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ALSO INSIDE:
PEARL HARBOR
THE "WITCH-FLICK"
SURPRISE ENDINGS
THE ESSENCE OF EYECANDY
Ten Characters in Search of a Film Journal

Ten writers sit down for a discussion about EyeCandy. Topics include the journal's purpose and its future.

Midnight Mass at the Nickelodeon

A reflection on The Nick's annual Evil Dead 2 ritual.

Don't Tell Me What's Going to Happen

Ambiguity and frustration with the endings of The Pledge and Limbo.

My Letter to Michael Bay

Pearl Harbor's contribution to the current cultural climate in America.

World Trade Center

The dangers of historical erasure and the American media's reaction to the September 11th attacks.

Chants, Magic, and Action

The evolution of the "witch-flick" and its use of fantasy and reality.

Seeing Yourself on Screen

Problems with identity in gay and queer cinema.

Battle Royale

How The Musketeer came to be and what it tells us about the future of Hollywood cinema.

http://eyecandy.ucsc.edu/
10 Characters in Search of a Film Journal: A Discussion About EyeCandy

Foreword and transcription by Jonathan Hamilton

Now, let it first be stated that EyeCandy is a collective of mismatched students of varying degrees of age, major, beauty and personality, and it is film that inspires the necessity within those on staff here at EyeCandy to write, and in so doing distribute our thoughts in homage of our beloved cinema. Dedicated to honoring personal opinion and ideas illuminating the filmic medium, we believe that EyeCandy earns and not just states its motto: For film freaks—by film freaks!

If you are expecting within these pages to find nice, neat, unbiased film reviews describing plot and character coupled with a subjective “good/bad/needs improvement” rating scale, perhaps you will be disappointed. Our articles and opinions are expressed in their rawest form. There is no single style solely endorsed within the thinly sliced tree you are now holding. Instead, creative minds are given free reign to analyze those issues which they hold dear, resulting in an eclectic whirlpool of sometimes sympathetic, sometimes conflicting views on an assortment of subjects.

The passion behind EyeCandy’s hurried publication lies in the propagation of academic thought, to which we here at EyeCandy believe film is inextricably entwined. The purpose of EyeCandy is the sheer existence of EyeCandy. To explicate the aforementioned essence of EyeCandy, I here include a round table socratic discussion among the members of the staff, talking about the publication.

Nate: The purpose of this is to discuss, what we think EyeCandy is, why we write for EyeCandy, what we think EyeCandy should be, what do we think EyeCandy might be missing? Just talk about anything...

Robert: EyeCandy is a nonprofit, student-run, film theory magazine at the UCSC campus. I write because it’s better than writing on the wall of the bathroom, because you could get caught. I have ideas about theory that come to me and it’s a great way to actually get them out to a larger audience other than just bitching to somebody like Nate about Once Upon a Time in China. What I think EyeCandy should be is what it is... I don’t really know what else to say that it could be except the hope that it will grow and become more refined but I think that is just something that will happen to a publication as time goes on and it evolves.

Briana: Coming from a theoretical standpoint I think that what EyeCandy does for me personally (and I think a lot of the people here can say the same) is that it allows a venue for my personal opinions on film, film culture, and film theory to be broadcast to a larger audience than just myself and my mirror and my direct group of friends. I think an important part of being involved in film culture is to be able to have a discourse about film. And I think that helps film evolve in a larger context. I think that it’s good to be able to have non-film majors as well as film majors read EyeCandy and get something from that, whether that be “Oh my God they’re pretentious” or “Wow, that’s really interesting.” It’s opening up discussion which is always good.

Christopher: EyeCandy is something I can write just for pleasure and go on my own little tangents about film. And, also, because I think it’s good practice because it’s important as discourse to be both workers and also theorists. And, I want to continue to do that in my adult life and this is a good way to start that off. I worry about EyeCandy being too in-store. I worry that it’s viewed as esoteric and is a very clubby publication. Not because of the attitudes of the people in it, but because of the subject matter. I’d like to see EyeCandy be something that works to break down the divide between the pre-production, I hate theory film students and those who love theory because film really is both.

Nate: I agree. I think that breaking down those kinds of barriers is what I would really like to see. I know that I became involved in EyeCandy because it was sort of a critical studies focused organization. But I think one step towards that would be trying to become more involved with other aspects of production on campus, like Film Arts Coalition... things like that. So, hopefully in the future at some point we can work together with them and actually integrate.

Austyn: This was my first quarter working with EyeCandy and I found that—not to start in a negative note or anything—but I found that one of my main problems was just that I’m so used to writing in the context of a class about film theory. I found that it was hard to step out of that and try to develop my own theory or even just say anything about film outside of the context of school in a paper.

I was thinking just now, maybe if we were to focus more on writing theory as students. I mean everybody knows that we are students, that’s pretty obvious, but I don’t know. It would be interesting at least for one person maybe to write a whole article on what’s it like to write film theory as a student of film theory. I guess one of the things that I’ve heard from people about EyeCandy is just that we co students kind of try to produce theories that are out of our league, which I don’t know...

Briana: I want to respond actually to what...
you all three have said. I think that it lies to something that kind of concerns me about EyeCandy which is this sort of clichéd, perhaps stigmatized academicism that we might be pigeonholed into because we write about theory mainly. And, I think the way to go about reversing that would be to talk about production and to get more involved with the production aspect. Because I think the most important thing that needs to happen in the film major at UCSC would be the integration of production and theory.

I think the problem with theory is that if you get too abstract and off in your own circular logic in your head, you don't have to actually tie yourself down to the fundamentals of what film theory is based on—which is film art, which is cinema, which is the actual palpable art. So I think both ways, there should be a synthesis on both accounts. I do think that production could use more theory and that theory could use more production. EyeCandy is a great way to do that because we speak to both focuses. Because we have people from both focuses in the magazine and it's a synthesis of those two focuses in the staff here. So, it would seem that we could do that in a larger, broader context...that would be fabulous.

Naomi: In response to that, to what Briana said, I think that this is a kind of production. I mean we are producing. We are producing ideas. The film production concentration just involves more visuals while we're playing with words. That's one thing that I appreciate about EyeCandy is this convergence of all these different ideas from different people. The reason why I do EyeCandy is because I like to be provocative and I think that's one thing that we do—we provoke ideas.

Christopher: I want to respond to what Naomi said. I really think that people don't realize that the teaching of form is pivotal to a good education and I think that theory, and the exercise of learning how to write, is what you're paying for going to a UC. I think that people don't respect form enough and I think that people need to become more engaged in theory because it really teaches you how to be an artist and not just somebody who is a "métier-der-scene" or a "métier-der-film". I think what a lot of people are saying right now is that it comes down to getting the two modes of the film school, the two departments kind of melded more together.

Andrew: Well, I started writing for this magazine because I wanted to write about film and I love discussing film. It's almost like having coffee with all of our readers and discussing films. I really like the fact that we get to have a voice and a forum as writers on campus and express our opinions and our beliefs and say how much Hollywood sucks and how much we like independent films or whatever our views are, and just get our voice out there and allow people to hear it.

