

Jan-Christopher Horak, "W. H. or the Mysteries of Walking In Ice," in Timothy Corrigan, ed., *The Films of Werner Herzog: Between Mirage and History* (New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 30.

The production of each of Herzog's films seems in retrospect to spawn at least one story of suffering and anguish, which may or may not be true, but nevertheless fulfills its purpose in the mythmaking process. Thus, Herzog financed his first short films by working at night as a welder in a factory. While shooting *Signs of Life*, Herzog had a run-in with the Greek military junta, threatening both to shoot and kill anyone who tried to arrest him on the set, and to turn the weapon upon himself. Filming *Fata Morgana* in the Cameroons, Herzog was apparently arrested and "badly mistreated" in prison, where he suffered from malaria and a parasitic disease, after being caught in the middle of an aborted *coup d'état*. When he ran into trouble on the set of *Even Dwarfs Started Small*, Herzog promised the cast that he would jump into a giant cactus patch after shooting was completed, and kept his word. During the production of *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* in the Peruvian jungle, the tensions flared to such an extent, due to financial difficulties and shooting delays because of continual rainfall, that Herzog and his star, Klaus Kinski, threatened to kill one another with pistols. In order to attend a screening of *Kaspar Hauser* in 1975, Herzog is reputed to have walked from Munich to Cannes with his 5-year-old son on his shoulders, after a shoot-out (literally) with his wife. In a variation of this rumor, Herzog walked to Paris with *Kaspar Hauser*. A year later he sailed to the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, after all the inhabitants had been evacuated because of an imminent volcanic eruption; on the deserted island he filmed a documentary, *La Soufriere*, about the sole inhabitant who refused to leave, venturing with his crew to the very edge of the spurting volcano. For his film *Heart of Glass*, Herzog put the entire cast under hypnosis, hoping to get the proper hallucinatory effect, while his script girl was asked – before filming commenced – to walk from Vienna to Munich to prove to the master her serious intentions as a disciple.

John Sandford, *The New German Cinema* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1980), pp. 48-49.

Herzog was born in Munich on 5 September 1942; his legal name is in fact **Stipetic**, after his Yugoslav mother; his father, Herzog says, was ‘a sort of *clochard*’. He grew up on a farm in a remote part of Bavaria, a farm behind which there was ‘a deep ravine and a mystical waterfall’. He hated school, and set off, at the age of **18**, on the first of his many journeys to far-flung corners of the world: in this case to the Sudan, where he was badly bitten by rats whilst lying ill for five days in a deserted barn. Back in Germany he worked nights in a Munich steelworks for two years to save money for film-making. A scholarship took him to Pittsburgh, but he was expelled from the United States, and for a while made a living smuggling arm and television sets across the Mexican border.

Hazardous and strenuous visits to exotic places were to become a hallmark of Herzog’s film-making. The stories behind the shooting of his films are every bit as amazing as the films themselves. **FATA MORGANA** was shot **in** the Sahara, where Herzog contracted bilharzia, and in Central Africa where he and his crew encountered floods and sandstorms and were repeatedly thrown into crowded, rat-infested jails on suspicion of being mercenaries; in the end they had to abandon their vehicle and equipment when the borders were closed. The short **LA SOUFRIERE** took him **to** the crater

rim of a volcano whose apparently imminent eruption had led to the evacuation of half **of** the island of Guadeloupe. And, equally in the face of local warnings, for the closing sequence of **HEART OF GLASS** he took his crew on open boats through stormy seas to the precipitous and barely accessible Skellig Islands off the Atlantic coast of Ireland. Even in the apparently innocuous countryside of Holland, Herzog managed to get himself into a violent and almost fatal confrontation with the locals whilst shooting **NOSFERATU**. But without doubt the most famous of Herzog's filmmaking exploits came in the shooting of **AGUIRRE, WRATH OF GOD**, which involved a gruelling trek with all his crew, cast, and equipment – some 500 people in all – into the depths of the Peruvian jungle, an expedition that culminated in a **by** now almost legendary battle **of** will between Herzog and the notoriously temperamental star of the film, Klaus **Kinski**, who was only persuaded not to walk out on the project when Herzog turned a gun on him.