

CRASHING (FEVER DREAM) NOTES/JOURNAL
6.16.03 - 5.17.05

"DIVINE INVASIONS" BY LAWRENCE SUTIN (7/13 - 7/24/03)

PDK uses junk props of SF genre to fashion intensely visionary fiction. (p1)

Types 120 wpm

"I want to write about people I love, and put them in a fictional world spun out of my own mind, not the world we actually have, because the world we actually have does not meet my standards." (p4)

re. his readers "they cannot or will not blunt their intimations about the irrational, mysterious nature of reality." (p.5)

Religious visions that PDK tries to make sense of (visions of his breakdown will form grist of future fiction). [this could be FD framing device]

Repercussions of drug use (Dick would have used acid-grass-speed) (Does Dick smoke pot with Haley and that further unhinges him?)

PDK's Themes: what is real? what is human?

Death of twin sister Jane.

Happily married to Kleo, they move to Point Reyes and in 2 weeks he falls in love with Anne.

"I could tell the difference between the real world and the world that I write about." (p74)

PDK's voracious literary reading. His theory of *Finnegan's Wake*: the text is Earwicker's dream from which he wakes at novels end. (p79)

Crashing back in time to stand beside bed and see his earlier self (p84)

SF novels published quickly, mainstream novels languished (p85)

Mainstream fiction freezes him up -- he loses his sense of humor. (p93)

Eye in the Sky, Joint, 3 Stigmata, Ubik, & Maze are the same novel written over and over again. (p95)

His possessions when moving into Anne's house: Royal Electric, many books and records, MAD MAGAZINE collection. (p101)

PDK to Anne: "You know, it takes 20 to 30 years to succeed as a literary writer."

Anne: "We talked about Schopenhauer, Leibnitz, monads, and the nature of reality." (p103)

The *I Ching* -- he used to help figure out plots (such as High Castle). (p.109)

"With High Castle and Martian Time-Slip, I thought I had bridged the gap between the experimental mainstream novel and science fiction." (p117)

PDK and Anne alternate weekly visits to shrink. (p121)

Characters, personal situations, and work situations reflected in his SF -- re. "downtrodden" elements.

PDK's minimal SF "hardware: he mostly plops characters on to a nearby Martian colony of post-holocaust Earth, talking homeostatic devices, some telepathic or precognitive characters, brand new drugs. (p129)

re. Palmer Eldritch concepts: secret invasion of alien forces beyond our comprehension, Barney Mayerson trying to win his wife back, Martian colonists yearn for the world of Perky Pat, advice from Dr. Smile, Palmer Eldritch proves to be everyone (at least for a while). (p129)

Barney wakes up in a strange bed with a woman and turns on Dr. Smile. (p129)

Leo Bulero defeats Palmer Eldritch, the demiurge creator of prison world. (p133)

Phil asks woman to hide in closet. (p134)

Phil's blueprint for novels. 3 persons, 3 levels, 2 themes (one outer or world-sized, the other inner or individual sized). (p138)

Phil loves urgently, ardently, hilariously. (p139)

He couldn't help but laugh at the loopy plots that SF allowed him. (p151)

Q: Do you believe in the afterlife? Burroughs' answer: "How do you know you're not dead already?" (p153)

Runciter in *Ubik* resorts to unique stratagems to get his message across: appearing on bathroom walls, matchbook covers, tacky TV commercials. (p153)

Phil deals with things that codings. (p169)

Phil would **fantasize** -- quickly, vividly, ardently, and **in ideal terms** -- ardent futures with women he'd just met or scarcely knew [CAN THIS HAPPEN WHEN DICK MEETS SHEILA/HALEY/DIANE?] (p171)

PDK keeps ardently falling in love -- with 2 lesbians. (p172)

"I was imposing myself on them and their reality the way I do in a book. (p173)

2 girls take Phil in as a roommate, he sleeps on their couch. Squabbles over money and household chores. His economics mesh with theirs (broke). (p194)

Agoraphobia often confines him to house, even to the bedroom. (p198)

Phil stresses his literary affinity with the Beats. (p200)

Insists that others read his work right away [SHEILA/HALEY? imagines how they imagine his work.]

Producing a body of work that is ignored -- then: rising fame.

"There is, in this country, a tendency to look down with contempt on people who are in financial trouble....I fight that attitude." (p207)

"2-3-74" breakdown/visions

Eight year, 8,000 page handwritten *Exegesis* devoted to figuring out the visions. (p209)

"taken over by one or more archetypes" -- impacted wisdom tooth/sodium pentathol -- doorbell rings, girl with black hair wearing fish symbol delivers Darvon from drugstore. Very ancient memories, predating life, are triggered. (p210) [THE WORLD TALKING TO HIM -- WHEN HE GOES OUT TO STORE --VOICES?]

"It was as if linear time was illusion and true time was layered: simultaneous realities stacked one upon the other." (p.211) [PEEL BACK LAYERS -- DIGITAL EFFECT?]

"I began to go outdoors at night to watch the stars, with the strong impression that information was coming from them." (p214)

Pets seem more intelligent, trying to communicate. Radio abuses Phil with obscenities.(p218)

Important information conveyed on a baby's cereal box. **Reads galley proofs in a dream.** (p.219)

Phil retained ability to see how loopy his experiences were. (p.221)

Phil wonders if his psyche has merged with his late friend Bishop Pike. (p.221)

Goes to bed for a week at a time, all meals and snacks brought there, he just gets up to write. (p.223)

God talks to him through *Strawberry Fields* song. (p.225)

He feels like he is a protagonist in a PDK book -- mixture of *Impostor*, *Joint & Maze* & *Ubik*. (p234)

Doris recalls: Phil had two switches: *I'm not writing now and I want you attention entirely* and *I'm writing now leave me alone.* (p.242)

Phil rereads his old stuff in light of 2-3-74: "So one dozen novels & too many stories to count narrate a message of one world obscuring another (real) one, spurious

memories...& your memories are faked to jibe with the fake world." (p.244)

Joan: "he was a living actuality of his novels...This wasn't a person who had this inspirational idea for a story or novel and wrote it down. This was a person's experience." (p.247)

You couldn't tell Phil "get out of bed, you'll feel better. He didn't respond well to reality therapy." (p.249)

"My books are intellectual (conceptual) mazes & I am in an intellectual maze trying to figure out our situation... because the *situation* is a maze." (p.254)

"Every novel of mine is at least two novels superimposed. This is the origin; this is why they are full of loose ends, but also, it is impossible to predict the outcome, since there is no linear plot as such." (p.256)

Fashioning theories for novels that poked indelible holes in official reality. (p263)

The Owl in Daylight -- new project that he is working on (at time of death). Considers laminating multiple plot ideas together. One version is a Dantesque Inferno-Purgatorio-Paradisio structure, backdrop to tale of scientist imprisoned in amusement park by angry computer. Only by solving ethical dilemmas can the scientist -- trapped in a boy's body -- reach Paradisio and recollect his true self. (p281)

Different (final) version of *Owl*: a composer lives in the boonies, he makes a living writing scores for schlocky SF movies. An alien who has had a religious experience with music travels to Earth to track down the composer and learn how music is composed.

POSSIBLE SF (7/10 - 7/24/03)

Dick writing about a clan of outer space crazies who then take up residence with him when he is left alone in the house. A group of depressives on a shuttle home who wreck on a desert planet and are too depressed to do anything about it -- WAITING FOR GODOT in outer space. (6/23/03)

RECALL -- someone discovering that they are not human.

Lars as existential hero (alone in hostile universe).

"Think Tank"

He's afraid to sleep because demons might haunt him (re. Poe, re. TZ)

Encountering someone else's hallucinations (e.g., Haley's -
- this could be basis for dream section)

re. Lovecraft's "Hypnos" -- visit world of dreams and get zapped by forces from other dimension.

"Whisperer in Darkness" -- invasion of invisible aliens

telepathy

time travel

alien invasion

zapped by dreams

"Maze of Death"

TZ episodes

"And When the Sky Opened" -- people disappearing (story was originally about a writer, not astronauts!)

People disappearing from Lars' world (as Dick feels more constricted in his world)?

OR: People disappearing from Dick's world as he goes crazy (instead of prosaic good-byes ala "cheerleader camp").

"Death Ship" -- loops into fantasies -- caused by death? or telepathic aliens? Relates to "Maze of Death"

Character trying to find his way back to sanity.

The demi-urge creator of a prison world (it is a creator who has made Lars a prisoner -- last plot twist revelation).

Crashing back in time to see an earlier self.

Erotic SF (ala "Void Captain's Tale")

"L'AVVENTURA" on a desert planet.

Start with Lars on a spaceship -- then reveal that spaceship is wrecked on a hostile moon.

Faulty memory

UBIK in relation to consumer culture.

Teenagers as aliens.

As Lars wanders along he is assailed by images that are projected directly into his head.

As Lars wanders around, he broadcasts images into people's heads. (Happy Black Holes?) Unbeknownst to himself, he is regarded as a religious leader and saint back on the home planet that he has been exiled from. (7/24/03)

Reverse RECALL -- on another planet an "alien" Lars suspects that he is actually a human. (7/31/03)

POSSIBLE NEW SCENES (6/03 - 7/31/03)

GENERAL

As NFU Confession?

VO to expand narrative scope ala "AND..."

Diane wants to have a baby -- doesn't regard Dick as an appropriate choice.

Talk show guy is Dick imagining himself successful.

OR: A more successful writer that Dick sees on TV (sets up later fantasy). **Friend haunts Dick by recurring in the media. The Doppelganger of Success.**

Dick over-theorizes about success/failure.

Dick's friends? That he talks to on phone, that he emails.

Dick's Diary/Journal -- could be VO: we hear Dick's thoughts

Explicitly talk about PKD -- imagine him coming back and being appalled by the industry that his work has turned into.

Disastrous outing prior to refusing to go outside of house

---with Diane?

---Shopping Mall (sets up "bread" speech)

TTWD/Clenon desert scenes as FD alternate reality

Structure FD as acid trip -- sex is first rush.

OPENING

Dick is driving through desert to LA, which is what gets him thinking about desert SF -- Desert seems realer to him than his self.

Epistolary contact with Diane prior to trip to LA. Emails, visualized would circumvent "catching up" scene. Does he present himself to Diane in an "appealing" way? No, his honest presentation of his difficulties is appealing.

MID-SECTION

Heightened breakfast routine (ala Pi/Requiem)

Show the stop and start of writing?

Dinner Party with Outside People

---Diane

---Sheila

---embarrassing re. he's broke, no job prospects

Dick & Haley persist in having sex with Sheila at home (& vice versa)

(Connecting bathroom from Haley's to Dick's room?)

Hiding in closet: use as subtheme (permutations)

Sheila serves Dick meals in bed -- agoraphobia prior to breakdown?

He sees symbols for things in *everything* -- this happens when he makes trip to store -- the *world* talking to him -- voices?

BREAKDOWN

Desert as landscape for breakdown scenes (beyond original TTWD fragments)

Lars wanders out of desert to highway, hitchhikes to LA (shifts perception that prison planet is actually Earth).

Lars shows up during hallucinations, and/or on park bench at end.

As Dick disappears, he is replaced by Lars (he goes out into the ether and returns as Lars).

After breakdown, Dick is replaced, Lars takes over story. Lars' behavior suggests/illuminates Dick's. It is Lars who breaks out of house -- once out of house, it is Dick again. Perhaps during breakdown Dick & Lars cohabit house -- Dick has conversations, watches TV with Lars. His madness is having his fictional character invade his life. Maybe the pressure on him as a writer is to continue on with the same character as his first novel, but he can't get it to work (mirrors the difficulty with "continuing MASTER DEBATER in the form of LAUREL CYN) (re. PERSONA, PERFORMANCE) Maybe Lars kills Dick, but upon re-emerging from house, it is Dick again.

This Dick/Lars replacement could achieve a Borgesian structural balance where they each seem to be dreaming the other. Explore the moment when the fictional creation achieves self-consciousness (independent of creator).

ALT: have Dick disappear limb by limb as he talks to Diane.

After breakdown, Dick imagines that he is being interviewed in bed.

What vision accompanies his breakdown? What does he return with?

ENDING

Story is a dream that he awakens from (to face blank page?) Pullback to reveal that he is in new house with Diane.

Dick sleeps with Diane and realizes that she is not the key to his happiness. She is attracted to him because other women are. The English teacher turns out to be Dick's soul mate (does she enter the SF?)

Gets over idea of Diane as unrequited love (ala Paula Fridkin).

STRONG ASPECTS OF TTWD

Artist struggling

Unrequited love in close proximity

Reality/fiction interplay

DAN: I liked the way the different romantic predicaments sort of coalesced into a soup, and I liked the way that the protagonist had an amused self-awareness even as he was spiraling downward. The psychological decline and the sex fantasy happening together gave an interesting ambiguous tone.

Don't think I disliked very much. Maybe I wish Villard were a little less goofy.

WEAK ASPECTS OF TTWD

Content of Dick's fiction isn't that interesting

Too many scenes are too one-dimensional (fish, eel, melting, girl turns into alien)

Writer imagining and reimagining things underdeveloped

His fictional life is too confined to GCG -- what if he were keeping a journal?

Opening section/set-up could be stronger

Escaping from house through ending could be much stronger -- he has no clear moment of revelation.

Doesn't really make a change from passive to active (ala Benjamin in The Graduate).

Sheila too broad. Tight-ass = too like Diane? A materialist, a status-seeker? Or Sheila could be more of a hippie (a hippie disciplinarian). Probably works better to have her be a control freak, trying to control everything in her house.

Diane is not that interesting of a character -- we stand too far outside of her. She is largely a moralistic scold (maybe that is okay).

WHAT MIGHT MAKE "FEVER DREAM" STRONGER

Make his character funnier -- make more use of **his intelligence at odds with his limited self-understanding.**

Put more of myself in it (EG, **someone who flits from task to task, who is writing several things at once**).

He undertakes a detailed plan for seducing Diane that fails.

Go more in the direction of the mystical breakdown section in terms of structure (broaden usage).

Bolder transitions between the places -- re. the stylistic complexity of NFU.

Minimize dial / make uniquely imagistic

The theme of BEAT might apply: there's something just around the corner that will make one happy.

Pay attention to: Emotional reality of characters.

Pay attention to: Emotional context of scenes.

REFERENCE FILMS/VIEWING LIST

Rear Window
The Passing
The Tenant
Brazil
El Topo

Alphaville
 Pi
 3 Women
 Exterminating Angel
 Simon of the Desert
 Paris, Texas (and Wenders in general)
 My Sex Life...Or How I Started an Argument

FILMS ABOUT WRITERS

√Swimming Pool
 √Deconstructing Harry
 Reconstruction (Norwegian)
 √Wonder Boys
 Adaptation
 As Good As It Gets
 The Shining
 √Manhattan
 Mother
 Providence
 √Sex & Lucia
 Martin Brest's first film

JOURNAL OF A FEVER DREAM

1/24/03

ABSTRACTED ELEMENTS

He refuses to get an ordinary job -- show?

An innocent/naïf

Girls chase him (reversal of expectation)

Bumbler who strives to get something (girl, write successful book)

6/16/03

CONVERSATION WITH BOB BERNEY TODAY -- HE THINKS TTWD REMAKE IS A GREAT IDEA.

Like Woody Allen -- struggle with art, struggle with women (but Woody Allen's characters are usually monetarily successful).

A guy struggling--

parallels in his fictional world--

enters a room-mate situation--

can't have the girl he wants (show fantasies)--

lets himself be seduced by mother & daughter--
descends into madness, comes out other side (Show with
what).

The book that he writes is about what he just experienced.

Remaking TTWD is re-living an obsession to try and escape
from it. Reliving an obsession in a different way to try
and escape from it.

Character manipulates story VS. story manipulates
character.

Dick was never successful.

3 women as the 3 sides of his psyche ("**Sentimental
Education**" all in one place).

His dreams are all non-verbal -- too literal, too
conventionally "movie dream-like" -- make some of the
dreams verbal.

Dick has anxiety about going in to see Diane. This is
where he has thoughts/fantasies? (DS thinks that this
undermines unity.) Make more modern, more angular, more
personal -- displace more aspects of myself into the
character.

6/22/03

Moment of self-consciousness when character (Dick? Lars?)
wonders if he is fictional (not real).

SF character has relationship/sexual problems.

**Riffing off idea that the construction of a personality is
like the construction of a novel (self-created) (where did
I first come across this idea?) -- Different First Chapters
ala "Manhattan" -- Show process of revision, but not
literally, rather with complexity of VO material.**

6/23/03

Dick writes about: Character worries that first sexual
experience will be pivotal, will set tenor of all future
sexual relations, and so gets spooked about doing something
weird and wrong that will screw him up forever. (If he is
young he could enter the house a virgin.)

SF coming-of-age story -- Dick's reluctance to let go of genre to tell his own story (this is what he does at the end?)

DAN: The reverse would be better (if he returns to genre).

He tries to tell a straight-up coming-of-age story to overcome prejudices that he isn't a "real" writer and this doesn't work -- it is genre that liberates him to tell his stories. Genre frees his imagination. Diane could have highbrow prejudices (sound familiar?) and he succumbs to those prejudices to unhappy result. Dick loves great literature, but what he does is something different, and that is what he has to re-learn to stay true to. (this resonates with PDK's life)

Dick doesn't care who listens, he just wants to tell it (hard drive as ultimate work of art).

Funny/inappropriate intellectual conversations with Haley because she'll listen (rather than talking down to her) (she writes a YA book?). She wants to hang out with him as a writer. Show a scene from her fiction. Open up to little curlicues like this to embellish movie. Explore their idyll as a forbidden lovers' paradise within the house.

6/26/03

THOUGHTS RE. WATCHING TTWD AGAIN.

(Pleased that I liked it -- boosts confidence)

SF too cheesy, not cerebral enough. Should the SF reflect a failed attempt to be commercial (like GW's failed attempts to write a commercial script)? Doesn't relate enough to Dick's personality, his imaginative struggles.

Dick's relation to SF

Cultural perception of SF (1985 VS. 2003)

Sheila not fully developed (ditto Haley to a lesser extent -- but she's young).

Insanity in house not fully realized.

Last section (post-house) weak.

6/27/03

Dick imagines himself to be a TV station that nobody watches. His VO describes this as we see scenes of his imaginary TV station.

Elaborate elliptical narrative sequences with V.O.

6/28

Same actor plays Dick and Lars?

Have Clennon play new SF character and use TTWD footage as alternate reality.

Dick tries writing non-genre fiction (maybe at Diane's suggestion). Doesn't work at all. He goes back to writing in genre, which frees his imagination.

GW TO DAN: I thought he could be working on a coming-of-age SF story, but eventually abandons genre to just tell a coming-of-age story. Not to look down on SF, but to say that in Dick's case genre is a contrivance that is blocking him from direct expression. Maybe.

DAN TO GW: Seems a little too pat. I'd rather go the other way around! He could rewrite an earlier story to make it work (which mirrors me remaking TTWD).

6/29

His first novel never reached an audience.

Theme: continuing in the face of indifference, obscurity.

Diane thinks he is crazy for continuing to do something that drives him crazy and is unfulfilling. Diane ultimately comes to admire Dick for doing it for himself.

Calls Diane from desert as he is driving into town. Palm Springs as SF setting.

LA landscape -- too much sun, fun -- act of self to stay indoors.

LA as SF landscape.

Pasadena as landscape of So Cal academia. Art Center? Cal Tech?

Dick lacks a killer instinct.

Dick takes notes re. construction of self like a novel.
LISTS HIS CHARACTER FLAWS IN HIS JOURNAL (could be funny) -
 - a way of showing his self-awareness and lack there of.
 Maybe tells Diane about idea of personality constructed
 like a novel. What novel is Diane? Dick? Sheila? Haley?

Diane Novel = Calvinist or story of nun/scientist.
 Sheila Novel = story of unrecognized suburban artistic
 genius (she's knowledgeable about outsider art).
 Haley Novel =

Back story: Could Dick have been a scientist but turned to
 science fiction instead?

How Dick is susceptible to criticism -- how that can affect
 and adversely affect his writing.

Could make use of my own personal failings with alien
 stories (RECALL, LM 4.0) -- maybe Dick is writing an alien
 story that Diane criticizes for not being real. An alien
 trapped in a human body. "Inner Alien"

6/30/03

re. "Exterminating Angel" -- can't leave house. Same MX
 when he first goes in house? Make entering the house the
 first time a charged moment? (no melodrama at the start of
 "Exterminating Angel")

**DAN: I'm not sure that all great filmmakers think in terms
 of theme. It can be a little dangerous - it's a potential
 way to eliminate perfectly good things and impose not-as-
 good ones. Anyway, you can usually pick a bunch of
 plausible themes to describe any film.**

**To me, the mood of FD/TTWD is governed by the contrast
 between Dick's immersion in an idyllic sex fantasy and his
 coming unglued. That's not exactly a theme: more a
 thumbnail sketch of a creative direction. The writer's
 block, often funny, is for me more a way into this
 situation. It's not the only way of looking at the
 material, I'm sure.**

(make more of sex idyll)

DAN RE SF: I always thought the concept was to have this
 material be not too profound, but amusing in the mundane

ways that it echoes Dick's life problems. That worked for me. It might work with a different concept as well. But I don't see that this particular script needs an original and arresting SF story. And if I had one, I think I'd save it for the end instead of the beginning!

(think of Christopher Guest -- amusing can be quite enough)

PKD infuses his SF with the mundane. (Having Lars Shrike in a wild prison costume seems to defeat that.)