Andy Serros: I started writing for EyeCandy because I thought it was kind of neat to write for a magazine. I am really interested in film. I have some theories and some ideas that I want to put out there and want to get portrayed in public and see how people read. I think that the analogy of people going to the movies to be entertained and people going to the movies to think is kind of like looking at EyeCandy. EyeCandy is a magazine for the people who want to think, not for the people who just go to movies and watch Jerry Bruckheimer blow shit up.

Noah: I love film and I thought that it would be cool to write about something that I picked outside of a class. I think it might be good to open up the magazine a little bit and make it a little bit less exclusive. I don't know how we would do that without compromising the theory-based background that it has. I thought that maybe we could open up the website to have discussions on there with people or maybe invite more letters to the editor. I thought about maybe doing interviews with professors for prospective film majors, people who maybe aren't film majors yet. I thought about maybe interviewing different film professors each quarter and just asking them what their classes are like, what films they like, what their theories are, stuff like that, just to kind of make it inviting to people who are kind of questioning whether to become a film major or not.

Nate: I know that's the reason that I became involved in EyeCandy. I was excited about the prospect of a film journal that didn't necessarily have any specific type of cohesion. So, in any case, pretty much I think the reason that I enjoy this publication, and working with this magazine and this group, this family, is that we all have such extremely different perspectives and that no issue is ever focused on one particular topic, but always represents a good variety of perspectives and ideas and hopefully in the future that collective (and number of people) will continue to grow to the point where any number of ideas can be expressed.
Midnight Mass at the Nickelodeon Theater
By Ansem Steel

Midnight strikes on the clock. The "Evil Dead junkies" and "Evil Dead virgins" emerge from their homes and unite at the Nickelodeon Theater for their annual worship of Evil Dead 2. Forking over my money, I, a newly established Evil Dead junkie, settle down into that familiar red seat and gluttonously grip my large tub of popcorn and box of Milk Duds. Shifting my eyes around the room, I take note of tonight's filmmakers, writers, and actors that will give this midnight show its own unique twist. The midnight screening of Evil Dead 2 is perhaps the only screening in which the outcome of the show is not yet determined. The night is written by the audience's reactions. The film is just a sounding board for a viewing experience that works levels beyond what the film alone has to offer.

Each year that Evil Dead 2 comes to the Nickelodeon, it takes on a different tone based not on the characters within the film, but rather on the characters that are sitting in the audience. Every viewer has his/her own unique relationship with the film. Some have studied it down to the smallest detail, some have never seen the film at all. However, it is the dedicated Evil Dead junkies, the ones who own the posters, the books, and the directors cut; the ones that have read all of the articles and now all of the background information about the Evil Dead movies that encourage each night's recreation of the film. The rehearsed comments, the historical knowledge, and the pure love and appreciation brought to the night by the Evil Dead cult always brings a new dynamic to the already established text.

Being at Evil Dead 2 at midnight is for me like looking in on a private ritual. The midnight show is essentially a once in a life time chance for Evil Dead heads to come together and share their appreciation for Evil Dead 2, a movie that would essentially be laughed at by film theorists and might horrify a mainstream audience. For those with an unexplainable affection for the film this yearly ritual might perhaps border on religious. The audience's communal worship of this icon of cheesy editing and campy cinematography binds us together as viewers, thus allowing us to collaboratively redefine the meaning of the film. In the ritualistic atmosphere of the midnight show, Evil Dead 2 is established as an almost biblical text written to elicit an experience of pure viewing enjoyment.

Because many of the audience members have studied the material of the film more closely than the filmmaker himself has, the midnight show is easily reinvoked. The material of the film is unyieldingly pulled off the screen by the midnight viewers and given new meaning. The guy in the back yells out "Ash Rules!" lifting Ash to a hero, perhaps even godlike status. The girls in the front shriek at the oh-too-predictable zombie attack, adding a thrill to a played-out horror technique. The film is brought to life by the characters that sit in the audience all around me. The cheap thrills that the filmmakers utilize are only stunning because we, the audience decide to make them so.

I was an "Evil Dead virgin" the first time I went to see Evil Dead 2 at the Nick's midnight matinee. The only thing I had heard about the film was that my boyfriend had almost been permanently kicked out of his house for watching it so I knew I was in for something potentially offensive. Bracing myself for a really gory show, I was surprised to find that what I was watching was mainly a parody on the other wise conventional scary movie. Evil Dead 2 uses all of the tricks that a scary movie uses including stark silences followed by loud surprise attacks, the unjustified death of well loved characters, the disgusting looking zombies, the spraying, gushing, pouring blood and the flesh gnashing chainsaws. However, the "B" movie style of the effects, the sets and the acting makes these otherwise horrifying conventions something to laugh at. In that the film is anything but realistic it takes itself off of the pedestal that most Hollywood movies sit on, thus opening up a space for the audience to get involved. Most Holly
wood films are polished and perfect. There is no room for audience participation in those movies that everyone knows have been flawlessly whittled down to completion. The filmmakers of Evil Dead II, however, have strategically left a space where the audience can engage in their own dialogue with the film. It is this space in the film, specifically created for the audience that makes the experience of viewing Evil Dead II completely unique.

Commonly the unspoken etiquette established by a movie theater keeps me passively contained. Keep quiet. Don't bump the seat in front of you. Don't laugh, cry, or scream too loud. Don't by any means break the unseen barrier between you and the screen, blah, blah, blah... The rules established by a movie theater intrinsically create an atmosphere where the film itself is the center of attention. In a conventional viewing experience, you and those viewers around you have very little to do with what happens at the show. The midnight show, however, is essentially a mirror of the audience. The personality of the film is a reflection of each night’s group. The experience of Evil Dead II is based on breaking all of the rules that one would normally adhere to when going to the movies. Revisiting the Nick this year for the annual screening of Evil Dead II, I knew that the main reason I came was not for the film itself but rather for the belligerent, lip smacking, beer drinking, popcorn throwing fun.

The applause that breaks out in the theater as the credits roll reminds us all again of the uniqueness of the midnight matinee. A conventional audience would quietly shuffle towards the exit sign at the end of a movie. As good as the movie might have been it never seems worth it to give recognition to filmmakers that you know aren’t there to hear your applause. Although the midnight showing of Evil Dead II is just another movie the audience cannot help but applaud. We don’t applaud for the screen, however, or for the characters that aren’t there. Our applause is directed back at ourselves. In that we created the night’s experience it is understood between us that we deserve recognition.
Don't Tell Me What's Going To Happen: When A Film's Surprise Ending Is Its Lack Of One

By Noah Finneburgh

In a recent interview with Guitar World Magazine, Wes Scantlin, lead singer of Puddle Of Mudd, one of the most incisive and untalented rock bands to come out in years, discussed the significance of predictability in his music. Scantlin said, “You know it’s working when you see the crowd anticipating something five to 10 seconds before it happens. Predictability is good.” An identical sentiment also seems to manifest itself within the hearts of many Hollywood filmmakers. I, personally, am sick of going to the movies and knowing ahead of time exactly how the film is going to end. The boy is going to get the girl, or vice versa, the detective will deftly capture the serial killer, the gladiator will slay the corrupt emperor, the irritating Fed-Ex executive will unfortunately be saved from the deserted island, and all the while my mind will wander to that ever important question: did I forget to lock my back door?

