CHAPTER 3 ASSIGNMENT

Werner Herzog’s philosophy of film is that the most important thing is to stay true to the story. In the making of his film *Fitzcarraldo*, Herzog shot on location in remote villages in the Amazon. There were so many forces of nature fighting against him, but he was determined to get the shots that he wanted and make a film that was brimming with authenticity.

An important part of the film was a large steamboat that was to be pulled up a forty-degree slope, which a team of native Amazonians cleared for the film. Herzog didn’t use a prop boat for this scene, although it would have been safer and easier. What was important for Herzog was that the boat looked real and you could tell it wasn’t plastic. This kind of dedication to the look and feel of the film is what makes Herzog different from other filmmakers.

At one point, Herzog moves his crew and actors to another more isolated village, although he could’ve finished the entire film in the first village, which was more accessible and an easier place to acquire outside resources. Herzog stated that the isolated nature of the second village would allow the actors to access a part of their performance that they couldn’t otherwise. This documentary kept pointing to Herzog’s intense motivation to create a story as authentically as possible, as the site of his perceivably maniacal behavior. Although many people who were apart of the project, quit because Herzog’s demands became to unrealistic to them, he kept pushing forward and would not compromise any of his visions.

Herzog would rather risk the life of himself and others before he would sacrifice a meaningful shot of the film. His dedication to the story of dreamer and opera enthusiast, Brian Fitzgerald, was at times absurd but always impressive. Regardless of the fact that Herzog was indeed reckless in the production of much of the film, his passion for his project is admirable. He was truly willing to put his life on the line for what he believed in. We should all be so lucky to find something we are prepared to die for.

The short documentary *Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe*, exemplifies the filmmaker’s unwavering devotion to truth. He once said to friend and filmmaker Errol Morris, that he would eat his shoe if his film were ever finished and shown at festivals. Herzog made good of his word, and cooked and ate his shoe in front of audiences at a screening of Morris’ film. This documentary showed that not only is Herzog dedicated to the authenticity of his films, but also the authenticity of his own word.

The filmmaker Werner Herzog was unwilling to take shortcuts for the sake of finances or human capital, if it would compromise his film in any way. He stayed true to the story and his vision throughout the entire process, and it is this kind of adherence to one’s beliefs and goals that sets him apart from other filmmakers.