GW TO DAN: I think the idea that Dick tries non-genre writing and fails at it, then goes back into genre is a good one. Is it too pat if **he rewrites an earlier story that failed and finally gets it to work?**

DAN: I don't think it's too pat. The writing is kind of a wink at the audience in the original, so some conventionality seems okay.

7/5/03

Dick rewrites earlier story (which parallels me remaking earlier film). Diane criticizes him for telling same story all over again -- not moving on.

Dick -- imagining an alternate life of success (ties into talk show). Can talk show scene be used as recurring element? Can it recur after it's first appearance in breakdown?

Social context for the women. Sheila has a best friend who comes over to the house. They all have social lives except for Dick. His life should get reduced down to his room rather than starting with that reduction.

Script is set in academic world -- should Dick regret dropping out of that?

7/6/03

Dick's room ultimately becomes an outpost for surrealist experience.

Jamie as a model for Sheila. Giftos as model for Sheila.

Spare VS. Sparse. One-dimensional VS. Bressonian. TTWD lacked a powerful, iconic directness, in part because of Villard's persona.

Imagine it with a less talkative "type."

re. "The Women" -- have Dick be the only man in the story (EG Samsa is a woman).

7/11/03

In TTWD too many scenes are clunky in terms of providing exposition, instead of immersing us in action and boldly pushing the story along. This is particularly true of the opening section.

re. Borges -- a dream that fulfills itself.

Existential: he is alone at the end (therefore: alone at beginning)

Posit that the universe as genuinely strange (ala breakdown section). Dick could have weird visions and when he comes out of them, he is standing in a different place (this is what happens in TTWD breakdown).

Intellectual conversation (make Dick more GWish).

7/13/03

Thomas Disch in "SF at Large":

SF is par excellent literature of students -- fantasies for those impatient with education, anxious for economic independence, highly developed day-dreaming, little emotional or moral sophistication.

HERO WITH A 1,000 FACES

--labyrinth visited in dreams

--pattern:

separation from world
penetration of power source
life-enhancing return

7/15/03

Dick doesn't want Diane to find out about the dalliances with Haley and Sheila -- milk this more than in the

original TTWD (in TTWD Diane catches Dick with Sheila right away.)

Play with idea of making Dick younger, post-collegiate. Back (or not so back) story of him leaving home, parents' expectations to try something different. Dan says that it alters the paradigm of career crisis, that it makes Dick closer in age to Haley, which turns it into a variant on THE GRADUATE (a pre-career crisis). (If Dick is young he could enter the house a virgin.)

(ala THE GRADUATE set in a house. A grad student moves in with an older divorcee, starts having an affair with her (that she instigates). When her daughter comes back home, the mom insists that they keep the affair secret. He gets interested in the daughter, but insists that they keep it secret from the mother (because he knows that the mother would freak out). It places him in a state of unbearable psychological tension.)

What if Dick is closer in age to Haley and decides that he wants to "marry" her, despite all the obstacles.

7/16/03

Dogged by the vaporous solipsistic lack of originality of the entire venture.

solipsism = self is the only thing that can be known and verified

7/17/03

DAN (phone call): Dick writes an SF game. Something trendy about virtual reality. **Sense of failure central to TTWD.** Dick sends Haley to play game in her room. Virtual world populated by people.

Hard imagining SF without Clennon/Lars in striped suit.

Conservative tendency to preserve too much of TTWD = so why bother with re-duplication remake?

Dick enters the house with a sense of failure -- tries to deny this -- it grows more acute. At outside dinner party, Dick tries to present himself as successful and fails. George Costanza.

7/18/03

Drugs in Dick's SF? Haley smokes dope?

Details of Dick's life go into his fiction -- with TTWD/GCG this only happens with Lottie's appearance in story.

Etiquette of smoking cigarettes (1985 vs. 2003)

7/19/03

Try to erase images of TTWD -- imagine FD action in someplace other than Monrovia house.

re. PDK bio -- so obvious (once again) that the good stuff comes out of one's life, not as the product of "research" or contrivance.

So: What is the story that I keep telling to myself? How do I look forward in my life? How do I look back?

I can do something long-lasting that redeems what failures I experience in the present. Transcendent accomplishment VS. the ephemera of transitory success. Sounds vaguely like Christian postponement of happiness to the afterlife. With me as an agnostic Jesus, the noble sufferer --

-- have Dick express this. Transitory sex. Sex vs. Art. **Sex on planet distracts Lars from escaping.** Loses sense of his body. Sex becomes meaningless?

Sexual tension in Dick-Haley-Sheila scenes. Each pair hides involvement from other pair. Both Sheila and Haley play footsy with Dick under the table (or is that too corny?).

re. "FOUR NIGHTS OF A DREAMER" -- FD could be Bressonian!

---isolated artist

---sexual tension in house between lodger, mother, daughter

---characters telling each other their story (as basis for narrative digressions)

---his art is a reflection of images of women

---re. FD: Dick's writing is the equivalent of the Bressonian hero's taped recorded conversations.

---FD ALT: Dick tells Haley his life story (different from life story that he tells Diane).

re. PDK:

Dick can't help writing SF. He gets by with it, barely, has some critical rep, but not fame. He imagines he would be happier as a mainstream writer, but that just isn't what he does (obvious parallels with GW's self-tortures). His life is prosaic and complicated and downtrodden, but he has this extraordinary thing that he does, that the people in his day to day life don't really see, and he comes to doubt. There is the profound contrast between the world of his imagining and the world that he inhabits. But not really. Because he takes the characters and problems of his real life and uses them as the fodder/basis for the unique future that he hypothecates.

When you see this person you immediately sense how complicated he is, a mix of profound happiness and unhappiness, **forever locked in his head, trying to make contact**. An appealing mix of sophistication and emotional naiveté.

He imagines an alternate reality of sex.

An alternate reality of different marriages (with Diane, Haley, Sheila).

David Kahn's two (?) failed marriages.

7/22/03

DAN: The danger of analytical thought as applied to the creative process -- inevitable, but dangerous.

DAN: In TTWD there was no issue of confusing SF. **SF is good because it reflects his extended-kid personality aspect. He is childlike, SF is childlike.**

Play with limitations of Dick's sensibility -- rather than transcending SF, he simply writes better SF at end. (this doesn't happen in TTWD)

SF makes Dick unpretentious, offbeat, willing to endure the scorn of some.

SF changes Diane's attitude toward Dick. Does Diane (analogous to Clare) urge him to write "serious" stuff?

re. "stakes" -- he can't stop because his whole sense of self is bound up with his work.

Kerouac as model?

---initial publishing deal, book unsuccessful
 ---followed by failure, manuscripts produced in obscurity
 ---when he gets success he's not taken seriously by
 literary establishment
 TTWD = catching Kerouac in his middle years

SF because he has wild imagination -- would he imagine wild things in the house?

Haley hostile to Dick -- surprises him by wanting sex?

RE. SWIMMING POOL

--genre vs. "literary" writing
 ---author is stale
 ---reality is more interesting than what she does
 ---she must twist reality to conform to genre
 ---revelation of dementia at end undermines/contradicts
 psychological acuity of what proceeds it.
 ---NOT EXPLORED: how girl would alter her behavior once she
 knows that she is subject.

Diane doesn't "see" Dick because she is stern,
 disapproving. Sheila idealizes him as a writer. Only
 Haley engages him in conversation, confides in him -- he
 has a childlike quality she relates to. She takes him out
 with one of her girlfriends (she gets off on showing off
 the illicit affair?). Dick starts writing about Haley, her
 life. When Haley realizes that Dick is writing about her
 (he doesn't know that she knows), she modifies her
 behavior. Lottie is too abstract a version of Haley.
 (entering story/Dick's life).

The dullness of his writing compared to interacting with
 Haley.

Is he trapped into writing a story that he no longer
 believes in?

If Dick writes about Haley in his SF, Diane could see this
 and object to it. (or does she object to aliens in
 general?)

[analogy of Diane seeing that he is writing about the
 crashing on the couch girls]

7/24/03

futilities of waking consciousness

indirection

exquisite pregnancy of ending

Fever Dream = dream. **It is an elaborate dream that occurs in a split second. Real time expands to accommodate the elaborate fantasy.**

DREAMS

freefalls

turn-arounds

abolition of cause and effect

evanescent temptresses -- enters bed

pains proliferated

pleasures deferred

7/25/03

Is Dick obsessed with Diane as someone who he wanted as a girlfriend, but he was too shy, and she wouldn't take him seriously in that way? Does he fantasize about Diane?

Maybe Diane recalls a time when she might have gone for Dick, but he was too shy to act. (fuels his regret)

Dick was virginal in college -- and he can't say no to Sheila or Haley because he is making up for all those things that didn't happen when he was younger (he says/explains this at some point). [this same logic would apply to Crashing]

7/27/03

It's a mood piece -- so be careful to maintain important underpinnings of the mood (EG, career disappointment).

What if SF/fiction is a silent movie? B & W? What if breakdown is silent? (re. silent footage in PERSONA)

Increase visionary aspect.

Complex, jeweled sequences.

Melding of "Fund Raising" narrative and TTWD -- TTWD was about thirtyish failure because my life was.

Set Lars on path of coming to visit Dick.

Show how advice or comments forever color Dick's judgments and perceptions of something he has written.

re. Shakespeare -- just set up great characters in great scenes, don't worry about how you get there.

7/30

Lars wakes up, wonders aloud how he got there -- CB answers him.

8/8/03

Lars wonders if he is alien. Play with alien vs. human theme (what is real, what is human).

8/9/03

Imagine writing the story as the capture of documentary footage, to be edited later.

Take new ideas that I like and use them as germs/seeds of new narrative.

What if the story is all the alternatives, it's final form is a tentative, circling, contradictory outline.

Sheila lives in Palm Springs (directly tie in desert)?

8/10/03

A character who lives in his head creates characters who think they are of the world but also just live in his head.

Deal with "passivity" directly, in dial.

UNDATED CAR NOTES:

Dick sees Haley's conquests.

Dick hears Diane & Art fucking.

Snooping around house, Dick finds journal and uses it for seduction.

CRASHING ON THE COUCH (as key concept):

8/13/03

NOUVELLE VAGUE FILM REFERENCES FROM DAN:

BREATHLESS

LE CARRIERE DE SUZANNE (Rohmer)

LA COLLECTIONNEUSE (Rohmer)

ALL BOYS ARE CALLED PATRICK (Rohmer-Godard) re. feel not
subject matter

ADIEU PHILIPPINE -- Jacques Rozier

TWO ENGLISH GIRLS

8/14/03

re. CRASHING ON THE COUCH

--Dick has lost his apt. because he was living with a
girlfriend who threw him out.--Dick is broke because he staked everything on a novel
that he can't sell.--Dick's friend (not super-close?) is the teacher at the
State College where he goes to speak.**He talks about what is going on in his mind (Rohmer).**Dick's fictional account of events as he is living them
(re. Claire's Knee).

Production Idea: get a writer to play the writer.

Re. (in reaction to) "SWIMMING POOL": he finds himself in a
situation richer than his fiction. The battle between
wanting experience (public) and wanting solitude to write.re. Truffaut "emotion expressed more openly in art than in
life" (is this counter to Rohmer's expression of thoughts?)

Sex on the couch VS. in the bedroom.

8/15/03

more CRASHING ON THE COUCH

Dick keeps a diary. Diary VS. Fiction.

Dick sneaks around and reads the diaries that the girls are
keeping (the girls are both aspiring writers).Dick realizes that he can do a better version of a story
that one of the girls is secretly writing.

Or Dick realizes that his version of reality is at great variance with how the girls present events in their diaries.

He can mine their diaries for more "commercial" fiction than he is capable of writing on his own.

Diane teaches writing -- she is one who brought Dick in to speak. Model her after Rachel Resnick (?), the "Go West Young Fucked-Up Chick." Does she introduce Dick to the babes (writing students) that Dick ends up crashing with?

Diary of Impecunious Decision-Making (this ultra-mundane thought processes)

How Dick imagines the girls' thought processes

Re. Ron/stakes --

Stakes test = can hero opt out?

In absence of dramatic stakes, need intellectual or thematic content

REPRISED FROM (HANDWRITTEN) NOTEBOOK:

Wants to get laid, can't (re. Continuous Victim)

Shyness

Belated coming of age story

Narcissism reflected in someone else (one of the girls is narcissistic?)

Conceptual/structural elements that intuitively coincide with personal interests

---sex

---vindication of the downtrodden self

---a way out of obsession

He sees deja vu of younger self in apt. situation

Minutiae of consciousness -- thought process

MODELS (femme)

Rachel Resnick

Samantha (was a fashion model in Japan)

Kathleen Wilhoit
 The Winona Ryder-ish girl (dark-haired waif with barbed
 tongue)

Erica Taylor (+ "The Sun Maiden")
 Mary Otis
 Mary (?) _____ (struggling to be straight)
 Kimberly Bellman (rock vid lady)
 Laurel Green
 Maureen Adair
 Eliot Street's wife
 Jim Krusoe -- as a character + his literary voice
 Patrick McCord (as a girl?)

Ms. Larger Than Life -- who has adventures that Dick
 voyeuristically observes

Dick is doomed to move from infatuation to infatuation,
 just as he re-experiences infatuation with each new
 manuscript that he starts. Is it a comedy if he never
 breaks through to true self-awareness? (or is that
 "unsatisfying?")

8/16/03

Dick lectures (or speaks to writing group) at State College
 -- speaks about characters being in a situation of choice.

Dick is broke and in his lecture speaks about the
 possibility of having to move back in with his parents --
 lecture audience isn't sure if he is joking or not. He has
 a self-deprecating manner that is charming. The girls
 wonder if he is joking, they learn after that his
 predicament in real (at a bar or a party afterwards).

Driving around, talking about how the world has changed --
 e.g., muffler shop as endangered species.

MORE DS ADVICE: in TTWD, sex-fantasy was balanced with
 downward slide. Need something to balance with sex-
 fantasy. (He wasn't sure if I was keeping the career
 crisis/mid-life stuff.)

re. "Sisters of Mercy"

Stress ordinariness/details of Dick's daily life

Period where he bonds with the girls -- then he begins to be an outsider/observer.

Promises himself he won't leave unless he finishes The Book or has a salable manuscript.

Can I forget about Dick Kendred and make myself less pathetic (historically accurate though that is), more the character I want to create in THIS moment?

What interests me about the situation? The indigence, in a socially exposed situation. All the potential for awkwardness:

they go to class early, he sleeps late,
 if they want to watch TV, they have to be in his presence,
 he can watch all of their movements, they grow
 uncomfortable as they realize that he is observing them,
 they don't have any privacy (they can't talk among
 themselves with him there),
 maybe he imagines what their life was like before he moved
 in,
**maybe one of their parents shows up and his presence is
 embarrassing,**
 one of the girls is a neatnik and he's a slob,
 it's awkward for him that they are so casual about things
 that make him uptight,
 maybe one of the girls is casual about being half-
 undressed, doesn't care about effect this has on him,
 maybe they politely ask him to leave and he eloquently
 explains why he can't,
 maybe he feels awkward because he knows that he is no
 longer wanted there and yet he can't/won't leave.

**ALT (reversal): Young girl crashes on couch (or in the
 guest room) of novelist and his wife (she could be the
 daughter of a friend of the wife -- it's the wife that
 tolerates the girl staying). The writer finds a more
 sympathetic ear with young girl than his wife and her
 presence undermines the marriage relationship. (a reverse
 SL&V -- the wife is being unfaithful with the brother of
 the writer. Ultimately the wife and the brother get
 caught...)**

8/17/03

Maybe his first book was successful for intuitive reasons that he has trouble understanding and reduplicating. Maybe there was an experimental aspect to the prose, and he was

given some advice that he try writing science fiction, to make his work commercial again, so he tries science fiction out of desperation and it's not a good fit at all. (This is my desperate way of trying to keep the SF in the story.)

It could be that both of the girls are interested in him as a writer/artist, but only one of the girls is interested in him sexually. But it takes a while for him to get her to come around. The other girl could be more of a libertine, she fucks everyone -- except him. And the girl who is interested in him becomes less so when he begins to seem less mysterious, more pathetic to her. The Diane equivalent would be a teacher of the State College where all this is happening, who is appalled that Dick has moved in with two much younger coeds. **From the outside it might seem like a sex romp, but from the inside it's anything but (this resonates with TTWD -- see Dan's analysis above.)**

8/18/03

DAN: Another possibility is that the girls are nice but have their own social lives and don't interact with him sexually. So he becomes an observer, writes about the girls, tries to stay easygoing and not tax their hospitality, peeks through the occasional keyhole. Maybe he is perceptive, analyzes and diagrams the girl's social lives with **psychological footnotes** on the participants. **He could keep this portrait real, or embroider it with fictional action-adventure or science-fiction elements.** Eventually he will make an appearance himself in this alternate world.

(GW) Who is the girl that he gets involved with? Someone that he brings home? Another young girl in the college-student world who picks him up? Where is the sexual component that leads to/intermingles with his downward slide?

[The alternate world could be a room-mate situation on a space ship.]

DAN: He could be sexually separate, or (even better), **there could be sex with one of the girls late in the film, as a sort of accident, that might trigger Dick's appearance in the fictional world of the girls. If the girl didn't want to repeat the sex, this could have consequences on the fictional world, and Dick's state of mind, as well.** I like him as an observer in this story. I'm currently treating this as a new movie, not a remake of FEVER DREAM.

DAN: As he degenerates, he could recast his writing about the girls into a few different genres, which might be fun and interesting if it's done thoughtfully. (There's a danger of simply making fun of the genres, but this can be avoided.)

DAN: I just thought of something that might work with your idea. A friend of mine with a teenaged stepdaughter tells me that kids sleep together differently these days: that they have a sort of pack, within which they can hook up freely. Sleeping outside the pack is infidelity. I suspect this is probably not true, or not very true, but it could be useful for the new FEVER DREAM. You probably don't want to make Dick too old, but then you need something to widen the gap between, say, a 30-year-old and a 20-year-old.

GW: All these ideas are very interesting. So the writer would be someone at a low-point, financially and creatively, and he finds himself in a prime voyeuristic situation. There is sexual anxiety because he would like to connect, but he's also seeing the opportunity to gather better material by observing the girls than he is capable of generating internally.

DAN: Yes. In this story, he's probably not as creatively stymied as in FEVER DREAM, because the girls are inspiring creativity.

GW: **There is the world that exists in the apartment, and there is the world that exists in his imagination. But there is also the world that exists in the girls imaginations as he reads their diaries, and their short stories** (they are English students and seek his advice because they respect him as a published writer).

DAN: Sounds good. Small glimpses of diary might be better than lots of diary. It's suggestive, and **it gives Dick the opportunity to display mixed feelings about snooping.**

GW: So what is he after? Is he trying to recharge and get back out in the world? Or is the apartment like the car radio in Cocteau's ORPHEUS -- a muse that he is desperate to stay in contact with?

DAN: I dunno - you need to do what makes you interested here. **Maybe he just likes being around young women -**

that's a pretty decent motivation. Maybe the search-for-inspiration theme can be there, but not as big a deal, and all mixed up with the attraction. I kind of see him being waylaid by the apartment.

(GW) (= my thought, not emailed to Dan) The apartment could be like THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL -- he doesn't want to leave, he loses the power to go outside.

Or the apartment could be like a "hang movie" -- just a place where he likes to hang out. The magic kingdom.

Story could start with spending the night at Diane's place, but there is too much tension there, it was only supposed to be for the night of the lecture. If he sticks around the town, maybe she thinks it's because of her, but it isn't.

8/19/03

DAN: I don't know if this is helpful, but you don't have to imagine the girls' inner lives, just their outer lives. **Their lives are mysterious to Dick** to an extent, and part of what he's doing is trying to feel his way, through his fiction, toward understanding it. I think it's okay to make them an interesting combination of fantasy elements. By "fantasy," I don't mean that they should gratify Dick's sexual desire for them, but that in little ways they are fascinating and alluring, even as they try to be as normal as possible. You don't have to provide any real insight into the state of young women today.

GW: Of course I still don't know what Dick is after. Maybe he feels that there is some mystery to be solved with the girls, and if he solves that mystery then everything will be fine in his life. He's displacing the need for self-knowledge onto other selves.

DAN: Maybe he's just interested in young women! You don't have to explain that to anyone. And then it gets tied up with his creativity when he starts writing about them.

SWIMMING POOL = writer in an emotional crisis, goes to house to unwind, her solitude is interrupted by young girl. Young girl is irritating, then intriguing, then inspiring. But the young girl immerses writer in the kind of murder plot that she typically writes about. Writer returns home

with new manuscript -- then it seems that she is insane, that she imagined everything.

MY VARIANT = writer in state of emotional crisis, goes to visit old unrequited flame (or old gf who is no longer interested in him -- maybe she has kids now). He winds up crashing in girls apt, at first he is annoyed that they are distracting him from writing, then he gets intrigued about them and starts writing about their lives. **The story of their lives is superior to what he was trying to write before he encountered them.** He leaves with he thinks is a salable manuscript. But one of the girls has actually written something more commercial. Or, it turns out that he actually has a kid (or a pregnant gf) and everything that he said about his "back home" situation is a lie, that he needed a vacation from who he was and now he's ready to go back to being "himself."

What if he is not so down on his luck but this is a vacation for him, a respite from his life?