It’s sad when you go to the movies and the only thing you have to look forward to is seeing whether the director managed to breathe any kind of new life into that worn out cliché. So, when a film comes along that plays with our expectations and/ or flat-out refuses to give in to them, you’ll find me dancing joyously in the aisles. Two recent films do just that: The Pledge, directed by Sean Penn, and Limbo, written, directed and edited by John Sayles. Both films feature utterly conventional plot lines and thus suggest the strong possibility of an equally conventional and predictable ending.

The Pledge tells the tale of a grizzled detective (Jack Nicholson) who, hours before he is scheduled to retire, becomes obsessed with one last case. In the end he'll chase down the serial killer and bring him down in a hail of bullets, right?

Limbo tells the tale of a troubled boatman, his girlfriend, her daughter, and the travels that occur after they find themselves lost on a remote, deserted Alaskan island. Of course, after weeks of hunger and isolation our courageous trio will be miraculously saved and will subsequently receive Tom Hanks’ seal of approval for faithfully bringing the endurance of the human spirit to life on screen, right?

Many popular films of late have had surprise endings. Take Fight Club and The Sixth Sense for example. However, even though those types of films (which suffer from what Roger Ebert refers to as ‘Keiser Soze Syndrome’) throw us a narrative curveball and ask us to change our perceptions of the preceding two hours of story, they still present us with a satisfying degree of closure. In other words, we know exactly what happens in the end, and we can leave the theatre and sigh with relief. The Pledge and Limbo, on the other hand, feature different kinds of surprise endings. Both films refuse to give the audience any narrative closure, leaving the outcome of the story up in the air. This serves a significant and dual function. First of all, the lack of resolution leaves the audience feeling frustrated and unsatisfied. Secondly, and specifically in the case of these two films, those feelings felt by the audience allow them to directly identify with the protagonists in the films, all of whose lives are defined by frustration and uncertainty. Though I have been discussing the pitfalls of predictability, a film assay isn’t complete without the ever-predictable presence of a plot summary! WARNING: SPOILER AHEAD.

The Pledge tells the tale of detective Jerry Black, who, hours from retiring, gets sucked into a case involving the murder of a young girl. All of Jerry’s colleagues are certain that the girl’s murder is an isolated incident, but Jerry is convinced that it is the work of a serial killer known only as “The Wizard.” Jerry gets deeper and deeper into the case and it starts consuming him emotionally and mentally. Soon, he begins showing signs of psychosis. Jerry then meets a young girl who he believes can lure “The Wizard” to him. He starts using the girl as bait, and eventually realizes that she is about to be the killer’s next victim. Jerry and
his fellow officers follow the girl on her outing to meet "The Wizard," and wait to capture him. However, an route to the scene of the impending crime, "The Wizard" is killed in a car accident. With no killer in sight, Jerry's colleagues dismiss him as paranoid and delusional. The film ends with a scene of Jerry sitting alone at the gas station he owns, muttering to himself about the case and falling deeper into a state of psychosis.

After watching The Pledge, I eagerly recommended it to many of my friends, to see whether people loved it as much as I did. Most of them were moderately pleased with it. The general consensus was that it was great up until the ending, which left everyone feeling angry and short-changed. This surprised me, because it was the ending that really made the film for me. I was sick of the tired serial killer genre, sick of films where upon the conclusion, we could all sigh with relief because our hero had killed the villain and finally brought justice to the land. The frustration that people discussed after watching The Pledge was something I could relate to. I too felt frustrated by the ending, but I welcomed this frustration. I believe that the best films are those that provoke us and leave us asking questions. Films that end predictably and with a heavy dose of closure often enable us to forget about the film and start looking forward to the next big blockbuster. Films like The Pledge, however, force us to confront the narrative, to discuss and ponder the story and what made it so frustrating, and perhaps ask ourselves whether films necessarily need to be satisfying in order to be appreciated.

This sense of frustration felt by the audience serves an additional purpose: it ultimately enables us to fully identify with the Jerry Black character because his experience with the murder case has brought him nothing but frustration. His colleagues don't believe his theories, and, by the end of the film, he has begun to seriously doubt his own credibility as well. Then, "The Wizard" is killed and Jerry might never discover that he truly did exist. The audience's sense of frustration operates similarly. We see "The Wizard's" car and badly burned body, but we never are able to put a face to his name—if you watch the film a second time, knowing who the killer is, you'll catch a glimpse of his profile, but nothing more—so essentially he's not real to us either. Also, the film ends with Jerry still obsessing over the case, so we never know if he'll ever learn the whole truth. Here, the frustration invoked in us by the film has essentially removed the barrier between audience and protagonist. We and Jerry—at least in relation to our emotions—have truly become one and the same.

In John Sayges' Limbo, a frustrating and incomplete ending has a similar effect.

Once again it's time for my essay to get predictable: WARNING SPOILER AHEAD Limbo tells the story of Joe Gastineau (David Strathairn), a handyman who gets by living job to job in a small Alaskan town. His life is going nowhere. Memories of a deadly boating accident keep him petrified and unable to pursue his love, the sea. He meets Donna (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) and her adolescent daughter. Donna also lives precariously and is currently working in a shabby bar as a singer. She is apparently "between men." The two hit it off, but an unfortunate chain of events results in their being trapped on a remote Alaskan inlet, pursued by men with guns and unsure of their fate. The last scene in the film is as follows: the trio spots a small private plane heading toward them. They are unsure of whether its occupants bring assistance or deadly force. We see a shot of the plane getting closer to the shore and then the film fades to white and ends.

This ending functions in a similar manner as that of The Pledge, for frustration overwhelms the viewer as a result of not ever finding out what happens to the main characters. Also, as with The Pledge, the ending of Limbo ultimately serves to force us to develop a very strong identification with the protagonists' situation. In the case of Limbo, all of the main characters live their lives, yes, in limbo. Both Joe and Donna seem to have hit a dead end in life. Both live as if each day they sit and wait for something to happen to them that will alleviate their current situation. Donna's daughter is going through life's seemingly perpetual state of limbo: adolescence. The true essence of these characters' lives is fully realized in all its symbolic glory when they find themselves trapped on the island, without food and without any sense of what the future will bring. It is the film's final shot (and lack of a resolution) that truly invokes in us the types of feelings that the characters in the film had been feeling all along. Here we realize that the title of the film has multiple meanings, as we are the ones ultimately left in a state of limbo.

