

As Man Is To God

**on
the filming of
Werner Herzog's
*Fitzcarraldo***

As Man Is To God

Andrew Nicholls

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inspired by Les Blank's amazing documentary film *Burden Of Dreams*.

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“This much idiot no one has ever been in the world!”
– Klaus Kinski

PROLOGUE

- Gather 'round children with pillow and nog 1
And hear ye a tale of the mighty Herzog
Eater of shoe, hypnotizer of chicken,
Filmer of scenes which the primal pulse quicken.
- Actor, ethnologist, modern Herodotus, 2
Maker of films that have thrilled and besotted us,
Climber of hills no one else second-looked,
Prover that Germans are often *verrückt*.
- Herzog, of filmic auteurs the Achille-est, 3
Found where the Amazon basin was hilliest,
Built his own Troy, provisioned it, fenced it,
Donned armor, and went off to battle against it.
- For he had decided *la métaphore juste* 4
For the struggle of art, the mind's arrow unloosed,
Was a muse-sotted aesthete, a tune-loving pill
Dragging a steamship up over a hill.
- Why, in lieu of some romp Caribbean, 5
Venture a filmic task so Sisyphean?
To paraphrase Mallory of Everest's thin air:
He dragged a boat up it because it was there.
- No kayak or skiff, not a tug or a dory, 6
In battles too easy there never lay glory
A rusting behemoth of tonnage 320
Whose movement would come to define *lentamente*.
- No CG, no models, no pad for his fall 7
He'd do this for real or not do it at all
His character's struggle would mirror his own:
Underpaid, overworked, understaffed, overblown.

Big mountain, big boat, plus remotest Peru 8
 And indigenous tribes who distrusted his crew –
 Were this insufficient to drive Werner nuts,
 Throw in a lead actor who hated his guts.

(Here's the director of *Heart Of Glass*, who 9
 Hypnotized for effect his entire cast and crew
 And, had not his shrink said t'was risky to do,
 Would have Mesmered the opening-night audience too.)

Fish out of water; man out of time 10
 Pick your own parallel, rig your own rhyme,
 The lure of defeat may be contra-Pavlovian,
 Nevertheless, *das is echt Herzogovian*.

THE STORY IN BRIEF...

Fitzgerald/carraldo, who owned rubber land, 11
 Had lived in Iquitos and daringly planned
 Enrico Caruso the Great to engage,
 To perform in Peru on a wide floating stage.

The real "Fitzcarraldo," it oughta be noted, 12
 To shift his boat over from where it was floated,
 Did not hire the Indians to drag it, thank Jesus –
 He took his apart and he moved it in pieces.

But, uncircumscribed by historical facts, 13
 A maker of fiction the truth may relax
 Needless to say, young Werner grew psyched
 To make *his* rubber baron as nuts as he liked.

The actor whom Werner had first signed to play him, 14
 The great Jason Robards, of *Thousand Clowns* fame,
 Grew sick in the miasmatic fug of Peru
 And was barred by his doctors from following through.

(The first man considered to wrangle the boats
Was *Wild Bunch* and *Dillinger* star Warren Oates,
Who died April 3rd of the very same year
That Herzog's film had its October premiere.) 15

Likewise, Mick Jagger, as spring turned to summer,
Committed to tour with guitarists and drummer,
Which left Werner's project in smoldering rubble,
And that's just the tip of his iceberg of trouble. 16

For film is to life 17
As is shovel to sod
Boat is to mountain
As man is to God.

ACT ONE

FADE IN: Vivaldi's chorale *Dixit Dominus* 18
Setting a tone elegiac and ominous
Far as the aerial camera sees:
Sky-yearning emerald Amazon trees.

CREDITS begin with a mud-landing plane 19
Germanically, Herzog begins to explain:
"You wish to know how to this movie I came?
It's a strange little story, let's start with the name.

"Fitzcarrald, an actual baron of rubber, 20
Transported a boat from one stream to another.
His other life details were boring, I thought
The thing with the boat – that's the movie I sought."

- In a boat, in the jungle, we glimpse through the fog
Intrepid director Herr Werner Herzog. 21
- “I invented ‘Fitzgerald’, *caucho* profiteer,
Who can’t raise the cash for a theater here
He worships Caruso – it’s, say, 1910 –
But were he to contact this god among men, 22
- “Should Bryan Fitzgerald his hero engage,
There’s no opera here, there’s no theater stage.
He can’t build a venue; his land’s too remote
Then one day Fitzgerald discovers this boat. 23
- “The Molly Aida is almost a wreck
But he pictures Caruso performing on deck,
Belting out *Lucia di Lammermoor*
To audiences screaming their *bravos* from shore. 24
- “His boat’s on the next river over, and, worse,
There’s formidable rapids no ship can traverse
But, indefatigable, soon he has planned
To move his *La Scala* one mile overland. 25
- “He’ll find where the two tributaries are closest,
(At least there is some method to his psychosis)
With one thousand Indians as his boat mover,
Clear trees, cut a ramp, and then haul the thing over. 26
- “He actually gets to the mountain’s far side,
Where his floating stage is by the Indians untied.
It drifts down the river, the rapids consume it
His dream is destroyed with no way to exhume it. 27
- “So Fitzgerald fails, in a most painful lesson,
But learns something that *er wird niemals vergessen.*” 28

- The Ecuador jungle, in Camp Number One 29
With crew still a-jangle, with film unbegun.
We see our director, a man in his prime,
In the year nineteen hundred and seventy-nine.
- The Narrator, young Candy Loughlin (she who 30
Would later go on to star in *Critters 2*)
Says here in the jungle deep, darkling and dense
Things between Lima and Quito are tense.
- Two different tribes of *Sudamericanos* 31
Who've lived in this jungle for *centos* of *años*,
Say Lima is pulling a land-grabbing rout,
Sending illegal settlers to muscle them out.
- Strangers are therefore a troubling disturbance, 32
Not least a loud film crew spearheaded by Germans.
Herzog needs workers at each crucial stage
So he offers up double the average wage.
- Ants search for food on the thick forest floor 33
As Peruvian music plays, *encantador*
Lumber concerns, with a mandate to clear,
Cut 8,000 square miles of jungle a year.
At this rate, the Amazon, by 2010,
Will be *desnuda, como la puda virgin*.
- One hour away, in South-East Ecuador, 34
Soldiers in both countries posture for war
Herzog assures everyone in Waiwaim
He'll just shoot his film, then take off in a plane.
- He plays soccer with them, this man from afar 35
To prove he is *un chico muy simpa*
He floats down the Pongo and rescues a deer
As clouds nimbo-sulphurous metaphor near.

- A spectacled, red-shirted Indian quoth, 36
 Speaking for Aguarunas and Huambisas both:
 “They never accounted when making the call
 For the one Tribal Council that speaks for us all.
- “When this film is done, when it’s playing in *Cannes*, 37
 With the shooting and editing out of our hands
 It can’t help but sell a lopsided idea
 Of how *mis hermanos* are living down here.
- “Why should some Hollywood fantasy, filled 38
 With tales of ‘dumb natives’ exploited and killed
 Define who we are? That is not how we feel
 We reject this portrayal as trite and unreal.”
- We watch a young *Indio* chop a canoe 39
 And meet local Nelson, at work on the crew
 His Council is calling him traitor, coat-turner –
 His terrified mother comes pleading to Werner.
- The threats from the Councilmen intimidate her. 40
 “¿*Qué dice?*” Herr Herzog asks his translator.
- “She blames you and Walter and all of the rest 41
 For provoking the warrant for Nelson’s arrest
 You’ll take him away for the harvesting season
 And now his own people have charged him with treason!”
- Producer Walt Saxer tells the distraught mom 42
 They’ll clear up this mess and take care of her son.
 The crisis put off, the disputants gone,
 Here’s Herzog, beside the Rio Marañon:
- “Rather than honestly try to engage us? 43
 They spread childish lies – they’re so crazy, outrageous:
 We’re smuggling guns to force them to their knees;
 We’ll kill all their women and cook up their grease...

- “They say every tribeswoman fears that we’ll rape her. 44
 I’m digging a ditch to the Rio Cenepa!
 So, on top of this trumped-up imaginary violence,
 We’re turning their village, their homes, into islands!
- “They say as I’ve filmed there’s been burning and looting... 45
 But look for yourself, we have not begun shooting!
- “Two men came from Germany, why I don’t know 46
 They met with the Indians eight days ago
 Photos from Dachau one of these guys shows them:
 ‘This is how Germans treat those who oppose them!’”
- In *Stern* magazine, a two-page photo-spread: 47
 “Herzog Horror Picture Show” screams the main head
 We see other clippings – they’ve heard of this fracas
 From Tierra Del Fuego to Northern Caracas.
- “And all since we’re safer to blame out of hand 48
 Than the oil firms and soldiers who’re seizing their land.”
- Herzog’s convinced it’s no time to be clever - 49
 He falls back to Santa Maria de Nieva
 At dawn, Aguarunas with guns come around
 And burn all his sets and his camp to the ground.
- The crew, their lives only remaining to lose, 50
 Flee downriver, white flags upon their canoes.
- Fade Out. Then Back In. Thirteen months have elapsed. 51
 The Amazon flows like a torrent of Pabst
 Men in white suits promenade for the cameras,
 Ladies in evening gowns laugh, *über*-glamorous.
- Rich impresarios charm *Señoritas* 52
 White canes are flourished, and sweet margaritas
 It looks like a concert, a *quinceañera*,
Una celebración from a different era.

- Werner's returned. It's 1981 53
 A wild party scene: filming proper's begun
 With bold *caballeros* and pretty young *damas* on
 Film in Iquitos, beside the brown Amazon.
- Says the Narrator: Iquitos is groovy 54
 The same age and style as the town in the movie
 Auspiciously, all its *echt* features contrive
 To help Herzog's grand *mise-en-scène* come alive.
- They'll film the town here, by the wide river's mouth 55
 Then move cast and crew fifteen hundred miles south
 This party's where Fitzgerald courts the elite
 To get his big plan on its financial feet.
- As Fitzcarrald, Werner has got Jason Robards 56
 Who couldn't be torn from his talent with crowbars
 Mick Jagger's signed-on to play Wilbur, his flunky,
 The soul of a lion, the brain of a monkey.
- A white stucco tower: Mick rings the church bell 57
 As both drunken hombres lean over and yell,
 Braving ridicule, vertigo, heat and mosquitos
 To shout, "We want opera here in Iquitos!"
- (Robards has just come from *Raise the Titanic*, 58
 A sequence that might make a lesser man panic
 For who in the world would deliberately go
 Into two troubled ship-lifting films in a row?)
- Wilbur grinds ice with a rotating shaver, 59
 Swinging his arms, a demented Rod Laver,
 Fitzgerald pours on red syrup – *ka-splort!*
 For sweet barefoot children who laugh and cavort.
- Wilbur quotes Shakespeare, an off-topic fill-in: 60
 He "can't prove a lover," so he'll be a villain!
 He babbles these lines from *Ricardo La Tres*,
 His pongoloid lips up in Fitzgerald's face.

All this from the 16-mill film of Les Blank, 61
Whose masterpiece we have entirely to thank
For details of all the backstage *Sturm und Drang*
Since all is about to go terribly wrong.

Five weeks into filming this *oeuvre* atmospheric, 62
Robards comes down with a bug dysenteric,
Flies off to recover at home. And, worse yet,
Is barred by his docs from returning to set.