ANOTHER VARIANT: he is invited to stay in apt. while girls are on spring break, after moving in he has the place to himself and inevitably starts snooping into their lives and writing about them. When they return he feels his privacy intruded upon, but he also has the miracle of having them in the flesh after imagining them.

One girl has sex, wild stories that she tells to the roommate, but not to Dick -- he must overhear them (maybe by standing in bathroom). The other girl writes about sex, but has a quiescent sex life.

His friend is on a tenure track and is very scrupulous about university moral codes (re. "The Corrections").

What is Dick's cowardice? Is it something that he faces?

If Dick is obsessed with young girls, why? Something missing from his past that translates into something missing from his present?

How does Dick tell himself the story of who he is -- what is the internal fiction that he has created?

re. Kafka -- "an epic of suspension and postponement"

He writes more penetratingly than he lives (Martin Amis).

DAN: The way I see it, the situation is an intriguing distraction from his writing and financial problems at first, then something absorbing as the writing inspiration kicks in, then ultimately something too absorbing, ego-threatening, disorienting.
 [gw: this could be the PERSONA aspect of getting sucked too far into the situation]

8/20/03

Time frame of story?

re. ALICE IN THE CITIES -- coming of age, maturation

How does he step outside of himself? He *needs* to step outside of himself to write something good (?).

re. Andre -- I've got plenty of good ideas, I need to act on them.

Go against expectations -- **he doesn't want to have sex. He tells himself sex would destabilize situation -- it is more important to write than to have sex** (re. Laurel in bed).

He remembers being shy, awkward. Didn't get involved with girls until well after college. He is hoping to recapture a youth he never had.

Intense collegiate late night intellectual-art conversations.

3 LEVELS

---Apt.

---Dick's imagination/fiction

---Girls' imagination/fiction

ADD ELEMENTS

---Diane

---His past

---His unseen life (before he came to apt.)

8/21/03

Accidental sex: after some drinking, or a momentary crisis hat needs comforting.

This sex disturbs fiction.

End: he disappears into the fiction (DS thinks it's too dark).

The fictional world of the girls.

8/27/03

He wants sex (because he has had a setback in his work, because his work is unsatisfying), then sex becomes what he wants to avoid because it will destabilize the situation.

He wants to do what he thinks the girls want, what will let him stay in the apt. Also, he throws things in jeopardy in his life back home (a gf, a job, a contract -- something) by staying in the apt. -- there has to be an element of risk/sacrifice to his decision to stay there.

Disquisition on the eroticism of midriffs. One of the girls wears pink/red underwear to match her tank top (predicated on top of the underwear being seen). Nicholson Bakerish digression into the details.

8/28/03

DAN: situation of girls -- he gets more and more interested as he is there -- he gets closer to their lives -- creativity and sex goes hand in hand. Relaxed, simple. Genial approach can have building suspense.

8/29/03

Dick has never grown up. Arrested adolescence, which the sojourn in the apt. is an extreme example of. How does it work as a belated coming-of-age story? He is semi-famous for writing a coming-of-age story, and yet he has to write and live his way through a genuine coming-of-age experience.

As vehicle for male fantasies about girls -- "What do girls want?" This relates to Dick's misguided desperation to be commercial.

9/4/03

re. Odalisque -- one of the girls does modeling

THROWAWAYS/ALTERNATES (from Outline 1)

He keeps it a secret from Diane that he is living in apt?
Or does he tell her up front?

Dick "accidentally" runs into Diane -- tense "date" with her?

One of the girls finds out that he is writing about her and is flattered. Maybe this is what motivates her to sleep with him. She is striving to make herself a better character by behaving more colorfully.

One of the girls comes home. Dick engages her in polite conversation, but it's forced, he's eager to get back to work.

What is missing from his life? What does he want?

What makes passiveness attractive?

ELEMENTS (from Outline 1)

Dick's fiction

PRIOR TO APT

STARTS WRITING ABOUT GIRLS

Dick's diary

Girl 1 diary

Girl 1 fiction

Girl 2 diary

The Lecture

The Invitation

Settling In

His Need For Routine

Growing Fascination With Them

Their Fiction

The Girls as Subjects for His Fiction

His need for privacy VS. need for companionship

9/5/03

Chaste girl: story of erotic librarian. Dick takes up story, "improves" it.

Krusoe class stories: savage sex in airport bathroom, real estate agent who has sex with a client (Erika Taylor).

One girl wants him to stay, the other wants him to go. He overhears this fight regarding his future in the house.

He makes up stories about himself, fictionalizes his life. (or is he incapable of doing this?)

The girl writes a better version of his story than he does. **We see his story first, then her version of it.** (She writes a story about their apartment life.)

Chaste girl is like BELLE DE JOUR -- outwardly chaste, but anything but, particularly in her imagination.

Some stories: **a trip to Europe where either party could have sex on demand.** Having an affair with a professor.

Escape to world of imagination -- but the imagination keeps being about the same thing.

One of the girls has a thing about brothers. Abigail, Vicki, Lois.

He imagines that he is invisible.

Chaste girl explains how "pack mentality" works.

He goes to library to work and imagines other scenarios unfolding there. Imagines fucking girls, hearing their secrets, getting to live in their houses.

He starts following girls around to try and learn something more.

9/14/03

Voyeurism -- leading to fantasy -- intruding on fiction?

Passivity / inner-crisis

Poss. inciting incident: thrown out by gf (or wife), search for new situation.

Either Dick has a gf he has to juggle against being in the house, or Diane gets interested in Dick once he's in apt.

Milk outside world's misperception of Dick's situation.

9/19/03

Diane refuses to believe his protestations of innocence.

re. VERTIGO -- imagine a beautiful girl you don't think you can ever have (re. Morris' slide show).

re. ROHMER PIX: La Collectionneuse, Suzanne...

9/26/03

re. ALL MY FRIENDS ARE GOING TO BE STRANGERS

Danny Deck as a character model. Plus, confluence of 3 relationships, all of them incomplete. How career success doesn't matter to him. He doesn't think his novel is very good even though it is being published.

He's lovable, eager to fall in love with whoever comes long, but not at all practical. People are forever inspired to take him under their wing. (interesting resonances with PDK)

Three relationships, each provide one thing, but in themselves each one is frustrating/incomplete.
 Sally (wife) = sex (until she gets pregnant)
 Emma = emotions, friendship, but sexually unavailable
 Jill = intellectual, soul-mate, but sexually incompatible.

re. CRASHING

Jill = Diane, can't have sex with him, angry that he wrote about her in the book. (Maybe he still carries a torch for her, but learns she has become gay.)
 Sally = wife, is freezing him out.
 Emma = married friend that he sleeps with and it undermines their friendship, makes comfortable intimacy impossible. (maybe Emma is the one that he wrote about who is cross with him at beginning of story.)

Unhappily married, in a complicated relation with femme professor friend.

The character in my story could be a Danny Deck who is trying to reconnect with his source of inspiration. He's unpretentious, surprised by his success, wishes that the book he wrote was better, etc. A humble, open character.

What if my character is as young as Danny Deck? An undergrad who drops out when his book is accepted for publication.

Or: he's only a few years older, was going to be an English Lit. grad student when his novel was accepted for publication and he then dropped out.

Character is frozen. Transcends this to reach out and touch.

He is closed off at first, gets more closed off as story goes along.

He begins as an isolated artist, and his journey is to being part of the world, professionally and personally.

Maybe becomes a drinker for the first time during course of story (funny to see him tippling beer).

(re. GW on Jasmine Street) Would rather work than try to have sex.

High concept (not quite): "Avoid the world by not leaving the house -- even if it's not your own house."

POSS OPENING SCENE: He's on bench on campus. Either he's reading a book that interests her, or she is reading his book, underlines a passage, he inquires. Too on the money if it's his book? Diane comes along, or another admirer, and either she is chagrined that she didn't know who he was, or he is chagrined that he didn't properly introduce himself.

9/28/03

He thought he wanted sex, but he realizes he wants, needs, something else.

He writes things just for himself. The pressure of presenting it to others creates problems.

Chaste girl has BELLE DE JOUR fantasies. Maybe she turns down his casual advances, then he realizes that she has this secret, libidinous life.

[Maybe: He is intrigued by her life, by her sensual chastity. Then he is intrigued by the disconnect between how she seems to live and her libidinous fiction. Etc -- feels clichéd as I spin it out (12/24/03.)]

The sex girl is a bit like Monique in "The Story of O" -- not interested in anything outside of herself, in anything she doesn't own. She is relatively indifferent to the writer.

Chaste girl writes about sex.

The sex girl writes about...horses.

Ultimately, can it be about friendship? Or is that too mild/subtle.

10/7/03

re. DESIGN FOR LIVING -- reversal -- two girls and a guy -- does he provide them with inspiration, help them get their act together?

(10/8 - 10/12 -- lost when I accidentally erase files)

10/14/03

AS (plus GW additions, reprised from 10/10)
backstory: Richard and Diane are among a group of friends at college. Richard and Diane have similar goals (to be serious writers), that gets in the way of their friendship. One night he sleeps with Diane -- they decide that they are better off as friends -- but this incident forever changes, weakens, complicates their friendship. There is both romance, or thwarted romance, and competition in their relationship.

His charisma: he had a vision as a writer, and he is trying to recapture it.

Diane is resentful that he has found an audience. (or the reverse -- shunned an audience and he didn't?)

Richard hangs out in the college library, gets caught up in reading a book, gets thrown out when the library closes (enter the fictional world of his daydream). When Richard encounters the chaste girl, they start having a conversation that they continue at her apt.

He crashes on the couch that night -- meets room-mate in the morning.

The girls use him for literary advice. The chaste girl wants aesthetic help, she has primarily artistic aspirations. The wild girl wants "commercial" advice -- she wants success/fame. She wants to be the new Jacqueline Susann (a funny, larger than life idea). She lives her

life in this large-ish way in the hopes that her persona, publicity, and art will tag along with her behavior.

The chaste girl has had a boyfriend since high school. He is now her fiancée. She is not sure about her fiancée and she confides to Richard.

He wants to recover his muse. He falls in love with the chaste girl in the process of doing this.

The chaste girl writes surprisingly sexual fiction, aggressively sexual (or does this take away from what wild girl is trying to do?). Maybe the wild girl tries to write sexual fiction, but it is the chaste girl that writes the really steamy/disturbing stuff.

He realizes that he can write a story about these two girls. And he wants to keep from getting involved with their lives to do so?

DAN: (phone conversation)

He's trying to find something to write --

Some kind of sexual relation or involvement leads to some confusion.

Interested in their lives as source of creativity and anthropology. They are alluring, and they are interested in him. Confusion with his art leads to psychological confusion.

re. "he has money": An artist who doesn't have to worry about money is basically a fantasy movie.

A little marginal -- not as marginal as Dick in TTWD.

Older guy falls in love with younger girl -- **has sublimated sex into art. Suspended between things. It's the human condition.**

He comes out of it with the book, not the girl.

re. LATE SPRING: collision of fantasy, fantasy mediating reality (?).

Trick to integrating the reality that generates fantasy. Woody Allen can't hide self-adulation.

Fantasy of being immersed in female flesh (applies to TTWD). (applies to Fellini).

Show the content of what he's writing, how it changes.

He could be writing SF ala TTWD. Or it could be interactive game design -- characters that are interactive.

10/15/03

The climax/crisis maybe is: Memory loss -- he loses track of who he is.

re. drama of DECONSTRUCTING HARRY: ex-wife wants to shoot him, he "kidnaps" son to go along with him to awards ceremony, his ex-gf is marrying a friend of his (he can't get the woman he wants). He is a writer who does not have money problems, other than needing to overcome writer's block (he's not broke). Interesting in that his fictional transfigurations are populated by a different set of actors than the realities. (What about when he visits hell and Billy Crystal is the devil?) Superficially it corresponds to WILD STRAWBERRIES -- a man experiences memories and incidents en route to collect an award. The climax, which is lame, is this: his traveling companion dies of a heart attack, he is thrown in jail for illegally taking his son along on the trip, and bailed out by the friend who is marrying the ex-gf. An overly-neat wrap-up. And then at the awards ceremony he has a revelation about his life that gives him the breakthrough about what to next write. A programmatic ending that ties up all the loose ends. And it sucks.

10/16/03

The paradigm that might work in ANNIE HALL. Dick announces at the beginning that he isn't together with Chaste Girl and he's still trying to figure things out. We see the ups and downs of the relationship, and it ends on a note of bittersweet friendship. Maybe he's a film nut, besides being a writer (they could watch silent films together). He could still help her with her fiction, there can still be the Wild Girl, the fiction can still comprise an alternate level to the film.

Also consider in relation to LOST IN TRANSLATION -- Richard isn't broke, but he is in a career slump. Consider the resonance of a direct rip: he's in an unhappy marriage, but

they have kids, and he loves them, and the marriage isn't so bad that he wants to precipitously end it. She's got a fiancée. They dance around the possibility of getting together, she takes him through the bizarre realities of contempo studentdom -- they sleep together maybe for one night, and there is love, but it would never last, or courage is lacking on one side, and they don't stay together. Two lost souls, not badly lost, come together briefly, and are a little less lost for it.

Why did LOST IN TRANSLATION work? Because it seemed real. People love a good unrequited love story, (almost) everyone can relate.

10/17/03

Explore all the variants of writer's block -- **for example, how frustrating it is to keep imagining and reimagining an opening scene, but being unable to get on with the story.**

One approach: a clean separation of reality (closely observed) and fiction.

NFU as a model for FD?

10/18/03

Today's revelation: **imagine that Richard (or Dick -- the surrogate for me) wrote a book that entitled "The Trouble With Dick" -- a book about a struggling writer who moves in with three women, one of them an old friend, with a parallel SF plot, etc. The book was a cult hit. He got some gigs off of it (maybe an advance on another book or some high paying magazine commissions, the literary equivalent of SLEDGE HAMMER!), enough to get by okay, but no breakthrough to the next level, etc. He is in a complicated, conflicted relationship with a woman when he gets the invitation from the old friend (that he wrote about in TTWD) to go lecture at University X. This is the situation that he is retreating from, into the world of the two girls.**

(The footage from TTWD can be used to visualize Dick's cult book.) (11/23/03)

Addendum: he modeled the Diane character on a friend of his, and she is the one who invites him to come lecture. This person looks different from Susan Dey.

re. PERSONA -- does the writer's identity fuse with the girls? Could there be an erotic tale similar to the one the nurse tells? (How does PERSONA end? With them going back to the city, superficially acting like nothing weird happened.) Does his consciousness split in two (fiction-reality, or bifurcate into imagining both the girl's fiction and his own?)

It could be trans-gender, he gets into the girls head, or thinks he is there (imagines himself a lesbian -- he likes girls, he just is one. Can't stop masturbating -- masturbating is the same as fucking. Super-impose their faces in the act of contemplation, the act of writing.

The breakdown/craziness is that he goes into her head. **YES -- inspiration crosses the line into internal psychodrama.**

Him and her writing side by side. **YES**

[[
Dick imagines himself to be a girl in the fiction, and has a lesbian relation with one of the girls in the fiction.
(11/23/03)

When Dick reads the girls' fiction, at first he imagines that the femme protagonist is one of the girls -- then (maybe one of the girls overtly corrects him) he imagines the femme protagonist as someone else. (11/23/03)

It's about him losing his inspiration and getting it back.
(11/23/03)
]]

In PERSONA, the breakdown happens before the film opens. So you don't have to show that happening.

NEO-PERSONA:

He's a successful writer, but he just stops writing. He can't bring himself to type another word. He's known as a ladies man, but he's not interested in women at this moment in his life.

A friend/editor/agent thinks that if a femme writing student takes care of him, that maybe he will get better. It is just a level back from pimping.

[DAN: This is interesting, and very different from most of your work, in that the protagonist writer is seen from a distance, and is not the audience's ID figure.]

[...Unless the story is from the girl's POV -- just as PERSONA opens with the nurse getting the assignment. (12/24/03)]

The girl is ambitious. Or she is only half-innocent, thrown into the lion's den (she is the assistant of the agent). Maybe he is Rohmeresque -- very erudite, but his stories focus on the travails of smart, high-strung young girls in the throes of young womanhood.

The girl gives him her stories to read. They are visualized. He starts imagining her stories. When he looks at himself in the mirror, his image of the fictional girl is super-imposed on his image of himself.

[DAN: Is the implication here that writing is a way for him to be female, to express a female side?]

But: PERSONA is from the nurse's POV. A house in Topanga? The writer comes to speak at the young girl's University. He is losing it. The girl is offered a job by his editor -- to baby-sit him -- help bring him back around to writing his fiction (about young girls?). They will stay at the editor's house in Topanga. Spend time together -- he gets interested in her.

She starts confessing more and more to him. (She seems willing enough to sleep with him, but he's not interested.) he starts studying her as a subject for his fiction, and when she finds out about this she gets angry. Etc.

[DAN: I sort of like this idea. The first version appealed to me a little more: with the writer a mystery, the girl at least half goal-oriented.

It would be interesting if the girl bears her semi-prostitution casually, and manages to retain a little directness and innocence despite the self-serving angle. Personally, I don't see any reason that this character could or should get angry about being written about. In the version I'm steering you toward, she is a little bit of a mystery herself, which means that you can play with shifting identification gradually to the writer.]

11/30/03 ADDENDUM (based on DS comments:

So the twist is that the girl is getting as much inspiration from the writer as he is getting from her. Not

only is he writing about her -- but she is writing about him.

It starts out as one point of view and becomes a mixed point of view film. They enter into a sexual relationship and that is the point of exchange.

At story's end, he gets his inspiration back but it becomes clear that they can't have a relationship together.

His first novel, TTWD, was about a breakdown, but it was written as a hypothesis, not on actual experience, and now he is really experiencing a breakdown. (the above was emailed to DS)

Use the layer of disturbing silent film that animates PERSONA. It's about the nature of cinema and the nature of the novel -- attempts to capture the disturbing flicker of consciousness. Modern and jangular (jangly + angular).

Could make use of the wordless sex scene that he wonders if he later dreamed. Maybe he asks her about it and she coyly refuses to confirm that it happened (this could pick up on an earlier surrealist idea that I never developed.)
 (Would she go so far as to make him dependent on her? Femme fatale-ism doesn't ring true -- but there could be intense psychological games that are going on between the two of them. He fears that she has written the better manuscript -- there could be a scene of her literary success, but then there is a framing device to make the viewer wonder if the writer has imagined it -- the film has become the writer's way of imagining the world.)

Alters PERSONA to have the two characters be different genders.

re. Robert McKee's idea for a novel -- a successful woman writer has run out of ideas, encounters a man crying who says he is looking for his lost love, and the writer decides to help him, and she immediately calls her editor and says that she has found her next book, a guy who is a walking novel.

What if the chaste girl is crying when Richard first encounters her? [And, like James Leer in WONDER BOYS, he keeps making up compelling stories that he wants to use -- he is desperate to tag along for the material it generates.]

In this version, she is a lit. student but doesn't conceive of herself as a writer. (12/24/030]

10/31/03

TTWD ur-logline: A struggling science fiction writer moves in with three women and has a nervous breakdown.

What triggers a nervous breakdown? What tips the balance?

AS: it's not about money struggles, but about a purely artistic crisis -- he stays true to his art. That's a story that doesn't get told enough. (In ADAPTATION, which AS liked the ending of, the artist is artistically diminished at the end.)

"Thus Rohmer often presents surrogate artists -- an antique dealer, a painter, a philosopher, an engineer, a novelist -- with **emotional scenarios that break down their elegant detachment, educate them in the interwoven complex of feelings and thoughts, and leave them doubtful at the realization that life is as shifting and indefinite as water in the sun.**" -- David Thomson, New Biographical Dictionary

re. CLAIRE'S KNEE: use of journal to move between events and a fictional account of them.

Possible formal device/conceit: set entire film in the girls' apt., as if the apt. has a sentient consciousness. [ala IRREVERSIBLE, there is a feeling of a sentient consciousness that supersedes the consciousness of any character, that is the ur-writer behind the entire enterprise.]

11/5/03

Thomas French (cultural critic): "few things more beloved of our mass media than the figure of the cultural rebel, the defiant individual resisting the mandates of the machine civilization."

Hero as paranoid re. ONE CHIP -- the encroachments of freedom that lead him into retreat. Montage of the inanity and invasiveness of forced into overhearing one-sided cell phone conversations. (Plus observing internet users disconnected from their environment.)

Mom inadvertently making him an artist. His ongoing psychic (and actual conflicts with his mother).

11/10/11

A NOVEL AFFAIR, 1957, D: Muriel Box. Woman writes a sexy novel and finds the fantasy comes true. Actors play dual roles, in real life and the novel. Alt. title: THE PASSIONATE STRANGER.

11/20/03

(misc. found notes)

He departs into fiction at the end (like Alfred Jarry). (or like GHOST WORLD)

He writes things just for himself. The pressure of presenting it to others creates problems.

11/21/03

Jill = equivalent of "Voyeur"-era GW: intellectually sophisticated but afraid of sex.

Young novelist as swashbuckling figure (rock star, film director's, &C now)

RELATIVE TO REVIEW OF "GW THEMES":

Mentor (Jill also?)

Fear of sex (Jill)

Sex as salvation

Permeable boundary between reality & craziness (how the young have permission to allow themselves to go crazy as a life experience).

re. MD: **Painfully shy in person, though not as a writer.**

Idea of having the dynamic of ALL MY FRIENDS ARE GOING TO BE STRANGERS transpire under one roof, within one apartment.

Fictional character who does all the stuff hero is afraid to do.

The writer lives too much in his head.

