

2014

Social Constructs in Film Culture: The Effect of it on the Performing Arts, and the Destroyed Association of Signs to Enhance Meaning

Eileen W. Tom
Portland State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/honorstheses>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Tom, Eileen W., "Social Constructs in Film Culture: The Effect of it on the Performing Arts, and the Destroyed Association of Signs to Enhance Meaning" (2014). *University Honors Theses*. Paper 71.
<https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.53>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in University Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

Social Constructs in Film Culture:
The Effect of it on the Performing Arts, and the Destroyed Association of Signs to
Enhance Meaning

by

Eileen Tom

An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts

in

University Honors

and

Film Studies

Thesis Adviser

Karin Magaldi

Portland State University

2014

Remember the childhood story that you grew up hearing? The one you would read over and over again. Imagining the scenes play out in your mind's eye. The images are so vivid and the characters feel so real. Fast forward ten years, your favorite story has been adapted for the screen. The actors and actresses that have been chosen to recreate the story bears little resemblance to those you grew up with. The relation of the audience to the characters of a given film is subjective and there isn't formula that a director or a writer can apply to their work that will equate a perfect connection. The audience can fully engage themselves with a film, enjoy it, or they find themselves disconnected and lost from the ¹diegesis of the film. The level of engagement will vary from audience to audience member. But there are several markers that have been generated by society that factor into their engagement. What the audience thinks about age, race, gender, and what their perspective of "normal" is. Is their reality of the world accurate in the portrayal of the film? The interpretation of a written word or an image drastically changes the meaning of a given film. A description of "scary" or of "love" varies depending on what society sees as normal and acceptable. Breaking down the images and words to its most fundamental parts makes a film's narrative simpler to analyze and understand. Using Semiotics, the study of signs, benefits the director and the film's narrative so the theme of the film maybe enhanced rather than lost in the inaccurate portrayal of reality in the film. The study of semiotics reduces the idea of film and characterization into smaller parts, used on numerous occasions for the creative individuals to better understand their connection to the audience, and on a larger scale society as a whole.

Scholars of this discipline, Charles S. Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure suggest the relationship between the audience and the image is subjective. Each individual

¹ Diegesis: Everything and everyone that generates the reality of the film

whether subconsciously or consciously develops an associated meaning with each image they see. Modern theorists, such as Bela Balaz, propose the relationship between the image and its reception cannot be separated. Audience members will always see a connection, without a connection the image is meaningless. Rules govern the connections, and ultimately the meanings the audience derives from a particular sign. One's subjective evaluation of a sign is indefinable and immeasurable, but individuals are not solely governed by internal rules but also by external rules, which is the subject of the research portion in answering this question: How much does society influence audience receptivity? Most audience members now have certain expectations when they see a film, specifically dealing with social constructs and norms such as traditional gender roles, persistence of racism and the obsession with youth. Because the audience expects a certain outcome when dealing with these issues, it is easy to predict it. For any filmmaker or a student of the performance arts, it must be understood to truly engage the audience into the world of the film. The association between the ²signifier and the meaning it signifies that has been generated from social norms must be destroyed and rebuilt in the narrative. Specifically dealing with social constructs and norms such as traditional gender roles, persistence of racism, and the obsession with youth in this project.

What can be defined as signs in a film? The image, the character within the frame, the object he is holding, the color of the holding, but the most prominent sign will always be the character. What happens when an audience begins to break down a film sequence or an actor's physicality to more fundamental parts? Semiotics as the study of signs plays an intricate role in the examination of symbols in films and the performing arts. Charles Sanders Peirce's sign theory is broken down as an account of signification,

² Any material thing that signifies, e.g., words on a page, a facial expression, an image.

representation, reference, and meaning. Peirce suggests signs consist of three connected parts: a sign, an object, and an interpretant. For example, a sign may be a color, like the color red. That color red is attached to a fire truck. The interpretant is what is understood as the sign in relation to the object in which it is attached. The fire truck itself denotes no meaning, but society has forced us to generate an associated meaning of “danger”.

Saussure furthers this idea by implying that the associated meaning is derived from a juxtaposition of many signs and images, which defines the visual medium of storytelling.