In an essay entitled "The Complete Film," early twentieth-century film theorist Rudolf Arnheim once wrote that because in its early years film as a medium was attempting to mimic reality, eventually its only purpose would be to serve as a sort of mechanical copy of the everyday world, and all of its artistic powers would be stifled. After examining The Pledge and Limbo, we could definitely argue against certain aspects of Arnheim's theory. Both of the aforementioned films are, in my opinion, quite "realistic" because they are unpredictable and lack any sense of closure. Real life is hardly ever as predictable as it appears in most mainstream films. For instance, when was the last time a significant period in your life came to a close and you sighed like you do every time you walk out of a Jerry Bruckheimer movie? Reality rarely involves this type of ultimate closure and finality. While both The Pledge and Limbo are realistic, they are also provocative. Not only do they leave us with frustration over a lack of resolution, but they might also make us ask ourselves why, when watching films do we necessarily need to feel closure when the end credits roll. So despite their lack of conventional resolutions and the frustration brought on by their final scenes, both The Pledge and Limbo have the power to set to motion a provocative, self-reflexive discourse that enables us to question our definitions of and investment in the medium of narrative film itself. That is to say we see them as two successful and—despite Arnheim's usage of the word negatively—"complete" films.
Dear Michael Bay, or To Whom It May Concern:

This past Memorial Day, I sat through your film Pearl Harbor (2001). This film was one of the few comedies that I have ever seen. At different moments in your film, whether intentionally funny or not, I laughed several times. I should mention here that I often use laughter as a defense mechanism. The verb "to laugh," as the New Lexicon Webster Dictionary defines it, means, "to express amusement, mirth, contempt, fear, etc. by explosive sounds, which result from forcing out air from the lungs, usually accompanied by convulsive muscular movements." It is also interesting to note that "explosive sounds" and "convulsive muscular movements" are typical of throwing up.

All kidding aside, I hesitate to get into a sensitive subject like race matters, as it requires a mature conversation that, judging by this film, you do not have the ability to hold. But in the context of our current global positioning, race matters; and I have a personal stake in the distribution and, more importantly, the reception of Pearl Harbor. I write this letter as a person who is interested in societal issues, and the films that attempt to portray these themes and problems. Pearl Harbor—the film, not the actual event—has no real historic significance. I am more interested in the film's significance in the present, especially in regards to your representations of race and how reactions that stem from media, like your film, are translated into our everyday lives.

By now we are all familiar with the events that happened on September 11th, 2001. Almost universally we have been forced to deal with the consequences. Throughout that day and the immediate days that followed, major national news anchors such as Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, and Peter Jennings reminded us that these terrorist assaults were "the worst attacks on United States soil since Pearl Harbor." These recent strikes have consistently brought the actual history of the Pearl Harbor event to the foreground. It is too complex to assess pinpoints that are at fault for these constant references. We cannot restrictively examine the minor occurrences that lead up to major events in history. Knowing this, I do not entirely blame you for these allusions, but surmise the creation and distribution of this film, as well as the discourse surrounding the film, has influenced the actual Pearl Harbor event into the American consciousness.

In your film, there is no promotion of progress, no clear critique of the actions that took place in Pearl Harbor, nor do you ask the audience to examine what has been labeled as "history." I am not dropping a bomb when I say that your trivialization of tragedy is beyond problematic. Aspects of your film that I found troubling were the lack of creativity in the story and dialogue; I have heard it described as Titanic set in WWII. I found the use of polishing composition, continuity editing, and other formulaic, Classical Hollywood elements of "opic" filmmaking to exist to the point of satire. Your archaic representation of women and the role of the homogeneously heterosexual White American, nuclear family were narrow and singular. Yet it is a film like yours that grosses millions of dollars, while simultaneously re-insisting and upholding the all-too-common nationalistic themes that continue to crystallize our American society, that socialize our memories with your biased retrospection.

The dominant reaction to September 11th in the United States has resulted in an enthusiastic spread of patriotism—patriotism that your film partly encouraged. It is difficult to be out in public now without seeing imagery of or relating to the American flag. Pearl Harbor, the film, creates a framework that makes nationalism and xenophobia acceptable.

There is no coincidence that this film opened on Memorial Day weekend, with a campaign that suggested that it be every American's duty to see this film. This romanticization is mostly at the expense of those who do not fit under the dominant umbrella of White American ideology. I am speaking in the larger context of representations in film and a broader social view. In this sense, there is hardly anything original about Pearl Harbor in style or theme.

I speak of nationalism by continuing this form to the United States specifically. The first title shot displays the rising sun—a misappropriation of the image from the Japanese flag, a fitting misuse of this history. This image, along with the superimposition of the text "Pearl Harbor," suggest a Western glorification of this incident. This is the principal theme of Pearl Harbor: an American film production restructuring history to help shape the audience's ideas of what and how to think of the (central) positioning of America, and its relationship to other nations. The idea of allegiance in your film, through the metaphor of the flag, not only discriminates against Japanese and Japanese Americans, but all non-White cultures, as this illustration of a confined recreation of events is told from a predominantly White, domestic point of view. This is a film practice that is not new, but is a problem endemic of popular media.

The aestheticization of war in this film helps organize and solidify this hatred and fear of "Others." The reintroduction of these
racial themes back into the American narrative, sets up your audience for the now-alarmèd state of this nation in connection with the latest events of terrorism. There remains a fill-in-the-blank mentality, where abhorrent (anti-Asian) sentiments are extensively displaced among Americans with Middle Eastern, Indian, Egyptian, Hindi, and Muslim backgrounds. Pearl Harbor makes it easy to render anger and resentment from the Pearl Harbor event, and relegate the rational responses to the present situation of race relations in America.

Fast forward to the end of your film, to the last anti-climactic shot presented in slow motion. In a long, low angle shot of Rafe McCawley (Ben Affleck), Evelyn (Kate Beckinsale), and their son, the threesome look toward the sun in pride and triumph. Yet there is no reference to the internment of over a hundred thousand Japanese Americans. In fact you fail to mention that hundreds of Asian Americans and Hawaiians sacrificed their lives in WWII for the United States. You allow for this White, “all-American” family, privileging them over a critical shift in the Japanese American and the Asian American narratives. You negate and ignore the history of the Japanese American prison experience by rolling the credits thereafter, signaling the near end of the motion picture and the story as well.

On the subject of Affleck, in my viewing of Pearl Harbor, an entire row of blushing and sweating teenage girls were situated in front of me, outwardly ecstatic over this Ben Affleck vehicle. They multitasked and chant his name a few times until a Black woman behind me, upset by the lack of recognition, yelled, “They always forget the Black man. What about the Black man? What about Cuba Gooding Jr.?”

Yes, what about Cuba Gooding, Jr.? If we examine the presentation of Dorie Miller (Gooding, Jr.) in relation to the Pearl Harbor attack, we will realize that you not only make a blatant statement against Asians in general, but you pit race against race, people of color against one another. The shift in thoughts and ideas in Pearl Harbor inspire and assist in this tendency toward xenophobia.

