Chapter 3 – Assignment 5/27/18

• Choose one film from the 6 films you watched that you enjoyed the most, were inspired by, want to steal from, etc, and break down the archetypes in the film using the Christopher Vogler book as a guide. The film you choose should also be what you see as most similar in tone to the film you hope to eventually make.

Darkness Falls – while not a good film I like the idea of taking a familiar fictional character (tooth fairy) we learn of as a child as turning it into something supernatural/horror. Some of the better elements include the use of lighting in the film to achieve the atmosphere and scary moments, as well as giving the antagonist a small backstory (weight) so we have an understanding of their motives or actions.

• Watch the films "Burden of Dreams" and the DVD supplement "Werner Herzog Eats his Shoe"

• Write a 1 page paper on what you believe Herzog's "philosophy of film" to be. How does it relate to guerilla filmmaking. How does his method of filmmaking differ from other filmmakers? Below

• Schedule an appointment to have a phone or Skype meeting with your Hollywood Screenwriter.

In many ways, Werner Herzog can be seen as the very definition of a passionate filmmaker. Or at least his methods of filmmaking are exemplary.

Herzog seems to have a one-track mind in that he sets his sight on a film, a particular story he wants to tell, and shoots it in the way he wants despite all other challenges, distractions, or judgements thrown his way. He basically said it himself in that if he did not share the story in his mind with the world, who would he be?

Despite his oddities and the extreme lengths he goes to, Herzog is a master craftsman, never settling for anything less than his true vision as the final product. The plot of the movie Fitzcarraldo, which sees a steam ship being manually pulled over a mountain, is an intriguing concept. The fact that it was actually performed in real-life is nothing short of insane. It’s admirable how Herzog stuck this project through to the very end over many years, and perhaps even more so knowing how he fully recognized the absurdity of it all. But this was his goal, his vision to bring to the screen, which he eventually accomplished and no one can take that away from him.

I think Werner’s overall take on a filmmaking is that it should be the director’s vision come to life. Their passion project. Their “baby”, if you will. And with that, no one tells you otherwise or even stands in the way of progressing forward. The director is the storyteller, who does not quit or walk away from making their dreams come true.

The term of guerilla filmmaking most certainly applies in the case of Fitzcarraldo. The behind-the-scenes documentary explores every obstacle and challenge the crew met in shooting virtually every scene. Resources were slim, props malfunctioned, tensions heated between the locals, political boundaries were pushed, clashes of culture, human injuries,… You could argue a “higher power” was at force on this set, as if to say ‘this is a film that will never be finished’. Herzog’s philosophy and determination trumped that higher power.

It’s not uncommon to hear of directors getting in over their head, backing out of projects for various reasons. Is that director then seen as a quitter, or revered for knowing they will not be able to finish what they started? Maybe Herzog has his own point-of-views and criticisms. Either way, it does not make him right or wrong, it just makes him who he is as a filmmaker.

He is unconventional in many ways, but Herzog’s heart and pride is always on full display in the results. Think about it; if Werner had the resources and visual effects at his disposal on Fitzcarraldo that is available today, do you think he would of just digitally created a ship being dragged over a mile of jungle terrain? Hard to imagine he would. The studios might say otherwise in this day and age, but this is where his methods of guerilla filmmaking have taught him a valuable lesson.

As we’ve said, Werner Herzog’s experience of making the movie Fitzcarraldo was basically crazy in every sense of the word, but incredibly admirable in his undying dedication to his personal passion. A flawless example of what a director, an auteur, can and should be.