This kick to the gonads becomes a one-two: 63
The backers are saying it's time to *adieu*.
The *englische Kirsche* on this *Streusel* of horror:
Needed on tour, Jagger says *sayonara*.
(In fairness to Mick, he's not being a dildo;
He'd have to re-shoot with a new Fitzcarraldo)

We see *Tattoo You*, the LP's Nazca visage, 64
As Herzog expresses his fears of film-fizzage:
In losing his Wilbur, his backers, his star,
He's faced with his most wrenching failure so far.

ACT TWO

Herzog horizontal, in hammock supported. 65
Ponders production procedures aborted.
Sans Jagger, he can't make a two-person scene play,
So Wilbur'll have to be cut from the screenplay.

Rethinking, rewriting, romancing his backers, 66
Still reeling from losing his Robards, his Jagger,
He flew to Berlin, reassured his stakeholders
The film was rock-firm on his Teutonic shoulders.

- They asked if he still had the strength or the will. 67
 May as well ask a hog if he's eaten his fill.
 The horse may have fled but he won't change his course
 A film's not a barn, nor an actor a horse.
- "If I give up this film I'm a man without dreams!" 68
 From all we've seen so far, we know what this means.
 "The truth is the truth, I can't twist or massage it
 I live my life or I end it with this project."
- (With DVD extras, this new info trickles in: 69
 Fox nearly set up this film with Jack Nicholson.
 That fell apart when some suit with no clue
 Said, "Shoot it at Sea World, dude! Who needs Peru?")
- For weeks, Herzog searched for an actor transgressive 70
 Enough to perform as his opera-obsessive.
 In fact, for a while he considered, last-ditch,
 Playing Herzog (I mean, Fitzcarraldo) *er sich*.
 He would have been fine; he's trilingual, handsome,
 But here fate conspires the strange plot to advance some.
- Lightning illumines a wild tiger mural 71
 There's actors in masks and an ambience infernal.
 It's April of nineteen and eighty and one –
 With a new Fitzcarraldo, the film's re-begun.
- The man-eating tiger is one vivid part 72
 Of a painting by Peru's Juan Manuel Ugarte.
 It's not the sole beast here with wide prowling eyes –
 Klaus Kinski has landed to thespianize.
- Kinski has filmed thrice before with Herzog: 73
Nosferatu, *Woyzeck*, and *Aguirre, Wrath Of God*.
 For Kinski, "work on" may as well mean "attack"
 Full-bore, epic hero, with zero held back.

- Offered *Raiders* by Spielberg, he passed: in a snit, he 74
 Described the screenplay as “moronically shitty.”
 He hates what he sees as the cheap and the rotten
 Contempt is a chalice he drinks to the bottom.
- Though Kinski and Herzog are both of a type, 75
 Accomplished, persistent, resistant to hype
 They create and relate on a different level,
 A Yogi next to a Tasmanian Devil.
- (The cynic says, “Way over-thinking it, putz – 76
 Herzog is crazy and Kinski is nuts.”)
- We’re back to Vivaldi: the sweet *Dixit Dominus* 77
 Werner rolls film – in control, Hindu-Brahminous.
 Down by the river, the dockworker district,
 Men haul heavy goods like a teen who’s been kiss-tricked.
- Huge blocks of ice, groaning backloads of lumber 78
 With friends walking near them in case they should stumble.
 The stuff for construction is hauled through Iquitos
 As Herzog burns film like Biz Markie eats Cheetos.
 (Or: as *Gojira-san* eats Hirohitos)
- A film-clapper claps. From a boat, dressed in white, 79
 Issues Claudia Cardinale, beauteous sight,
 Guided by Klaus down a rickety dock
 But a man drops their suitcase and Herzog calls, “Stop!”
- White trousers, white dress, muddy, messy location; 80
 This isn’t your standard ship disembarkation.
 Klaus Kinski slips with his new Tony Lamas on,
 Bobbles, and nearly goes into the Amazon.
- “¡Atrás!” cries Herzog: *back up!* And Take Two! 81
 A man with bananas keeps missing his cue
 The A.D., Jorge, calls, “*Miguel. ¡Por favor!*”
 (His bananas don’t look like they’ve acted before.)

- (“American Film” magazine, ’82: 82
 The writer Mike Goodwin, who lived with the crew,
 Says there’s no close-up here, because Kinski got bit
 On his face by mosquitoes and won’t allow it.)
- Thatched river-homes stand on low wooden stilts 83
 Above the floodwater like Scotsmen in kilts.
 In a red plastic bucket a boy floats beneath ‘em,
 Creative, resourceful, like Jonathan Lethem.
- A little child wades, Klaus dirties his socks. 84
 A girl kicks a bristly black pig in the hocks.
 The music played over these scenes of Iquitos
 Is “*Vamos a Belén*” by Los Solteritos.
- The District of Belén, unchanged for a century, 85
 Seldom remarked for its excellent dentury,
 Though it is clearly a hotbed of *mensch-erie*,
 Isn’t the setting to wax existentiary.
- As Klaus in a mirror, adjusting his titfer, 86
 An upcoming sequence rehearses a bit for,
 We hear he’s made 100 movies or more,
 From *Zhivago* to *Bankraub in der Rue Latour*.
- Venus In Furs, The French Woman, Das Netz;* 87
 How much more diverser can one actor gets?
 He’s captured in French, English, *Deutsche* and Italian
 Each possible take on the wily rapsCALLION.
- In *La mano spietata de la legge* 88
 He gives some poor Guido a flamethrower wedgie.
 In *Mir hat es immer Spaß gemacht*
 A young Barbi Benton meets Klaus and gets facht.
- Roll camera. Fitzgerald’s asleep in this take 89
 With children impatient for him to awake.
 They ask to hear music with wide, begging eyes
 He rolls on his side, lifts the needle, complies.

- “*M’Appari!*” Caruso’s rich tenor, his great 90
Sense of drama, unreels from the 78.
One million sales of “*la giubba*” alone
Without radio, cinema, TV or phone.
- (Born to a poor working family in Napoli, 91
Enrico had to do everything scrappily.
Cash he made singing in cafés he’d use
To help feed his sisters and buy himself shoes.
- One session he did, in one room in Milan 92
In 1901, had established the man.
By 1903 he’d performed at The Met,
Enchanting New York as he sobbed *Rigolett’*.)
- The kids in the *choza* grow silent. They stare 93
At the turntable spinning the sound into air.
A slow turtle wanders beneath the Victrola
A sign on a hut nearby reads Coca-Cola.
- Kinski, flame-topped beneath shock of blond hair 94
(Like the actor himself, shooting off everywhere)
With director and crew past the camera float
On their way to inspect the *Nariño*, their boat.
- As the phonograph skips the ship’s hull comes to view, 95
A steamboat constructed in 1902.
The rusting hulk lies on a sand bar, alone,
Like a party guest someone forgot to send home.
- Herzog describes from a skiff anchored near 96
The challenging project of dragging it here:
- “We found it three hundred and fifty miles down 97
The Amazon, in a Columbian town.
They built it in Glasgow, it ends in Peru
Busted and rusted and rotted half through.

- “The peace treaty for the Columbian war 98
 Was signed on this ship in 1934!
 To tow it upriver, this boat triple-decked,
 We stuffed it with oil drums to keep it *aufrecht*.”
- (He never says “she” for the ship, he says “it,” 99
 Cos he knows that in filming he’ll smash it to shit.)
 “We’re leaving the rust. The eye can’t be tricked, you’re
 Aware at a glance that it’s part of the picture.”
- Chickens peck ‘round the long, lopsided vessel 100
 A-sprawl on the sand like a drunk Georgie Jessel.
 As water pours into the hull through a breach
 The size of the fruit pit in James’ Giant Peach.
- A motorboat putts to our *ferry fatale* 101
 With Kinski’s co-star, lovely Miss Cardinale,
 Playing Fitzgerald’s lover, an elegant madam
 The wealthiest dudes in the country? She’s had ‘em.
- To help her man fuel his obsessive desire 102
 She buys him a steamship, with which he’ll acquire
 A rubber plantation, then move into opera
 Thrilling the children, their mamas and papara.
- Claudia’s shown ‘round the patched-up top deck 103
 Of this Potemkin paddleboat, ravaged to heck.
 She’s shown the one door she may open, and those
 Which reveal it’s an emperor without any clothes.
- “No, not this door, this one has to stay shut,” 104
 Werner says to the French woman playing a slut.
 She tugs wide the door to a “room” near the camera,
 Revealing Peru, wider than Cineramera.
- A ways up the river we meet the *Huallaga*, 105
 The second of three hero boats in the saga.
 Upstream goes the first; up a hill, the facsimile
 The third one’s in case things go all *Gott-im-Himmel-y*.

- Workers weld bulkheads and deftly repaint. 106
 A ship you might honeymoon cruise on this ain't.
 They rebuild this shell to survive on the water
 As Herzog expounds on his desiderata:
- “Without solid backups we'll all be in trouble 107
 But this looks enough like *Nariño* to double:
 The same length and tonnage, the same silhouette –
 I think it's as close as we're likely to get.
- “But despite all the work being done on *das Boot* 108
 We need a third vessel before we can shoot.”
 As toilers and tools toss up sawdust and sparks
 We're reminded once more what's in store for these arks.
- No one has done it, so no one will reckon 109
 The cost of a boat o'er a mountain *abschleppen*
 Amid warring tribes and hot jungle's decay
 Two thousand miles from Peru Triple-A.
- One will be dragged a steep mile overland 110
 And one the dire Rapids of Death must withstand.
 The third must lie ready to fill either slot,
 A great case of, “Jesus, what else have you got?”
- Says Herzog (V/O): “I don't know it'll make it 111
 The rocks or the river could easily take it...
 The boat in the “death-rapids” could come a cropper
 We'll save it, I hope, by remote from a chopper.
- “So many have given their labor, their art, 112
 I wish I could keep all the ships, in my heart.
 So much sweat and blood in rebuilding these decks –
 A pity to put them through what's coming next.”
- New scene. New horizons. Some time has elapsed. 113
 At a chart of Peru with the Amazon mapsed,
 Herzog is asked how the hulk, move-resistant,
 Was brought from Iquitos, two thousand miles distant.