Saussure separates sign theory into two different parts, as explained by Rosen in the introduction to “Narrative Apparatus, Ideology”, the syntagm and paradigm. The example used by Rosen is the sentence “the big pig ate Nick.” In a sentence there are distinct parts, and the relationship and order between the words generate the meaning. When applied to film theory the film montage can be defined in a similar manner; it reveals the images as words in a sentence. The images that are sequenced together produce a certain meaning. The governing factor of those images is what society considers as “normal.”

Christian Metz writes in his article “Problems of Denotation in the Fiction film,” that although cinema is constructed of many different codes, it is not “located at the very center of the perceptual analogy between the object and the image” (39). Metz applies the Saussure model of semiotics to film images. Film images are “infinite in number. . . like statements, which can be formulated in a verbal language” (40), and together these images formulate a coherent whole, much like the linguistic sentence. If a film sequence (a construction of several different moving images woven together), is analyzed in the way that Metz describes, what rules or guidelines govern their structure? What prevents them from being unintelligible to whoever is watching it? The answer is the social constructs, which are generally the social norms that govern the viewers’ receptivity of

the images or rather in this case, the character. How can the understanding of signs be applied to a narrative and character? Can the receptivity of these images been changed from social norms?

The understanding of social norms changes the application and direction a film might take. Traditionally when a guideline is broken in film the director to emphasize a certain point he is attempting to get across to the audience uses it. In video editing a set of guidelines have been set by Hollywood standards (or films in general) so the audience will not become too confused or disoriented by the actions on screen. Continuity of direction, of action, and of location is important to maintain throughout a film sequence. If a character exits one frame where rain is pouring down, and in the next frame it is sunny, the audience begins to question a few things. The fluidity of the scene has been broken, and therefore the audience has been distanced from the world of the film, in other words; they know this is simply a film. But the editor can utilize these guidelines to emphasize a thought, for example a jump cut may be placed to jar the audience members. Whatever is happening on screen is wrong; the screen essentially does a double take for the audience. Directors and casting directors adhere to a similar procedure when deciding the actors to play certain roles. What rules must be broken in this case? What meaning is being emphasized? Jon Whitemore describes the “meaning of a performance change[s] with each new enactment and are constructed differently by individual spectators because of each viewer’s discrete physical psychological, intellectual, and emotional constitution” (*Direction Postmodern Theatre*, 4). Through these ideas and rules that govern structure of signs in film, what governs an actor’s portrayal of a character? What signs does he embody to enhance the intention of his acting ability? Modern films have developed numbness to traditional storytelling, the archetypes of “love” and suffering, hold too

much meaning. The standard model has become too common and predictable to the modern audience.

A character as a sign on the big screen has morphed through the years. For example the sign of a woman of traditional gender roles; she elicits a different reaction from the audience when she is outspoken rather than when he is outspoken. Laura Mulvey describes in her article, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” a woman’s presence “tends to work against the development of a storyline, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation” (203). It is not ideal to be “womanly”, this is exemplified in the old Hollywood film, *Blond Venus* (Sternberg, 1932). The main character Helen Faraday (Marlene Dietrich) is seen performing on stage for an audience filled with men. In the film she is presented as a symbol of a person that has overcome the social constructs by shedding all the signs of a woman and then embodying all the signs of a man. This is also exemplified by how she is portrayed by the technical framework of the scene; the high angles of the camera’s position, the lack of shot/reverse shots between her and the ogling men, and the way the audience is forced to track with her around the stage. She is in control, not the men in the audience. The character herself also exhibits signifiers of a man- the suit, the cigarette, and the swagger of her walk, are indications of her dominance. Which women do not typically display in films, especially not Hollywood productions made in the 1930’s. A woman is either a goal or an obstacle, rarely is the subject of change and domination. *Blond Venus* is a film that creates a reality that mimics the society from which it was born. The environment shows the men as the dominant figure, but once Faraday enters the frame the reality of the film changes. The associate meaning the audience has of the “woman” as a sign is destroyed throughout the film.