The writer who lives in his head creates characters who think they are of the world but also just live in his head.

Writer imagines reliving situations, getting a better result, getting revenge (re. NFU).

11/22/03

from Movie Ideas, #97:

An author, dazzled by too many ideas can't commit to one -- a phantasmagoria plays out in his head.

Keeps trying to come up with an idea for a break-out book. The ideas totter between the banal and the outrageous. Genre ideas are either totally derivative or wildly divergent from what a genre pix should be. A stock company of actors, the inhabitants of the twilight zone bohemian hustler's imagination, would act out all the various scenarios.

Hero unabashedly a nerd?

Grad student milieu?

11/24/03

Scene: Jill (chaste girl) imagines a scene from Dick's book differently than he does.

Scene: The characters in Dick's book have a life independent of him -- they continue to do things that he doesn't, can't monitor.

If he goes crazy, then he encounters his characters from his fiction that have a will and a history of their own. He is struggling to catch up to what they are doing. He is desperate to transcribe their actions. He feels threatened. If he can just get down what they are doing, then massive success will come his way. It becomes like a dream he is desperate to write down, fearing that it holds the key to everything but it is destined to be forgotten. (AS A SHORT STORY?)

11/25/03

Really Deconstruct Harry (ala FEVER DREAM) -- really take main character apart.

Consider it in a Rohmeresque vein.

What if the story was set in 1970?

11/26/03

re. WONDER BOYS

It's about getting inspiration, artistic focus back.
He writes *everything*, no editing (re. my notes/journals for movie ideas, various projects, &c).

My character could start a zillion things and be incapable of finishing anything.

But FD lacks the safety net of a subplot (which WONDER BOYS has).

11/28/03

A Talking Heads vibe -- imagine David Byrne as the hero. He doesn't seem "human" (re. "normal" feelings/aspirations) but is. Gawky, intelligent, with intellectual armor. **Dick could have written his first book because he didn't understand girls. He wrote about girls in his first book, in a speculative manner, as if he were writing about aliens.**

He's repressed, thinks that Jill is repressed too.

DRIVING TO ANGLES CREST, THANKSGIVING:

What are the sentences you speak to yourself to tell yourself who you are?

If you stop saying those sentences...

Write those sentences down -- that's what a writer does.

Moment when he realizes that he can go crazy (POV in car).

11/30/03

Relentless self-narrating -- transcending self-narrating. Self-narrating as something that film can effectively show. (Narration opens MANHATTAN, is used throughout DECONSTRUCTING HARRY as part of the "fictional" pieces.)

The NEO-PERSONA idea could be the fiction that the writer is now trying to write. (This could be the fiction that he is inspired to write in the girls' apartment.)

The idea of a movie that keeps changing, ala Exquisite Corpse.

IMAGINARY/INSPIRATIONAL SOUNDTRACK
 More Songs About Buildings and Food
 Colossal Youth (Young Marble Giants)
 Throwing Muses

What excites me about the story?

--As a way of redeeming my own life (doesn't that make it self-serving and narcissistic?)

--Going inside the writer's head.

--Illuminating the idiosyncrasies of one man's thought process (What I like about some of my fiction writing is that I feel it catches the rhythm of MY thinking -- that is what I would like to do on film).

--Complex levels of fiction and fantasy, and how they collide with and illuminate the "reality."

11/30/03

ANNIE HALL as a Pygmalion story.

Consider how energy shifts between characters -- as one gains, another loses. Consider the drama as an entropic system -- for one to gain, another must lose.

Can it be about mother? Can the writer see Jill struggling with her mother and that gives him insight into his own life?

HIS CHARACTER

Not Richard Kendred

Woody Allen in MANHATTAN = money gig in TV, quit to write a novel

Woody Allen in ANNIE HALL successful working comedian
 (details of work life mostly skipped over)

[Woody Allen in DECONSTRUCTING HARRY = pill popping, whore monger, savagely uses his own life for material -- character seems with odds with the Woody we know and love and he uses this disjunct to his advantage.]

[Woody Allen in CRIMES & MISDEMEANORS = film editor schlemiel who despises pretensions but is jealous of successful

brother in law]
 SWINGERS = young and struggling actor, work life only
 indirectly seen

The "Swingers" variant

--He needs a place to crash and winds up at apt. with two girls.

--He is heartbroken from a relationship that ended (equivalent of Danny Deck having his marriage break up.)

--He's got a swinger friend who thinks that the writer has got it made, but his life on the inside is anything but.

--He manages to take a step toward a relationship by the end of the movie (move beyond the hurt that is haunting him).

Maybe Jill really likes him and wants to have sex but she's hung up.

12/1/03

Feel haunted today by Jeanine B. wondering why TTWD wasn't a success.

Consider returning to the concept of refining what didn't work in TTWD. Imagine Jon Favreau's Mikey and Danny Deck combined. He loves Diane, but she doesn't love him, he's heartsick but pliable.

DS 6/30/03: TTWD is governed by the contrast between Dick's immersion in an idyllic sex fantasy VS. coming unglued. Writer's block as way into situation.

Can neo-Persona be funny?

12/2/03

Writer has great doubts about what he is doing.

His fantasy is that he is denying her sex: A VOYEUR, the roots of many anguished student films.

12/7/03

He keeps quoting literature, maxims about art/writing. An overt level of literacy to the proceedings.

12/8/03

His shutdown (rather than a full-on breakdown) on the couch is similar to Grady Tripp's waffling in WONDER BOYS (or is it?).

Inability to settle on a story (which could also be part of BIO PIX) is equivalent of Grady Tripp's prolix failure to commit to an idea.

Interesting to consider FD relative to the fictional medley in DECONSTRUCTING HARRY -- not only is he fictionalizing his life, but he is also writing a slew of short stories -- featuring Tobey McGuire in one, old yentas in another, &c. His concluding insight: "Character can't function in life, but can function in art."

WONDER BOYS is "commercial" because it starts in a situation of drama/melodrama, because it doesn't go inside the writer's head and show his fiction, because it was a firecracker string of happy resolutions to various plot strands.

12/9/03

Two halves, opposite sides, that fit together:

- 1) Character realizes that he is fictional
 - 2) Author realizes that character has independent existence, is realer than he is (and won't die, unlike the author -- the character has an enviable immortality).
- (This version of the story resonates back to RITE OF PASSAGE.)

His character comes to life, acts independently of creator. Maybe he encounters his creator, but creator doesn't recognize him at first.

12/11/03

Writer uses book as excuse for problems in life (applies also to BIO PIX).

Is rooted in middle-class, with mild rebellion (pot smoking, eccentricity, &c).

The girl is intelligent and witty (ala WONDER BOYS, MANHATTAN).

His fictional character does all the stuff the writer is afraid to do.

12/13/03

Self-employed self

Research on myself

Title: Weapons of Self Destruction

12/14/03

Could DIARY OF A SEDUCER be the story that he is writing?

12/17/03

Back to the essence? General principle: he is involved in what seems like a sex idyll, but it is his undoing. "the mood of FD/TTWD is governed by the contrast between Dick's immersion in an idyllic sex fantasy and his coming unglued..."

He gets a gig as a visiting professor -- before he can sort out where to stay he winds up crashing on the girls' couch. He gets involved with both of them?

Or renting a room in a house. **Haley is a student at the college. Mom tries too hard to be youthful. He gets involved with both, each tries to keep it secret. It mirrors the book he wrote (that the mother has never read). Life fulfills the prophecy of fiction, but does not match it exactly.** (a neo-GRADUATE version would make him a young student, a contemporary of Haley's -- except there would be no reason then for her to keep the relationship secret. Wait, here's a reason: Haley wants to keep Dick in the house and if Mom finds out they're fucking, he'll have to move.)

Or: he goes to college to deliver a lecture -- at a crisis point in his life.

12/20/03

Fight with gf over portraying her in fiction -- gets thrown out (housing crisis).

Guest lecture -- woman who invites him & she holds a long-simmering grudge, pissed that he portrayed her unfavorably in an earlier book.

Dispute with mother over portraying her in fiction (re. MASTER DEBATER-type situation).

ALT: wrote book that was savaged by critics -- pot smoking
-- gets woman pregnant.

Write fictional version of self, virtual version of own life.

Fictional = idealized world.

---he gets revenge

---can put other people down (emerge victorious)

CRISIS VECTORS (WONDER BOYS & DECONSTRUCTING HARRY both have compressed time frame)

Writing

--writer's block

--logorrhea

Professional

--failure of last project

(artistically and/or critically)

Personal

--trying to win ex-gf back (before she gets married)

--deciding to commit (Michael Douglas)

--trying to woo recalcitrant partner

Personal relationship as a writing problem (vs. as a directing problem)

Sex fantasy mixed with breakdown.

He can't stop writing about situations that he lives through.

12/23/03

See p.7 Breakdown notes -- the pressure and difficulties of continuing to write the same character (the MASTER DEBATER / LAUREL CYN dilemma).

[[p.7 notes reprised: After breakdown, Dick is replaced, Lars takes over story. Lars' behavior suggests/illuminates Dick's. It is Lars who breaks out of house -- once out of house, it is Dick again. Perhaps during breakdown Dick & Lars cohabit house -- Dick has conversations, watches TV with Lars. His madness is having his fictional character invade his life. Maybe the pressure on him as a writer is to continue on with the same character as his first novel,

but he can't get it to work (mirrors the difficulty with "continuing MASTER DEBATER in the form of LAUREL CYN) (re. PERSONA, PERFORMANCE)]] **Maybe Lars kills Dick, but upon re-emerging from house, it is Dick again.**

A sex idyll in the crashing apartment -- the girl likes him being dependent on her.

Opening montage describing his life up to point where the movie opens (ala I STAND ALONE).

12/30/03

Movie Ideas #218. 2 girls take in as a roommate, he sleeps on their couch. Squabbles over money and household chores. His economics mesh with theirs (broke). ("Diving Invasions" p.194) He comes to write about the girls that he lives with. (7/28/03)

Do this as a PDK story with an alien/religious level, downtrodden SF. (12/38/03)

350. PDK bio straight up (but a Dickian straight up). Really do the Trouble With Dick. (12/28/03)

12/31/03

Our row on the flight from Houston to LA: Carrie, a doctoral candidate at University of Michigan in animal research (rats self-administering cocaine), and Joy from Oklahoma (sitting by the window), who is an auditor for Deloit & Touche. Joy is reading an interesting novel. They are both intelligent, open, friendly, balanced, in their mid/late twenties.

Imagine DECONSTRUCTING HARRY crossed with DAY FOR NIGHT

Maybe give everyone dual roles in reality-fiction.

1/1/04

Show emailed story advice (ala Dan) from an unseen friend that changes the nature of the story that he is writing.

Jason Robert Brown wrote a musical, THE LAST FIVE YEARS, about the rise and fall of a marriage. His story begins at first date, her story begins at separation. Brown had a divorce settlement in which he agreed not to create a

character identifiable as her. Her lawyers claimed that the show violated the agreement. he ended up changing the part and paying her lawyers fee.

1/3/04

re. ANNIE HALL -- as a novelist he imagines a better ending.

LA COLLECTIONEUSE -- confined setting of three characters playing out a drama. The principal drama is between one of the guys and the girl.

1/17/04

Starring Joe Russo.

Parody in a New Wave relationship flick. (re. Dan Sallitt note). (this could also apply to Bio Pix)

2.22.04

THE TROUBLE WITH THE TROUBLE WITH DICK (META)

Interview Bob Berney, Jeff Dowd, EG, some old Sundance figures (Todd McCarthy? Lawrence Smith?)

Try variants of what might make it successful--

New Scenes with David Clennon.

It's like The Stone Reader, except that I am searching for an alternate, more successful version of myself.

A mockumentary about myself.

After discussing the various Metas with AS (TTWD, NFU), go back to the "original" concept: a writer who takes refuge with two girls. (TTWD could be either the subjective visualization of his novel or the film version of it.)

I'm seeing the writer as someone who had a big success with his first book, and hasn't been able to recapture that.

I'm not sure if he should be thirtyish or fortyish. He is under deadline to turn in a manuscript. His problem isn't writer's block but logorrhea -- he can't commit to one version, spins out multiple takes on everything. **The apt. becomes a retreat from the pressure he is feeling.** A place where he doesn't have to answer questions. One there, he finds one of the girls extremely annoying, disruptive of his work. But he comes around to seeing her as someone he wants to write about.

I haven't been thinking of La Collectionneuse as a model, but it occurs to me that it's sort of an inversion, but in my story the POV resides with the guy at the fulcrum between the two girls (the equivalent in the Rohmer would be if it the story were from the girl's POV). Maybe in my story the reserved girl encourages the flamboyant girl to seduce the writer, but then regrets that, realizes that she really wants to be with him. Just a thought--prompted by the act of writing this letter.

Appropriate Rohmer. **Consider his motif of vacations as places (space/time) of temptation and revelation.**

Appropriate the irritation that Charlotte Rampling felt in SWIMMING POOL -- the flamboyant girl annoys him at first.

Appropriate the logorrhea of WONDER BOYS -- it's not that he's blocked but that he writes too much, too many variants, can't commit to a version. Maybe expand the appropriation to include a book that he is supposed to deliver on deadline and he can't bring himself to finish it, turn it in. Imagine WONDER BOYS with a level of intense subjectivity.

If Original Dick was thirtyish, should this guy be fortyish?

2.23.04

3 POV's to story? The girls' POV are later revealed as fiction.

re. Maltin SCHIZOPOLIS blurb: non sequiturs, satire, underground film technique.

DS -- if not poverty, what is the justification for him being in the apt?

2.24.04

> But...but...but Dan, what was the original idea? Please play it back for me

DAN: Well, lemme see. Writer has one or two critical successes behind him, but not enough to keep him solvent; and he's not sure what his next work is going to be. He finds out that he's lost his apt. (rent problems, or a girlfriend throwing him out?) on the day he's given a lecture at a

college. The two (or three) girls come up to him afterwards and tell him what big fans they are; it comes out that he doesn't know where he's going to stay, and they offer him their sofa. He accepts, only partly out of interest in the girls, partly coz he needs a place to stay. He is intrigued by the girls' lifestyle, hears strange stories from them of a social world different from the one he experienced in college. Left alone in the apt. fairly often, he starts snooping, eventually finding journals. Slowly he begins writing things that use the girls' life as a basis. Increasingly obsessed with his subjects, he takes a turn for the worse after one of the girls sleeps with him while drunk, but then pulls away. Eventually he becomes a total nuisance to the girls, increasingly slovenly and in their way; discovered in the act of espionage, he is finally thrown out. Homeless and a bit disoriented, the writer nonetheless emerges with the finished work that he had been seeking.

We don't resolve his future at the end of the movie, but he has a new book, and that is uplifting.

> (And while I await your missive, I hope not to prejudice it by saying I'd like to try and avoid the cliché of the broke writer. What if the guy wrote a critical success and just can't complete the next book to his satisfaction. He's lost his way creatively. He has a teaching gig in another city, but he feels like an artistic failure. More of a middle-range guy at a moment of crisis, in retreat from his ordinary life...etc. Yet another etcetera in a lifetime of etceteras...)

DAN: This is fine, but why can't he be broke too? Cliché or not, it's the rule rather than the exception.

> Re. the difference in the girls -- if the writer is observant, it seems like the differences would be important, or at least noticeable.

DAN: "Observant" depends on what you want to observe! Of course they have to be different, but not necessarily in important ways.

DAN: In my version, they're kind of aliens - the writer can't grok the way they live, but is fascinated by it.

Haley in TTWD was kind of an alien. Though I don't picture the girls as aggressive like her. Anyway, do whatever works for you with their characters - I think you have some leeway. I was just trying to liberate you from the chore of individuating them too much, in case you secretly didn't want to but just thought you had to.

I'm re-sending this thing I wrote to you in August, because I still like it:

A friend of mine with a teenaged stepdaughter tells me that kids sleep together differently these days: that they have a sort of pack, within which they can hook up freely. Sleeping outside the pack is infidelity. I suspect this is probably not true, or not very true, but it could be useful for the new FEVER DREAM. You probably don't want to make Dick too old, but then you need something to widen the gap between, say, a 30-year-old and a 20-year-old. - Dan

GW: Was Haley an alien? At the time she seemed to be a character, or that was my delusion. She was certainly a construct, a fulfillment of structure.

DAN: She was a character, but she was so far from Dick's sensibility that she was essentially unknowable for him. She was a collection of unfamiliar behaviors.

GW: Does Breillat's A REAL YOUNG GIRL have any relevance? I haven't seen it, but the blurb reads just like I envision doing a section of the film -- to visualize the girls fiction/diaries/fantasies (but then reveal it as something the writer has imagined).

DAN: I suspect you'll find it quite a different thing.
[Note: this exchange of emails through 2.29.04]

2.25.04

re. the brokenness -- what is he's a less desperate guy than Dick Kendred, but something along the lines of what you suggest -- someone who blows hot and cold. because he sometimes makes a lot of money he assumes that he can again, so he's sloppy about money, not at all careful and gets himself in jams that he always seems to get out of. We catch him at one of these jam points. He's been down before, he'll be up again, he'll be down again -- that's the jigsaw of his life.

If the girls are unknowable -- is that why he writes SF?

2.26.04

A solitary character whose habits are peculiar (re. Lyle Lovett).

**Fantasy of a TV cameraman & reporter waiting in the bedroom for some news to report (re. New Yorker cartoon 3/1/04)
(feel too jejune)**

Model the girls after the two in THE AVIATOR'S WIFE? Lucie = the spunky girl.

Maybe he imagines the story from multiple points of view.

2.27.04

Here's a thought I had at breakfast -- to **model the two girls after the pair in THE AVIATOR'S WIFE. Certainly, the spunky girl he meets in the park would be good foil for the writer. She naturally spins out her own scenarios, and is fearless where he is timid.**

The other girl could be more actressy. She seems to thrive on emotional turmoil, likes for more than one guy to be in love with her, imagines herself as maybe being a larger than life bestseller ala Joan Collins or Jaqueline Susann.

Robert Altman blowing his last couple of hundred bucks at the track.

2.28.04

He fantasizes that he would be considered more interesting if he had a gun (secretly) and was about to explode (re. I STAND ALONE).

Chapter headings?

Diane = prof who invited him to lecture, embittered that she was role model for character in his first novel. Part of Diane's rap to the writer is she doesn't believe he could ever be faithful, not like her new bf. Spunky girl helps Dick follow around Diane's bf. It's an inconclusive adventure.

DAN: to do a Rohmerian inconclusive adventure you have to be willing to devote an entire film to it.

Expansion and contraction of plot. Have some extremely abbreviated condensed plot sections to give lie to the charge that there is no plot. Treat condensed plot (with VO?) as another form of mood.

3.2.04

What is interesting about the Larry David "character" on CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM is that he's got scads of money and is still basically a form of Underground Man (again to another U.M. -- George on SEINFELD). It strikes me as not a bad model for FEVER DREAM. Not that my guy needs to have scads of money -- but that he is an engaging eccentric. Maybe it's not so much a story about madness as social inappropriateness.

I could imagine scenes where the writer as mis-perceived as being romantically involved with one of the girls -- maybe a case in which he is asked to beard for one of them.

Try to imagine FD as a form of CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM/SEINFELD.

George/Larry re. peeing in private. (re. THE CITY DOCTOR) (Writer could be picky about his privacy with the girls.) He should have a buddy that he confides to, pals around with.

3.4.04

A scene later in the story where the writer imagines him powerless and thinks how people would regard him differently if they knew he was carrying a concealed gun and could explode at any time.

Opening: Imagine of bench in the (SF) desert.

CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM NOTES

Wild tirades about apparent trivialities.

Open to discussing any human dilemma as long as it's something not a lot of other people are interested in.

Social awkwardness -- not saying good-bye

Practices composing recommendation letter out loud in bed.

Hypochondria.

Heavy use of coincidence, "running into people"

Larry can't keep a secret -- and the consequences of that.

FD POINTS SPARKED BY CYE

(The spunky girl could be his buddy -- after being an alien)

(it's the writer's hometown -- he runs into people)

(can't keep a secret)

3.5.04

Imagine it as a French film, starring Gerard Depardieu or whomever.

Non-sequitur / satire / "underground film" technique

Reserved girl encourages flamboyant to sleep with him.

He watches their interactions -- speculates -- the speculations are visualized.

3.6.04

re. WONDER BOYS:

Opening narration

Add non-embittered encounter with someone more successful.

He keeps writing variants of opening scene.

(Alain re. Wonder Boys:)

Helping other people with their issues helps him with his.

Other people have real (and different) agendas.

He understands what blocks him but can't work through it.

ALAIN FD COMMENTS

We care about a character with core sincerity.

His wife kicked him out -- but that's not bad, because she is shallow (wife is screenwriter?)

He was lovers with Diane -- source of frustration. Maybe she seduces him again -- he shares his insights with her.

Lecture: Not just students, but colleagues come to hear him.

He is given accommodations in exchange for helping them with their writing -- it's a pedagogical relationship. (and is violation of the pedagogical relationship an issue?)

His first book good, second book crap, lives frugally to write good books.

Needs to dig himself out of a hole, get his inspiration back.

The girls interactions with him clarifies their desires.

He rediscovers inspiration by snooping -- he does what he needed to do.

But he betrays them (by spying).

1. spying
2. caught spying (or caught writing about them)

Conflict: aesthetic ideas VS. behavior typically considered reprehensible.

Spying excites him aesthetically (and sexually?)

Sleeping with one of the girls isn't an accident -- loneliness, desire.