- He points to the map with the river drawn on it 114
 And traces the route of the vessel upon it.
 “Further North-South than the U.S. is vertical,
 Such a long trip, it was *über*-exertical.
- “Setbacks and pains in the *Arsch* without number, 115
 Rio Ucayali to La Urubamba.
 Our boat held together, from rudder to prow,
 Towards Camisea we’re towing it now.”
- Their new destination’s *location non grata*, 116
 A desolate spot in the middle of *nada*.
 A full day by air, over two weeks by boat
 When the river is passable. Why so remote?
- Herzog admits as we see him encamp 117
 Into woods inhospitable, buzzy and damp,
 He could have shot most of the movie up north
 But for qualities mythic the jungle brings forth.
- Yielding takes and performances, Herzog implies, 118
 Impossible e’er to achieve otherwise.
- Crewmen and Kinski step out of the prow 119
 Of a skiff as it’s slowing – no going back now.
 They’re two weeks from doctors and showers and Brie
 And civilization as seen on TV.
- The new local Indians, brave Machiguengas 120
 (Strictly monogamous, not jungle swingers)
 Seem a good stand-in for *los Aguarunas* –
Muy fotogénico, less loony-tunas.
- But newer impediments soon become clear: 121
 The river’s too shallow at this time of year.
 Original plans were to film when it’s rainy,
 When moving big ships would have been a no-brainy,

- But everything's compromised by the delay - 122
 The waterline's dropped like a prom dress in May.
 Time is a-flyin', we hear a great sucking
 As budget and schedule both take a schmucking.
- The East Andes foothills are blazingly hot 123
 (Except when it's freezing and damp; then, they're not).
 Thunderstorms ring in the air like great coinage
 And clothing stays wet with the sweat of your loinage.
- Gloria Gonzales, prettily sauntering, 124
 Strolls through the camp with some clothing she's laundering.
 (Her kid today runs – here's some narrative maundering –
 A B&B named for this film she was born during.
- La Fitzcarraldo*, a boutique hotel 125
 Run by Micaela Gonzales-Saxer-MacPhale
 Has four pretty bungalows, far from buttinskis,
 Where you stay in rooms that were Jagger's and Kinski's.
- Your host and your hostess are keen to provide 126
 A respite on the jungle's less hectic side.
 Room rates and more are available from
 Info@LaCasaFitzcarraldo-dot-com.)
- As Gloria G. hangs her laundry to quiver 127
 And somebody washes their fruit in the river,
 A man hangs an antenna high in a tree
 To bring in Iquitos and Sports BBC.
- It's crude, but there's civilization-reminders: 128
 Cold showers for bodies, flush toilets for hinders.
 There's power for lights and a fridge full of beer
 So you can get drunk and forget you are here.
- Bananas are offloaded in the near distance; 129
 Peruvian capuchins offer assistance.
 One constant sour note: a radio's squawking
 That blares day and night. Now a man's voice is talking:

“Pucallpa?” Walt Saxer attempts to check in 130
With his boat somewhere downriver, on it, or in
Mid this tractless expanse, this sound stage absurd
This effort that changes the scope of the word.

“Pucallpa, *was ‘los? Hören Sie? Are you there?*” 131
The question goes out in the hot jungle air
Hopeful electronic secular prayer
To river gods ancient, malign and unfair,
Who if they exist clearly don’t even care
“Pucallpa, Pucallpa, *estoy Camisea...*”

Herzog erect in the woods, his eyes darty: 132
He’s Sherlock Holmes; nature is Moriarty.
“That way,” he says, his voice low, nudging East,
“Two-point-five thousand miles of *der Dschungel*, at least...

“West is two thousand miles. North? A bit less. 133
South is five hundred.” (To Cuzco, we’d guess).
“That’s – what? two months? – of non-stop ambulation
Before you’d walk out into civilization.”

He doesn’t look spooked to have settled his crew 134
In the most inaccessible spot in Peru.
Au contraire: these brutal facts he’s abrupt with;
Hard exigencies that he’s forced to put up with.

“What can you do?” say his voice and his posture 135
As though he’s a sheep in a maze of exhausture
Which, three years back, he drank enough gin to
Become his own sheepdog and herd himself into.

We witness a take with one Don Aquilino, 136
Caucho profiteer who’s made fortunes obsceno
Exploiting the natives wherever he’s able,
By stealing their rubber, their land, and their cable.

- He carries himself with the haughty *noblesse* 137
 Of a man who takes 12 through 8-Items-Or-Less,
 Dressed all in white like a jungle éclair,
 As he's carried aloft by four men in a chair.
- José Lewgoy, *telenovela actor* 138
 Plays Don Aquilino with *je-ne-sais quor* -
 A really good scene for a musical cue, so
 We hear "*Demeure, Chaste e Puro*" from Caruso.
- The Narrator says it is Fitzgerald's plan 139
 To learn all the tricks of this arrogant man,
 A roundabout method, but if it comes off, it's
 A good way to bankroll his scheme with the profits.
- Actor El Tigre, bare-chested and sweaty, 140
 Cuts "V"s in a tree's outer skin *con machete*.
 Fitzcarrald asks, "This is a rubber tree?"
 The squat millionaire rolls his eyes and says, *si*.
- El Tigre tends to the slow-dripping tree 141
 As his people have done since two thousand BC
 To make the game balls used in *Ollamalitzl*
 Which often killed those whom they hit in the *schnitzel*.
- Milky white latex drips over a leaf 142
 Into a bucket that's hung underneaf
 Kinski looks sour, out of sorts, ill at ease
 At his dialogue under the gum-rubber trees.
- Klaus *ist verärgert*. The words he just bit on 143
 He looks like he'd rather set fire to and shit on.
 As opera music fades up on the score
 We cut to the huts where three Indians pour
- Latex on a *bola* o'er fire-heating hissery 144
 Turned on a spit like a hog on rotisserie.
 Cinematographer Herr Thomas Mauch
 Points a short lens at this great blob of *cauch'*.

- He tells his director the rubber looks creepy 145
 “Either like bread or like *Scheiß*,” says the D.P.
 “*Ich kann nichts dafür*,” Herzog tells him, “*dass das*.”
 That’s what rubber looks like; a dead rhino’s ass.
- “I presume with the market price you are familiar,” 146
 Says Don Aquilino in tone supercilious
 His director suggests he try doffing his hat
 Lewgoy wafts at the smoke. Herzog says, sure, do that.
- As the two actors parry, Herr Herzog, off-screen 147
 Shoos a large wild turkey into the scene.
 How quick do they make *una bol*, Klaus inquires
 “Three men for one week, toiling over the fires.
- “*Ahora*, I’ve eight and a half thousand men 148
 I’m thinking of raising that number to ten.
 You’re strange but I like you,” he thunders, vociferous
 Klaus is beginning to look cameranivorous.
- “*Unmöglich* – impossible!” Kinski repeats, 149
 “*Einschlafen!*” We’ll put ‘em to sleep in their seats!
 He gives his director a look that’d fry a log
 Werner helps José to work on his dialogue.
- (Now to a rumor. No, they’re not all true. 150
 When shooting *Aguirre*, about here in Peru,
 Herzog refused Klaus, who’d hotly requested
 He fire an assistant whom Kinski detested.
- Klaus said, “I’ll quit!” Herzog found a gun, 151
 Pointed it straight at his star and said, “Run.
 By the time your ‘creative dispute’s’ run its course,
 There’ll be one slug in my head, eight bullets in yours.”
- The press took the bones of this tale and recast it 152
 To make Werner out an imperialist bastard.
 They changed it to natives who’d got the gun-threat,
 If they wouldn’t labor for free on his set.)

- José Lewgoy has a stage actor's brio 153
Three years from now he'll do "Blame It on Rio,"
The film that persuaded the world *my-oh-me-o*
That there was much more of Demi Moore to see-oh.
- It's very hard making this movie, Lewgoy says 154
As over the sequence we hear straining voices -
Two native workers climb, bobble and slide
Down a pathless, vine-covered, be-muddered hillside.
- An equipment case, heavy and tricky to grip, 155
Is part of the Indians' stagger and slip.
It's not just the labor and moisture that rankles,
There's heat-seeking leeches that suck on your ankles.
- Herzog Imperator, taking the day off, 156
Points up the river, a very long way off,
Re-emphasizing the stark, harsh remoteness
Due to his mania for overland boatness.
- "Everything needful must come from Iquitos 157
A nail or a paintbrush. A packet of Fritos
Pucallpa's halfway, but they have few supplies."
He stares up the river at nothing and sighs.
- Three men unload, from a Cessna, comestibles: 158
Beer, meat and butter and other digestibles,
Offhauling whiskey and condoms and Sterno
Next to a runway from *Dante's Inferno*.
- One porter says, "Hope the chicken is dead," 159
As good an alt.-title as anyone's said.
All these provisions a small boat are tucked in,
And sped to the camp to be drunk, ate and fucked in.
- Fade up Caruso, who is to "Pagliacci" 160
What \$5,000 jeans are to Versace
Molly Aida, the boat of Fitzgerald,
Prepares by the crew to be rudely imperiled.

- For a rainstorm has lifted the river a foot. 161
It might last an hour; Herzog races to put
His crew and his boat on the river, post-haste
So this chance at a crucial scene won't go to waste.
- One error could do to their grand floating set 162
What the Jacobins did to Marie Antoinette.
But one of Herr Herzog's endearingest foibles –
If he holds a low pair, when challenged, he doubles.
- Fitzgerald blasts his Caruso *fortissimo* 163
Molly Aida endeavors, *bravissimo*,
Rain-hastened Amazon to overcome
As the steam engine rotates the prop in her bum.
- The engine's not up to the task they're demanding 164
Werner exclaims, "We're at risk of crash-landing.
If we hit those rocks, forget shooting till winter."
A heck of a spot to have talked himself inter.
- Up at the prow is the huge wooden figurehead – 165
Only our star has a denser or bigger head.
Onto the high wheelhouse roof Herzog hobbles
The turkey runs circles, a-swingin' his gobbles.
- Werner leaps back as the ship rakes the shore, so 166
The trees lashing by won't tear open his torso.
The screeching of metal, the snapping of branches
He's lucky his belly is not Bruce Vilanch's.
- (Billy Rose, one of theater's seminal forces, 167
Who squandered a fortune on cars, boats and horses,
Famously said while life-wisdom sharing,
"Buy nothing that eats, floats or might need repairing."
- Watching this scene, Billy might feel the need 168
An additional "Don't" to append to his creed,
Like: Don't fly to the jungle, Peru's in particular
To treat a steamship like it's a funicular.)

- The riverboat captain, be-weathered, encalloused, 169
 Says, "It's not the engine; you dumped all your ballast
 To make the boat lighter, the better to port her;
 Your prop's turning 'round but she ain't in the water!"
- Sure enough: the propeller gyrates in the air 170
 Like kids in the dryer when mom isn't there.
 Below the small rapids the vessel is grounded,
 A punch-drunken fighter whose last bell has sounded.
- On flows the swift river that nearly sank her 171
 The broken-off figurehead lies by the anchor.
 The turkey's suspiciously left the arena –
 He stole a life vest; he's halfway to Lima.
- A river-raft passes, it's just out of reach, 172
 A tuna fish mocking a whale on the beach.
 The Italian music that played on the score
 Is replaced by de la Selva's "*Madrugador*."
- Miss Loughlin, the Narrator, tells us, condensing: 173
 "The crew builds a mock-up so they can keep lensing,"
 A small masterpiece of narrative evasiveness,
 Skipping what surely were days of shit-facedness.
- Detail by detail, from forestay to rudder, 174
 They built one boat's deck on the top of another,
 A full duplication, to scale, from the chest up
 Am I easily impressed or is that really messed up?
- (The fictional screenplay was based on an actual 175
 Story, but straying, for thrills, from the factual.
 So: these boats are lookalikes, albeit sloppy,
 And this is a dupe of a fake of a copy.)
- A new river setup, late in the day 176
 With dozens of Indians blocking the way
 On rafts and canoes, clutching weapons of pierceage
 As Herzog cajoles them to new heights of fierceage.