As the symbol of a woman has changed so has the idea of “romance”. Society’s standard for romance has changed with the developments in society. It is no longer a struggle for someone of a lower class to love someone from an upper class family. These films have been produced several times where it has generated it’s own genre. That story has even been told too many times, the audience has seen it. The idea of “love” and “struggle” is no longer a major theme; films of this nature have developed a different name, “chick flicks”. A chick-flick is defined by Wisegeek.org, as a slang to “describe a movie that primarily appeals to teenage girls and young women”, usually featuring a strong female lead and some snappy music. The strong female lead is probably timid in the beginning and then after going through some obstacles she falls in love with the man of her dreams. An example of this genre film is “The Notebook” (Cassavetes,2004) starring Ryan Gosling and Rachel McAdams. By the synopsis alone the audience understands what this film is about:

A poor and passionate young man falls in love with a rich young woman and gives her a sense of freedom. They soon are separated by their social differences

-www.imdb.com

A young woman, Allie Calhoun falls madly in love with Noah, but cannot carry on a relationship because of the difference in social classes. Although Allie faces these hardships, she ultimately makes the decision to pursue her dream man. This genre of film appeals to many audience members, but many view this as just a love story. It’s not groundbreaking, in fact many other films share a similar synopsis and endings. “A Walk to Remember” (2002, Shankman), it reads:

The story of two North Carolina teens, Landon Carter and Jamie Sullivan, who are thrown together after Landon gets into trouble and is made to do community service.

-www.imdb.com

The film is again about a man and woman falling love, but have to overcome obstacles in order to be with one another. Although this concept is different from *Blond Venus*, it has now become the standard for the typical “chick film”. How do films prevent themselves from being labeled as a “chick flick” or a “typical action film”? How can a modern film hold merit? A detailed examination of signs and their connection to their associated meanings provides the answer.

Social constructs and social norms perspectives around traditional gender roles have changed since the 1930’s and from the last few years. New signs and signifiers have emerged since the shift in social constructs not only dealing with gender roles but also with sexuality. *Brokeback Mountain* (Lee, 2005) details a love story is about a homosexual relationship rather than a heterosexual relationship. The film centers on two male characters that find themselves in love with one another within a society where it is not accepted. A man is the provider for a wife and child; he does not carry on love affairs with other men. In Robin Wood’s article titled “On and Around *Brokeback Mountain*” Wood describes *Brokeback Mountain* as “the ideal film for mainstream audiences today. . . its release coincides with a precise and rapidly developing phase in gay history, the movement towards acceptance and integration”(2). The film breaks traditional gender roles; it emphasizes a theme about acceptance and love in a more effective method because it goes against the social norm of a heterosexual couple. This film effectively builds a world with strong signs of cowboys and of the culture of the 1960’s towards

homosexual relationships. The audience has certain expectations for this world just like the film *Blond Venus*, but the film takes advantage of the audiences expectations to enhance the themes of the their films by eventually destroying their associated meanings. The cowboy is no longer seen as this “masculine” man, but rather someone vulnerable, someone ultimately as human as the rest of us. The idea, the social construct that a heterosexual relationship holds more merit over a homosexual relationship is an issue the film tackles,

Society has many other social constructs, one of many that are emphasized by films and narratives are the struggles of the dichotomy of familial traditions and the wants of an individual; such as *Romeo and Juliet*. An example of a film that portrays the archetypes of Shakespeare work in a modern setting is *Guess Who* (Sullivan, 2005). The narrative centers on a primarily African American cast, with a stranger in the midst, the character of Simon Green (Kutcher). This film much like *Brokeback Mountain*, establishes a reality that the audience is familiar with, then introduce a factor that creates a disassociation from a sign and it’s meaning. In the case of *Guess Who* that factor is Simon Green; a White-American attempting to assimilate into an African American family. Matthew Hughley’s says in his article “Cinethetic Racism: White Redemption and Black Stereotypes” discusses the idea that because writers are uncertain of how to present the Black figure to an audience in fear of going against societal norms. The audience sees the symbol of the “magical negro” because of their expectations that have been formed due to social norms. They are dominated by the thought of “new racism”, as Hughley explains, and the reversed roles in *Guess Who* are a method in supporting the change in racial roles. The “magical negro” is a reflection of the societal norm, and what the audience may expect to see on screen when there is a juxtaposition of two different

racial groups. Many of the subjects of these films were considered different from what society considered as “normal”, breaking the expectations of the audience in order to enhance the theme of the film.