In the film’s centerpiece that lasts an exhausting thirty minutes plus, Miller is allowed “naturalization”, that is, for a few minutes he is able to pass as White. Miller realizes that the Japanese are attacking the U.S. naval base. In a series of extravagant crane shots, he is shown behind a large implement of war, shooting down the Japanese fighter planes. Glorifying his defensive strategies, Gooding, Jr. is framed in medium close-ups in order to focus on his enraged facial expressions, as well as situating the firearm within the frame. He screams, passionately operating his big gun in the name of America.

The film contributes to this legacy of bigotry mixed with violence. You allow a certain amount of assimilation for Gooding, Jr. but strictly on the grounds that his character resort to violence that is exalted as White-American patriotism. This is not an issue of race. It is the character’s White versus Yellow. It is true that his character is based on a real person, but you undermine the importance of Miller’s story by marginalizing it for the fictional romantic plot line. This marginalization seems to be used as a kind of reinforcement, as if to validate your version of “diversity” in your film, yet only to incite it in the backdrop of the Pearl Harbor story.

In an interview published in the 21 June 2001 issue of Rolling Stone, you defend, “Historians have to understand that we are making a movie here.” You fail to understand that you are producing non-existent histories, like the love triangle or the crippled Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Jon Voight) rising to his feet, and naturally presenting them as if they really happened. Your representation of these events in American history comes off as equally valid through conventionalized movie techniques. How does the average moviegoer distinguish between the “fake” stories and the “real” ones? You have inhibited and perverted the history of Pearl Harbor and the meanings behind them, challenging our memories and replacing them with new ones that celebrate White patriotism.

It is for these reasons that I would like to dismember Pearl Harbor. “Dismember” in the sense of deconstructing and interrogating the implications of and popular reactions toward your film; and also in the sense of erasing the memory of this painful movie experience. But we, as a responsible audience, must not forget. I cannot neglect this embarrassing re-establishment of a jingoistic thinking mode—that which mimics your diegetic world. You had three hours and $135 million dollars to justify the making of this film. I could find no other reason for this superficiality in your film except to exploit its extremist structure in a big-budget, Hollywood context. I, as a cinephile, make no distinction between those who create “epic” films like Pearl Harbor with racist overtones and those who harbor them.

This is the infamy of Pearl Harbor.

Nauseous.

C. Naomi Kajiyama
America's Bubble: The Dangers of Historical Erasure

By Briana Lenz

In case a solitary soul has yet to become informed on September 11th, 2001, terrorists hijacked four domestic American airliners and plowed them into the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington and crash landed the last in rural Pennsylvania. For most Americans, we learned of these events through word of mouth, televisions and radios. The media frenzy that ensued left many of us immediately unsure of what was going on in our country and we stayed glued to our televisions for the remainder of the day. It was an experience that not a single one of us will forget, the aftershocks of which are still to this day.

In the quiet atmosphere of this shell-shocked nation a jarring voice, translated into radio waves and retransmitted onto every American TV, spoke up. The backlash that ensued prompted some very interesting and probing questions for our country and the industry that controls our media. Bill Maher, host of the late night talk show *Politically Incorrect*, was the culprit. "We have been the cowards, lobbing cruise missiles from 2,000 miles away. That's cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the building, say what you want about it, it's not cowardly." You might agree with White House Spokesman Ari Fleischer, that Maher's comment was "a terrible thing to say" Or, you might want to slap him on the back in congratulations for reappropriating George W. Bush's words into a statement that makes sense. Either way, Maher's show was swiftly pulled from the nightly lineup at ABC, its sponsors bailing left and right, despite a public apology from Maher himself on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno.

Has it been so long since the Communist witch hunts and blacklisting of the 1950s and 60s? On a platform clearly labeled "controversial" (the title of Maher's program inherently suggests unsavory topics) it seems that one can no longer stand and speak one's mind. In a nation where anyone can speak his or her share and reach any number of Americans, we can not seem to allow one outspoken man, informed and clever, to point out some difficult truths. When the question "Why do some Muslims hate America so?" is asked, we cannot receive answers to it. Understandably, the audience to which Maher was speaking was one in shock and trauma. But America prides itself for its freedom of speech, does it not?

As America witnessed the image of planes crashing into skyscrapers over and over again, we didn't quite know how to respond. As a nation we have been egocentrically and falsely secure in our national safety. Hence the reaction: "It looks like a movie!" An interesting comment, ripe with subtext. The American media has created images like this countless times before: Independence Day, Air Force One, Godzilla 2000. The list goes on ad nauseam. These are powerful images, the destruction of the symbols of America's pride: The White House, The Statue of Liberty, and so forth.

Yet we can watch these films because these images of destruction were fictitious, created for our entertainment, and perhaps to reinforce that the U.S. is, in fact, untouchable. But when the images are not fictitious they jump off the silver screen. The dust, fire, and dead are palpable. Our own invention has been thrown back in our faces, it has been turned against us. We are Doctor Frankenstein and we are shouting in horror that it is, indeed, alive. Fictionalizing something seems to discredit the possibility of it really happening. For once the lines between reality and fiction were blurred for the American population as we watched the unthinkable happen via that same box that brings us fictional narratives of Friends and Will and Grace.

In any event we are still reeling from the shock of this image. The networks chose to no longer air the footage of the planes crashing, and the nation has fallen into an...
atmosphere of contemplation. The planes that crashed into the World Trade Center have also sliced through the self-involved bubble in which the American people usually abide, forcing us to really open our eyes. It is a shame that something so crucial had to happen in order for that bubble to be penetrated, but it is often hard to reverse habits so long standing. However, it might really be that blow to our national ego that will prove to be the most dangerous effect of the attacks. Now we as a people have seemed to come together as a more thoughtful and careful nation. But it is the anger at the robbery of our complacency, the stealing of our self-assuredness and confidence, the ignominious and self-righteous response of our country that says, "We will have justice for those that have made us again afraid of the shadows." For some of us, there has never been a moment where we have feared that anyone would dare to shed American blood on American soil with American made weapons. We are itching for revenge, for a course of action that will right us with the world and that will allow us to return to our previous state of calm. Instead of looking these events straight in the face, we choose to pick up American flags and slap "God Bless America" stickers onto every open space we can find. These are symbols of patriotism, yes, but also blind ones at that. And now the government has followed suit, picking up its guns and ammunitions in their brave pursuit of justice.

Enter the American media. We often look to Hollywood and television to soothe national wounds and to dictate our reaction to tragedy. What can we expect from them? So far, an uncoordinated, schizophrenic reaction: season premiers were pushed back, the Emmy's were stalled twice, film release dates were readjusted, movie trailers and scenes from several films were altered (Spiderman's and Zoolander's deletion of the WTC), all in respect for the dead and grieving. Celebrities gathered to help us mourn and to collect funding for the American Red Cross in a national broadcast, while MTV was initially broadcasting real news and their only playing music videos (probably the most sore experience for our generation). We seemed to be scrambling back towards our safety bubble. At the same time that Hollywood was scavenging their new releases in order to cut any potentially offensive material, MTV's The Real World displayed a disclaimer that their New York series would be left untouched. This proposes an interesting debate: should America be guarded from viewing the WTC, or should we be able to see it as we used to?