- Fitzgerald's upriver trip's thrown off track 177
 By the rapids. He circles around to go back
 But the locals impute to him motives infernal,
 Line up 'cross the river, and block his returnal.
- Narration recaps this brand new convolution: 178
 Fitzgerald is handed the best poor solution
 The Indians' blockade is forcing his hand
 So this is the spot he must go overland.
- Behind them, the Indians dynamite trees 179
 In case he conspires to get round them. Now he's
 In a fix existentialist, like Jean Paul Sartre –
 He cannot stay here but he cannot departe.
- Los Machiguengas* are proud forest gatherers 180
 Close-lipped, laconic – they're not hunter-blatherers
 Nor are they vicious; now it becomes necessary
 To ask them to act much more river-possessessary.
- Pride is appealed to: "More brave ones can row!" 181
 They have to show menace with arrow and bow
 Herzog asks (*en Espanol excelente*):
 "¿*Para canoas vacías, tenemos más gente?*"
- "¿*Todos aquí!*" he cries. "Everyone here! 182
 But *despacio!* Slowly!" They must inspire fear,
 So Assistant Director Jorge Vignati
 Yells, "Lady in yellow! Less smiley, more pouty!"
- They shoot it. "*Sollen sie nochmal zurückgehen?*" 183
 Shouldn't we back up and try it again?
 "Back!" he cries, "Back! *¡Todos atrás!*"
 As the light and the moment recede, *más y más*.
- They've had to bulk up on their fake "Camiseans" 184
 Herzog explains, as an Indian deplanes.
 They flew in some Campas from Rio Ene
 And the sweet Oventinis, who walked the whole way.

- In what Les Blank enters as Shot 52, 185
One lone Machiguenga tugs one lone canoe.
A lyrical flute plays, as sweet as it gets
In “*Godzilla*,” here’s where you’d go buy Raisinettes.
- Patiently, Mauch waits to shoot the blockade for 186
An hour (don’t feel bad, it’s what he is paid for)
He checks on the sun, continues to wait,
And gripes, “In one hour it’s completely too late.”
- It takes several days to finish the scene 187
Where the Indians point and pretend to look mean,
Since Herzog insists on his “magic hour” light
That comes on an hour ‘fore the onset of night.
- Fooling around while waiting to act, 188
The Indians their strings with sharp arrows retract,
Pointing at Mauch, who, with low gallows humor,
Says, “Sure, try to hit that guy there, with the zoomer.
- “They’re checking the dude with the lens,” he conjectures, 189
And says, as if one of the three dozen extras,
“What’s keeping ‘em? Hey, here’s a boredom defeater:
Let’s nail that German guy through his light meter!”
- As if they can hear him, or grok his Bavarian, 190
Indians laugh and flex bows antiquarian.
“Magic light” fades into coppers and greys
Then just glooming outlines in tenebrous haze.
- “*Dreh das*,” Hergoz says, “*Nimm die Kamera jetzt!*” 191
As if Mauch could see what his boss indicates
“*Zu dunkel*,” Mauch hisses; “It’s too dark to see!”
“It still works,” Werner says, somewhat Panglossily.
- He shouts from his perch, “More canoes in the stream!” 192
Pitch darkness? No worries! He’ll light with a dream.
All we can see is his tall silhouette
As one more good take he endeavors to get.

- One's put in mind of the great Roger Corman 193
 (Known, if you worked on his films, as Hell's Doorman)
 To get 80 setups a day in the can,
 He discarded the clapper and slated by hand.
- That's "Little Shop," infamous low-budget creeper 194
 Which featured Jack Nicholson when he was cheaper,
 Shot on another film's sets in two days,
 On a weekend when all of the guards were away.
- Mindful of what may investors befall, 195
 It serves well a dictum of old to recall
 When to such men you a project entrust:
 "Talent does what it can; genius, what it must."
- Among *los Campas* now the camera lingers 196
 A dugout canoe, a child's face, weaving fingers
 A man with a shirt that says "Mickey Mouse Discos."
 Herzog to a favorite subject of his goes:
- "I fear in my heart that this film may enshrine 197
 The last fading glimpse of *ein Volk* out of time.
 They're fading away at a tragical pace
 As 'civilization' intrudes on this place.
- "The loss of these people would be catastrophic, 198
 Abandonment cruel, insane and myopic.
 What do we know of their hopes? Their ontology,
 Culture or language, their complex mythology?
- "Cover their homes with skyscrapers and bridges... 199
 We're losing riches and riches and riches.
 We'll end up zombies, unable to waken,
 In malls built atop wilder dreams we've forsaken."
- Five Campa woman sing low, *a capella* 200
 As men shoot big arrows up, just for the hella.

- “My film, how I use them, this is not ethnography 201
I give them traits that don’t fit their biography,
Make them do things they have not done before,
Make them *act*; this is something that interests me more.
- “It’s folly to think one might make an ‘improvement’ 202
In *Los Campas*’ culture, behavior or movement,
If they’re gone, their culture and all that it’s worth
Will just disappear from the face of the earth.
- “They must be protected from us and our science 203
I don’t want to live in a world with no lions.”
- Pity the artist who thinks in this fashion 204
And finds, on location, a people, a passion
Which his own scenario, typed in Berlin,
Diminishes, or even helps to do in.
- There’s their right to keep their own primitive glory, 205
Their rites and beliefs... but there’s also his story.
He won’t undermine the respect they deserve
But without their help he can’t finish his *oeuvre*.
- (One wonders if anthropocultural fears 206
Were part of the fact, for the next 18 years
That Herzog directed – per IMDb –
Sixteen documentaries, to dramas just three.
- Although that’s a ratio, one must allow, 207
Not far from what Herzog has made up to now,
Added to which, one may fairly adduce
That a drama is four times as hard to produce.)
- Day. Solemn Indians with spears and a quiver 208
Board a small war-vessel facing upriver.
The music is tense as they face the unknown
And Herzog explains in a serious tone:

- “These are the guards who keep watch on the narrows 209
 Two of them last night were wounded by arrows
 Two hours upriver from here by speedboat,
 A guardsman was shot through the leg and the throat.
- “His wife was hit too before they gave the slip, 210
 Twice in the torso and once in the hip,
 In complete darkness when they couldn’t see.
 Our doc operated immediately.”
- The man’s throat is bandaged, the woman is too 211
 As Herzog describes what the tribe’s gonna do:
 “They’re sending a raid party back to the site
 Where *los Amahuacas* attacked them last night.
- “And all ‘cos the river’s abnormally low. 212
 It’s usually 20 feet higher or so.
 Some turtles routinely lay eggs in the sand,
 But can’t reach the now-inaccessible land.
- “So mama swims downstream, her eggs to inter 213
 And egg-hunting Indians come following her.
 If those displaced turtles were not in the story,
 That tribe would have stayed in their own territory.
- “The proud Machiguengas, no cane-shaking grandpas, 214
 Have just sent for help from their neighbors, the Campas
 It’s highly unusual, so I am told,
 For them to be so inter-tribally bold.
- “The locals are seldom too happy at all 215
 To encounter the Campas of Gran Pajonal.
 And yet, with this clash, they’re enlisting the aid
 Of a people of whom they’re extremely afraid.
- “They’ve made up their minds; I can’t stop them here. 216
 Some *Macher* from Germany can’t interfere
 With an ancient hard-wired territorial dance
 They have done since the dinosaurs were in short pants.

- “There might be an incident, what, I don’t know 217
 As off on this hazardous mission they go.
 Bewildering turn for an outsider man to see
 What else can happen? I’ve run out of fantasy.”
- “Fantasy” puzzles here: why does he need it? 218
 And how do the rigors of shooting deplete it?
 Is not the vision with which he was gripped
 In the first place encoded, spelled-out in his script?
- Yes, he needs magic, bright instantiation 219
 Of dreams one discovers when out on location,
 But “fantasy”? How is one by this encumbered
 With all one’s scenes prefigured, typed up and numbered?
- One thinks of Sir Hitchcock, who said of his art, 220
 “The filming’s by far the least interesting part.”
 Who only rolled film, or at least so he said,
 To glean what he’d already seen in his head
- But note: Alfred H. was a neurotic Brit 221
 Afraid of authority, struggling to fit
 In a world that alarmed him, conceiving dark fantasies,
 Mis-accused hombies, cold blondes without pantasies,
- Where Herzog, an artist of hot blood and sinew, 222
 Appears his tormenting to wish to continue.
 He doesn’t look downtrodden, ruined, or broken
 He’s buoyed by these problems. And, by the same token,
 He seems to respond, when he’s most in a rut, with:
 “See? This is what I have to make me put up with.”
- But still – is it likely he gave Blank permission 223
 To capture his struggle to capture his vision
 Cos he knew the core of his thematic expressal
 Was his trouble making it, not the big vessel?

- Maybe that's something we love in an artist 224
 He must entertain. But another big part is:
 He must be a high-minded high-aiming clown
 Who gets beaten up but is not beaten down.
- The Indians in camp, perhaps tedium-fearing, 225
 Catch arrows fired at them across a grass clearing.
 A pastime they've conjured up for their amusement,
 Chancing a lancing or major contusement.
- The raid party leaves in the long peke-peke, 226
 An arrow is caught by the cook, Huerequeque
 One barely misses the cameraman's arm.
 Hey, it's only a razor-sharp spear, where's the harm?
- "¡A cabeza directamente! ¡Mas fuerte!" 227
 Werner exhorts, as this game risking *muerte*
 Resumes. "Throw it harder, and right at his head!"
 He's stalled on his film, so he shoots this instead.
- He wants an intensity they can't deliver; 228
 Their best arrow-catchers have gone up the river.
 This weakness in others: same story, re-titled –
 Always the bridesmaid, never unbridled.
- Outside his bungalow, Herr Herzog stands 229
 Two samples of the fletcher's art in his hands,
 Heavy and deadly. He turns in his grip
 The arrow that glanced off the young woman's hip.
- (Hard to know here what "young woman" might mean 230
 When even the elders look barely thirteen.)
- "The doctor on set gave me this – it's no joke 231
 Here's where it struck and the arrowhead broke.
 There's blood on the tip of this one, on the spear –
 And this travelled through a man's throat, up to here."

- The things stand at least a foot over his waist 232
(Lucky they weren't tipped with *Woorare* paste,
Which slows down the nerves, then the lungs and the heart
Much like the Museum of Modern Art).
- “This bit broke off. Check the size of that feather 233
It's vulture, I think. These two parts fit together...”
Bruce ‘Pacho’ Lane, the Camera Assistant,
Asks, “Will you keep them?” Herzog looks distant.
- “I might save this one for my son, if I can... 234
One day I could tell him, ‘This went through a man.’”
He looks at the arrow – there's so far to go –
Pauses and says, “But I really don't know.”
- Indian women wash clothes in the stream. 235
The fierce Amahuacas were calmed, it would seem.
The raiders delivered their grievances to them
And came back without any new arrows through them.
- A Campa is asked at a table, lips pursed, 236
“So weren't you afraid of the gringos at first?”
Elia, from Rio Ene, says, No way,
“*Porque he comprendido todo lo que...*”
- “I knew what they'd do, what a ‘movie’ would be 237
Because my friend Walter explained it to me.”
Walt Saxer, to go by this lady's depictions,
Has had to unravel some frightening fictions.
- “It's lies,” says Elia with comical urgency, 238
Listing the pale ones' purported perversions:
“They'll empty your head and stir-fry your brains
And cook up your grease for their motor airplanes.”
- (The grease-using detail is interesting 239
Since the Aguarunas believed the same thing.
There's clearly a sense that the freaky white nation's
In constant need of anthropo-lubrication.)

