

## ***Five from the Best Picture Series***

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### ***The Helpless***

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Perfect in-flight flick especially during turbulent trans-Oceania crossings. Imagine two-and-a-half hour hurrah for Black Mississippi maids born at the wrong there and time but they were so awe-inspiring I wanted to toast to turbulence and thank heaven for little white girls sticking out their necks when the rainbow was not enough.

Southern belle role models for sheltered Filipino girls before they get knocked up by family drivers or gardeners a.k.a. “live-in companions”—21<sup>st</sup> PC term for indentured servants in the world’s last die-hard Catholic country. Just thank god this is not a Tagalog film, or we’d all end up slitting our wrists from all the crying shouting bitch-slapping. But if the help was Filipina, no way would she go through all the hoopla

to bake her own shit. She'd rather rat-  
poison her master-cum-rapist slowly, invite  
burglars and meth-head sons of has-been  
politicians. If she worked for Chinese or nouveau  
riche, get gangs and cops to coordinate afterschool  
kidnappings. Then, she'd take the first flight  
to Hong Kong, Singapore, or Abu Dhabi and  
repeat the cycle as a live-in nanny, cook, sex  
toy, iron lady, and death row inmate.

## War Whores

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Keep in mind throughout the hundred and forty-six minutes of horseplaying fourteen colts were used to tackle the demanding role of Joey, galloping across endless fields of turnips and corpses as he searched for Albert who'd taught him how to plough before getting deployed to France, where an unexpected bromance with a Topthorn blossomed, a sure bet, always horsing around when they weren't pulling ambulance wagons of dead Germans, in short, inseparable, until Topthorn got existential and willed himself to die.

Grief-stricken, Joey trotted straight for the barbed wires of No Man's Land, where, by fate or bad script, he's reunited with Albert, blinded but only briefly by mustard gas, thank God, nonetheless, a tear-jerker worthy of Oscar's attention, especially Joey's final scene in which he stretched his electrifying death for what seemed like eternity.

## ***Moneyball Huggers, or O.B.P.***

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Last time I saw Brad Pitt, he was aging backwards. So while most men went through a behavior modification stage called Overrated Bachelorhood Phase, Brad was busy making love to Cate Blanchett before taking off on a motorcycle, sparing her from seeing him die as an eighty-year old infant, wrinkled and unwanted as the day his father had left him on the steps of a Black-run whorehouse.

That was two, three years ago. Brad made more movies (and Brangelina babies) after that, none worth skipping Bikram or pilates for, until the Tree of Life (see future stanzas) won Cannes' Palm d'Or. It attracted five film festival buffs east of Honolulu, including me and my friend Lisa who'd snuck in just in time to catch God's name appear on the screen.

After a two-month book tour to promote poetry with a frozen shoulder, I am once again crossing the Pacific from the exit row of Delta's coach class, watching on a small screen another Brad flick where he plays an ex Major-League-player-turned-GM for Oakland Athletics. Non-conformist, he pisses off all board members by hiring a Yale Econ grad to assist him in assembling baseball's dream team that's based, not on experience, but on sabermetric-based OBP or On Base Percentage. Whatever that means but I think it means: Think theory-practice analogy.

I'm not a fan of baseball, basketball, badminton and other B-sports flicks. *Bad News Bears* and *Rocky I, II, III, IV,* and *V* remain the Only Boxing Pic on my tolerance and comprehension list. I prefer dark rooms with singing nuns and serial killers than sinking ships or Smurf-blue digital giants playing H-O-R-S-E in the heart of the Amazon.

Back to Brad so convincing as a superstitious GM convinced his team would break its winning streak if he finally stayed and watched his team play rather than work on his pecs, biceps, and hamstrings that he cured me momentarily of my ADHD even during heavy turbulence, proving once and for all that regardless of big or miniature screen, a smooth or Bette “Bumpy” Davis ride, the blonde hunk only gets better and better with acting and age, making it even more difficult now to be so OBP or Over Brad Pitt.

## ***The Vanishing Tree of Life***

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Begins with five of us munching on popcorn  
and The Book of Job asking us about singing stars  
and our whereabouts when God made earth.  
For a moment—we're hostages to darkness  
slowly shaping into a bright glow as a woman  
mumbles about two paths people must choose:  
the way of grace or nature or the other way.

“What is this Robert Frost bullshit?” a man  
at the very front row says, then storms out.  
I don't know why he's complaining; he snuck  
in just like the rest of us. His loss. He'll completely  
miss out on Brad Pitt's bravura performance  
as a bullying father to three sons in 1950s  
Texas, which does not appear until after  
a volcano explodes and microbes and galaxies  
blossom extravagantly, giving way to an ocean's  
surface choked with hammerhead sharks  
and a brontosaurus tanning on the shore, waiting  
for an impressionist painter or Sir Richard  
Attenborough's or Oprah's voiceover narration.  
They might as well be part of this voiceover-fest.

Two more walk out with one muttering “What a Born-Again propaganda,” and the other, “Pretentious poetic license.” This leaves only Lisa and myself to contend with every organism on earth, living or dead; Jurassic Age, the Milky Way, Solar System, rock-and-roll, and asteroids en route to us — all are included during this Planet Earth-like segment that pops out of nowhere twenty-minutes into the film, as if we sat down to watch Brad Pitt go abusive on us and got transcendentalism instead.

But Lisa, an atheist, is transfixed. Even her frequent anti-Born-Again remarks do not stop her from chain-popping popcorn into her mouth. Who am I to judge? The movie scandalized Cannes as much as Lars Von Trier’s anti-Semitic sentiment. It won the Palm D’Or over *Melancholia*. More prizes followed, including one from the African-American Film Critics Association. It nabbed three Academy Award nominations and received an 84% “Certified Fresh” rating in Rotten Tomatoes dot com.

## ***Midnight in Woody***

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Alice In Allenland.  
Autobiography Of Alice B. Toklas By Gertrude S. Allen.  
Being Woody Malkovich.  
Character Dialysis.  
Dali's Talking Vulva.  
Deconstructing Wooderrida.  
Everything Woody Always Wanted To Ask Woody  
(But Were Afraid To Ask Woody).  
For When Woody's Bell Tolls.  
French Kissinger's Woody.  
Gertrude & Alice & Carol & Woody.  
Husbands And Woodies.  
In Conversation With Woody And Mr. Allen.  
Jumba Jews.  
Kim Chee Chigae By Cho Woody.  
Knock On Woody.  
M. Butterfly By M. Allen.  
Neil Simon, Are You There? It's Me, Woody.  
Old Woody And The Sea.  
One Thousand Ways To Braid Picasso's Nosehairs.  
Portmanteau: Woon-Yi.  
Quiet On Woody's Western Front End.

Reflections Of Woody's Things To Come & Go.  
Scarlett Woohansen.  
Still-Life With Woody Woodpecker.  
Trapped With Woody Inside Woody.  
Unidentifiable Flying Woody.  
Victor/Victoria, Woody/Woodyn't.  
Woody When Slippery.  
Xeroxing Woody.  
You Will Meet a Tall, Dark Woody.  
Zelda By Zelig.