Maybe he ends up with one of the girls.

End is mirror of beginning. His success could tear apart relationship with girl (danger of this being pretentious).

He is insightful about his problems. He has insight into other people, but it doesn't help him until he stops worrying about himself.

He is selfish not self-serving.

His decisions:

1. Locked in a mansion (kicked out)
2. Still real people out in the world (he used to write about them).
3. His first book worked because he was in an emotional relationship.

Tossed out of jail --

Diane sets him up to accept girls' invitation--

He doesn't want to work on book he hates --

He's like a soldier on furlough.

Nice guy derailed by success.

He's in apt but they don't totally trust him?

Consider this as a PREQUEL TO WONDER BOYS

(back to GW notes:)

What is he sleeps with both girls as per TTWD?

In the mode of a French film, what if he sleeps with both girls, and each wants him to keep it secret? This parallels the psychic stress of TTWD.

After he sleeps with the girls they become less interesting as inspiration sources because he is too involved (or is he shocked by what they write about him in secret?)

Need a moment where one of the girls discover that he is writing about them.

3.7.04

An IKEA scene (he goes shopping at Ikea with the girls).
Add domineering Mom?

Start with writer on couch, flashback to how he got there.
Maybe do film in 3 (?) flashback sections, each one pulling back to the present.

Character models: Alicia, Jamie, Mary Mann.

Alicia: bright, ambitious but lacks polished education.

Discussion of character's core sincerity as part of story.

Writer's discussion of story is parallel to him discussing his own character (story discussion as parallel to character discussion).

3.11.04

[START DRAFT 1 OF SCRIPT TODAY -- JUST PAGE ONE]

ALAIN DISCUSSION

Wonder Boys -- Messianic quality to Michael Douglas character. He has lost his creative confidence.

[smart pothead = WONDER BOYS appeal]
genre: Art Comedy

Logline: Writer loses money and fame and it's the best thing that ever happened to him.

Quasi-messianic: doesn't want to fulfill what he needs to fulfill.

Honest ala Peter Finch in NETWORK but milder.

Lecture: I'm writing a book I hate -- my wife -- ex-wife won't give me my computer so I can't write -- at least not that book -- and that feels great.

Q: would you like to teach?

A: I wish I could go back to being a fucking student.

Lunch with Diane: She backs away from the envy she has (he's rich, famous). This becomes sadness, empathy.

Later: God of honesty is a sneak.

Girls are pissed off that he has written about them.

Diane to girls: Hey, that's what he does -- what did you expect?

His arc: gets his creative confidence back. He realizes again what things are important. He needs to have an emotional connection with her.

Diane wants him back. She broke up with him. "How could I meet the guy of my dreams so easily?" Threatened by his intelligence, his creative drive. When the first book came out, she was pissed that he wrote about her. Now she is charmed. She broke up with him because she over-rationalized it. Now she relates to their shared experience.

His mistake was not fighting to stay together with her. (He doesn't fight to stay with current wife -- he doesn't want to.) He should never have accepted her decision to break up.

[story-telling technique: talk to other people about their past. He talks to one of the girls about Diane.]

[Technique: first script pass -- directly discuss problems, then back off of that.]

CLAIRE'S KNEE: Obsessed by girl he doesn't even like.

3.12.04

NAMES

Cary

Harry

Samantha

Sally

One of the girls makes up stories about herself
(Jacqueline?)

ARCS

WRITER

Unhappy to happy, lonely to in love, gets his creative
confidence back.

DIANE

Distance/envy to love.

THE GIRLS

From regarding him as a god to being angry (to
realizing/accepting who he is).

What if the writer is a little more heartbroken over the
loss of his wife? Not enough to try and get her back (just
as he didn't try to get Diane back). It's definitely a
love-hate thing with the wife, but show some more of a love
side. There was some love though he knew the relationship
was doomed. Say she is a successful TV actress, she likes
all the creature comforts, and why not, she's rich, and he
has drifted into that life without particularly liking it.
That puts him in a darker place to bounce back from. That
makes the girls non-material innocence and energy more
attractive.

3.14.04

How many "catch-up" scenes with Diane?

re. WONDER BOYS

Loss of book -- poetically throwing it away

FD is missing plot complication of Marilyn's jacket/dead
dog

VO "I had to find Sara, convince her that she was my
choice."

Pedagogical victory at end -- James takes a bow. Plus, VO that teaching his students is what redeemed the last few years.

END VO: "But I finally knew where I wanted to go and I had someone to help me get there."

3.18.04

Meditation on the need to fictionalize life.

Spin out the history of Danny and Diane as it exists in fiction? Show her fiction?

He questions it's validity or importance or why he should even keep doing it.

3.19.04

AS: decide what the fiction of the first novel is.

RADIO MARY -- a personal novel with genre elements. (would this be the second book?)

Diane = Shayne in THE MASTER DEBATER. (as the first book?)
Or: Diane as Diane.

ALT: The Trouble With Dick was his first book, a personal story mixed with SF. He's made a mistake in the second book of pushing too hard into genre, trying to write literary SF, but lacking the personal element that propelled the first novel.

It's okay for the book to be destroyed at the end -- as long as he is back to writing -- or it's a twist/reveal that an alternate copy exists. Maybe that is Kristin's present to him.

DAN:

Why is a chaste girl rooming with a flamboyant girl? Are they school-assigned roommates in a dorm? If so, why are they friendly enough to invite the writer jointly? If they're friendly, why the rather nasty game of sexual one-upsmanship between them?

Maybe you can turn this into a virtue, by writing scenes where the girls talk about their relationship with each

other to the writer. In general, I want to know more about the girls' lives - that's probably the next area to develop.

Diane seems the weakest link at the moment. At the beginning, she seems disapproving all the time, and then she wants him back. My first thought is that she should be a cipher, not an important character. He could still wind up with her at the end. But she has a thankless role - maybe it's better to reduce her role instead of elaborate it. Any way you cut it, the girls are going to be more interesting.

Financial pressure of having to pay advance back.

ISSUES:

Visualization of first book?

3.20.04

TTWD as post-grad story -- Diane is in school, Dick isn't. He hasn't written a successful book, he is just trying to be a writer. He's trying to write SF.

re. TTWD "I really did go crazy -- I really never managed to write SF -- guess my imagination is too pedestrian. I'm a literalist"

"Literary?"

"No -- a literalist. Any advice -- it's hard not to listen, not to hear an echo -- even if it's advice I don't like, that I reject, it stays with me, makes me forever doubt that sentence or that chapter -- whatever that other person, whoever it was, called into question, from then on I question it myself. That's how it is when things get bad."

"Anyway, I listened to my agent who said I should try to give whatever I did next something of an SF spin -- not to confuse my 'audience.'"

"Maybe the second book could be good -- maybe it used to be good but it isn't now -- I worked on it too much, thought about it too much, and the good parts are scattered across drafts and I'm not even sure what the good stuff is anymore. Ask me about something else -- anything is easier to figure out than that. **And now I can't separate the book from the room I wrote it in -- what it felt to be in that**

room is how that book feels to me -- and I'm sick of that room so how can I help but be sick of that book..."

re. opening: Literalness of the scene.

3.21.04

First novel -- Coming of age with an SF element -- wasn't an SF novel per se.

With his second novel, he's trapped himself into writing something with an SF tinge and that's constricting him. That's the joy of being free of the second book.

Per Dan, Diane should be a cipher, only come into existence as a character at the end of the story.

Show process of fiction, of thought. He thinks of a word, he writes the word down, he ponders the meaning effect of that word in relation to other words.

ADD SCENES

Kristin talks about her relationship to Jacqueline.

Jacqueline talks about her relationship to Kristin.

Early scene where we hear his thoughts in VO (ala ETERNAL) -- how those thoughts morph into "self-narration" -- how that self-narration becomes writing. But...what scene? Getting up in the morning? Taking taxi to UCLA? Reveal plausible scene as being fictional? Waking up in the girl's apt?

Example, waking up first morning:

"First thing you see...wonder what it is...oh, that...why am I here...who was she...oh, here...looks different in daylight...which way is the bathroom...take the steps back to where it started...." Cut to him with legal pad, writing it down: **work backwards from here but forward in words, take a sentence to cast myself back an hour, a paragraph, this one, to throw me into the day before...Yesterday, another set of words...don't write words about words, too obvious. Too boring. Reality is inexhaustible. Select the details with precise backwards eye. Backwards I."**

Balance between inner and outer stuff. Inward stuff is interesting if the process is interesting. If you can feel the flickers of consciousness and how that is given shape.

[3.22.04 -- BEGIN INTENSE RUN OF WRITING DRAFT 1 -- UP TO P.5]

3.28.04

J. talks about THE STORY OF O and THE CLAIMING OF BEAUTY -- how she wants to "brand" her own form of hot literature. Talk about VOX (or does K bring this up?)

3.30.04

J. is writing WEEKEND? (sexual teasing)

J -- VOX talk

K -- ROOM TEMP (or too much Nicholson Baker?)

Danny's sexual reluctance

Do they give him a key at some point?

4.1.04

DRAFT 1 REWRITE NOTES

When do we find out that Danny and Diane went to school together?

Takes inventory of his suitcase at the apt (doesn't open it until then).

Scene where he talks about reconstructing reality in fiction. Visually demonstrate this as he talks about it. A mirror into the fictional process.

Save SF discussion for Kristin.

Kristin wants to do inventory -- write story about his suitcase.

Clothes shopping with one of the girls.

If they invite him out, wouldn't he go? He would learn more about them in a social context. Maybe there would be an awkwardness if he is there -- he effects the situation such that he gets limited info.

DIAL PIECES

Is this anything like when you were in college?

Fucking has been relatively the same for a number of years.

Are you going to try and reconstruct or rewrite your novel
-- or start something new?

4.2.04

Norman Mailer talk

Cortazar -- A CONTINUITY OF PARKS

Borges

Strategy: when I feel bored with writing something, then take an approach that interests me, whatever that is, unconstrained by the style/content of the rest of the script.

4.3.04

Potential emotional resonance: Diane no longer a fictional character but a "person" -- arriving at the beginning of romance.

Use the phrase somewhere in script "crashing on the couch."

√Some comment (Ds?) about dream sequences -- how you don't feel cheated if they are about sex. (have this dial close to the "threesome" moment?)

Try to convey a sense of all of them mining the same experience for fiction.

Try to revive detail of Danny peeing without splashing (this ties into The Mezzanine discussion of peeing).

At my most hopeful/ambitious, see this as a mediation on the complexities of relationship between three people, a meditation upon the complex relation of reality to fiction (by those intent upon creating fiction). How complicated and inexhaustible a little hunk of reality can be.

4.4.04

FINISH DRAFT 1 OF THE SCRIPT TODAY.

Mess with the connections between scenes. Erase the obvious stuff.

"And like the man said, in the end we're all dead."

For bathroom short story, have Kristin voice over for the two character's dialogue.

(POST DRAFT 1)

4.6.04

re. rewrite: enhance Danny's sense of guilt re. snooping.

End: is J swayed by arguments of literary immortality, how Danny's book will help her legend?

4.8.04

Clarify stakes -- his need to stay in the apt., his fear of getting thrown out. How does this reverse to his willingness to leave at the end? Does he have a moment of panic that he overcomes?

4.14.04

Danny makes some comment re. criticism (when he is asked to comment on the girls' stories) that criticism forever haunts him, the when someone makes a remark it is hard to erase that from his mind.

I must deal with my own impressionableness. How I hear and then spout opinions of others.

4.17.04

DANNY PLAYED BY DIFFERENT ACTORS -- ALA THAT OBSCURE OBJECT
3 actors?

1. With J/K together
2. With J
3. With K

re. TTWD clips -- use J or K narration to "sell" clip of Dick "angrily" writing about "Art."

DRAFT 2 QUESTIONS

Can multiple actors play Danny?

How to increase Diane's presence in story?
 re. making Danny sympathetic -- explicit dial about not
 being about money?
 Improve long "banal" section that lacks weirdness.
 Fix "fictional" TTWD "angry writing" scene.

4.19.04

FROM "BOLD NOTES" 3.14.04:

Could one of the girls write SF, or imitative SF in
 imitation of Danny?
 Danny on talk show?
 His mother inadvertently made him an artist.
 Fantasy of a TV cameraman & reporter waiting in the bedroom
 Chapter headings

CURRENT "THE TROUBLE WITH DICK" SCENES

Haley seduces Dick
 Sheila seduces Dick -- Diane sees Dick in bathrobe
 "Meet Art"

POSSIBLE "THE TROUBLE WITH DICK" SCENES

Gazebo with Diane -- "Today I finished my story...what's
 your next project?...You." (:45?)
 From Haley's room to Sheila's room (:58)
 Dick's trance typing (:59)
 Regression dream
 Diane talks to Dick: flour/bread/vanishes
 Tom Paine -- Dick comes through TV (1:01)
 Kitchen -- Diane's good-bye (Kafka riff, "you need to get
 out of this wretched house.") (1:12)
**Dick watches Lars on TV (this could jump cut to Haley
 seduction)**

J & K's need for a mentor relationship

What's there for me, what's missing for me

Intractability of pages -- and what do I see/sense when
 I'm not looking at the pages?

"If you can sum it up in a theme, why not just say a
 sentence and be done with it?"

4.20 - 4.21.04

DAN COMMENTS

√After sex with Kristin, "relief" doesn't seem right. Alt: I want to be alone and regroup -- OR: I want to write this down.

Work competes with romance -- maybe after sex with Kristin he rushes back to couch to write.

√When Jaqueline leaves without his noticing, externalize POV to show that happening without his noticing. (p.43)

Diane as school marm.

> -- got to find some way to fix Diana.

DAN re. DIANE: Here's an idea to replace one of her irate-phone-call scenes, though it might be too close to some other things you've done. You can have one of the scenes between Danny and the girls (or their fictional counterparts) turn out to be something Diane is writing. In it, Danny inexplicably refuses the girls' sexual advances, saying he loves someone else. The girls criticize him, saying how psychologically implausible this is, and how it seems like a female fantasy from a cheap romance novel.

> -- got to find some way to fix Diana.

I've got a killer idea for an ending which fixes all the problems I have with the script with one stroke! But I don't think you'll want it, because it pushes the film too far away from comedy conventions.

To do this idea, you need to take the penultimate coffee chat between Danny and Diana and move it somewhere earlier in the script.

The idea: after Danny says his rather reserved goodbye to the girls, we see a "rewrite" of the scene. In the rewrite, Danny and the girls are much more affectionate: he tells them that he's never met two women as smart or perceptive or funny as them. But he brings up the age difference, and how impossible that makes things...not to mention the menage-a-trois factor.... Everyone is sad. Then this is revealed as a fiction being written by Danny, when he is with Diana. The audience should not see Danny and Diana together as a couple until right after this fantasy. The end.

This fixes the Diana problem: she doesn't have to be a major character anymore, coz she's no longer the fulfillment of Danny's dreams. And it fixes the fact that Danny never takes these somewhat amazing girls seriously. But it turns the ending melancholy, coz Danny is still thinking about the girls. Possibly too arty. But I like it.

(GW:) (Eenie, meenie, minie, moe -- he picks Kristin, because J. would never be faithful. But K takes exception, she doesn't pick him.)

(OR: K accuses Danny of never taking her seriously. She makes a case for romance. He accepts.)

(OR:) He tells Kristin that he wants to be with her (he makes a point of getting her alone to tell her this -- expresses his reservations about the age difference, that he is disrupting her education, that she has an idealized view of him. Reveal that he has been writing this, that he didn't have the courage to tell her this to her face. Somehow she reads this and they get together -- as expansion of "getting busted" scene and they are together. Do a reveal of Danny now sleeping in Kristin's room.) So here's my take on your take:

(EMAILED TO DAN: He goes back to the apt, they are reading the legal pads, he is busted. After apologies and promises of no more wrongful spying, he gets Kristin alone and tells her that he wants to be with her -- expresses his reservations about the age difference, that he is disrupting her education, that she has an idealized view of him. Reveal that he has written this, that he didn't have the courage to tell her this to her face. She is reading this and they get together. Do a reveal of Danny now sleeping in Kristin's room.

The person I am rooting for him to end up with is Kristin -- even if they are together, they probably have to leave the apt. for closure. I kind of like a double Tramp image of them both walking along the road with suitcases in hand.)

(could use same last scene as in Draft 2, but he goes into Kristin's room instead of Diana's.)

(An image of Danny and Kristin walking together, a tramp couple, along the road.)

(OR: they say, stay here, finish your book. No sex, until you're done. J brings a another guy home -- K invites Danny into her room. The couch is vacated.)

Don't want to be too clever at the end because that would undercut the reality of the emotions needed for closure.

Miguel Arteta's advice re. casting non-actors: cast ambitious people because that raises the courage level. It's not that they want to be performers, but that they want to be well-known, they already have drive to succeed. Miguel didn't read them (they begged to) because he wanted them to have confidence going in. Cast people who are unexpectedly close so you know how to maneuver them.

4.23.04

DAN

Try RASHOMON ending -- J and K each write a fictional version where they end up with Danny. Danny writes his fictional version, where he leaves the apt -- then reveal that he is with Diane. His version comes last, for closure.

Keep TTWD clips short -- Haley seduction clip doubles up with what is going on in the apt.

RON M.

Doesn't come across that they are inspiring him.

Value of what he's doing not self-evident.

Need to signal that he is writing literature again.

He should have remorse/pangs/turmoil over his voyeurism & spying.

Most sympathetic in his interactions with Diana (not using or abusing her).

After he gets his money back, maybe bring his wealth into it (he takes them out on the town).

Skip opening writing, start with him getting kicked out of house.

Computer stuff confusing -- **he gets her AOL password to read mail.**

Change Danny's name re. readability.

Not clear he's sincere in helping J & K with their writing.

Ron thought he was going to be taught a lesson by them.

Tables weren't turned on him.

K's attitude after sex not clear -- she got what she wanted and has moved on? (in which case he's be miffed).

Like K's poem better than the other snippets.

Push the imaginary sex scenes more (like when K gets into bed with J & D)

More interactions with Diana (liked Dan's idea of getting Diana's "fictional" take on events). Could repeat this riff again, of an outsider's "fictional" take (a child's, in passing?)

4.29.04

ADD: DECONSTRUCTING HARRY riff -- replace actors with realies re. Diana

Scene where Diana is sympathetic and appealing "Sorry I'm projecting stuff onto you."

LAURA CORN COMMENTS

First half flows quicker -- a little too cerebral in second half.

5.3.04

RECAP OF DAN EMAIL STUFF:

DAN (3.30.04): Well, the scene of Diana writing about Danny was a suggestion. And moving the penultimate coffee chat earlier was another. But maybe you have to accept the idea that Diana can't compete with the girls, and leave her a bit of an abstraction. My alternate ending (with Danny suddenly in bed with Diana at the end, without narrative buildup, and with the girls still a little bit on his mind) depends on the fact that Diana isn't as important as the girls: she's a minor character who gets Danny in the end because she's an acceptable choice by conventional standards. Not that their relationship can't be just fine, but the audience will still be with the girls.

DAN 5.1.04 -- get rid of Diane phone messages and/or make less strident

ALAIN RE. FIXING DIANE SCENES:

<< I'm open to any suggestions for improving the Diana character, making her less strident. >>

Should be easy to do in the scene at the Gypsy Wagon: (1) she starts out aloof and resentful, jealous of his critical and physical success, perhaps add comment how he certainly

drew a crowd of her colleagues, never seen so many of them in one place before, not even at department meetings etc. Rick is above, sincerely more interested in writing something good than making money so (2) she listens to Rick's tale and softens and finally (3) she is hurt that he accepts a couch from strangers rather than her but tries to mask it with the "my students" stuff. Rich should see this and be uncertain how to react. It should be clear that he is still attracted to Diana, but does not want to restart anything with her just now for fear of either being hurt or hurting her.

It should be easy to make the phone message more sympathetic (less strident). Perhaps she says something unguardedly about her concern/feelings/etc. for Rick presuming only Kristin will hear it. Her direct conversation should stress that she would really like to help--not just offering a couch but other emotional support. Perhaps she feels she failed him back in college, that she was too self-centered, too guarded, whatever, but now she has another chance to help (and, read between her lines, be with him) and does not want to blow it.

5.4.04

RE. RASHOMON ENDING:

Busted scene -- reaches moment of stillness.

Cut to: (either repeat action or cut forward in time) D comes into K's room, sees that she is packing to come with him -- tramp image --

Cut to: reveal K as writing this -- dolly into J's room -- enter into her fiction.

Cut to: J's version -- she refuses to sleep with Danny again, even though he desperately wants to be with her.

Cut to: restart busted scene, fonder and funnier version

Reveal: that Danny is writing this at Diane's house.

5.5.04

re. DECONSTRUCTING HARRY "Can't function in life, can only function in art."

Conceptual issue of fictional characters vs. realies.

5.7.04

RE. DIRECTING:

Yet another file, another journal, another attempt to contain, compartmentalize....

Clarity-comprehensibility means "speaking" in a common language. So "personal expression" is using that language, bending it (or adapting it) to the contours of one's (might I say my in the context of MY journal?) personality.

Assumed language =

1. Consistent construction of character (no elements that break the illusion)
2. Consistency in the actors interpretation-performance (again, to create and maintain illusion of the dramatic construct).
3. "Clear" presentation of space -- following the rules of screen direction, eyelines, etc.
4. "Conventional" treatment of dramatic time.