Miguel Fuentes, who plays “Cholo,” says, 240
 “We’re not like *Jivaros*, the ones who shrink heads
 Until they can fit into pocket protectors,
 Even the noggins of German directors.”

Elia nods; she is past that impression 241
 Thanks to Walt Saxer’s humane intercession.
 When friends came, she told them, “No cause for alarm,
 No one will stick poison drugs in your arm...”

“So you cry and then die as you lie in your bed.” 242
 (The silly ideas people get in their head!)
 “And eat all you like; no one’s trying to fill you
 Up quickly just so they can fatten and kill you.”

She rolls her sweet eyes – o! the daftness some show 243
 Before they have talked to someone in the know!
 Miguel jokes around as he hears all this lore:
 “Pork makes you fatter. Eat up. Have some more.”

Drums pound, traditional scene tension-mounters, 244
 As Fitzgerald skeptical Indians encounters.
 They’ve never met one with such pallor of skin
 He picks at his meal as they scrutinize him.

They, in this first meeting anxious and fraught’ll 245
 Come round to believe he’s some kind of immortal.
 A shamanic figure who, like them, believes
 That life’s no more real than a shadow on leaves,

A lid, which, from under, the truth of dreams hammers on 246
 (What do they smoke in this part of the Amerzon?)
 Fitzgerald’s nervousness clearly comes off.
 Cut! Herzog teases: “Now everyone cough.”

The Indians agree to help this visionary 247
 Play King of the Hill with his mini Queen Mary
 (It’s never made clear why this tribe would unknit
 What another tribe two miles downriver hath wrought).

- A second long take on the Molly Aida: 248
 The chief isn't happy, Fitzgerald ain't eitha.
 Menacing natives play panpipes, as he
 Looks unsettled (they're good, but they're no Kenny G).
- The upshot: they'll take the white man as their leader. 249
 "They're gathered around me like chicks at a feeder,"
 Laughs Kinski, but "*sehr güt gemeint*," – a good job.
 Moving on. Next location. Next set-up. Next prob.
- Two separate camps in the green jungle vast. 250
 Why this divide between Indians and cast?
 Herzog admits, "There was much contemplation
 Of how to fit them in our organization.
- "Yes they perform, for which they're compensated, 251
 But one doesn't want their lives contaminated
 By our Western culture. I worried about
 How to film without changing them, shoot and get out.
- "We have such a different technical history, 252
 Each to the other a near-total mystery.
 That gap between us is vital and real
 And I hope this distinction to never conceal."
- Crew members hang in their hut and play cards. 253
 Campas kick balls in their jungle back yards.
 Boy chews on sugar cane. Man toys with camera.
 (Where are the fabled Peru wooly llamera?)
- Women slice yucca pods, making *masato*, 254
 A milk-white narcotic much like Al D'Amato.
 They peel, chop and pound it with brown forearms muscly,
 And chorus a song loosely translated thusly:
- "The women their drunk menfolk started to cuss 255
 The men said, 'There's plenty, why not drink with us?'
 The women got drunk and requested some lovin'
 But now the men's dough was too soft for the oven."

- Six untranslated quatrain verses follow, 256
 Presumably dealing with marital sorrow.
 A woman boils yucca, a boy plays with string,
 A cat's-cradle, fish-in-a-dish type of thing.
- One wonders if we in our "technical" nation 257
 Aren't arguably in the same situation
 As they. Have we not in our way made a leap
 Toward the comfortable lure of the easy and cheap?
- We mastered the elements, conquered diseases 258
 Spread by microbial agents and fleases,
 Tamed electricity, followed our dream,
 We're lions ourselves, or we once could have been.
- Now we sit by our river, we fall with the tide, 259
 Deplore all ideas that come from outside,
 Race with our arrows to challenge all slights,
 Get drunk, watch TV, go to bars and start fights.
- Did not a strong race, facing hardship and fear, 260
 Invent and invest and empower us here?
 What if an alien force came among us,
 Would they share the technical secrets they'd brung us?
- Or would they just leave us to fend for ourselves, 261
 Watching films-on-demand, stocking gun-racks and shelves?
 So as not to impair, meddle with or redress
 Our anthropologic indigenousness?
- Narration: the tribes on *masato* rely, it's 262
 A substantial part of the Indians' diets.
 Much like our Coke, or the Englishman's tea,
 Drunk all day long, ceremonially.
- Says one *fabricanta*, the *masato* prof, 263
 "You pound up the pulp till the marrow is soft,
 Chew all the paste in this long wooden trough,
 Then spit it back in, wait a day, sieve it off."

- “*Silencio, favor,*” Herzog says, “Quiet please.” 264
 As sparks from a campfire curl up through the trees.
 “So you spit here,” he tells someone in green
 It’s the Klaus-dreaded *masato* toast-drinking scene.
- To praise Fitzcarraldo, this brave plan of his, 265
 His new *compañeros* propose *un brindis*
 Klaus does not exactly ask for a fork
 To lap up a bowl full of somebody’s hork.
- (And, to be fair, what other employment 266
 Would ask you to do this while feigning enjoyment?
 Oh, sure, Senior Editor at Murdoch’s *Sun*,
 But other than that, can you name even one?)
- Kinski his nails is beginning to nibble 267
 At thoughts of consuming the Indians’ dribble,
 Of *schistosomiasis*, *tripanosome*,
 And poor Jason Robards, Medevaced home.
- He scrubs the container with San Pellegrino, 268
 Adds Nestlé canned milk for the Indian *vino*.
 He’s handed the juice of the tropical tuber
 Up comes the chalice and down goes the goober.
- Day dawns with soft, sorrowful Campa refrains 269
 Indians carve wood. Miss Narrator explains:
 Kinski has offered \$3.50 an arrow,
 So they’re whittling away as if there’s no tomorrow.
- Klaus snaps a shortbow in half with his hand, 270
 Tells its maker this shoddiness he will not stand.
 “This is no good. Make another. *Fa niente,*”
 He says (in Italian, *obliviamente*).
- They can make 20 a day of these arrows, 271
 Swinging their blades like demented Jack Sparrows,
 When not buying Polaroid pix from the cook
 Of themselves by the boat, to record how they look.

- (Though Herzog's been shooting on film for a week 272
 Their imagery-innocence feels so unique –
 They've never even used things electronic,
 Much less taken selfies with gadgets iPhonic.)
- \$3.50's good money, though some are annoyed: 273
 It's what the cook charges for each Polaroid.
 Give a day's wage; get some photos instead
 With your friends making bunny ears over your head.
- It's not just the Campas: the film's other crew 274
 Fork over their bucks and get their pictures too.
 All of them pose, the boat's nose for a stage,
 As Herzog defends his sub-minimum wage.
- "You can't compare paychecks with those in the States 275
 Our little production can't manage those rates,"
 Werner serenely and equably states
 As the brown Camisea he negotiates.
- "Our tractor driver makes more than he could 276
 In the town – though, admittedly, less than he should.
 But what I would want an outsider to trust is:
 It's less about cash than it is about justice.
- "There's no legal title for this territory. 277
 I hope when we're done there's a different story.
 I pray that this land which they struggle and die on
 Ends up in their name – their Valhalla, their Zion.
- "So no dull-eyed settlers or their drooling progeny, 278
 Loggers with eyes on their precious mahogany,
 All the king's oilmen, or all the king's horses
 Can show up to blow up their earthly resources.
- Indians chop hilly brush with machete. 279
 Jorge Vignati shouts out, "*jListo!* Ready!"
 They're shooting the scene where the Indians make
 The long path up the hill that the steamboat'll take.

- Men in brown, single-file, walk a felled tree 280
 And, excited for once, so does Mr. Kinski.
 Standing below, in the same crisp white shirt,
 Herzog perpend in the fulminous dirt.
- The hillside's *desnuda*, it beggars belief. 281
 The men look like ants crawling over a leaf.
 Their shouts the Sound Tech on his Nagra records,
 In this outlandish goal they are pushing towards.
- They call it the *trocha* – the trough up the mountain, 282
 The sole passage through (like in L.A. – “take Fountain”).
 The script says “*a ramp*,” but as we’re soon to see,
 That’s a word used somewhat optimistically.
- Fitzcarraldo decides, “We’ll cut through to the top!” 283
 Says the Captain, “That’s *months*, even working non-stop!”
 Cholo proposes the dynamite option,
 Cameraman Mauch bellows, “*Aus!*” as he stops them.
- Back they all go to the starting position, 284
 Klaus all a-twitch at this hitch in his mission.
 (The film doesn’t show it, but Kinski and Mauch
 Get along like a cat and a new leather couch
- In ’05, Herzog mentioned this acrimony, 285
 In a clip on the *Burden Of Dreams* DVD,
 But it didn’t fit in Les Blank’s tale of hill-conquerness
 To plumb the depths of the lead actor’s bonkerness.)
- The Narrator says, the carved path in the forest, 286
 A back-breaking task which the sane man deplorest,
 Will join Camisea, past trees pulsing amber,
 Straight down the far side to Rio Urubamba.
- Herzog explains to a hillside of Indians 287
 (Unused to acting – they’re no Mork-and-Mindyans)
 How they must toss the cut branches aside
 “Not fast, but hard work! It is no Disney ride.”

- Vignati repeats as the men branches lob, 288
 “¡Trabajen! Work hard, make it seem like a job!”
 “No, throw them like *this!* To the side!” More mistakes...
 Then back to the bottom, more chopping, more takes.
- Impatient to get what he wants, Herzog bristles, 289
 Throws down the clapper, climbs upward and whistles.
 The fat’s in the fire, the cows have come home;
 Rubber, meet slippery Peruvian loam.
- As cook Huerequeque performs a soliloquy, 290
 Werner no doubt thinks, if he knew ventriloquy,
 Puppetry, too, he could shoot, as with lasers,
 His vision entire into their *cabezas*.
- (A director of “non-pros” is in the same scrape 291
 As a quadriplegic with a home-service ape
 All he can helplessly hope is that Koko
 Won’t shove a hot soup spoon up his Orinoco.)
- It’s not called the rainforest here for no reason – 292
 It starts to piss down like a drunk Jackie Gleason
 Un-anchored topsoil runs down the hill face
 Past all the cut trees that once held it in place
- Herzog is asked, has he met with surprises 293
 Throwing-off any preplanning surmises?
 “Yes, well, of course!” he looks up and replies,
 Wading through mud almost up to his thighs.
- “All bad surprises! For one, the terrain 294
 Has lost any firmness it had, with the rain.
 Though we gouged a new path for the boat with the dozer,
 I still think our goal hasn’t moved any closer.
- “Then there were landslides. It’s all been so tough. 295
 Too much rain now – and last month, not enough.
 In 25 years it has not rained this heavily!”
 Herzog declaims, soaking wet and dishevelly.

