

## Document Citation

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Werner Herzog's Woyzeck contains two or three epiphanies involving Klaus Kinski as Woyzeck and Eva Mattes as Marie, and two or three epiphanies is more than you get from all but a handful of film artists in the world. As in *Aguirre, Wrath of God*, the epiphanies come at the beginning and the end. The problem, as always with Herzog, is in the middle where he is unable to create a cinematically dynamic narrative. Indeed, Herzog is as fragmentary in his way as Georg Buchner, author of *Woyzeck* was in his. Moreover, Herzog displays little feeling for fiction, for archetype, for a representation of the world with its normal constituents. Herzog is instead the eccentric par excellence, searching out what differs most radically and most violently from the norm in order to express a more exalted level of consciousness.

Unfortunately, Klaus Kinski is too spectacularly histrionic and quintessentially Herzogian an actor for the morbidly banal part of *Woyzeck*. Hence, the madness of this despised "little man" does not achieve the desired incongruity. Kinski's *Woyzeck* is insane as an image, before he becomes dramatically insane as a character. His insanity is indelibly established with Herzog's first frenzied framing of the actor's tortured countenance. After this epiphany, Buchner's saga of the soldier-barber-cuckold-murderer becomes superfluous, and Herzog does not help matters with his tedious, tableau-like *mise-en-scene*. The murder constitutes another epiphany, however, and the agonizing pain one finds time and again in the eyes of Kinski and Mattes makes *Woyzeck* a film of stirring intensity and originality. ■