The assumed goal is to give a seamless dramatic experience, offering the viewer the opportunity to lose himself in the illusion of a manufactured narrative experience. Slight variances from this (such as jump cuts) are perceived as "radical."

I start with the assumption that I will make a movie pretty much like all others. I start by writing a script that is pretty much like all others. I hope that if I make something "well-crafted" then I will be rewarded for being a good boy and will be patted on my (bald) head and given an opportunity and paid to do it again, in a bigger and louder way. I internalize the language and goals of making my film pretty much like other estimable "films of quality."

Maybe the internalization of language is linked to the desire to succeed within the culture. I will speak like you, I will charm you, you will love me.

Weird how scripts are all sort of the same. Hew to the same structure. Same with scenes. A certain number of things are said back and forth. A point is made. A story is advanced. Then on to the next scene.

I can demonstrate certain principles of "craft" without being able to articulate them. I can write a "well-crafted" screenplay. It would be hard to explain note by note why it is well-crafted. Does that make me an idiot craftsman? Or an intuitive craftsman?

What would it be like if I had never seen a movie and was handed a camera? If I had the opportunity to invent cinema? I need to get a smidgen of that into my movie -- more than a smidgen might tip the balance into incomprehensibility.

Or...the first draft of the script turned out well because to some (small) extent, I did what I liked, played around, under the assumption that I was making something small and unnoticeable. Why not do what I like? Parallel to Henry Miller's dictum that "to lie in a diary is the height of insanity," to make a micro-art film that is not tailored to my precise and persnickety whims is ridiculous -- since it is folly to think that anyone else would like or pay any attention to what I am doing, I would be insane to do anything other than what I like. No one is paying me. No one is making demands or requests or imposing curtailments of caprice. The only person stopping me from doing it exactly how I like is me. As per Henry Miller, to make a private work for anything other than private reasons and private pleasure is the height of artistic insanity. My best chance for success both inside and outside of my head is to do what I like.

Which leads to the noisome problem of input. And the problems of how comments and criticisms echo. And how I parrot sentiments that are articulated to me, repeat them as if they are my own.

Can there be guiding principles to the practice of intuition? How does craft come into play.

Perhaps craft comes down to a sense of what works based on:

1. experience
2. experiment

Experience is what you bring to the experimental situation of making a movie.

"Guiding Principles" can impart unity to a longer piece.

5.12.04

What would make me confident to direct:

1. A cast that I believe in.
2. Storyboard -- a detailed visual plan.
3. Adequate resources: time, art dept.

4. The script as good as I am capable of making it.

(end DIRECTING entry)

5.14.04

DAN

Before one can know what to do with Danny's fiction at the end, one has to have a clear idea where his head/fiction/life want to be.

What does he want or need to say that he hasn't already said?

Final fiction doesn't have to reverse or add to what has come before. But it is an opportunity to do what hasn't been done in the "climactic" scene. What is the fiction adding? Why is it there?

Your (GW) notes about the script are in the script (a nice aspect of this project).

GW: Maybe he doesn't want to say anything other than what he's said (maybe he's the kind of character who doesn't say everything).

J'S FICTION, K'S FICTION, TTWD -- these can all be title cards in the finished film.

5.15.04

RE. DIRECTING:

The Scene vs. The Whole -- issue of restraint

MOOD

--Pacing of shots, dial.

--Visual rhythm: editing, how long shots are held, movement within frame, shot size (which effects rhythm)

--Narrative tension (what sustains interest in a scene)

--Lighting, texture

--Direct vs. Indirect Conveyance of directorial "attitude"

When is "claustrophobia" a positive stylistic attribute? A story where the tension tightens, where options are reduced.

What happens when space becomes familiar, lived in? How do attitudes toward that space change?

NARRATIVE UNITS

1. The events that get him to the apt. (p.14)
 Writing
 Malibu
2. UCLA -- class, coffee kiosk
3. First Night: get stoned, book talk with K, late night talk with J (p.26)
4. TTWD I -- vending machine (p.26)
5. Second day: alone in apt, starts spying (p.32)
6. J's fiction, he writes "ecstatic writing" (with J present) (p.33-41)
7. K returns (almost busted), he reads her fiction,
8. Coffee bar, comes home alone (p.41-55)
9. TTWD II -- Diane catches Dick with Sheila (p.55-57)
- Day 3: J & K reading TTWD, talking to him (p.57-60)
10. Kristin seduces him, bed, after: discovered by J (p.60-67)
11. Day 4: Awkward breakfast with K, he reads K's poem,
12. J comes home and seduces him (in flashback) (p.67-76)
- K returns, catches them in bed, fantasy of menage, then not. (p.76-79)
13. Kristin's fiction -- bathroom sex (p.79-81), dial with K about her story (p.81-83)
14. TTWD III -- meet Art, angry writing (p.83-85)
15. Coffee II with Diane (p.85-87)
16. Climax scene -- He's busted (p.87-91)

J's fiction, K's fiction, D's fiction, end (p.91-96)

KEY DIRECTORIAL PARAMETERS

Structure of story

Dramatic emphasis within story

Casting

Placement of camera

Framing of shots

Rhythm, pacing of movement of camera & movement within frame

Rhythm of performance

PARAMETERS OF CASTING/ACTING

Creating the illusion of a character

Engagement

Empathy/sympathy

Charm

Surprise (surprising behavior)

Truth (surprising truth)

(end DIRECTING entry)

5.18.04

PETER ELLIS

Liked having Diane in the story.

really liked how you didn't know what the scene was about.

Didn't so much like the monologues about fiction.

Monologues made him lose track of the sexual tension and

how is he going to get out of the hole that he's in.

Maybe didn't see level of personal investment in monologues.

p.25-40 -- before cat and mouse game

5.18.04

RE. DIRECTING:

RE. THAT OBSCURE OBJECT -- occasional documentary feel.

Almost no CU's (which makes the lace-making CU so powerful

at the end). Weird AUTO-MATES feel of couple constantly

bickering. Bunuel left visual planning to the last minute.

No overt/heightened sense of visual design -- basic,

neutral story-telling.

As per Jim Krusoe re. Faulkner -- great idiosyncratic stylization is not exportable -- it usually makes sense only as used by the artist who coined the usage.

Sexual tension = key element of appeal

Script notes are part of the script -- could this concept apply to visuals?

The script was written under the guiding principle of doing what I liked -- "why the hell not?" Under the assumption that there was no other reason to do anything -- no money, no attention. This should probably be a guiding principle under any/all circumstances. Think of Buñuel.

So, visually, just do what I like -- which should be fairly consistent on a day to day basis (just as I have an affinity for certain phrases, &c).

Unlike NFU, there is not necessarily some over-arching visual plan.

What interests me? What sustains my interest? What gives me energy?

Playfulness as the key.

Just as all scripts are all kind of the same (unless they extensively use silence), all films are more or less the same: 90 minutes to two hours in length, conventional presentation of space and time, a conventional number of shots. A style in keeping with the time or intentionally retro, rarely recklessly future-looking.

A deliberate quality to my work that accentuates mood. Stately (for lack of a better word) rather than frenetic.

Additional meta level of shooting the film at the Tiki.

ALT: designed shots that express strong authorial presence (which fits with meta levels). Re. THE SERVANT (or Gaspar Noe). Elaborate camera moves shakily executed as per DV approximation of dolly &c. This approach can provide a strong (imposed) mood.

QUESTIONS

Should TTWD look-be different?

Should J and K's fiction look/be different?

(end DIRECTING entry)

5.20.04

Find this phone quote from Dan: "not bad to use conventions -- bad when you think conventions is what film is about."

5.21.04

Nudity reference rewrites, pages: 1, 2, 37, 61, 64 "wearing a robe", 70, 72, 73 (nipple clamp)

No-nudity rewrites undone: 1, 2, 37, 61 (unbutton pajama top), 64 ("wearing a robe, K goes to the door)

5.21.04

re. DIRECTING:

Talk with Alain about my three parameters of confidence: in the script, in the cast, in my ability to direct.

Re. the directing he says that the key is my ongoing vision of the movie. That I shouldn't worry so much about production design.

Alain says that the bathtub scene in BEAT is the best scene that he has ever been involved with -- that "if half the scenes in the movie had been at that level then the movie would have been phenomenal." The key to BEAT's failure (for him) is the fact that the cast didn't click. Take that scene as proof that I have done *it*, that I can do *it* again.

DAN: (re. the movie being from the writer's POV)

I didn't get a really subjective feeling from the movie. The point-of-view was quite mobile, and often ambiguous.

GW> A further thought on the topic of debut films. Maybe many debut films are good because one's confidence hasn't been battered by experience (and failure). Since you've never done it before, there is less to mitigate against unbridled confidence and hopefulness.

DAN: I guess. Of course, sometimes it works the other way around too. I was just trying to say that **the craft of directing isn't as important as personality and attitude.**

GW> And I must say I both fear and don't at all look forward to going out and shooting again. Some sort of emotional paralysis that I just can't seem to shake.

DAN: But it's always scary, isn't it? I'm always scared. Didn't you used to be?

(email to Dan, re. being scared about directing:)

With writing I can take all the time I need to get something in the best shape that I am capable of. There is no deadline. Unlike the situation in filmmaking where you have to shoot the _____ scene on Wednesday, and what you get on Wednesday is the eternal incarnation of that particular scene.

When I write something, what I strive for is my perfect version of the thing, that is, the best work that I am capable of. Say, with CRASHING, I can now play an vague but ideal version of the film in my head.

Admittedly there are moments of epiphany and instances where what you get on film (or tape these days) far exceeds the expectation. That's the joy -- the capacity for surprise.

But I fear these last few years I've crossed some sort of line where I am now more a writer than a director. That I prefer the method and achievement that writing offers.

That said, there is a need I have to prove that I can still make a good film -- an inner demon, an inner doubt that needs quelling, particularly given the abject artistic failure of THE LAST BIG TOE.

(end DIRECTING entry)

5.25.04

NOTE -- this is a section that I was ambivalent about cutting from the "writing section", at p.38 of Draft 3:

RICHARD (V.O.)

I'm afraid to read this shit because then I might stop and never start again -- why do I feel so tired after a couple

of sentences, as if there is nothing more to imagine, ever
--

Behind him, Jacqueline appears in the doorway, still dressed in sweats, notebook in hand. With exaggerated quietness she sits down at the kitchen table.

CUT TO:

REPEAT ACTION -- INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

PETER ELLIS (script notes)

Wanted stronger sense of desperation, of what's at stake.

Show his reaction to lock's being changed at Malibu house.

Coffee kiosk I -- Richard is clever with words, he uses words to keep emotions at bay -- does anyone call him on it? Can he reveal himself more to Diane? Show more raw hurt re. his situation?

p.38 "read this shit" -- cut this VO (echoes my own doubt)

p.48 Thin out Richard's "Big Lebowski" dial.

Coffee bar scene is good because it shows his struggles. Try to write some new pieces that show his struggles.

Where does he put down his guard? Show how his cleverness is how he keeps the world at bay.

p.39 "Writing section"

FRANK GRUBER (script notes)

Diane drops out too much in the middle (Peter who read both versions, did not miss the absence of Diane)

(AS--Richard runs into Diane at Staples while he is buying legal pads).

Confusing that actors are playing a younger version of Richard/Diane in the TTWD scenes.

Play up Richard's Joseph Heller-like fame (re. CATCH-22 -- it is lying around coffee bar, etc.)

Maybe Richard transposes what's going on in apt. to Science Fiction (last piece of Richard fiction?).

5.27.04

re. DIRECTING:

Liberating myself from obsession with BG/FG relationships -
- learning to minimize the trivial, to stylize clutter into
cohesion

5.27.04

KILIAN'S COMMENTS (script notes)

Girls should ask Richard about getting back with Diane in
the future (not just talk about her in the past).

Scene where Diane comes to apt -- "So this is what's it's
like, staying with two college girls." (You would see
Diane's affection for Richard in this scene.)

Richard sweats enough in the beginning, in the build-up to
sex with the girls, but he doesn't sweat enough at the end
(after sleeping with both of them).

Ending up with Diane doesn't seem like an option in the
middle.

Richard is devil may care and that's what appeals to Diane
(because that is what she is not).

DAN: What is Diane doing in the script if not to be the
happy-ending girl? That's really her only function. It's
not necessarily a bad thing to have a convention like this.
But it's bad if you think she's a character and not a
convention. So you have to be careful if/when you add
Diane scenes, so that you don't start pretending she's an
important character.

GW > Are there any films you think it would be useful for
me to see to help get ready to direct this thing?

DAN: Maybe your own! It really doesn't feel exactly like
any other movie, so I'd say no. You could rent some
Resnais films for a good, clean approach to directing
interiors. But I picture your film more of a medium-shot
film, and Resnais tends toward long shots.

5.28.04

RE. DIRECTING:

Style as opposite to homogenizing story.

POV as the key -- mobile, ambiguous, alternating?

DAN'S CHARACTER SKETCHES:

RICHARD: confident; brash; charming; comfortable with the business world; goes after the things he wants; capable of being hard; empathetic but not always able to use that empathy with real people, as opposed to fictional characters.

JACQUELINE: confident; flirtatious; ambitious; aware of the way she affects others; capable of manipulation; uses sexuality but doesn't feel defined by it.

KRISTIN: sociable; uses humor as a social device; solitary by nature, though it's not obvious; secretly vulnerable and uncertain; capable of getting lost in relationships, and dislikes this aspect of herself; felt like a misfit in high school, though she was already well socialized.

5.29.04

RE. DIRECTING

ala TOGETHER -- pans to connect characters. Coverage is all from one camera position, not roaming along the axis of the stageline. Pans (not whip pans) to connect characters.

When are camera moves not distracting? When they enhance the expressive content of the scene. When you are unaware of them, unless that is the intention.

But with CRASHING, occasional awareness of the camera is congruent with the meta games played throughout.

How Dan's statement that the POV is quite mobile, ambiguous has affected some of my storyboarding decisions -- to not straight-jacket myself into a rigorous presentation of Richard's POV.

Do I limit myself by thinking about what I did before?
Today's answer: yes -- or -- maybe.

Feel like I'm restricting myself by forcing it through Richard's POV.

Directing (with storyboarding as a first step) should be like writing, as per John Huston's dictum -- don't try to

impose style, just speak in my own, natural, conversational voice.

color filtration of the various levels?

TTWD - green (or B&W?)

R's fiction - blue

J's fiction - pink

K's fiction - yellow

EMAIL TO DAN:

DS-

Once again, thanks for your words of encouragement.

Spent a good chunk of the day muddled about how to shoot a simple scene. Sometimes it feels good and sometimes it feels ridiculously hard. In a way this process makes me think about the nature of cinema (as it applies to me).

For the moment I'm working under the assumption that I'll be shooting in the Tiki. I went back to the locale of my former life, drew up an accurate floor plan, and have been musing over graph paper.

Your statement that the POV is quite mobile, ambiguous has affected some of my storyboarding decisions -- to not straight-jacket myself into a rigorous presentation of Richard's POV.

Richard is the through-line for the film, but it's my take on Richard. Why not allow myself to be as playful here as I was in the script process where I took a fuck it anything goes approach (within the parameters of my native deadpan-muted sensibility).

(DAN: Go for it - see what happens.)

If script notes are part of this script, why can't visual notes and curliques be part of the visual style?

I've developed a very mobile, roving style of shooting home movies with my little DV camera. Why not apply that aesthetic to this? Why not regard this venture (no matter what budget level it gets made at) as an ultra-sophisticated home movie?

(DAN: That sounds interesting, especially as you've developed that style and have some feelings about it.)

Sometimes when I'm re-reading one of my scripts, I insert a new phrase or line of dialogue only to find that it's already in the script maybe a page or so later. **My point being that there is a tendency to speak (and write) a certain way. An approach that transcends the context of a given scene. Which makes me advocate just doing what I want on a moment to moment basis and hoping that persistence of personality carries the day.**

(Absolutely. - DAN)

GW

Sly observer VS. obtrusive observer

5.30.04

RE. DIRECTING

Better to get amateur actors than to get half-assed professionals who deliver a slick but vapid performance.

Think back to the early days of indie flicks when casting had nothing to do with names or numbers. The charming ineptness of John Waters casts, at one with the garbage aesthetic.

"Wavelength" = primacy of camera and intelligence behind the camera.

Constantly looking for ways to circumscribe illimitable reality, to sustain the illusion that art is do-able, meaningful. The illusion of control is preferable to the illusion of chaos.

Awareness of style is like awareness of personality, a handle?

5.31.04

RE. DIRECTING

Remember, re. NFU, the visuals planned for the Ted/Liza conversations involved much agony, and then those scenes were shot entirely differently when I had them in the room. I felt an inner need during the planning for more shots

than were necessary. Note this to assuage current shot list doubts.

The people seem bigger when they are actually there.

Some key moments of staging can be pre-thought, emotional-spatial beats for the actors to hit, give them freedom on either side of the desired moment.

Value of shot list is to limber up awareness of staging, coverage, etc. And to weave a security blanket for that which will change on the set.

Note: the good sex scene was totally reconceptualized on the set, and that was peak visual story-telling.

As with NFU, only need intermittent/periodic outbursts of highly conceptualized style. It would be too rich, ornate, off-putting, baroque to do nonstop. Let the style moments stand out in contrast-relief.

Don't shy away from making it dramatic. Don't shy away from appropriating thriller language.

ala AND -- instead of perfecting one master, try alternates.

Is reality more interesting than a constricted structuring of fiction?

6.1.04

SCRIPT

Look for ways to set some of the apartment scenes outside -
- by the pool?

RE. DIRECTING

Lunch with Steve -- bemoan the intuitive nature of the casting process -- but it's all intuitive, all of it.

6.2.04

Consider the work an accumulation of intuitive moments.

The Mailer quote re. set the level of style at a sustainable pace. (see 2003 Movie Ideas)

6.3.04

RE. DIRECTING

Key issue: continuous VS. fragmented time. And the related question of continuous VS. fragmented space.

Use the conventions of smooth manipulation of time for to maximize "entertainment" -- easy viewer involvement in illusory drama.

Buñuel and Rivette don't care if it's ugly lighting or decor. Ugly is unfussy. Ugly has the patina of real.

Getting back to my roots of theoretical considerations of cinema. Thought this informed TTWD, but...maybe I just tend toward the classically stodgy. NFU was theoretical, BEAT was patterned (in plan, not execution).

Even the most "radical" of narrative films are highly bound in the conventions of dramatic presentation -- photographing human interaction from a human perspective.

Keep breaking the habits of craft (or at least trying to).

re. SCHIZOPOLIS

--Switters speaks in fiction, as transition to "reality"

--Crazy spinning 360° in dentist's office

--Flash cuts of fantasy as an added layer

-- 4 90° cuts for transition from to doppelganger dentist

6.5.04

As per Jim Krusoe and Norman Mailer, observations about writing apply to filmmaking. (cf. Jim's remarks Faulkner's style really only working for Faulkner)

"literal transitions"

Don't be afraid of eclecticism.

6.10.04

After first Tiki test shoot, shift apt. scenes from day to night where appropriate. Wonder about Sc 84 - 93, J's seduction through reading K's story -- does resetting these scenes at night lose the feel of afternoon illicit sex?

SCENES CHANGED FROM DAY TO NIGHT:

14-16

64
 84-93
 98-100
 107-109
 111
 115
 118
 120

NOTE: scenes 84-93 shifted back to day (J's seduction of R, it plays as more forbidden/erotic in the afternoon).

RE. SECOND TEST SHOOT

- Initial inner-chaos of trying to stage final confrontation scene at multiple locations.
- Learned about light in the Tiki (which I should have learned on LM4.0): daylight sucks
- Make script revisions from day to night (re. lighting).
- Tried some fluid staging (it works)
- Further reassurance that the script is good (hearing new scenes read).
- Starting to recover my language for talking to actors.
- Starting to recover my sense of framing.
- More (low-key) grappling with FG/BG obsession.
- Increased familiarity with camera.
- Difference of viewing action through viewfinder and watching the actors directly. In the kitchen scene I only checked viewfinder framing occasionally.

6.12.04

Apply the lessons of fiction (Jim Krusoe, Norman Mailer) to filmmaking/CRASHING. But how much of myself can I put into a fixed manuscript? How much can I truly explore?

Writing the first draft of a novel, particularly one that hasn't been outlined to death, puts me in a condition of being on the edge, sentence by sentence. On a film shoot, it's a moment by moment process of accepting the momentary as the final incarnation of a given page of script. A stranglehold of execution. But nowhere as free a condition as the act of writing, the solitary interaction with words, placing them on a page, without anybody else watching or participating.

RE. ACTING

The key decision now is casting. How professional or non-professional. "Professional" pushes it in the direction of almost every other movie. How many actors did Truffaut or Godard see for their first films? How do I take the skills of a professional actor and get him out of a professional stance to achieve something more interesting? How far off was I when I made my short films and I pretty much took the first actors who agreed to do it? How can I learn to see the right actor when he stands in front of me? Being an introvert I have a limited pool of acquaintances to draw from.

Issues:

--My cowardice.

--Loss of confidence to estimate the present.

6.13.04

LETTER TO DAN:

In a message dated 6/12/04 10:09:33 PM, sallitt@post.harvard.edu writes:

<< Instead of thinking right or wrong, maybe you should think of each actor as a movie, and decide which movie you like best. >>

That's a wonderful concept -- a koan.

"Ah, you don't have to reverse everything. This one is not going to be a failure."

As always, thanks for the ego boost. I'm not reversing everything, but I am reversing a lot of things:

--I wrote the script by myself (LBT, or LM4.0, it went by two titles) was co-authored. That makes a big difference.