Brokeback Mountain and *Guess Who* took the ideals of the age into considerations through their narrative. What are the ideals of this generation? What might be considered taboo? We’ve come across gender and race, what may prevent individuals from being together? Social constructs have forced the emergence of a variation of the gender and racial issue; age disparity. Films with a focus on a relationship with a significant age difference may be considered as taboo for many cultures especially when it involves a “cougar” character. A “cougar”, as defined by popular culture (in this case, urbandictionary.com) is as follows, “Noun. A 35+ year old female who is on the “hunt” for a much younger, energetic, willing-to-do-anything male”. The social stigma is further highlighted through different films, such as the film *Don Jon* (Gordon-Levitt, 2013). The main protagonist of the film, Jon (Gordon-Levitt) is addicted to porn, and unless he is able to resolve his intimacy issues he will continue to make the same mistakes in relationships. He falls for a woman named Barbara (Johansson) in this case the “typical” romantic interest. She is feminine and beautiful and she also pushes Jon to be a different person after she catches him watching porn. But the twist comes when Jon really hasn’t changed, the woman who ends up changing him is a woman (Moore) who appears to be at least 15 years his senior. This film has been described as “edgy” by USA Today magazine and “confident” by Entertainment Weekly, both magazines are objectively accurate representations of reactions from average audience members. This begs the question, films like *Brokeback Mountain*, *Guess Who*, and *Don Jon* go against traditional movie structures and motifs when it comes to family and romantic dramas, are these the

“ideal” films for the present-day audience? We are so used to seeing signs and their associated meanings that in order to maintain the entertainment level and reviews for the film medium, these meanings are then destroyed then ultimately rebuilt in the respective films. The rebuilding of the reality in films to reflect the modern society is essential to the association the audience will create between the signs and the meaning. In order to enhance a theme, in this case love, the narration must generate a storyline that adheres to the reality at first, and then destroys the connection between the sign and it’s meaning by introducing a new element that is foreign to the subject matter. To test this theory, I set up a ³staged reading for an audience. The script is called “The Talk” (appendix I), a simple script detailing a conversation between two individuals. It’s a talk that a majority of the audience could relate to, a conversation where an ultimatum is presented. Focused heavily on a romantic connotation between the two characters in the script. The staged reading was organized in a way to demonstrate the structure of modern films; build up the story with a reflection of reality, when the audience’s expectations are align with what the signs are presenting, the meaning is broken and reassembled in the film. In order to gain a better understanding of my audience I prescribed a survey that they filled out upon the end of the staged reading (appendix 5).

“The Talk” was presented in four different variations; the same script read by four different pairs of actors. Each pair of actors were given different directions for their respective performances. The words on the page were meaningless until the actors projected their intentions onto it, which drastically changed the performance from pair to pair. It was organized from the most socially accepted to the least socially accepted.

Granted the organization of the performances was subjective to the director, but I am also

³ A staged reading is typically conducted for writers in order for them to hear their written words be prepared in front of an audience.

determined to enhance the meaning of the piece. The central idea being no matter what sort of relationship, be it homosexual, different cultural backgrounds, long distance, or an age difference, the end of a relationship will always hurt both parties. My hypothesis regarding the staged reading is that if the director were to break the audience in slowly, by placing the most socially accepted couple first, and the least socially accepted at the end the meaning of the narration will be more effectively translated across to the audience. According to many film theorists, audience members cannot help but see the association between the sign and it's attached meaning, so the disassociation of the signs in films and rebuilding it may only prove to disorient the audience rather than enhance the film's theme.

