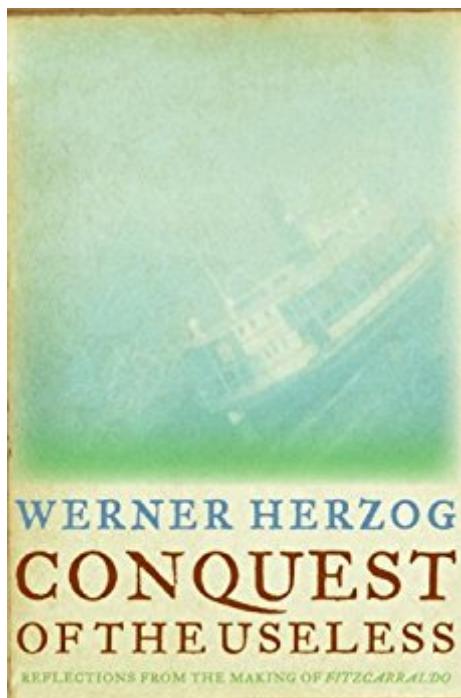


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Conquest Of The Useless: Reflections From The Making Of Fitzcarraldo



Synopsis

“Hypnotic.” It is ever tempting to try to fathom his restless spirit and his determination to challenge fate. Janet Maslin, *New York Times* Werner Herzog (*Grizzly Man*) is one of the most revered and enigmatic filmmakers of our time, and *Fitzcarraldo* is one of his most honored and admired films. More than just Herzog’s journal of the making of the monumental, problematical motion picture, which involved, among other things, major cast changes and reshoots, and the hauling (without the use of special effects) of a 360-ton steamship over a mountain, *Conquest of the Useless* is a work of art unto itself, an ian fever dream that emerged from the delirium of the jungle. With fascinating observations about crew and players—including Herzog’s lead, the somewhat demented internationally renowned star Klaus Kinski—and breathtaking insights into the filmmaking process that are uniquely Werner Herzog, *Conquest of the Useless* is an eye-opening look into the mind of a cinematic master.

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Customer Reviews

Much as I love Herzog's films I did not expect his observations made while making even a movie as outrageous as *Fitzcarraldo* to be all THAT interesting. Perhaps I feared the opposite, that they would be too interesting - the weird factor infusing his ruminations with a delirium that would irritate me. As it turns out, the way Herzog documents what he sees and experiences is pitch perfect, avoiding a self-indulgence that generally pervades these things. He cannot avoid himself, his idiosyncrasies and imagination, nor can he ignore the bizarre circumstances. But I never feel that Herzog is demonstrating what a unique genius observes and how it expresses itself. His fodder is inherently fantastic and he has the sense to keep it simple. His notes are engrossing, visual, and yes, at times magically real but everything is somehow grounded. I should have known Herzog's exquisite sense of things would enable him to express the outrageous and fantastic without sacrificing, how Gauguin put it, "The flat sound of my wooden clogs on the cobblestones, deep, hollow and powerful..." Herzog's objective observations of suffering at times added a painful edge to the book. Not that the observations are devoid of compassion, but and good, melodrama is avoided. I fear I'd have been driven mad by all those pleading eyes and desperate creatures: live chickens tied by their legs, dangling off the back of a motorcycle, being choked by dust as their heads bounce on the road; dogs tied up, stranded, thirsty, starving and covered in sores; helpless children - the relentless . *Conquest Of The Useless* is one of the most engrossing books I've ever read. For some reason I kept caring.

Herzog's massively enjoyable diary effuses wildly tangential impressions: mesmerizing, kaleidoscopic sensory apprehensions, hallucinogenic stories, transient characters, and ubiquitous dread. His core narrative is ethereal; the story progresses primarily as a reaction to Herzog's descriptions of grotesque jungle life, and the even more grotesque life of an independent filmmaker who wishes to pull a ship over a mountain. The result is a type of realism, the reality of which arises from a similarity to human memory. We remember things the way Herzog describes them here, as landscapes characterized by their peaks: heightened tangents, particular vivid sensations, and characters who fade from our lives as quickly and as fully as Mick Jagger disappeared from the Peruvian jungle. Herzog's form of description resembles to me Tarkovsky's exposition of memory in his film *Mirror*, which is realistic in the same way. If a man could pour his memory into film, it would appear on film as in *Mirror*, and on paper as in Herzog's *Conquest*. Highly recommended.

This book is only peripherally about the film *Fitzcarraldo*. Yes, it talks about the production, the

actors, the budget and more, but the book itself is really more of a look inside Herzog's mind as he works on the film. It is fascinating, very funny, and ultimately very enjoyable. I recommend it for all readers, not just students of film.

Great read. Herzog has a thirst for life that is admirable and very addicting. If you liked Fitzcarraldo, you must read this book.

Herzog is a unique genius who produced this unique work. These are almost hallucinatory notes reflecting his thoughts as he made Fitzcarraldo. Dreams enter into rich descriptions. Some sections may make little sense but the book as a whole reveals how his force of will and vision created the movie. For anyone interested in the making of movies, a creative mind under very difficult circumstances, or the life in a jungle or on a movie shot in location, this book is a must.

If you enjoy Herzog's sobering darkness, read it. You will find accounts of the filming interspersed with that voice. I am struck by his capacity with language and ability to ascribe meaning to what he sees. I do hope the albino turkey enjoyed copulating with the headless duck.

Poignantly describes the trials of everyday life in the jungle and the physical and psychological effects on people. This background material greatly enhances the impact of the film. Glad I found this remarkable book.

Notwithstanding the films he's created, Conquest of the Useless provides an amazing journey through the mind of Werner Herzog.

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