--I'm doing a comprehensive shot list, so I at least feel prepared going in.

--I'm aware of and monitoring the emotional strains and turmoil of my complex home life. I was aware of it before as a problem, so I don't know if that is a reversal. I've at least vowed not to let the demands and neurosis of my home situation to fuck up the movie.

(a section about therapy session with Clare, shifted to GW NARRATIVE)

Regarding the movie, I'm of a mind to approach Ron Livingston next week -- of "known" actors I've got the best shot with him. It's dangerous to get lost in pursuing distant tenuous impractical scenarios.

I'm scared of actually shooting this thing eight weeks from now, but in a way I need to -- I've promised myself to stop writing other things to concentrate on this, and that's hard to do. Despite the anxiety of the ticking clock and always imperfect preparation, at a certain point I'll get bored with having CRASHING fill my mind.

Alain's pretty much swayed me to pursue the ultra micro-budget approach. That's one mistake that I didn't correct -- I wanted to make this film without Alain, to do it with an entirely new group (last time I listened to his dictum that I shouldn't prepare, that I should be loose on the set, loose was the best way to go with DV -- but that's not me, as I so painfully learned). And as you well know, I'm easily swayed -- I adapt the formulations of others (for example, I use those thumbnail character descriptions you sent me on 5.28 -- weird how I can write the characters and yet be unable to describe them or even have a descriptive/analytical sense of who they are and what they do. I really am an idiot savant.) -- I use phrases of others to describe things -- their voices fill my head.

On the plus side, I've stopped showing the script to anyone for input. I don't want any more input. Fuck input. The script is was it is, I like it, I'm shooting it.

Best,
GW

6.14.04

Watching films doesn't necessarily help. What helps are activities that bolster my confidence, clarify my vision.

6.16.04

Orlando: writer character gives himself permission to be ruthless as an artist.

SCRIPT:

Eliminate Dick/Diane intercuts from TTWD scenes for ease of reading?

Try to work in phrase: "weapons of self-destruction."

6.23.04

DIRECTING

re. PRAISE--pan shot across open door, built in FI/FO,
continuous action with brackets.

6.24.04

ANALYSIS OF DAY-NIGHT SCENES IN APT:

Day -- 26.5 pages

Night -- 31.5 pages

Total: 58 pages

Writing section through K surprises R (Sc. 34-42): 10 3/8
pages.

Scenes 34-42 are currently day. If they are shifted to
night, that would reduce the day scenes to 14 pages.

6.29.04

re. Sc # 66 -- device of hearing Kristin's VO thoughts --
use this device elsewhere?

7.3.04

Maximize poetics - shapes (what is the characteristic
shape?)

silences

7.4.04

If I sit at a desk, if I make lists, if I worry, does that
make me ready?

Best thing is to fully commit to an idea...or is it? What
if tentativeness, slipperiness is my core mode?

Artifacts of long-term literalness. Incurable.

Eternal acolyte. Eternal expectation that research will
elevate, save me.

Opening Spaceship Scene -- rewrite to convey act of
invention at odds with stagnant, repetitive imagination.

7.5.04

TO DAN RE. SELF-DOUBT:

I think the incident today where I thought J would go into the kitchen for the lighter (awkward) and my mental meltdown regarding if and when they should stand (**as you suggested, it's natural that J would stand to set fire to the legal pad, and K would stand in response**) is indicative of my rusty staging skills. Sometimes I don't think I have any vision beyond that as a writer.

This week I got a photo assignment from the guy I worked for at EA -- it felt great to be out shooting again, trying to execute an abstract exercise in images. I think I'm a good photographer and a good writer and I have made some good films, but the separate activities of photography and writing feel easier and more natural than what I had always thought was the ideal synthesis, directing.

Here's another thought: so much of directing seems to be confidently committing to an approach or an idea and just unreservedly doing that. But what if tentativeness, slipperiness is my core mode? (I remember you saying you were a bit surprised when the script was turning out well, that you had forgotten that I was a good writer in the morass of self-doubting emails and tentative half-starts that we had been exchanging.

GW

7.8.04

Voice Over thoughts -- maximize this principle?

7.13.04

DAN RE. TTWD SCENES:

GW> The first is after Richard falls asleep the first night (triggered by seeing a copy of the book on the coffee table), so it has the structural place of a dream sequence -- he's at the vending machine, scares the jock away, makes out in the parking garage.

Yeah, this one feels like a dream. It has the effect of bolstering Diane's role in the film, for better or worse. I think I once advocated getting rid of it for that reason. It's an okay scene - I don't really mind it being there.

But it's true that it's not as relevant to the story as the present-tense scenes. In a way, I wish it were really a dream, so that J and K could get mixed up in it. **Maybe he could imagine Diane standing next to the couch in J's night robe, and wake up as she starts to bend over, just before he sees her breasts.** Just a random thought, not necessarily a recommendation.

GW> The second scene happens in the middle of the story, with J & K querying him about the book afterwards. This is the scene where Diana catches Dick and Sheila fucking and leaves in a huff.

This starts with Richard jerking off in J's room and ends up with the literary discussion.

DAN: Somehow this one seems necessary - the later conversation, which is quite good, just doesn't work without it.

GW> The third scene happens near the end -- between Richard's phone call to Diane and the second coffee kiosk scene where Richard and Diane talk. This the scene where Dick discovers Art in Diana's room, confronts her in the bathroom, then starts writing angrily.

DAN: And this one feels as if it's intensifying the Richard-Diane connection. It's probably my least favorite use of the three.

I dunno, hard for me to judge it without another read. I wouldn't care if #1 and #3 were gone. I think #2 has to be there for the following conversation, though I don't know if that particular passage has to be there.

It's true that the connections between the TTWD sections and the rest of the story aren't that strong. I guess I'm thinking at the moment that maybe using only #2 might be a good way to go. - Dan

8.10.04

Scouting last night with Alain & camera. Lessons in available light -- always look for cross-light situations, check out how the singles work before you shoot the master.

8.19.04

GAIL LEVIN re. casting **Richard: he's incredulous about his own position in his life.**

RE DIRECTING:

Imagine filming reality, then imagine directing as the opportunity to change things around to please me and film that. **A home movie in which I can tell people where to stand, what to do.**

Stage a scene, then step inside that reality and film it. Imagine it as the opportunity to shoot a home movie again and again until I get all the pieces I want/need.

8.21.04

RE DIRECTING:

Quit worrying about competently staging/covering scenes. I did that okay from the get go in 1974. And when was the last time that a film was denigrated for incompetent coverage? Even with LBT, that basic competence was there (provided in part by SV and AS) -- a situation in which I was exhausted and distracted and had abdicated. Now I look at LBT and see how the dramatic beats are wrong, misshapen. And how I got the timing wrong (e.g., how rushed Henry made his turnaround to stay in the apt with the girl).

So let the mechanics take care of themselves, worry about the emotions, the idea, the bold line of attack. Viewers are media saturated, accepting both the filmic restructuring of space and its fragmentation. They fill in all the dots (even the ones that aren't there). Competence means nothing.

If subtlety is my core then why should I veer from subtlety?

Relax. Stage each scene to achieve a dramatic effect, to build a mood. Use silences to build tension.

What if stock characters populate the fiction? (ask Dan and Alain).

ETERNAL SUNSHINE -- good model for look (prod design, cinematography). My low budget version of this big-budget sophisticated grunge.

--handheld

--low angles

--underwear sexier than nudity

--camera sliding across stageline
 --profiles, not frontal shots. Semi-doc feel to coverage.

Joe Russo plants a phrase that sticks -- this is a French film, like JULES & JIM. That's a way of explaining it to myself and to the others. A rich image to lock into.

re. SINGAPORE AIRPLANE REREAD

--picks up steam after p.60 (sex with Kristin). Is this just natural momentum, or does first half need strengthening?

--No Diana (Diane) prior to end (= cut TTWD scenes)?

Vending machine scene is weak (not witty or insightful or interesting).

--Shot list didn't come to mind while reading

8.23.04 (Singapore)

FRENCH FILMMAKERS (to vide)

Truffaut

Rivette

Bresson

Rohmer

Resnais

Chabrol (Les Cousins)

Leconte

9.22.04

RE. DIRECTING:

Approach it as a still photo shoot. Me, my eye, what I like. But not as a found photograph -- I've can move some things around. Don't worry so much about pre-visualizing (even though I know that I will).

If I shoot with a POV (my eye) then that POV will suffuse whatever sequence is finally edited. Remember, each shot contains a rhythm -- it should contain the internal rhythm that best suits my sensibility (as that sensibility intersects the story arc).

The danger, for me, is rushing moments. Don't let my fear of infinite repetition lead to falsely speeding up a scene.

I like drone music, minimalist music, noise modulated by rhythm into trance. Think of this music playing in my head as I watch the film unspool live in front of the camera.

(from today's GW Narr:)

If, as Dan says, a movie is putting a frame around the world and extending that through time, then I should look at myself as someone who puts a frame around things (I can do that) and extends it through time (the words and action that I have selected for inclusion, the words and actions being the things that stretch the time, that accomplish the task of duration, as what happens within the selected hunk of time).

If I stick to these elemental concepts, then maybe I can grow confident. Confidence in and of itself would be a success.

So instead of thinking in terms of typed words that describe shots, or blocking diagrams that abstract how I plan to present people in space, I should just think about how I like to frame things, and then frame them that way. Maybe this will get me clear of the bottleneck that I feel as I try to pre-visualize a movie (in this case, this movie) in my head. What I think I have always been searching for is a way to completely plan a movie and yet somehow try to purely be myself. Early on I twisted myself to fit a vision that I was a Hitchcockian filmmaker, that I could and would plan everything, that I would pre-cut a film in my head, knowing exactly what angles I wanted and when. An urge to control, an urge to eliminate chaos and the terror of chaos.

9.25.04

RE. ACTING

Clare talks about subtext a key requisite.

Sometimes it is text. Sometimes it is subtext. Sometimes it is both.

Last Sunday at LACMA I started looking at faces, and even the most ordinary ones were fully formed characters. Which led me to think how much craft would be involved in recreating one of these characters -- body language, expression, attitude. The simulation of a person, of a personality, of an entire mode of being. A process involving training and intuition -- that would be the traditional platitude covering all bases.

So what am I looking for in an actor? Someone who is compulsively watchable, who I want to look at and hang with

through time. **The actor is the conduit of duration. And I want someone who will believably bring my character to life, in ways that I find both reassuring and surprising. I don't know exactly how these characters will behave, but I sort of do. I hope to have the confidence to know what feels right and wrong when I see it. Credible, surprising human behavior.**

I don't ever want to feel the mechanism of acting (unless that is what the scene is about, such as Jacqueline intentionally "acting" like a woman of the world).

Richard -- He needs to *seem* like a writer. **We need to get a sense of him thinking, of observing his environment, processing that. Need to feel the gears of how he transforms experience into prose.** He is a mix of happy-go-lucky and troubled. He is unpretentious. He is troubled in his art and in his sense of himself as an artist. That is how he defines himself, as an artist, as a writer, that is what is important to him. He needs to be charming. **He is self-centered, he is constantly observing himself, but he is not unattractively selfish -- because there is a core sincerity.** His self-centeredness is in the service of a higher calling. He is not about money. He is not a consumer. He is not a materialist.

9.27.04

VISUALS ("SUNSHINE" reprise)

--eroticism of underwear (not nudity) - the imagination, glimpses.

--handheld slide across stageline.

--profile not frontal

Sitar tuning up for opening "space station" MX

10.14.04

RE. ACTING

Callback Session #2 yesterday. Something fresh and energetic about Caleigh White, but scary to match her lack of technique with someone as polished as Justin Theroux. Or does it create the situation of an actor interacting with the world?

Cory Starbird Singer had acne yesterday (a flare up? or something not noticed before?) skillfully hidden by make-up, but the bumps still there.

Am I putting too much of a premium on sex appeal?
Sentences form in my head to describe what the film is about but often (always?) they are things that other people have said.

My perspective on the casting process changed when the actors sit on a couch to read -- suddenly it became more behavioral, and more interesting. All the initial tapes were of actors standing, reading alone. Tough job for a literalist like me to watch these tapes. Find myself evaluating appearance (looking for interesting faces) and the ability to inhabit a role, to project complexity, naturally.

This week's possible Richards (Tom McCarthy, Justin Theroux) have asked about theme. Which should be contained in the writing, silent self doesn't say. Does it hurt to explain things plausibly? Is art homogenized by putting it in the zone of conventional explanation? But isn't it already there. A sophisticated sex comedy. What uniqueness does the piece have beyond being in my own voice?

Blame it on the Sixties, on how I see myself as hoping to be part of that (still bearing the scar of that rebellious hope)...healthier to think of the agenda as being (merely) something that I like?

Intuitive choice of an actor is marred by fear of the profound consequences that choice entails. Healthier to have a fuck all attitude, get some people that I like, and just do it?

What are the consequences of deadening myself to the hopefulness and resignation in each actor that comes in to audition?

Try to think back to my nascent days (A VOYEUR, &c). No theory of acting. Just try to find something to say to help shape performance. Did I ever see it change that much from take to take? Then, after the movie is done, hard to imagine it any other way than how it was done. In my mind not a universe of options and alternatives. This parallels my form of masturbation fantasy -- reliving a sexual experience that I have had, not imagining a new one. In that way it's not imagination but re-experience. Maybe

**because the memory is relived as a form of imagination.
Like watching a movie. Watching a movie of myself.**

Maybe this way of seeing and being in the world leads to a contemplative style. But I fear things taking too long (the way that I rush a meal, or a sentence, or am fearful of taking too long speaking in front of Jim's class). I am afraid of boring others and myself. Not sure that's a good thing to worry about.

A story has a rhythm. And I have a rhythm. And if I tell a story then I am telling it at my rhythm. Or I am telling it at a rhythm that I think others will like (but that's just me adjusting my aesthetic to what I perceive as the expectations of others). Am I capable of truly doing something for myself?

Probably not, given how fiercely I seek consensus, ratification of decisions. Can't remember that as the process with A VOYEUR. Youthful certainty.

10.15.04

GW: Still not sure about the hug. Not sure it's really me, my kind of gesture.

DAN: In that case, just get rid of it. But keep in mind the idea that you probably want this goodbye to have some weight - I think it will be bad if the scene gives the impression that the relationships between Richard and the girls weren't all that important.

RE. ACTING

Parameters:

--rhythm of speech

--rhythm of movement

--intention (tell the actor to think about X

--line reading (tone of voice, what to emphasize)

--explaining what the scene is "about" -- how that translates into performance.

How much does it change an actor's performance to *think* about something?

Coverage as a means of changing performance. Consider the option of maximizing off-camera lines. For example, if Richard is giving the stronger performance, play J/K lines

on him as off-screen dialogue. Coverage and montage (context) as means of altering perception of performance.

What makes for a "natural" performance? How can I stop the appearance of acting? Or, regarding J & K, are they acting like they are writers as the first step toward possibly becoming writers. When you are young do you "act" as a step toward becoming? The presence of Richard in all the scenes in which we see J & K would certainly impose a certain need to act other than they might apart from him, particularly if he is famous and they must even in some small way process/react to that fame. Ignoring his fame is in itself an action, an alteration of behavior.

"Natural" seems to most simply mean that a viewer is engaged in a performance as "real." And yet in this particular movie, there is a constant challenge as to what is real. It is not seamless. Tom McCarthy was asking (questioning?) this when he said that he got sucked into the story but then wondered how it would work (for a viewer) when the various fictions and time fractures pulled him out. My answer: the script is my best guess as to what will work. My plan is to add complexity to the linear flow, not simply for complexity's sake, but because it feels like the right density and opacity for this particular story.

Each conversation is useful (with an actor, with a DP, with a friend) as long as I am presenting what I feel about the movie in that particular moment, not if I am presenting a party platform or giving a rote sound-bite answer that has worked in some other conversation (including inner colloquy). And not if I am parroting something that someone else said that sounded good/plausible.

What makes the process difficult is that when something (a line or a scene or...) is criticized then that criticism is forever attached as a footnote. The trick is letting others aid the process of refinement without warping the script/movie into something other than what most pleases me.

Am beginning to regret (or at least question) the decision to shift the opening Space Station scenes to a limbo bedroom. Maybe because it decreases the resonance with TTWD which, while not crucial, is in some way important to me. Maybe it's a matter of honoring the integrity of the backstory, however fragmentary that backstory might be.

Did I change it simply as a matter of expediency? But the matter of expediency is not all that simple or dismissable given the reality of craftily making a no-budget film.

10.17.04

Review the casting tapes. Two actresses that I think we overlooked were in fact called back and then didn't make the cut...

Weirdly for the first time in feature mode (TTWD was shot in 1985, finished in 1986, won Sundance in 1987) I go back to A VOYEUR as the benchmark (with THE CONTINUOUS VICTIM as the second bench) -- didn't have the actors read. I was felt lucky just to talk someone into doing it. Those were the days when no other films were being made on campus. Didn't even have to be an actor, just someone that I hoped was right.

Did I somehow get behavior? Not that much film was burned -- it was too expensive, too precious.

And with TTWD there was no videotape of sessions. Just judgment and memory. ON NFU I snuck my camera onto the Fox lot to tape the sessions...

Maybe it's harder with actors because I tell myself that I don't want them to act. Then I watch the callback tapes and see how much more that Margo has to offer than Cory. If I can just get it to not seem like acting. If I can get behavior. If I can impose rhythm, something that I utterly failed to do on LOVE MACHINE. Tell myself that at least I am thinking about these things.

Watching NFU, seems beyond me that I could have been the one to have actually conceived that shot structure? Will it be me again?

10.19.04

Get no clarity from studying all the casting tapes.

EMAIL TO DAN:

Dan--

I sent you a tape of our Callbacks for Kristin/Jacqueline to get your two cents.

I feel under the sway of Bressonian notions -- or my whimsical misguided notion of what Bressonian acting is.

Maybe it's cleaner/clearer just to say that I've been thinking a lot about naturalism, whatever that means, and what seems natural in acting.

It seems that in the various callbacks that I've done, what the actors first do is more interesting than what I tell them to do, or how they react to that telling. And it's not necessarily that they are bad actors.

I'm having this weird problem with the whole notion of acting. After watching a lot of tapes and seeing a number of actors, they all seem the same in some way that I find troubling. (Just as all narrative movies and all scripts are beginning to seem more similar than different.)

I honestly don't know how I got credible, coherent performances in my other films. It almost feel like an accident I happened to be present for. Maybe it's a matter of imposing mood and rhythm, of placing actors in a world that is somewhat of my own making and they have to fend for themselves and I get to intervene to try to adjust things.

I think back to my early student and post-student days when I made the film with the first actor who said yes, and it was hard enough to find anyone. How can the same sort of choice be so agonizing now?

GW

Think back to LOVE MACHINE (inevitably) -- Alain (and Steve?) seemed to vote for Lisa as being more empathetic than Emily Proctor. I was blind to it in the room (when she read). Remember going into Alan Holzman's office and watching the tape, under the gun to make the decision. Felt I was bending to a consensus that I did not mandate [?]. I did not feel it. And while she was passable during the shoot, I have trouble remembering her name now. Felt like I talked myself into something.

And I kind of feel that here. Talking myself into Calleigh.

Is it this situation that makes me so nervous, uneasy? Or is it this situation as it follows the bad casting in both BEAT and LOVE MACHINE?

After I saw Sheryl read for NFU, there was no hesitation. Didn't even open the role up to casting. That is not the situation here.

10.20.2004

Clare reads the script -- something I had trepidations about given the foul history of LOVE MACHINE. We talk about it, I defend my position, telling her and myself that I am not defensive. And sent this email to Dan and Alain (separately -- never send joint emails to them):

Clare read the script and had these comments, which I pass along to the brain trust.

She wanted Richard to be more "on the spot" at the beginning. His credit cards have been canceled, he needs a place to stay that first night. He asks Diane, she waffles, says "that might not be such a good idea." Maybe she doesn't know the extent of his need. Then when the girls offer and Richard accepts, Diane changes her position and wants him to stay with her (which is how the script reads now). This plays more to the notion of "crashing", that it's something he needs to do.

I argued that this changes the story -- he doesn't need to stay with the girls at first, its a lark, then it becomes a necessity (when his assets are frozen), and then when the necessity is removed he needs to stay (for creative reasons). She thinks its funnier that he needs to stay there from the beginning.

Her second suggestion was that he doesn't get his money back until much later in the story, delay the restoration of his credit cards until the beginning of act 3 (whatever that is). That he is forced to stay there longer out of financial necessity, that it's not so voluntary.

She also wanted his lack of money physically demonstrated - he goes out for coffee, his credit card is rejected, he can't get a cup of coffee.

She loved the ending, which Steve hated.

I pass these comments along for your comment.

ALAIN REPLIES:

RE points from Clare and Steve:

1. I believe Richard's attitude should be set by performance and that any sense of his neediness, first fiduciary then aesthetic, should be underplayed. The more pertinent emotion is frustration over his writing and his relationship.

2. I think the entire story arc hinges on Richard's shift from frustrated mode to liberated, While the lack of money is secondary to the lack of satisfaction in his writing and love relationship, all three situations change. I think the order of that change should still be money, creative, and love but delaying the first could be better and funnier, particularly if there is an emptying-out-his-pockets scene. If Richard is more self aware from the first, and the money frustration continues until after the process of creative liberation has begun, it could give the performer a moment of realization that lack of money is a much less significant problem than lack of creative satisfaction. It is this realization which earns Richard the happy ending to which Steve objects. You could reinforce this by suggesting that his financial situation living with Diana is far from Malibu, perhaps even slightly impoverished and none of that matters any more.