Bela Balazs a film theorist from the late 1900's author of the article "The Absolute Film", he argues that the only piece of art that is devoid of signs and meaning is Balazs' definition of the "abstract film". The question he poses in his article "is there no way of escaping this human condition? Does pure objectivity not exist? Is the pure intuition of sheer existence an impossibility? Can we not simply see things as they are?" (159). As an example he describes the film, *Un chien andalou* (Bunuel, 1929), in a narrative prose describing all the signs and their meanings, he continues to say, "shall I continue my narration? To do so is quite pointless" (167). He has described the denoted meaning of the film, accessed through emotions the audience feels during the film sequences that are spliced together. The famous image of the sharpened razor blade as it slices the woman's eye open in *Un chien andalou* creates disgust and unease through the audience members. But Balaz argues that there is no real meaning in those individual images, the only meaning is generated through the audience's fright and reaction at the juxtaposition of images. Balaz believes that there is always going to be a meaning

associated to the images the audience will see, but I argue that this connection can be realigned to generate a different meaning. If the audience is first introduced to the reality of the world of the film, whether it be in *Brokeback Mountain* using cowboys, or in *Don Jon* the entrance of the typical love interest, the associated meanings of those two signs can be redefined. Comparing the outline of the staged production (appendix), it was organized similarly to the films that have been discussed earlier that were effective in the idea of the disassociation of the signs and it's meaning. Before the staged reading began the audience was handed a survey, and here are the general results of the audience demographics:

There were twenty-one different sets of data, with a range of 20 years of age being the youngest and the oldest audience member being 62. The mode of the data is 31 years of age, the average age being 30.74 (blank survey and more detailed statistics included in the appendix). Eight of the members answered that romantic comedy/ comedy was their favorite genre of film. Duuren describes a mainstream film as having a “small palette of familiar, generic images, plots, verbal expressions, and archetypal “stock” characters” (2). The key word is “familiar”, what the audience is used to seeing, whether in reality or in films. The staged production is then organized to the most familiar subject matter to the most foreign. The decision is purely based on the reviews and reaction from the mainstream audience members, as most of the audience consisted of individuals that enjoyed comedic films. This is common, as most individuals would like to have a laugh at the movies, we are “seeking an experience of being alive. . . so that we can actually feel the rapture being alive” (Campbell), to feel happy like the characters in the film.

Two young actors, who are both in their early twenties, portraying a couple separated by distance, read the first variation of the script. The intention of the characters of this variation is that the distance has become too exhausting, and the girl (Rae) has realized she cannot give him (Ferguson) what he needs from a significant other. This variation is reminiscent of films like *The Notebook* or *A Walk to Remember*, a struggle about youth being in love. This variation of the script appeared eight times in the surveys as the least favorite out of the twenty-one audience members. This is an indication that the audience has seen this conversation played out by two young actors too often, and the dialogue has become “boring and predictable” as described by an audience member. The purpose of this variation was a set-up, the building of the reality of the world of the staged production. The audience will hear the same dialogue an additional three times after this variation.

The second variation of the script was read by two males of approximately the same age. Jason Bradd and Charles Hedges were directed to deliver the intention of a strictly platonic relationship. Although the majority of the audience did not interpret the script the way it was intended. For example an individual (survey #2) wrote for an answer which variation they enjoyed least, they wrote “the one with the gay couple”. This answer indicates a few things, one of which is similar to the social norms that have been generated by films like *Brokeback Mountain*. With the release of *Brokeback Mountain* in to the mainstream media the audience has become more susceptible to seeing same sex couples on screen. During the time of release for *Brokeback Mountain* the audience had a difficult time comprehending the message the director was attempting to send. In Wood’s article “On and around *Brokeback Mountain*” he states, “some reviewers have questioned whether Ennis and Jack are “really” gay, or just starved for company and sex” (4).

Evident in this statement, the audience during the time of the films release found the idea of two males being in love incomprehensible. Since this film there have been instances of homosexual themes in films that have enhanced the film's meaning rather than deter the audience to question whether or not the characters feel love because of their gender. *Blue is the Warmest Color* (Keichiche, 2013), that was released not too long ago was once again at the center of attention. But the story at its core was never in question; it was always a love story between two women. The characters relationship, similar to that of a heterosexual couple, enhances the theme of love in the film. The audience of the staged reading have been subjected enough to mainstream media that the two men reading the script are no different than the young couple reading the script. It essentially has the same effect and reads in a similar way to the audience.