The upcoming Spiderman contained a scene in which Spiderman and a helicopter do battle at the WTC. These shots were cut from the film as well as it's trailer, causing the recall of several new video releases that contained the offensive preview. Yet The Real World retained its shots of the buildings. In a recent issue of the New York Times, New York documentary film director Ric Burns described the image of the WTC as a "phantom limb." You feel it, but it's not there; you look to where you feel it should be. The media seems to have two options so far: to cut the World Trade Center from material, or leave it as a testament to history. A student described his experience while viewing the film Zoolander. When he noticed that the WTC had been completely eliminated from a shot of the New York skyline, the sense of loss was all the more present, more disturbing, he claimed, than had he seen the buildings standing. However, during our discussion, another student spoke up and described his reaction as exactly opposite. More understandable is the elimination of Spiderman's WTC scenes. To display the WTC, peaceful, content is fine, but to show the same buildings in impending danger of being once again violated seems to me inappropriate at this time. It is a fine line, but one that can be crossed if care is taken to consider alternative forms of representation.

Eliminating the WTC from preexisting works appears to be functioning as a form of erasing history. Others may feel that viewing the buildings would exacerbate their trauma — a hassle reminder of the vulnerability of our bubble. But perhaps the following examples will allow the media to devise new and thoughtful approaches to this issue.

The Queens Museum of Art houses a detailed scale model display of the WTC, all in respect for the dead and grieving. Celebrities gathered to help us mourn and to collect funding for the American Red Cross in a national broadcast, while MTV was initially broadcasting real news and their only playing music videos (probably the most sore experience for our generation). We seemed to be scrambling back towards our safety bubble. At the same time that Hollywood was scavenging their new releases in order to cut any potentially offensive material, MTV's The Real World displayed a disclaimer that their New York series would be left untouched. This proposes an interesting debate: should America be guarded from viewing the WTC, or should we be able to see it as we used to?

Why is creative work often so difficult? What helps and hinders us in doing it? What makes it possible?

THE CAPTIVE MUSE: ON CREATIVITY AND ITS INHIBITION
Susan Kolodny
(PsychoSocial Press, 2000)

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Chants, Magic, Action: The Evolution of the "Witch Flick"

By Andrew Dimble

"Wicca is a recently created, Neopagan religion. It is largely based on symbols, seasonal days of celebration, and deities from ancient Celtic society, fleshed out with Masonic and ceremonial magical components. A follower of Wicca is called a Wiccan. Wicca and other Neopagan religions are currently experiencing a rapid growth in the U.S., Canada, and Europe." - BA Robinson, 1995.

Monasters and "Oogey Boogey" have engaged and engulflled audiences since the origin of narrative cinema in 1895, but it is only until recently that witches have been more actively portrayed. As time progresses and Hollywood cinema grows older and more experienced, we begin to see not only a wider use of new and innovative techniques and special effects in witch-flicks, but also a slow move from fantasy to reality-based depiction. With this move comes the question of how a modern and widely practiced religion can be portrayed on camera, and also puts light on Hollywood's previous inability to bring the screen witch story to life. Religion in general is a difficult subject matter on film, especially when incorporating Deus ex machina or divine intervention. This occurrence deals with the psychological, making it difficult to visually interpret and represent on screen. Special effects are the easiest solution, having been used in all witch-flicks to date, as well as in many Christianity-based movies such as The Exorcist and Stigmata. Still, when dealing with religious contexts, it is important for the viewer to draw the distinction between what is meant to be fantasy and what is meant to be a realistic portrayal.

The screen witch has been depicted in numerous forms throughout Hollywood's history, but almost always falls into one of three categories: the fantastical "Pedi-witch" or child killer, the most common screen depiction and most popular in the thriller-horror genre. These depictions are not linked to the Wiccan religion, rather serving as morality tales for children. The second category, the "Natura-witch" or born (natural) witch, encompasses almost all television witches, but very few witches in film. Thirdly, the "Neo-witch" includes all modern Wiccans and teen witches. This article will largely focus on the first and last types of "screen witch."

The Pedi-witch is the preferred type of representation by both Hollywood big shots and low-budget independent filmmakers. From the classic fairytale of Hansel and Gretel to the summer blockbuster The Blair Witch Project, the Pedi-witch has been a favorite for many. The peder-witch mirrors Christian depictions of the Puriian witch-hunts in the mid-1600s. While this portrayal mocks witchcraft practitioners of the time, it is more or less based in fairytale and fantasy. These "real witches" of the 1600s were probably not as horrendous as
they are depicted in modern cinema; some woman did indeed practice a form of witchcraft, but others who did not practice witchcraft were still persecuted as witches. While this type of witch is most often portrayed in horror/thriller films, it is also the most common in children's movies having even been utilized by Walt Disney Productions. A single star driven motion picture like The Witches (1990) starring Anjelica Huston wouldn't be enough to create an audience if it weren't about the Pedri-witches of England trying to eradicate the children by turning them into mice. Witches, a movie based on the children's book by Roald Dahl, was made a decade ago using fantasy story telling and the Muppet magic of Jim Henson. Using common stereotypes of the fantasy genre, the film delivers a scary representation of the Pedri-witch as a fictional character. The viewer is given the facts about witches in the beginning of the film by a grandmother warning her grandson. She tells him that “real witches wear ordinary clothes, they look like ordinary women, they live in ordinary houses, and they work ordinary jobs.” She says that witches have purple eyes, tootless squared feet, wear wigs because they are bald and have scap rashes, and that “witches hate children.” Later, the film goes beyond common conventions when the Grand High Witch (Huston) removes her mask, wig, shoes, and clothes, to reveal a huge and distorted nose, hairy facial warts, dagger-like claws, and a shrill voice. The film begins by portraying witches as "ordinary people" but then leans toward the fantasy and of the scale, by making them hideous creatures, and in doing so creates the epiphany of the villainous Pedi-witch.

The Natura-witch is a category that encompasses nearly every television portrayal from Samantha in the 1964 comedy Bewitched to today's Sabrina the Teenage Witch. Other shows, such as 1996's Charmed, stars three sisters who all fall into the Natura-witch category, having all been born witches and receiving knowledge of their powers and destiny later in life. While television is plentiful with this type, there is a sparse representation in film. The only such character that comes to mind is Sarah from The Craft, whose mother was a witch, making her a Nature-witch. This particular category begins to more closely mimic and represent elements of the Wiccan religion; however, it often still incorporates flying and casting visible energy out of the hands, playing into the slow fusion of fantasy and reality. I can't recall an instance where a Natura-witch invokes a "greater evil," at least not purposefully.

