Robert Turner

Chapter 3 Assignment Part 1 - Archetypes

Archetypes in *Hell or High Water*

For my film I’ve chosen to emulate (or steal from) and have been most inspired by I chose *Hell or High Water* by David Mackenzie. The relationship between the brothers played by Chris Pine and Ben Foster and their reasoning for robbing banks are the main reasons I have chosen this film. In my idea, the reasoning for robbing is to get money to save Evan’s daughter Melissa while in *Hell or High Water* the brothers are trying to save their ranch so it stays in the family. Though the storyline elements here differ, the family element is the one that I am trying to emulate, showing that the characters will go above and beyond (breaking the law) to help their family. Another specific aspect of the film I want to emulate is the sacrifice made by Tanner Howard (Foster) for his brother Toby (Pine) near the end of the movie. It is this noble act that I want to bring out from my characters, an act that will allow the audience to sympathize with someone who would rob a jewelry store.

The first archetype I found in *Hell or High Water* I would argue is that Toby Howard is the antihero. Toby’s cause is one that is noble and absolutely relatable: he wants to save his family’s ranch. With just this aspect, Toby seems like the hero coming in to save the day; however, Toby is thrust into the life of crime and goes about acquiring money by robbing banks with his brother. This character imperfection of Toby’s is one that obtains sympathy for his character. While his actions are strictly illegal and can be considered immoral, his reasoning of robbing banks to help his poor family save their ranch is one relatable to the everyday person.

Another archetype, which relates to the main storyline of the film, is the “rebel” or “rogue” archetype that the brothers follow. By this I of course am speaking of the plot of the movie in which the brothers use unconventional means to acquire the money. Rather than raising the money normally, they decide to go on a bank-robbing spree. These vigilante actions are ultimately important to the film as without this rebellious choice, there simply is no story and no film. Therefore, this is an archetype needed for this particular story and is one also prevalent in several stories of the same genre.

Lastly, another archetype I found in the film is what is commonly referred to as the “buddy cop” trope represented by the two characters Marcus Hamilton (Jeff Bridges) and Alberto Parker (Gil Birmingham). This archetype is in the film similar to the reason the aforementioned “rebel” archetype is in the film: to make the story more three-dimensional. Time after time, films with cops are permeated with this “buddy cop” motif and I think *Hell or High Water* employs it in a way that creates relatable characters. Without Hamilton and Parker being buddies and having banter throughout the film, the characters would no doubt fall flat and be forgettable. So, essentially the reason this archetype exists, especially in a story such as the one in this film, is very similar to the reason any archetype exists as I said, and that is to create well-rounded and relatable characters.