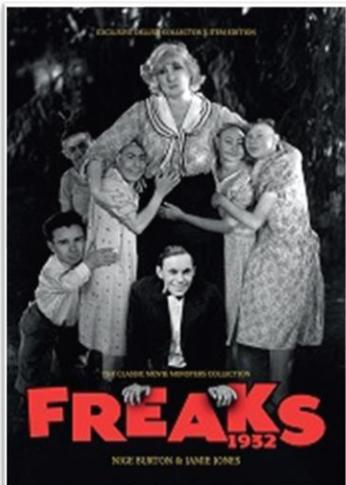
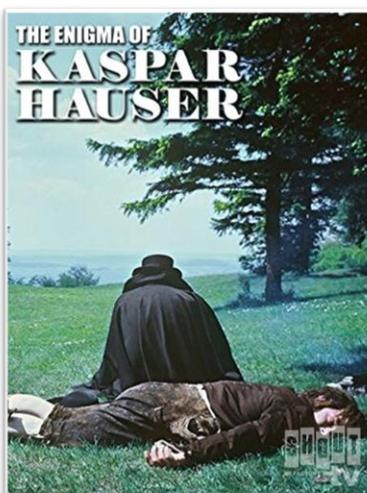
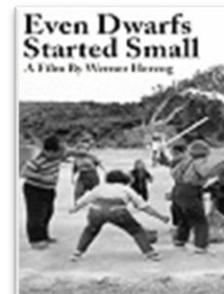


Dear movie-goers,



Given the current availability of a wide spectrum of Werner Herzog's films (free) on Prime, I thought I would go ahead and assign *Even Dwarfs Started Small* (Herzog, 1970), which may be the strangest of all his films -- an allegory about political upheaval and anarchy within a group of captive little people. And then dipping back into the past with Tod Browning's (1932) *Freaks*, for which he was given almost complete artistic control by Universal after the popular success of his previous hit *Dracula* (1931). It was the first film ever to feature a cast of carnies, who were friends of Browning. His intent was to make a film depicting them as real people with feelings; though the end result may seem less than satisfying because it coopted them into a horror story of revenge. *Freaks* is a fictional story with the traditional narrative arc of a "horror" film; its original 90-minute running time was cut down to 60-minutes by the studio, before the film became banned from public performance. *Even Dwarfs Started Small* is a non-genre fictional story revealing a social order

reduced to chaos. Both feature ensemble casts of "little people" and other carnival performers, with both directors caring very much about their cast, while Browning's is the more sympathetic view and Herzog's the more irreverent. (Though in the case of Herzog's film, one could argue that his use of a strikingly unusual cast of characters enabled mainstream audiences to see the socio-political disharmony effectively "over there" in "the others", only later to realize that the film was really allegorical in its intent.) You can view these in either order, but the intent will be to use them for inter-textual reference to discuss together as films made by iconoclastic filmmakers with unconventional casts.



In the beautifully restored *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974), one of Herzog's best films from his early period, this "New German Cinema" filmmaker of the 1970s strives to bring to our awareness the plights of those less fortunate than ourselves. It is also his way of presenting yet another allegory, this time about the failure of post-Enlightenment social institutions designed to help humanity, namely, the state, the church, and the educational system. It is loosely based on the historical novel *Kaspar Hauser* about a 16-year-old foundling who allegedly was born to royalty and spent his life chained to a floor in a basement, until one day he suddenly appears standing in the town center of a village in southern Germany, most likely fashioned after the Bavarian towns where Herzog grew up. The entire story is told from Kaspar's perspective. We will pair this film with David Lynch's (1980) masterpiece *The Elephant Man*. Both Kaspar Hauser and Joseph Carrey

Merrick (aka "Elephant Man") were ultimately products of the very social orders that exploited them. Each at various points in their lives was made to stand before audiences, both curious and nefarious, consisting of common folk, professionals, and sometimes the cruelest of the cruel.



All four of these films will advance our understanding and discussion of cinematic representations of "otherness" - how social prejudices play into our perceptions of others, and how sympathetic film portrayals can facilitate a sense of empathy toward otherness. Along these lines and in conjunction with the story of the Elephant Man, who was rescued but then once more exploited (though with the best of intentions) by physician Frederick Treves, I will also assign Alice Winocour's (2012) *Augustine* (also available on Prime), the story of a young kitchen helper who becomes a patient of the infamous Dr. Jean-Martin Charcot, a French neurologist who at one point became mentor to the young Sigmund Freud. Charcot approached the enigma of hysteria with compassion - and also with showmanship, as was also the case with Merrick's Dr. Treves. Both patients figured heavily into lives of these physicians who attempted to heal them. Written and directed by Winocour, *Augustine* tells the story from the patient's perspective - though the narrative is only loosely based upon the real work of this talented French physician; and thus, "audience beware" in regards to depictions of the doctor allowing himself to be seduced by a patient whose neurosis was later described by Freud as a "transference" neurosis, where the cure consists of analyzing the patient's transference of love to the doctor, as well as keeping the doctor's counter-transference in check.



Perhaps as an antidote to the three black and white "dark" films of Browning and Herzog (plus the color *Kaspar Hauser* and *Augustine* which still have a "dark" feel to them), I thought we might revisit -- just for the sheer fun of it (and "optional" for the group) -- a film like Tony Scott's (2005) *Domino* (starring Keira Knightly, Mickey Rourke, Delroy Lindo, Christopher Walken, Lucy Liu, and Jacqueline Bisset), a tour de force of editing, with almost kaleidoscopic cinematography - featuring an ensemble cast of actors all having great fun making this action film, which is arguably one of Tony Scott's best. *Domino* is available for rental on Prime (\$1.99) or free on Tubi and offers a very different view of female empowerment than the one portrayed in *Augustine*. In each case, though, the filmmakers chose to depict a woman prevailing through personal difficulty by using their sexuality to their advantage, though one more unconsciously than the other. This should keep you busy for a while!



Bring your thoughts to class on Monday, April 19!

Scott