- He's not the only one up to his knees, 296
 The actors bog down and sink in by degrees.
 Oddly, he says, he may all this deplore,
 "But basically, it's what I've been looking for."
- He wades in the warm water after the shoot, 297
 Laving the muck from his legs and patoot.
 "I hated today, I don't even know why.
 It went well I guess..." and he lets out a sigh.
- The crew joins their chief in a late-evening swim 298
 Everyone looking as *erschöpft* as him.
 The sun paints the tips of the peristyle frieze
 On the Amazon's crenellate curtain of trees.
- The D-8 bulldozer is stopped on the *trocha* 299
 Sprawled on the mud noncompliant and mocha.
 A man with a jerry can struggles toward it
 The film, says Miss Narrator, cannot afford it.
- Gallons 150 each day it burns through, 300
 Fuel that must come by light plane, then canoe.
 They purchased it used, it breaks every day
 And expensive spare parts must be flown all the way
- From Miami, and sadly it often transpires 301
 They've sent the wrong part (like, Dodge Dart winter tires).
 It's much like your lead actor coming up lame:
 Until he can hobble, you can't shoot a frame.
- Even the few hours the dozer is working 302
 It moves like your 7th grade shop teacher twerking.
 Like Bambi on ice the great tank tread goes spinning
 In film versus jungle, the jungle is winning.
- Most of the men signed three months to work steady 303
 Delays have meant some have spent twice that already.
 Food supplies, medical, camp sanitation
 Break down in the long and unplanned occupation.

- One needs no tea leaves or ailuromancy 304
 To know there'll be costs to this strained occupancy.
 The Campas endure an additional distress:
 They're used to small groups of a dozen or less.
- Put them for months in a commune of forty 305
 And some unavoidably start to act naughty.
 (You've heard of the Munchkins, who, in '38,
The Wizard of Oz hired to thespianate,
- And who, the first time they were gathered *en masse*, 306
 Went Toto-Does-Dallas on MGM's ass?
 So, daily, small dildos, brassieres and vibrators
 Were found in the Culver Hotel's elevators?
- Thing is, that's a myth, wholly false, incorrect. 307
 We tend on performers our lusts to project.
 Where better an orgy to stage, we reflect,
 Than where money and glamor and film intersect?
- More likely, their days, whether Brandos or Urkels, 308
 Are spent watching bulldozers go round in circles.
 It's not just their dreams brought to life, abra-dabric,
 Our hankerings too get stitched into the fabric.)
- Two Campa sisters, one with a knife, 309
 Are loudly harangued by an Indian wife.
 We hear a fourth girl in quick Spanish, relate:
 One of them slept with the married one's mate.
- "That woman shouting the most of the three? 310
 She's angry and has every reason to be.
 A husband decides with a new girl to go?
 He should tell the wife. But this one didn't know."
- They lean on the stanchions supporting two huts, 311
 Exchanging their "oh yeahs?" and their "eat my butt"s.
 Ocelot furs lie on branches to dry
 One girl looks so wretched you think she may cry.

- “¿Los dos quieren al mismo hombre?” asks Lane. 312
 “Poco complicado,” she tries to explain,
 “One of the sisters, this one on the right,
 Wants to pick who ends up with the man, with a fight.”
- “A fight? Meaning fists, like a man?” inquires Pacho. 313
 “Así, como hombres,” she says, “muy macho.”
 “The sister, she’s saying she’ll win cos she’s bigger?”
 “Sí. Plus she says she’s not old, so men dig her.”
- “It’s not,” says the wife, “that I chose to deceive him. 314
 I don’t have a husband now? Fine! Then I’ll leave him!
 I don’t want him anyway! Now that I’m free,
 Come pick up his clothes and his Play Station 3.”
- The girl in the flowered dress holds the knife tight. 315
 There won’t be much sleep in her cabin tonight.
 She thumbs the sharp blade-edge again and again
 In this whole confrontation we’ve seen zero men.
- Father Gagnon, soulful Franciscan, 316
 Checks in on the Indians’ general condition.
 They’re bored and morale’s at a low, he discovers,
 And many are missing their families, their lovers.
- If that hasn’t ruined the mood, scarred the soul in it, 317
 Their only soccer ball now has a hole in it.
 Gagnon discusses their baleful estate,
 Attempting their woes to ameliorate.
- Here’s Herzog, in manner precise, analytical 318
 (Of an experienced director befittical):
 “Space is a problem, the size of the lot
 This clearing you see; this is all that we’ve got.
- “So each of the tribes must go on with their lives 319
 In this space of bad vibes, missing children and wives.
 The medicine’s fixable: on the next plane.
 We’ll have to address sanitation again...

- “... but *masato*’s a strain that will always be there. 320
 We’ll see if the others around them will share.”
 He’s honest, sincere (well, as film people go)
 He adds, “¡*El fútbol, es bien serio!*”
- (The director’s *prima Español* may seem odd, 321
 Until one recalls his *Aguirre, Wrath Of God*,
 The masterpiece Herzog shot here 10 years previously,
 The first time he and Klaus Kinski fought grievously.
- It has Indians, rapids, messianic spree, 322
 A wooden Titanic found up in a tree.
 A cynic might say it exploits the same realm; it’s
 Basically just *Fitzcarraldo* with helmets.)
- Gagnon gets right to the root of the prob: 323
 Making *masato*’s the women’s main job
 Without their own families to chew up the yucca,
 They can’t have *masato*. Game over. Deal fucka.
- “Women from Ucayali can’t deliver 324
Masato to men from a different river.
 Tell Cubs fans, ‘*Don’t set fire to cars cos you won?*’
 It’s part of their culture. It just isn’t done.”
- Indians carry some mud in a portage 325
 (Of mud, you’ll recall, there is no risk of shortage)
 To pour on a form to build-up a mud-oven
 So they’ll have hot bread, if not any hot lovin’.
- Kinski helps out, he’s so bored, so *famisht* 326
 That he and Juarez Dagoberto cook fish.
 Gagnon concludes, “You’ll be fine. I’ve no doubt
 That a lot of these problems can be straightened out.”
- The Narrator says, the film crew is jumpy 327
 Dwarfed by the jungle, they’re dopey and grumpy.
 Bulldozer breakdowns and rains horizontal
 Have made them all tired, upset and disgrontal.

- 'Captain' Paul Hittscher says, "We'd be okay
If we just could wake up and work a full day.
You have to do something – to move, cover ground,
But we are just sitting and sitting around." 328
- Sound Recorder Maureen Gosling rakes leaves. 329
D.P. Thomas Mauch reads a book by the trees.
Most, asked about deep jungle fears, would say, "Snakes,"
Not reading Tom Clancy for hours between takes.
- Kinski, not happy, in 3-button cuffs, 330
In English, says flatly that enough enough's.
"You can't do a thing till they finish that ramp
You cannot escape this fucking, stinking camp.
- "Because you don't know when they'll call you to set 331
You have to sit here in the rot and the wet!
Because there's a contract that spells it out neatly:
Until Herzog's finished, you're captured completely!
- "You pace here to there, there to here, and then back 332
From set to latrine, from shitter to shack,
From morning to night that is all you can do!"
He pauses and says, "But at least there's a view."
- Bruce 'Pacho' Lane swims the brown Camisea 333
With imported cutie pie Carmen Correa,
Who points to his heart-with-two-bird-wings tattoo
"How," she asks Bruce, "Did they do that to you?"
- "A needle," he says. "Does it hurt?" "*Un poquito.* 334
Como la mordedura de un mosquito."
The heart and the wings – *¿qué significan?*"
"Just love," says the young bearded cameraman.
- "Ah, ya. *¿Es tu signo?*" "No, it's not my sign." 335
She asks him for her a tattoo to design.
"*En mi pierna.*" "Your leg?" "*¡Sí, Aquí!*"
If he needles her later, this we do not see.

- “We agreed,” Herzog says, “to bring in prostitutes, 336
 When even the padre said, ‘Go for it, dudes.’
 Our men, in six months here, the one hole they’ve seen
 Is the overflow slot in the coffee machine.”
- Angela, 20-ish, ponders a question 337
 About why she’s in Peru’s oldest profession.
 “I have two *hijos*, they’re eight months and three,”
 She says to the camera dispassionately.
- “You’re in this profession *porque gustaba?*” 338
 “No,” she replies, with no grimace, no *Ha*.
 “*Por necesidad*. Not because it is fun for me
 Were that the case, I would go and find one for me
- “Who entertained me, who filled all my needs 339
 If it was for joy I committed these deeds.
 It’s not that,” she says, as her lip she bites on,
 “It is *porque no tengo otro opción*.”
- If a hooker approached an *auteur* in the States 340
 Says Werner, with her resume and her rates,
 He’d tell her, “I’m sorry Miss, but we don’t need ya,”
 Whilst here it is Standard Directing Procedure.
- “In Germany too, the cast would be offended 341
 If offered a recompense so happy-ended.
 In the jungle – well, it’s not obscene here, I feel.”
 (Hang onto that word for about half a reel.)
- Butterflies mate in the great river basin 342
 As we ponder matters of sex and predation.
 Cut to an aerial view of the hill,
 The flaccid bulldozer athwart a deep rill.
- Small on one side, in brown river-mud crusted, 343
 Lies Molly Aida, her forelip cliff-busted,
 Her haunch in the wet, looking up at the moon –
 The newt, in a fish-evolution cartoon.

- The Vivaldi aria with which we began 344
 Returns, to remind us how feeble is man,
 How petty his rage, how futile his plan,
 Herzog calls out to a boy, “*¡Estebán!*”
- “Watch out when we hit you don’t slip or fall off!” 345
 They’re gunning a small boat towards the hill-trough
 On which we can see the impressive, three-story
 Molly Aida in fully-beached glory.
- Documentarian Blank is afloat 346
 And calls out, “Hey Werner, how big is your boat?”
 It’s a sign of the tension that his reply ain’t,
 “Well, Lester, I’ve never had any complaint.”
- The historic steamship was lighter by far, 347
 Not one-tenth of its length or its avoirdupois.
 “And that one,” says Herzog, “was taken apart
 Into 15 pieces before they could start.
- “This big piece of iron does not have to ‘act’ 348
 It’s a visibly real unsurmountable fact.
 To lessen the difficulty would subtract
 From the metaphor. Better for leaving intact.
- “A model won’t work – some small plastic thing? 349
 Jerking as it’s towed along on a string?
 You can tell this boat is not six inches tall.
 And this slope...” He looks back. “... this is no joke at all.”
- LaPlace Martins, engineer, one hand on hip, 350
 Studies their system for lifting the ship
 He says it’s fallacious mechanically,
 And reckless, and generally OMFG.
- Herzog defensively waxes rhapsodic 351
 “Since *la metafora central* of my project
 Is: haul a big ship, with tow-rope and spade
 Up an impossibly vertical grade...

- “If I dig a path that’s too easy, too *blah* 352
As challenging as *el Canal Panama*...
My metaphor’s lost. What they say about pain:
Ich muss muhr riskieren if I wish to gain.”
- The two are at odds: Martins’ load-bearing plan 353
For cable and pulley plus dozer and man
Is designed for a gradient of degree 20,
But Herzog’s insisting, *obstinadamente*,
- On 40 degrees. This has failed once already. 354
LaPlace says the folks pulling ropes could get dead-y.
He pencils a drawing of what he envisions
Might come from unsound engineering decisions:
- “This big capstan bears all the weight. That pilaster? 355
The sole thing that stands between you and disaster.
You’ll have sixty men working here, more or less,
At the hub of the height of the perilousness.
- “The ship is your *load*, all its weight at the tackle. 356
The energy loosed if the load should fly back’ll...
Cause all of these winches, A, B, C, D, E...
To concatenate in a catastrophe.”
- Clamoring Indians, slipping and hollering, 357
Struggle to put the capstan in its collar ring,
Barrel-sized hole in which it will revolve,
The puzzle of lifting the steamship to solve.
- The pole goes at least six feet into the ground 358
With holes for the crossbars to turn it around.
It looks like the flag-raising on Iwo Jima,
This strange rite, a thousand miles due east of Lima.
- Herzog calls out, “To be safe, let’s stay here, 359
Till the post’s in the hole and we get the all-clear.”
A man with the tie-off rope hangs in the air,
Emblazoned against the sun’s last brazen flare.

