

## **Burn Hollywood Burn**

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I want to see Hollywood in flames. For too long it has perpetuated the image of cross-dressing and gender blurring as something to be mocked, laughed at and often feared.

Growing up, I was not as affected by images of women in movies as I was by the less common yet more troubling images of trannies, because I knew they reflected how the world would see me if I came out. The movies kept me closeted for years.

There's a scene in the movie *Crocodile Dundee* in which the protagonist unknowingly flirts with a tranny in a crowded bar. Surprisingly for a throwaway character, set up only to be knocked down for a cheap laugh, she's given the beautiful name of Gwendolyn.

The main character is informed in the nick of time that Gwendolyn is "a guy dressed as a woman—a fag," but doesn't believe it until he grabs her crotch, which sends Gwendolyn rushing out of the bar while the throngs laugh. In another time, they would have been carrying pitchforks and torches.

Though I found the movie noxious, I watched that scene over and over, pausing the tape, studying every frame. I couldn't help but notice that Gwendolyn didn't have visible facial hair *before* the hero had been informed of her dirty little secret, but *after* both he and the audience have learned the oh-so-*awful* truth, she suddenly has a 3AM shadow.

I felt sorry for Gwendolyn. She had the courage to be herself, only to be humiliated and laughed out of what was probably *her* regular hangout. I imagined what her life was like otherwise, how her day had gone up until then, and decided that after leaving the bar she went and got herself properly laid by a man who appreciated her. I created another movie in my head, one where Gwendolyn was the hero and this macho Australian prick was just a bit player.

In a screenwriting class in the nineties, I wrote a script which featured a transsexual. I was still very much in the closet, but hey, if you can't write about what you know, write about what you *wish* you knew. The character was smart, funny, well-adjusted, and named Sherilyn. (Total coincidence, I swear.)

A classmate who read my script said they weren't sure what to make of Sherilyn, because--and I quote--"The only other transsexual I've seen in a movie is the killer in *The Silence of the Lambs*." Well, sure. Granted, Sherilyn did not kidnap women, starve them, flay them, then tan and stitch their hides together to make a "woman suit." She doesn't stare at her garishly made-up face in a mirror and say "I'd fuck me. I'd fuck me hard!" She doesn't even tell it to put the lotion in the basket or else it gets the hose again. But why get hung up in details?

I later read the novel, and was pleased that it clearly specified that the killer is NOT a transsexual. I then rented the DVD of the Oscar-winning movie and discovered that aside from a reference to transsexuals as "passive," the issue was glossed over. Making it worse somehow was that among the deleted scenes was that crucial bit of information. It was filmed, for fuck's sake, it was in the script and it was filmed, but cut because in Hollywood it's okay to give the impression to millions of viewers that "transsexual" equals "potential homicidal psychopath," just so long as the movie doesn't run fifteen seconds longer than it's supposed to. Besides, this way nobody can accuse them of being "politically correct."

Not that it was the first time. All I have to do is say the words *Dressed to Kill*, and those of you over forty will probably squirm uncomfortably. Remember how you felt when THAT movie came out, especially if you were still closeted?

Thousands of movies are made every year, and while there's been some progress, we're still regularly kicked into the gutter. Even a much-vaunted film like *Transamerica* features a genetic woman playing a transsexual like a goddamn minstrel show.

Someday we'll look back on that the way we look back on Mickey Rooney playing a Chinese man in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. But nothing will change at all if we don't take control of our image, start making our own movies, and say Burn Hollywood Burn!



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