The Neo-witch on the other hand, is the most common type featured in films in the last five years. Movies such as Little Witches (1996) and The Craft (1996) revolve around witches that fall under this heading. Fairuza Balk and Neve Campbell in 1996's The Craft depict the epitome of the Neo-witch as represented by attractive teenage girls. This representation is in much opposition to the former depiction of the Pedi-witch. The film is based around a group of high school girls that have learned the craft through books and have little power of their own until Sarah (Robin Tunney) moves to their town and becomes their "fourth corner." The girls dabble in all kinds of spell craft and mischief, invoking a god, the four corners (compass points), and the elements. The excitement of the film comes from the continuous magic that occurs throughout. The girls are constantly casting some type of spell, and appear to be living the good life without suffering any consequences for their actions until later, when Nancy (Balk) invokes a greater evil and Nancy's heart turns evil with it.

The film is far the closest and most accurate Hollywood portrayal of modern Wicca. This comes mostly from the fact that the filmakers and screenwriter worked with actual practitioners of Wicca to get the most realistic depiction possible. Yet the movie fails short of reality in several places. As usual Wiccans don't really fly or levitate, and can't cast visible energy from their hands. This film however, does fairly portray the different tools and herbs, a pretty close ritual set up, alters, the ability to invoke the dream states of others, summoning the elements, and love and binding spells. Slight things were changed in the film to keep the audience from mimicking what they saw on the screen and could invoke painful and dangerous energy. One of these things is the fictional "Manalog," the sleight of mind, or as Nancy puts it, "the playing field for god and the devil." In creating a movie that so closely mimics elements of reality, a line is drawn at one point, and fantasy takes over for spectacle.

The year 2000 brought to the screen yet another representation of the Neo-witch in last year's flop sequel, Book of Shadows: Blair Witch 2. This movie focused on the hype stirred by the first movie, taking a tour group into the woods where the original film was shot, for one night of fun that turns into one night of death and terror. The Blair Witch (Ellie) herself is a Pedi-witch. In the sequel, Erica, a teen Wiccan and Neo-witch, goes into the woods with the tour group to "shed her mortal coil, and commune with Ellie". Erica's character speaks off different aspects of the religion she follows during a ten minute segment of the film when they begin to settle down at their campsite. In a terrible (and personally infuriating delivery), she tells the viewers (looking right at the camera and audience), "Witches can summon powerful energy, but we still have to eat, shit, and die like the rest of you. People think that I drink blood, that I sacrifice children, that I worship the devil, just because I'm Wiccan. I don't believe in the devil, that's a Christian concept. I believe in nature.'}

Though she delivers the correct information pertaining to the modern religion, she does it in such an arrogant and awful way that she doesn't help the religious cause one bit. And though Erica surpasses common Hollywood conventions by not flying or casting visible energy, she fails to cease invoking a greater evil. While Hollywood may have begun to make the move from fantasy to reality based depiction of witches, it will appear more as a fusion between the two rather than a complete change.
I've never been able to identify with gay movies. Movies like *Trick* (1995), *The Broken Hearts Club* (2000), and *Lie Down with Dogs* (1995) usually never work for me. They are too constraining and they always seemed to be speaking to someone other than me.

While they are important because the films depict gay lives that are not normally given a voice, they also prescribe and impose on me a specific kind of gay identity. I see the main characters of those films on screen. And, when I'm at home looking in the mirror, they are not always what I see. I identify partly with these characters' desires, their desire for other guys perhaps. But, I do not see my complete self in these characters.

Blurt, a British pop-rock band Hedwig would adore, describes me the best. As they say in their song "Boys and Girls" I'm just one of those "Girls who are boys, who like boys to be girls, who do boys like they're girls, who do girls like they're boys." Oh, maybe it's the other way around. I think that kind of play with gender and sexual identity is why Hedwig and the Angry Inch struck a personal chord with me. At very least the characters in Hedwig don't have their identities and their desires set straight (pun intended). Undoubtedly, I'm ready for something more complex. I want to get every last bit of queer out of my queer cinema. Now is the time for a new method of seeing sexual identity.

As dominant culture becomes more and more "open" to a wider range of topics and issues of identity (such as race, class, sexuality and so forth) that were previously forbidden, one is forced to take notice of how these "relaxed" cultural norms have affected specific representations. One can think about the time, during the Production Code era, when the specificity of particular meanings was confined to subtext and a spectator's inside knowledge. In other words, the articulation of a particular forbidden subject, such as a specifically gay or lesbian identity, was confined to stereotype and connotation. It could only be hinted at, never explicitly confirmed. This is no doubt a highly problematic way to represent a gay or lesbian identity because of the way it renders the identity "unshockable" or in this case "unshockable." Leaving homosexuality and, therefore, homosexual identities, to subtext and connotation.

One could take a degree of comfort now that it is permissible to represent a homosexual identity, but is it actually possible?

A gay male identity may be visually connected through a character's telling fashion choices, a limp wrist, a certain kind of posturing, and/or a generally effeminate demeanor. Conversely, a lesbian identity could be connoted through telling fashion choices, as well as aggressive and active qualities and a more "masculine" demeanor.

These representations are not a homosexual identity. Yet, I would argue that all of these connotations are only aspects of a character's gender performance. Unlike many films would have us believe, a gender performance that transgresses traditional heterosexual gender roles does not logically or necessarily equate to a gay male desire or identity. The fact that these "signs" of homosexuality have no definitive concrete connection to homosexual desire/identity is exactly what makes these representations connotations rather than denotations.
The progression of time and the effect of gay liberation movements do not inevitably bring about diverse or "positive" representations that might replace older and presumably more homophobic ones. Therefore, it is important to situate filmic portrayals of same-gender desire within their respective historical moments. For instance, it may prove difficult to read *Brute of Frankenstein*, *Rope*, *The Haunting*, *The Boys in the Band*, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, *Bound*, *Chick and Buck*, and *The Angry Inch* all with the same prescription for sexuality and identity because of the very different historized assumptions each film makes about the self and sexuality.

One could take a degree of comfort in the fact that now, with the looser cultural restrictions of what can be shown on film, homosexual identity must no longer be necessarily confined to the closet of connotation, that now it is permissible to denote, "show," and explicitly represent a homosexual identity. While connotation functions through hints and processes of suggestion, denotation can explicitly show or describe what it refers to. Yet, while it may very well be more permissible in this day and age, is it actually possible? Of course a character can verbalize his/her respective identity through dialogue, but can he/she be denoted in a manner that is more specific to film, more strictly visual?

For many spectators the primary denotative signifier of what might be called the specificity of a homosexual identity is the same-gender sex act. Here same-gender desire equals a homosexual identity. The problem with this sort of connection is that the desire is being denoted, and then the spectator infers the character's identity. The same-gender sex act, what might be unanimously considered a denotative signification of a homosexual identity, is ultimately only a sign of same-gender desire, not necessarily a homosexual identity. In this way "actually showing," or denoting, a homosexual identity is still basically a form of connotation since the desire only suggests the identity. Desire can be denoted quite easily through a shot of same-gender sex or a well-edited set of glances between characters, but the denotation of sexual identity is trickier.