Says Herzog, “We’ll put someone up at the top; he
 Can warn us if something gets skeevy or sloppy.
 He’ll whistle, or trumpet, or maybe he’ll shout
 If a sign should arise that the post’s giving out. 360

“This measure we’ll take. A mistake otherwise 361
 Would mean five or six people losing their lives.”
 “More,” says Martins. “More than that?” Werner asks.
 “Many more,” Martins echoes, his face a grim mask.

Herzog to Mauch: “Thom, he says *mehr als fünf*.” 362
 “So, with 60 on site, how many get bumfed?”
 The engineer thinks. “If it broke at the collar?
 You’d be launching Indians into Guatemala.”

Werner’s dismay with this verdict is clear – 363
 This is not the assessment he wanted to hear
 He tells Mauch, “He says they’d fly off like a rocket;
 That 30 might die if the post leaves its socket.”

Con respecto, says Herzog, Martins is too cautious. 364
 He cannot stop here. Just the thought makes him nauseous.
 Dreading a tragedy, Martins says it’s
 Time to turn in his studio parking. He quits.

As Herzog, ascendant, continues to grope, 365
 His 300-ton ship fifty feet up a slope,
 At war in the jungle, like Francis Ford Copp’
 (But without his American firm, Zoetrope)
 And his engineer saying go pee up a rope,
 A lesser auteur might abandon all hope,
 Turn to Kevorkian, maybe the Pope,
 Be found dead like Sid with an armful of dope,
 Become a Kurtz-like nihilist misanthrope,
 Does Werner fold up? Is it over now? Nope.

ACT THREE

Indians haul a canoe down the hill 366
Where the three-story ship cools its rudder, stock-still.
Chief Espinosa, and men from his band,
Are asked what they think of the mission at hand.

“They never will manage it,” says Espinosa 367
“Some tiny boat, sure – *pero, es monstruosa*.
If those cables pull out, we’ll all be as dead
As that talking *caballo* who played Mr. Ed.
A three-story boat up a hill? Come on! Who
Can push *that* when we can’t even pull a canoe?”

Now on board ship, Espinosa appears 368
In his role as The Chief. He is asked if he fears
That his people, no matter how strong or how clever,
Face injury in Fitzcarraldo’s endeavor.

“They fear they will die up there, all of my men 369
If we have to push it, then he should, *también*.
How dare he make widows of all of our wives
If he and his friends do not risk their own lives?”

“If we die, the owner should die right beside us, 370
Ground into the mud like the future denied us.”

Herzog calls Action. “*¡Aquí falta gente!*” 371
“People are missing! *¡Inmediamente!*”
The huge wheel revolves as eight Indians man it,
It’s like the guitar tuning-peg of the planet.

Mud-slavered, half-naked, sweat-glist’ning bods 372
Torque the great wooden Spam key of the gods.
The camera crew films, we hear tribal drumming
You’d think that King Kong or Wayne Newton was coming.

- As Fitzcarraldo, Klaus Kinski calls, “Quick! 373
 Everyone out! Come, don’t stand by the ship!”
 Off-camera, the bulldozer starts and deploys,
 Abetting the sweating of workmen and boys.
- “Pull it! Just drag it!” Fitzgerald implores, 374
 His white hair aglow in the steamy outdoors.
 “There she goes!” cries the Captain. Fitzgerald: “*It works!*”
 Throws his hat, grabs the cook and mud-dances in jerks.
- “Look out!” calls Miss Gosling, neglecting sound levels. 375
 The cook and Herr Kinski abandon their revels.
 “But it didn’t work?” Kinski asks, looking stunned
 The ship’s skiddered backward to where it begunned.
- Miss Gosling’s voice comes again: “Something broke?” 376
 The sky-pointing vessel lies loose of its yoke,
 The massive iron loop that supported the ship
 Pulled straight like a Home Depot wire paper clip.
- What Herzog most fears has occurred, it appears 377
 With triple-spec loads, even carbon-steel shears.
 “*It fell?*” Gosling asks. There lies pulley and cam,
 As useless as that other singer from WHAM.
- And here, Les Blank makes an unfortunate move, 378
 Inserting B-roll of a scene from the *oeuvre*:
 A poor Campa Indian, crushed by the Molly,
 Lies lifeless, a victim of Fitzgerald’s folly.
- Indians three drag their fallen *compadre* 379
 Downhill to his poor grieving father and *madre*
 In caul of brown slaver, limbs broken and torn,
 As some tried the crazy white man to forewarn.
- The way real and mock can go sprocket-in-hand, 380
 It’s plain to see how we could misunderstand,
 With the English and Spanish and Deutsch jambalayan,
 We just watched a scene *cinema-vérité*yan.

- One's mind looks for patterns, collects evidences; 381
 The juxtaposition of these three sequences –
 The warning; the slippage; a death by the shore –
 Dogged Herzog's career for a decade or more.
- When his engineer quit, Werner brought up to code 382
 Every capstan and winch, every rope with a load,
 To triple the recommendations for strength
 He's talked about this, on film, and at length.
- If it's setting-things-straight that the world has in mind 383
 A world-famous artist is not hard to find.
 There are books and crew interviews, people who know.
 So why does the falsehood bewitch us all so?
- (Remember *Zhivago*? The scenes on the train, 384
 With Kinski, an anarchist bug in his brain?
 That sequence was filmed in 1964,
 When the actor had shot 40 movies or more.
- Refugees sprawl on a bare boxcar floor 385
 As it pulls from the station – but here come two more!
 A desperate woman, her head shawled in black,
 With a baby, cries "Please!" as it speeds down the track.
- The shawl is to make her *plus mysterieuse* 386
 The baby is dead, and it's not even hers.
 Omar Sharif grabs her bundle and reaches
 For her as she stumbles, implores and beseeches.
- She fumbles her grip and falls under the wheels. 387
 "She lost both her legs," someone whispers, "For reals,"
 On the DVD extras of Lean's epic flick
 "David said, 'Dress the double, let's go again, quick.'"
- But that didn't happen. She stumbled, it's true, 388
 Bunched-up as she fell, and was knocked black and blue,
 But Lili Moráti, the actress we saw,
 Made films, with both legs, till 1994.

- Why do we all to grim rumor incline 389
 When it's easy to check and correct it online?
 Is it a ship trying to climb up a shore
 Whose chilling unlikeliness rouses us more?
- Because as we sit in home theater seat 390
 Epic fails of the famous our evenings complete?
 Are movies a truth-plus-reality mash-up?
 Are we lookie-loos at a movie-car crash-up?
- If so, ain't it us, not directors and stars, 391
 Who gaily, and daily, keep crashing those cars?
 People are hurt every hour in jail cells;
 Plans fall apart; there's bad sex in hotels.
- There's no shortage of grief if that's what we seek 392
 Among the unknown, disadvantaged and weak.
 If celeb nonsense some gladly admix
 To spice the *frissons* of their favorite flicks,
- One should Snopes guilty hopes about showbiz hinjixes 393
 Between our on-screen Casanovas and minxes
 Adopt a tone skeptical, cautious and fierce
 Toward deaths, randy Munchkins, and gerbils up Geres.)
- The native lies past the cruel reach of life's whim 394
 When Herzog's voice says, "Far enough. Look at him."
 The victim rolls over. He stretches a bunch
 His director advises, "Wash up and have lunch."
- Is this the same guy who was dragged from the keel? 395
 We just saw two scenes; which was fake and which real?
 (We'll pare, in a scene coming up in a minute,
 The apple of fancy; the worm hidden in it.)
- The victim cleans up as the bulldozer groans 396
 The cast walk eyes-down as if searching for stones.
 Says the Narrator, the bubble has burst.
 The investors won't vest lest the vessel moves first.

- Some, behind Werner's back, hope to get clear 397
 Of the filmic disaster unraveling here.
 Up on the mountain, the D-8 tries pulling,
 Still doing more dozing than it's doing bulling.
- Oddly, this seven-high dealt-out by fate 398
 Appears our director to invigorate.
 His walk has a bounce, his grimace a grin
 How could this be, in the spot he is in?
- Men spear a snake. Werner starts a harangue 399
 In his low but insistent Bavarian twang.
 Here comes the most extraordinary tirade
 A man facing ruin, on film, ever made.
- "Of course, we are challenging nature out here 400
 And it sets the cost of defying it dear.
 That's what makes its grandiosity clear
 We have to accept it's much stronger than we are.
- "Klaus always sees an erotic veneer 401
 But I can see nothing erotical here,
 Reeking of death and bereft of humanity,
 I see the jungle as full of obscenity."
- A vermiform vine nears his arm as he speaks 402
 Searching for something slow, meaty and sweet.
 A boy with a knife cuts a parrot apart
 And spreads it to show his dissectional art.
- "It's just... nature here is vile and base 403
 The foul and the vicious competing for space.
 I see choking and fighting, I see fornication,
 Dominance and wholesale asphyxiation.
- "Every square meter on every day, 404
 Surviving, then growing and rotting away.
 Misery rules without shade or remission
 In fact we should say it's the ruling condition.

- “The trees are in misery. The birds are the same,
I don’t think they sing here, they just screech in pain.” 405
- An ant with a red feather three times its size 406
Walks down a branch with its psittiform prize
Birds called *wistwinchis* (it says) serenade
A tree frog a-pulse in a sweltering glade.
- Back to Juan Ugarte’s big airport mural 407
Huge alligator, long boa nocturnal,
A tapir at twilight looks out on a swamp
And ponders the merits of not getting chomped.
- “It’s an unfinished country. It’s still prehistorical. 408
All that it’s lacking is beasts dinosaurical,
Like there’s a curse on the landscape entire
And all who go deep reap their share of the fire.
- “So we too, for bringing this film, we are cursed 409
On this land where *der Herr Gott* his Eden reversed
And fashioned in anger – that’s if He exists –
To weaken our spines and our impotent fists.
- “It’s the only land where... where creation’s unfinished,” 410
(In his faded polo shirt, pique undiminished...)
“And yet if you should take a close look around
There is harmony too, of a sort, to be found.
- “It’s the harmony, though, of an orderless order; 411
Of vast, overwhelming and collective murder.
And we, beside all this articulate vileness,
The baseness, obscenity, this coprophileness,
- “We only sound and we only look 412
Like a badly-pronounced, poorly edited book.
Like half-finished sentences, tawdry and awful,
Out of a cheap, stupid suburban novel.