The third variation read by Jonathan Hernandez and Tara Harshberger presented the audience with two individuals that were of a different ethnic background. Their intention with this specific reading of the script was to appear as a mother and a son. This reading only appeared in the surveys a total of four times from the audience of the staged reading. Although theirs was an intended familial relationship the audience still continued to interpret the dialogue with a romantic connotation. Racial themes in films have always prevailed in terms of enhancing the overall meaning of the film. *12 Years a Slave* (McQueen 2013) a film that won best picture at the Oscars in 2013 made a significant impact on the audience members. Mark Kermode of www.theguardian.com says in his review of the film that it presented the viewers "with something that is visceral, truthful and electrifying real". The reaction to this variation was not as I estimated. I had assumed because of the reactions that the mainstream audience had to films such as *12 Years a Slave* the audience of the staged reading would have been impacted by this version more

than the survey displays. This may have occurred for several reasons; the demographic of the audience, the intentions of the actors, or even the clarity of the difference in ethnic background. None of this distracted the audience from believing a romantic connotation between the two characters. I can assume that because of the way the staged reading was set up, having a romantic intention for the first script read through, the audience had assumed it for the rest of the variations. I had established the reality of the staged reading: each pair of actors were romantically involved, and something (which is evident in the dialogue) is preventing the pair to be together. Utilizing this knowledge I organized it so that the least “socially accepted” couple to read the script last for the audience.

What I’ve defined as “socially accepted” is what the audience is used to seeing in the mainstream media. What hasn’t been featured in romantic films as often as a romance that blossom between an older woman and a younger man. When this relationship is featured the women are referred to as “cougars”, the romance is never taken seriously. Either the man is a “⁴gold digger”, whom exploits his “⁵sugar mama”, or their sole purpose in the film is to generate comedic relief. In the example of *Pineapple Express* (Green, 2008) Dale Denton (Rogan) has a romantic relationship with a high school student (Amber Heard), and their romance has a comedic effect throughout the film. As Denton, although years older than Heard’s character, he is much less mature than her. The audience has yet to accept a relationship between an older male and a younger female to be completely realistic. In the case of *Don Jon*, the audience had been introduced to the protagonist as a “player”, but the audience’s perception of the world of the film is destroyed when Jon is introduced to the actual love interest of the film who is

⁴ The sole purpose for an individual in a relationship is to ask for money from their significant other

⁵ The woman in the relationship (typically older) that has a significantly larger income than her male counterpart, and willingly gives him money to spend.

at least ten years his senior. Having this in mind, the actors in the staged reading of the last variation of the “The Talk” intended to play characters that are in love, but are blocked because society seems to believe the relationship as unacceptable. The survey proves that the fourth variation was the most impactful according to the audience members, with eight out of the twenty-one audience members indicated that the fourth was their favorite version.

In conducting the staged reading I discovered that what is seen as the social norm is what will prevent the audience from being disoriented when the association between the sign and its signified meaning is disconnected. The disconnection occurs in the staged reading when the audience discovers that four different pairs of actors are performing the same dialogue four different times. The audience understands that after the introduction of the first couple, with a romantic intention that the following couples that read the same dialogue must have a similar intention. The reality that has been built in this instance is that all the couples in the staged reading are going through an end of a relationship. The theme is enhanced when non-traditional couples (couples of different ages, races, and genders) are introduced to the story; relationship and the hurt of break-ups occur within any variations of couples. The audience felt that the last variation between Ferguson and Duvell made the most impact because they understand this theme that has been enhanced by the disassociation of signs that have occurred earlier in the staged reading.

Films of the modern age have the most difficult time generating a narrative that is new and impactful, but through an examination of the fundamentals of a narrative, a new enhanced meaning can be created. Signs and their signified meanings can be changed,

new meanings can be assigned and through that method the themes in the narrative will be enhanced.

Bibliography:

Articles/Books:

Barnett, Lisa A., and Michael Patrick Allen. "Social Class, Cultural Repertoires, and Popular Culture: The Case of Film." *Sociological Forum* 15, no. 1 (March 1, 2000): 145–63

Hughey, Matthew W. "Cinethetic Racism: White Redemption and Black Stereotypes in 'Magical Negro' Films." *Social Problems* 56.3 (2009): 543–577. *JSTOR*. Web. 11 Feb. 2014.

Metz, Christian. "Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film"." In *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology- A Film Theory Reader*, n.d.