Given these problems of connotation and desire one must eventually ask if the denotative, or purely visual, signification of a specifically gay identity is possible without invoking the "connotative closet"? Many connotative representations of homosexual identity are inherently homophobic because the very possibility of their denotation was censored (as in Hitchcock's *Rope*). The main character's identities had to be connote, or hinted at because society would not allow their existence. But, connotation is inherently unstable because its meaning is not concretely attached to its signifier. That is to say, since the representative "signs of homosexual identity" are not directly connected to the character's identities, many other characters in the film might be "suspect" of homosexuality. In this way connotative homosexuality attains a kind of omnipresence and may be located anywhere. This kind of omnipresence produces a queer possibility that can attach itself and exist as a potential in any character, moment, or shot.

Although connotative forms of homosexual representation appear to be inherently problematic, denotative representations have consequences as well. Although a name and the subsequent identity it gives birth to provides a basic level of visibility, it simultaneously contains and constrains the very thing it attempts to articulate by defining exactly what that thing is. In a similar fashion the denotation of identity, or the shifting from connotative suggestion into denoted visually specified images, has the potentially dangerous effect of stabilizing and constraining identity.

In this way connotative representations are not completely negative, nor are denotative significations entirely sufficient or necessarily favorable. In fact connotation in particular may actually be better suited for some queer cinema. Only through connotation can sexual desire change and exist as a dynamic potential, rather than a static absolute. In this way connotation emerges as an arena that may prove to be home to identities whose very existence resist the temptation to define and classify. It may be the place for those whose gender identities, gender performances, and sexual practices fluctuate and change each time they look in the mirror.

The Term Queer...

The term "queer" in this article is used as vague and ambiguous. Its use here does not necessarily invoke the umbrella term for the established identities of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning and so forth. Perhaps the most important aspect of its use here, particularly in its ambiguity, is its invocation of transformations that might be called a pansexual identity, where one's desires are potentially limitless and not determined by binaries of sexuality, sex, or gender. Both queer and pansexual are intended to signify elusiveness and flux and are not only meant to problematize categories such as hetro/homo, male/female, masculine/feminine, but also represent the fallacy of epistemological categorization itself.
In the latter part of the 1980s, while American film markets were
struggling, there was a film explosion in the Hong Kong cinema
industry. This "explosion" was inspired by the uncertain future of
Hong Kong, which after 1997 would be returned to mainland China.
Many feared Hong Kong would be economically blunted and
oppressed by "communist" rule. As this moment approached, the
most sensible thing for people in the Hong Kong film industries
to do was to break into foreign markets. This had been
accomplished throughout Hong Kong cinema's history with legends
such as Bruce Lee, who attempted to find their niche in the American film
industry in the 1970s. In the last decade, a major shift has occurred
along similar lines due to the impending "political doom" of
mainland China's rule. The success of such films as Jackie Chan's
*Rumble in the Bronx* signaled an influx of Hong Kong Cinema
 directors, actors, producers, stuntmen, and action choreographers
into the American Mainstream.

However, something unexpected happened when 1997 rolled
around. Mainland China did not bleed Hong Kong dry of its wealth;
it did not try to censor and suppress the movie industry. Instead,
Hong Kong was given a certain amount of freedom. This meant
that the movie industry would survive. In the coming years almost
all of the filmmakers, actors, producers, and action choreographers
who had made the shift to America came back to Hong Kong to
work in film. While films are still being made in Hong Kong, America
has integrated certain aspects of Hong Kong Cinema into its
mainstream. This integration can be understood in relation to The
Musketeers when we look closely at the characters Huang Feihong
and d'Artagnan.

In Hong Kong film over the last 50 years, an enormous group
of films have been produced that centered on a character from
Chinese history called Huang Feihong. There are little actual hard
data known about this character, yet there are films where he fights
everything from opium dealing foreigners to the supernatural. Feihong
time has become less a person and more a symbol, which the Hong
Kong film industry has molded in response to what viewers have wanted
to see at the time of the film's production. He has been shaped by
trends in patriotism, economics, and philosophies, to become a perfect
embodiment of Chinese ideals. He has been made an unbreakable hero
whose adventures and exploits respond to what people wanted to see.
This somewhat fictitious character remains popular, and he is still incorporated into
Hong Kong films, some of which you may have seen. These films include,
The Legend of Drunken Master, Iron Monkey, and the upcoming
release of Once Upon a Time in China. While there are other
characters from history who have undergone this appropriation,
such as Fong Sai Yuk and Wing Chun, Feihong remains one of the
most popular in Hong Kong film.

Similarly, Alexandre Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* is based
loosely on a journal chronicling the exploits of a young man named
d'Artagnan in 16th century France. This classic has been made
and remade into many films over the course of the last 60 years. All
of these films have been variations on the original story or
completely re-invent it. One of these films, for example, took the original
story and incorporated it into the western genre. The character of
d'Artagnan has been involved in most, if not all films that follow the
escapades of the Musketeers, and in these movies he has undertaken
adventures that have little basis in the reality of his life. His character
also differs within each film in accordance with trends,
and masculine ideals.

D'Artagnan is in some ways comparable to the Chinese character of Huang Feihong. D'Artagnan is a real person from history but
whose life, in the minds of the masses, is fluid in the sense that it changes and takes on new meanings with each retelling of his story.
The fact that d'Artagnan and Huang Feihong have similar properties
made *The Three Musketeers* the perfect story to remade into a
Kung-fu film. *The Three Musketeers* and Huang Feihong films are
martial, action/adventure, period pieces, revolving around
The fact that d'Artagnan and Huang Fei-hong have similar properties made The Three Musketeers the perfect story to remake into a Kung-fu film.

the escapades of young men who often land themselves in trouble and are often helping the weak or exploited. This melding can be best understood when one watches Tai Chi II, and Once Upon a Time in China, then the recent Three Musketeers film starring Chris O'Donnell as d'Artagnan. You will be able to see how easily certain stylistic and structural characteristics of The Three Musketeers have been combined with those of Hong Kong Cinema to create a hybrid. The Muskteer exemplifies how smoothly the aforementioned integration can take place and how no "American formula" is safe, or sacred, as this melding continues to move throughout different genres.

The Musketeer is the latest step in a natural progression in film that will continue in the same direction. To understand this progression, one must look at the influence of Hong Kong Cinema as its presence becomes more and more imbedded not only in film but the media as well. The action hero movie was the first to exemplify this melding of film industries with John Woo, and Jackie Chan in Hard Target and Rumble in the Bronx. The next genre to be transformed was science-fiction with The Matrix, followed by the gangster film with The Big Hit, the spy espionage thriller with Mission Impossible, the film parody of the 1970's television show with Charlie's Angels, and now the swashbuckling film with The Musketeer. These examples show how Hong Kong film is affecting U.S. film and how this process will continue to change our movie going experiences here in America in the coming years.

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