- “We must become humble, remember our station
Amid this great misery, this fornication,
This growth without reason, this orderlessness,
Here, even the stars in the sky are a mess. 413
- “There’s no harmony in the universe black
We must reconcile to that unlovely fact. 414
Incredible, true, that we ever believed it.
There is no real harmony as we’ve conceived it.”
- (This sermon was not, in fact, quite off the cuff 415
He’d riffed the whole thing in the boat, in a huff.
But the motor was deafening. Blank couldn’t use it,
And so, the next day, asked him to reproduce it)
- A spider web necklaces tree branches placid 416
It looks like those lab tests of insects on acid –
No concentric spiral, no regular shapes:
An Etch-A-Sketch web drawn by lunatic apes.
- “I say all this not without some hesitation; 417
The jungle still captures my full admiration.
It’s not that I hate it. I love it, you hear?
But I love it against my own judgment, I fear.”
- The film pushes on despite all the bad crap; it’s 418
The *Pongo de Mainique*, whose terrible rapids
Await the crew members’ next traveling sequence –
A job for brave filmmakers, no place for meek ones.
- Camera Assistant Bubu gets directions 419
By walkie from Herzog with hurried inflections.
With one ship unable its scenes to deliver,
Its boat understudy now takes center-river.
- The guinea-pig craft floats a skeleton crew 420
Down the most unsafe rapids in all of Peru.
In the film, when the boat’s reached the far Urubamba,
Each Indian kicks back and rolls a fat numba.

- That night, with the Indians drinkin' and gabbin', 421
 Fitzgerald, done-in, goes to sleep in his cabin,
 So he doesn't hear all the boat cables snappin',
 Which lets the calamitous denouement happen.
- They cut the ship loose while Fitzgerald's asleep, 422
 A pact with the river god *huillcas* to keep
 These men, it would seem, had their own lofty dream.
 Fitz wakes up on board going sideways downstream.
- In the current, the ship can't be steered any more 423
 It spins caddy-whumpus; it faces the shore
 (Where waters that gush down the canyons to greet you
 Point straight up the cliffside toward Machu Picchu).
- An ancient Victrola is set up on deck 424
 Of the valiant old septuagenarian wreck.
 Cameraman Beatus learns how to use it
 So each take can start with the same piece of music.
- "That's a gramophone needle?" Klaus heads for a snit. 425
 "Sewing needle, same thing." Herzog snips it to fit.
 "What else have we got?" Kinski looks all round.
 "Klaus, these are rapids! You won't hear the sound!"
- "Okay Paul, good luck," Herzog tells Captain Hittscher, 426
 Who nods, "*Ja, du auch*" – and him too, with the picture.
 "If you fall, I'll catch you," he tells his D.P.
 "Let's go now, let's risk it. Everyone ready?"
- The beast is released from its maritime mooring 427
 With howling of hullage and flexing of flooring.
 The disk plays "*Chi mi frena in tal Momento,*"
 The ship turns a slow water *ballet demento*.
- We hear Fitzcarraldo scream, "Turn on the engine!" 428
 Electric the moment, *unheimlich* the tension.
 Herzog calls, "Klaus! That was good!" Then: "Watch out!"
 The ship hits the shore; the jolt wobbles the Kraut.

“It came up so quickly,” says Kinski, aghast. 428
 Herzog’s concern is, “The background’s too fast!”
 “He ran out too soon?” asks Thom Mauch at the lens
 “No, the background’s too fast.” So they do it again.

The second collision hits nose-to-caboose 429
 Klaus says his line, then all Herzog breaks loose.
 Arms and some legs fly up in the air
 (It’s a good thing the trough of *masato* ain’t there).

One camera falls off its deck-bolted stand, 430
 Then there’s Thomas Mauch, sitting gripping his hand.
 “We must bandage Thomas!” Klaus screams o’er the torrents
 There’s someone to do that on board, Herzog warrants.

“It’s not bad,” says Thomas. “You hurt yourself too?” 431
 “Ja,” Werner says, “but let’s take care of you.”
 Klaus insists, “Thomas, your hand and forehead!”
 “*Glaub mir*, believe me, they’re cut open bad.”

They crouch on the deck as the ship fights the flood. 432
 Mauch jokes, “Werner, now you have *mein bestes Blut*.”
 They bandage him up with whatever they’ve got
 And Herzog returns to critiquing the shot.

“Klaus, you ran out just before the boat hit.” 433
 “Of course” bellows Kinski, “I’m not an idiot!”
 Herzog’s intrigued by a small piece of drama:
 “Hey look! Here’s the lens! It flew off of the camera!”

Beatus is dazed and is talking a riddle, 434
 Jorge Vignati cracked ribs in his middle.
 The anchor-point punctured the hull in its throes –
 The front of the boat looks like Stephen Fry’s nose.

Kinski explodes: “Werner, that’s the idea! 435
 Fitzcarraldo yells out as the cliff-face is near:
The engine! The engine! He knows it’ll crash!
 Who wouldn’t take off in a 50-yard dash?”

- The opera ends. The ship hangs on a bank. 436
 It's a 6-hour motorboat ride back to camp
 In a skiff toting two spatting filmic colossi
 And Thomas, cut through his *palmar interossei*
- Not for nothing is Be Prepared one of life's dicta: 437
 The morphine got used on the two arrow victa. *
 So Carmen, sweet 20-something courtesan,
 Is retained to keep Thomas's mind off his hand.
- In lieu of the now-nonexistent sedation, 438
 She will, when they get to the medical station,
 Disrobe, and then press, during Thom's operation,
 His face to her breasts for its two-hour duration.
- * (That attack – not with details off-topic to bore – 439
 But it only just happened, eight hours before.
 Evidently, frequently some action or word
 That's shot in the fourth act works best in the third.
 For narrative simplifies, edits-to-fit.
 Life *surprises*; that's what is so *life* about it.)
- The *Huallaga*'s not done with. They cannot retire it, 440
 The last scenes to shoot in Iquitos require it.
 It's April. The season of rain-every-day
 Is still at least seven or eight months away.
- Then, says our Narrator, to Cuzco State 441
 Comes the longest dry season recorded to date.
 One ship cannot move till the Amazon fills,
 The other's gummed up on the mother of hills.
- And so, with his steamships both *hors de combat*, 442
 Werner goes to Iquitos and shoots all of that...
 The docks, the young children, those sweet scenes we saw?
 The stuff we assumed happened three months before?
- That was shot here, and then moved back for piquance 443
 To make the doc mimic the larger film's sequence.

- “The whole film is stuck,” Candace L. summarizes 444
 Herzog, as he will, further catastrophizes:
 “If I believed in the devil, I’d say
 That he’s here; that he’s standing right here in our way.
- “It becomes questionable,” he murmurs. “The cost 445
 Is that here on this film people’s lives have been lost.
 People have been in a plane crash, and five
 Are in critical shape, one of them paralyzed.
- “And these are the prices that you have to pay 446
 This could have hit me, anyone, any day.”
 He stares ‘cross the stream to the green forest’s shelf.
 “And one starts to doubt the profession itself.”
- He does him no favors with reference infernal. 447
 These ‘deaths’ he refers to were single, not plural
 Two locals who didn’t know what they were doing,
 And who couldn’t swim, both went out joy-canoeing.
- Their vessel capsized, leaving one of them dead. 448
 But the notion to which many viewers were led
 Was that when the huge Molly refused to be pushed,
 Some of the extras behind it got squooshed.
- In interviews decades and many films later 449
 He’ll call Les an out-of-context-statement-taker
 And say, in his level Oktoberfest patois,
 This edit gave rise to a virtual *fatwa*.
- No one’s ever been gravely hurt in a film, 450
 He says, that has had him in charge at the helm.
- On the other hand, one can’t just say “people’s lives” 451
 For the tater of shock, and then not eat the chives.
 It’s tough, all the blame to one artist reducing –
 What he couldn’t help saying, Blank couldn’t help using.

- Les asks, as Herr Herzog a motorboat mans, 452
 “When this movie’s over, then what are your plans?”
 Herzog looks down, like he cannot envisage
 The day when he’ll pass this warm lump of show-bizzage.
- “I shouldn’t make movies I think any more,” 453
 He says as he drifts parallel to the shore.
 “I should go right away to a loony asylum,
 With bars on the windows too heavy to file ‘em.
- “It’s been just too crazy, too hard to get through 454
 It’s not what a man with his one life should do.
 Even should I get that boat up and down
 And finish the film, you know: *‘drinks all around...’*
- “Anyone then who congratulates me, 455
 And tells me it’s marvelous, toasts or fellates me,
 No one on earth who’s not sat where I’ve sat
 Can convince me to ever be glad about that.
- “No matter the outcome, or how the film plays, 456
 No, not until the far end of my days.”
- HIGH ANGLE: the ships in their different predicaments 457
 (Shot by Thom Mauch, his wound full of medicaments).
 Campa Alfredo sings. One of his chums
 Accompanies him on Piro tribal drums.
- The Narrator says there’s a victory of sorts 458
 For Fitzgerald, when everything’s gone through the courts
 He sells off his steamship and makes enough dough
 For an opera troupe to fly in for one show.
- And Herzog his victory wrenched from the jaws 459
 Of himself, when an angel was drawn to the cause
 At the very last second, and loosed up the bucks
 To bring in new, powerful, ship-lifting trucks.

- It took a few months, no doubt gallons of Zima, 460
 But heavier earth-movers lugged in from Lima
 Hauled the ship up. Then they turned it around,
 Greased up its belly and slid it back down.
- November the 4th, nineteen eighty and one, 461
 The last bits are shot. “Fitzcarraldo” is done.
 The champagne is popped, the cigar is smoked,
 The fatted calf’s eaten, the fat lady’s choked.
- The band Popul Vuh bubbles soft electronica. 462
 Werner concludes, in his accent Germanica:
 “My belief is, these are not just my dreams.
 They’re your dreams as well. The distinction between’s
- “Who can articulate, make it resonate through. 463
 That’s all that I think separates me from you.
 It’s what poetry, oil painting, knitting a sleeve
 Or literature is all about, I believe.
- “It’s simple as that. I make films and get burned, 464
 Because I’ve *nie etwas anderes gelernt.*”
 I know I can do it to a certain degree...”
 (He blows a black bug off his polo-neck tee)
 “I feel it’s my duty, in fact, honestly.
- “Any film ever made, any story or star, 465
 Could be the true chronicle of what we are.
 We must *speak ourselves* – do this job, never yield.
 For otherwise, we would be cows in a field.”
- Blank picks a shot of a tiger to fly in, 466
 The closest he found to the *Herz* of a lion
 Our man takes a street photo, loose in Iquitos,
 Mood calm, drama over, and Kinski *finitos*.

The street artist's pinhole "*recuerdo*" device 467
Prints negative stock, so he's got to shoot twice.
Green parrots look solemn as clients pass through,
Reserving their judgment on who's watching who.

Herzog stands still, his hair curly and black, 468
The guy lifts the lens cap, counts three, puts it back
Then takes out the print, its daguerreotype grain
With a poem; some romantic legerdemain
Encircling the subject's face in a frame,
Washes it through his developer chain,
Props it upright in the tight focal plane,
And, with Herzog in negative, shoots it again.

"Since the Film's Completion, Many Of The Peruvian Indians Have Gained Title To Their Lands" – final title card, *Burden Of Dreams*.

The Camisea Project, a \$3.8 billion consortium headed by Argentina's PlusPetrol, began pumping natural gas and gas liquids from the region across the Andes to the Pacific coast in 2004. As roads encroach on the wilderness, the Machiguenga are now surrounded by gas and oil workers' settlements. Many bilingual teachers have left the tribe's children to take jobs with the consortium. Among the adults, beer is slowly replacing masato. – *news item, 2014*

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We rage at our messes this side of the sod
Claim our successes, lay setbacks on God
Climb daunting hills without reason or plan
And oft tumble backwards to where we began
Holding our grievances high as we can
Beating our breasts when the *Scheiß* hits the fan
Berating a fate we feel cleverer than,
Our goals to our methods as God is to man.