Mick, David Glen. "Consumer Research and Semiotics: Exploring the Morphology of Signs, Symbols, and Significance." *Journal of Consumer Research* 13, no. 2 (September 1, 1986): 196–213.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology- A Film Theory Reader*, 198–209. Columbia, 1986.

Peirce, Charles S. *Charles Sanders Peirce: Contributions to The Nation*. Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1975.

Wood, Robin. "On and around Brokeback Mountain." *Film Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (March 1, 2007): 28–31. doi:10.1525/fq.2007.60.3.28.

Websites:

Kermode, Mark. "12 Years a Slave – Review." *The Guardian*, January 11, 2014, sec. Film.
<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/jan/12/12-years-a-slave-review>.

Lane, Anthony. "New Love." *The New Yorker*, October 28, 2013.
http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2013/10/28/131028crici_cinema_lane.

"Cougar." *Urban Dictionary*. Accessed May 4, 2014.
<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=cougar>.

"What Is a Chick Flick? (with Pictures)." *wiseGEEK*. Accessed April 23, 2014.
<http://www.wisegeek.org/what-is-a-chick-flick.htm>.

"Why Do People Go to the Movies Film Philosophy Storytelling." Accessed April 23, 2014.
<http://www.crackingyarns.com.au/about-2/my-film-philosophy/>.

"Definitions of Semiotic Terms." Accessed November 14, 2013.
http://www.uvm.edu/~tstreete/semiotics_and_ads/terminology.html.

Films

Cassavetes, Nick. *The Notebook*. Drama, Romance, 2004.

Gordon-Levitt, Joseph. *Don Jon*. Comedy, Drama, Romance, 2013.

Green, David Gordon. *Pineapple Express*. Action, Comedy, Crime, 2008.

Kechiche, Abdellatif. *Blue Is the Warmest Color*. Drama, Romance, 2013.

Lee, Ang. *Brokeback Mountain*. Drama, Romance, 2006.

Sullivan, Kevin Rodney. *Guess Who*. Comedy, Romance, 2005.

Sternberg, Josef von. *Blonde Venus*. Drama, 1932.

Appendices

Table of Contents

1. Poster for “The Talk” (PDF attachment)
2. Script of “The Talk” (PDF attachment)
3. Cast of the “The Talk”
4. Stage Directions
5. Blank Survey
6. Survey Results (PDF attachment)

Appendix 3: The Cast of “The Talk”

Scene 1:

Sena Rae- Woman
Ben Ferguson- Man

Scene 2:

Charles Hedges- Woman
Jason Bradd- Man

Scene 3:

Tara Hershberger- Woman
Jonathan Hernandez- Man

Scene 4:

Ben Ferguson- Woman
Suzanne Owens Duval- Man

Appendix 4: Stage Directions

Scene 1:

Actors: Ben Ferguson and Sena Rae

Actor Entrances: They will enter from opposite ends of the stage. Ferguson from stage left and Rae from stage right.

Stage Set up: Chairs are five feet apart, facing the audience

Other directions: Never look at each other.

Scene 2:

Actors: Jason Bradd and Matt Hedges

Actor Entrances: Hedges will enter first and sit down facing the audience, and Jason will enter as Hedges reads the first line.

Stage Set Up: There will be one chair, and Jason will walk around Hedges they deliver their lines

Other Directions: Hedges will never look at Bradd throughout the entire scene.

Scene 3:

Actors: Jonathan Hernandez and Tara Hershberger

Actor Entrances: Hershberger will enter first from stage right and sit down. Hernandez will enter after a few beats, and sit next to her.

Stage Set Up: Two seats within two feet of each other.

Scene 4:

Actors: Ben Ferguson and Suzanne Owens-Duvell

Actor Entrances: They will enter from opposite ends of the stage at the same time and sit next to each other.

Stage Set Up: Owens-Duvell's chair will be angled towards Ferguson's.

Appendix 5: Blank Survey

Survey Questions-

- 1.) How old are you?
- 2.) What is your favorite genre of movies?
- 3.) What's your favorite genre of music?
- 4.) What is your favorite pastime? (Rockclimbing, reading, video games)
- 5.) Which variation of the dialogue impacted you the most?
- 6.) Which one did you enjoy the least/confused you the most?