10.21.04

Calleigh White on Jacqueline: Jacqueline wasn't the smartest one when she was a kid. She wants to prove that she's smart. She wants to prove everyone (from her childhood) wrong.

10.22.04

EMAIL FROM DAN:

Gary - I'll try to get to your other email soon - I'm in a busy period.

(GW)> She wanted Richard to be more "on the spot" at the beginning. His credit cards have been canceled, he needs a place to stay that first night. He asks Diane, she waffles, says "that might not be such a good idea." Maybe she doesn't know the extent of his need. Then when the girls offer and Richard accepts, Diane changes her position

and wants him to stay with her (which is how the script reads now). This plays more to the notion of "crashing", that it's something he needs to do.

> I argued that this changes the story -- he doesn't need to stay with the girls at first, its a lark, then it becomes a necessity (when his assets are frozen), and then when the necessity is removed he needs to stay (for creative reasons). She thinks its funnier that he needs to stay there from the beginning.

DAN: Well, I agree with you, of course. Her comment is interesting from a commercial point of view - people are always trying to "raise the stakes" in commercial films. I guess some people might wish that you hadn't used the plot to emphasize Richard's psychological state. But that's the film you wrote.

(GW)> Her second suggestion was that he doesn't get his money back until much later in the story, delay the restoration of his credit cards until the beginning of act 3 (whatever that is). That he is forced to stay there longer out of financial necessity, that it's not so voluntary.

>

> She also wanted his lack of money physically demonstrated -- he goes out for coffee, his credit card is rejected, he can't get a cup of coffee.

DAN: Same suggestion, basically. I don't think these would be good changes. -

Dan

EMAIL TO DAN:

DS--

FYI, Here's Alain's reactions to Clare's comments.

The problem I have with script suggestions of this sort is that they sound reasonable, and so I take them seriously. As you know, I'm often caught between commerce and art. This is a laughable dilemma in that at age 51 I have yet to do anything commercial. I keep trying to, in various guises, and never succeeding. (Most recently, by trying my hand at a romantic comedy that everyone so far has passed on. Of the four scripts that I have completed in the last

year or so, it's the one that I like the least, so what does that say?).

Part of why CRASHING works, I think, is because (granted the input that you and Alain both gave -- he steered me to much less needier Richard) I just did what I liked. And why not? A zero budget film. Little likelihood of it ever getting much notice. (I made a film with Kiefer and Courtney and no one seemed to notice except to knock it.) At this point why not just do what I like?

You articulate a reason for not changing the script better than I could (because the story stresses Richard's psychological state).

The best I can do to explain things is to say that it feels right, it feels balanced.

NOTES just came out on DVD, and there is a commentary track by Joseph Frank (he wrote a four volume work on Dostoevsky, and he shifted from studying French lit to Russian because of NOTES). It was very validating to have someone so immersed in the text give a thumbs up to my film, but it was also interesting to just hear his explanation of things in the movie. I could never explain things that way. I just did what felt right to me.

So often in conversations about the film (actors ask about theme a lot) I find myself giving one of your answers. Or Alain's. At least I'm aware that it's an answer I have inherited or appropriated.

As always, thanks.

GW

"atomized into smithereens" (from GW narr) -- use as a dial phrase?

10.24.04

Conversation with Steve re. editing circles back to LOVE MACHINE, which I rewatched as prep with these scribbled lessons:

--Sloppy timing -- doesn't fulfill beats.

--Dramatic gaps in script. Cop at door -- not a credible response. This is where the story goes wrong. (A fix? He invites the cop in, they talk. Swinger seems to go along with the program, then a skirt comes along, and he escapes to get laid. It becomes a task of bringing him back into the fold, is issue isn't convincing him that he's an alien. Also, Swinger could inspire Hippie to go back to seeking pleasure, so the two authority guys have got to round up the two pleasure guys.)

--Camera often too close -- inappropriate, enervating.

An old note:

Vision of intelligent student film -- accepting what I get, keeping it fresh.

(GW)> While the questions are piling up, I might as well add one other one: At the end of the movie, in what is called Richard's Fiction, there are three characters: Dick, Jasmine, and Charlize. Does it violate the language of the movie to have Charlize, who is the persona of Kristin's fiction, be in Richard's? Jasmine, who represents J, makes her one and only appearance in this scene.

>

> Or is the (convenient) rationale that Charlize is slipping (seeping?) from Kristin's fiction into Richard's?

(DAN) I think I can handle this one quickly. I always feel that you can do almost anything at the very end! Because everyone knows that the rules are just movie rules, and now the movie is over.

At first, it looks like a medley of the different writers' works. Then, at the very end, it's revealed to be all in Richard's mind. Well, that's a pretty good metaphor - it could be the slipping/seeping you're talking about, or a playful hint that the whole movie might as well have been the inside of Richard's mind anyway, or just an exposure of the fictional game to the audience, when it's too late for them to do anything about it. So I think it's cool. - Dan

10.25.04

Gary,

> It seems that in the various callbacks that I've done, what the actors first do is more interesting than what I

tell them to do, or how they react to that telling. And it's not necessarily that they are bad actors.

So maybe you like the evidence of a person more than you like them to be an extension of your idea.

> I honestly don't know how I got credible, coherent performances in my other films. It almost feel like an accident I happened to be present for.

Well, the good thing is that you don't have to do everything. The actors really do most of the work - even if you steer them in the wrong direction, it can still work if they're on the case.

> A couple of questions about the script (I'll send a current copy in case you need to refer to it). In the final confrontation scene (#108) I was thinking about cutting the four lines:

>

> K "Right this second?"

> R "What I sit down, start on the next chapter?"

> K "Well..."

> R "No, it's time to go."

>

> Richard would then go from saying "Look, I'm sorry about the spying...and I'll be on my way." Beat, they look at each other. "Being here meant a lot to me."

>

> I think this kind of keeps him on the hook.

You're wanting to cut everything about that scene that I urged you to put in! Which maybe means you should cut it, that it isn't really you. Personally, I feel that some kind of grading is essential there, that a transition is needed from one state to another, that we need to see the characters adjusting. If you cut those lines, keep that in mind.

By the way, has "You're so non-committal" been there the whole time? I don't line the sound of that line. If it used to be something else, I liked the something else better.

> Currently J is the one who says "So this is where we hug and you lay on some big moral truth?" I wonder if Kristin should say this line. Although even as I ponder this suggestion, J would probably be the one to use the word

"moral." And I'm not sure the line would survive the removal of the word "moral". Or maybe it would... (how's that for putting a single line of dial under a microscope?)

I think the trace of hostility in the line marks it at J's at this point in the scene. It sounds more like her, in any case. And why take away one of her lines, when K is in danger of running away with the scene anyway?

> The other line that borrows me is the fiction that J writes that follows soon there after. I'm thinking about cutting her line "Unless you want me to." (It's part of the speech that goes: "Tell me. I won't bite. Unless you want me to.")

Yeah, I'd be in favor of that cut. We already know that J is a hellion - no need to push it.

> Have I officially entered the province of over-thinking things?

Nah, sounds as if you're coming back to it after a break, and seeing some things afresh. - Dan

> I used to think that the chemistry between the two actresses was crucial -- but why? They are roommates -- maybe by accident. It's okay that they are different, perhaps a bit ill-mismatched -- as long as you can believe that they would be living together, then their being different is probably more interesting than two peas in a pod.

I think I agree with this. J and K don't need chemistry. They are alternatives.

> Calleigh mispronounces a number of the bigger more esoteric words and that put me off, but I had a flash that that could be part of her character -- that she has learned a number of words that she doesn't know how to say, or that she is reaching for more of a vocabulary than she has.

Careful about this. It might work, but if it doesn't, you might not be able to do much about it.

> What's the harm in showing the process of acting (just as I show the process of writing). Why be hobbled by that to

finish suspension of disbelief? Am I being insightful and daring or merely rationalizing?

I think it's a way to make films, but it's usually not the most commercial way. If the idea of showing the acting process is inspiring you at all, then exposing the mechanism is worth thinking about. - Dan

> The one idea that is nagging at me is possibility of delaying the call that restores Richard's money, which occurs now on page 42. But scrolling through the script I don't see a natural or easy way to delay that doesn't disturb a lot of other things. Am I just being lazy? Or too conservative?

Why delay the call? I think that emotional flow works perfectly.

> Given that (or not), what do think about having the characters wearing the same clothes -- if that doesn't seem odd, then it would give me maximal flexibility in editing. Of course, if each character wore a couple of different things that were similar, that would give me almost the same flexibility.

I don't think the girls would wear the same clothes. You probably lose some good stuff by not letting them dress for Richard. But, if you need the flexibility, it won't kill the film. - Dan

10.29.04

DS--

Went to look at a location yesterday for the Real Estate Fiction (Peter Baxter's house). A very good space but I must say I drew pretty much a blank as to how I would shoot it. That didn't feel very good.

And today I thought of a plan to present to Campbell Scott to see if it could accommodate his schedule -- to shoot the apt. scenes in December, and then to shoot the rest of his scenes (all of the stuff outside of the apt) in Feb.

I had been bopping along for a while with the idea of shooting the film in November, and now that November is

here I'm terrified, I mean actually and truly scared of shooting the thing in December. I really can't remember anything like this fear again.

I had promised myself to be in the mode of working every minute on the movie, of not getting started on another writing project, and I've backed off of that. Today I finished writing the first draft of a children's book, started reworking the outline for a ghost story I want to write as my next script.

I do actually like writing. I take pleasure in facing a blank piece of paper (or a computer screen). Writing a children's story forced me to face a constellation of new problems and issues -- and I really enjoyed the challenge. It felt good to face a whole new realm, somehow get a handle on it.

Directing just scares me. The urgency and untidiness of it. The messiness of it all. Walter Murch said it well -- if you are directing, then are forced to do it on a given day no matter how you feel, whereas with say, writing, you can adjust the daily work to whatever level of inspiration or stamina one is feeling. I fear that during this long run of just writing, something essential in my persona has shifted over to being (seeing, conceptualizing) myself as a writer. That solitary line of attack. That totality of self-reliance.

I curse the DGA scam and yet it is forcing me to make this movie. It did force me to sit down and write the script. Maybe without the pressure of the scam I would never have written it. Maybe it's a good thing that it's forcing me to make the movie (otherwise I might never make it).

In certain moments if I regard the movie as a micro-budget fulfillment of an insurance scam necessity (sort of like a program picture of yore, say, a Monogram Picture), then I can relax, a bit. If I see it as no stakes, nothing to lose, anything goes student movie. If I can get myself to believe some of that, then maybe it will work.

Weird to go from such a high of thinking someone like Campbell will do the movie to this funk.

GW

10.30.04

Gary,

> Avert good space but I must say I drew pretty much a blank as to how I would shoot it. That didn't feel very good.

Just point the camera in the right direction. It'll work out, especially in a good space.

> I had been bopping along for a while with the idea of shooting the film in November, and now that November is here I'm terrified, I mean actually and truly scared of shooting the thing in December. I really can't remember anything like this fear again.

I'm completely terrified in each pre-production, and each time I think I've never been so scared - even though I know it repeats, it seems so raw each time that I think it's unique.

> I do actually like writing. I take pleasure in facing a blank piece of paper (or a computer screen).

Maybe the writing is a way of containing anxiety. In which case who can object.

> I curse the DGA scam and yet it is forcing me to make this movie. It did force me to sit down and write the script. Maybe without the pressure of the scam I would never have written it. Maybe it's a good thing that it's forcing me to make the movie (otherwise I might never make it).

Yep, you've got it.

> Weird to go from such a high of thinking someone like Campbell will do the movie to this funk.

No, it's not! That's what caused it, I'll bet anything. Nothing like a bit of success to bring out ambivalence. And a big actor raises the stakes, whether you want to think that way or not.

Can you get Alain involved yet? - Dan

Dan:

The problem with the writing is that it stops me from working on the film. I disengage with this project and engage with something else (the new stuff).

But what can I do on the film? I can keep re-watching the casting tapes, visit the handful of locations left to scout (not that many), re-read the script (does that make me more familiar with it or sick of it?), re-read my shot lists (to see if I still understand what I wrote), watch French Films (because I tell myself that I'm making a French Film), watch my films, read my Notes/Journal, write you emails.

Maybe (is this a big lie?) there's not much I can do until I actually do the movie, until I am that two week crunch where everything has to get done at once.

Part of me is reacting to how ill-prepared I was when I made LOVE MACHINE: no shot list, script in flux, the physical and emotional chaos of Clare & Baby Dot. I never watched dailies, I actually made dinner for Clare and played tennis after shooting, telling myself that all was fine.

>Can you get Alain involved yet? - Dan

He's back, so we talk about stuff. I showed him the casting tapes.

GW

10.31.04

EMAIL FROM DAN:

> The problem with the writing is that it stops me from working on the film. I disengage with this project and engage with something else (the new stuff). But what can I do on the film?

Exactly. So I say write if it makes you feel better,

> watch French Films (because I tell myself that I'm making a French Film)

I think your film is pretty American, though not like today's American mainstream.

> Maybe (is this a big lie?) there's not much I can do until I actually do the movie, until I am that two week crunch where everything has to get done at once.

It doesn't matter whether it's a lie or not. You've got the script, you're not going to mess up the visuals. Other than casting, the aesthetics are pretty much in place.

> Part of me is reacting to how ill-prepared I was when I made LOVE MACHINE: no shot list, script in flux, the physical and emotional chaos of Clare & Baby Dot. I never watched dailies, I actually made dinner for Clare and played tennis after shooting, telling myself that all was fine.

Maybe that wasn't the problem. I mean, I haven't seen the footage - maybe it's a masterpiece. But I don't see why you have to make yourself uncomfortable this time, just because you relaxed last time. You've got a much better script now, I think, and that counts for a lot. - Dan

11.2.04

A flash of the ways that CRASHING resonates for me:

Reality/fantasy opportunities

= pure GW

Writer situation

= pure GW

Sex comedy (not sanctimonious)

= pure GW

11.4.04

RE. ACTING:

Am bored with myself, how I talk about the script. Just prattle. As if I feel obligated to look for something different. What would happen if I talked to the moment? No matter what that was or where that could go? To not expect to have expectations (which maybe is the heart of what Clare thinks the process is). As if I had a vision that I want the actors to conform to. Whereas now I can just (sort of) say right or wrong. Talk about how wrong it is? Or how right?

11.17.04

Lunch at Chung King with Andrew Hubscher and Alain. He's got a good a low-key manner and is accepting of the brutal minimalism of the situation. Feel the heebie jeebies -- the moment of commitment -- this is the DP, this is how we will do it. The theoretical, the speculative incarnates, gets a graft of skin.

Call Cory Starbird Singer, she went through several callbacks as a Kristin maybe, wonder how she'll react to offer of the Coed role. She's excited. She works Sundays and will have cancel for our shoot day, tell her that I am doubly embarrassed, not only am I not paying her, but... She laughs.

So now I've got two actors and a date set to shoot a scene. Start to tell myself why it's okay to fail (a stand alone scene that I can always do again...). As a way of relieving pressure? As I tell Andrew (but am yet to believe myself, truly) need to shoot the film like I wrote the script -- for my own pleasure, with the confidence that I have in private. As if it were a journal.

11.18.04

Campbell--

We had a production meeting yesterday. Everyone thinks that it is possible to shoot your scenes in one long week. You have to decide how fatiguing that will be to work at that fast pace. I'm sure that we'll talk about that when we meet. But it is a viable option. Your comfort is the key to how we will structure the shoot.

Regarding our meeting, if you can take the train to Philly, take would be great. I will meet you at the train station and we can go somewhere from there. I'm completely flexible as to day and time.

If making the trip down to Philly is inconvenient, I'll come up to New York.

We're taking the red eye (me, Clare, Dot (3 1/2) and Harry (1 1/2) on Wednesday night, getting into Philly Thursday morning. We fly back to LA on Sunday night.

The phone number at my sister's is 610 - 687-8275.

I'm really excited to finally meet you next week.

We begin shooting the "short stories" on December 5th. We start with what I call the Bathroom Sex Scene (Kristin's fiction). An auspicious beginning. High minded, certainly.

Best regards,
Gary

11.19.04

Dear Gary,

Thanks for the letter. I will come to Philly on Friday for mid-day lunch if that sounds OK. I'm looking forward to it. I remain a little torn about how and when exactly to make this work, but, speaking as someone who needs 3 years of sleep, fatigue is the least of my concerns. I'm sure we'll figure something out. I'll call you next week. Have a safe trip.

All the best,
Campbell

11.22.04

Dear Campbell--

My sister who lives in Philly has recommended a restaurant, the White Dog Cafe, that sounds very pleasant. It's a ten minute walk from the 30th Street Train Station, near the Penn campus. So we can meet at the station and walk there. Just let me know what train you'll be on and I'll meet you in the station. I too am looking forward to it.

You only need three years sleep? We can swap fatigue stories.

Hopefully we'll talk before I leave for Philly on Wednesday night.

Regards,
Gary

12.5.04 FIRST DAY SHOOTING

Sunday. Rain. Crew call 12:30 (Andrew, Alain). Cast call 1 PM (Stephen Gyllenhaal, Cory Singer). Get to the office before eleven for the quiet and calm and non-exhaustion of being by myself for a bit.

Feel like shit. From two mugs of coffee? Pee a lot. The nervous obsession with an empty bladder.

Cory then Stephen arrive and I am assailed with wardrobe questions. Steven is unshaved and I have to decide to have him shave. I'm here for you, you're the director he keeps saying. When we load into Alain's car for the drive to UCLA, I had planned to sit in back the actors but Stephen insists that I sit in the front, that I am the director.

The UCLA set-ups go pretty much as planned on the Friday scout. Andrew is low-key and easy to work with, a better fit than Dominic on LOVE MACHINE. Alain fills in with whatever else needs to be done, isn't fussy about water drops on his camera. I have to get in the mode of taking script notes, doing the slate.

Back at the airport, finally do shoot a scene in the 3200 Airport Hallway, without the magical light of late afternoon. Cory seems to rue that I'm not giving her much direction. The blocking falls into place. I quickly revise my idea of a fixed shot where they walk into CU in favor of walking along with them. Now, the morning after, I regret not getting one take of my original version.

Last night I fretted that I didn't properly get the beat of Stephen beckoning Cory into the bathroom, that that was his intention when he stood at the bathroom door.

Shoot a reverse travelling shot (over their shoulders) plus a pair of close-ups at the door. With some variations for cutting choices, but no refining of the story beats that take place at the bathroom door.

Still haven't come to terms with who and what these "fictional" characters are.

Simon (of Talia and Simon fame) shows up to do the bit part of Man at Urinal. Bathroom smells bad. More business and staging to work out. Cory is game for mock molestation, has very interesting nervous patter about the difficulty that men have with women's clothes, how she has acted when doing something naughty. Two extra set-ups in the stall, an overhead and a reverse angle.

Back at my office, Stephen wants to watch some of the tape. It looks good. It plays. Workable. Not an embarrassment.

Toward the end, as we were about to go into the bathroom, as I was quickly trying to determine if I had all that I needed at the bathroom door, I felt that I was crossing the line from fully grasping the situation into a fog of uncertainty.

Don't quite feel like a director again yet.

But it became very clear what coverage I needed in each situation. I felt able again to sense how the sequence would edit, what to cover, what pieces would be desirable to facilitate that.

Regrets as to how I could have performed better, but not too rusty after such a long hiatus. (It's been two years since I shot AND... and SLEEP II.

12.6.04

Campbell--

I really enjoyed our lunch. Hope I didn't seem too befuddled with exhaustion. And if I did -- that's not the real me.

We shot the Bathroom Sex Scene yesterday, with Stephen Gyllenhaal playing "The Writer." Amazing, giving his breadth of experience and his actor brood, he had never done any acting before. He was superb. But the bathroom was smelly. No more public bathroom scenes for me.

Regarding the issue of schedule, I do want to make the film with you, and I am willing to wait until April.

That said, I have no problem with you playing Richard with a beard. If you want to shoot in February with a beard, I'm up for that.

Best,
Gary

12.14.04

Dear Gary,

I, too, enjoyed our lunch in Liberty City. Thanks again. Very exciting that you've already filmed some stuff. I hope you're pleased with it. Things continue to shift with

the New Mexico job, but it appears April is still our best bet. I'll keep you apprised.

All the best,
Campbell

PS - I hope you're taking some time to write down the amazing story of your own last few years. What's a matter, scared? Huh?

12.16.04
Dear Campbell--

Fine, April it is.

Have you updated your agent or do you want me to?

I've already got some great candidates for Jacqueline & Kristin but I'm going to approach other agents and managers to find the optimal Diane/J/K for you to play against.

And, yes, I have been keeping a journal of the unfolding home story. I've just started writing a script. The trick to writing this is treating my own life as if it belongs to someone else, to free myself from the constraints and indulgence of autobiography. It requires a certain ruthlessness. (Gee, sounds a bit like Richard.)

I'm very pleased with what we shot for the Bathroom Sex Scene. It went remarkably well for a first day. The DP, Andrew Huebscher, is a real find.

We just shot a lighting test for the Spaceship Scene and achieved a really great look with two extremely blue fluorescent tubes set against a field of dubitine, to create the feel of an abstract sleep cubicle. Looks very promising to have David Cross play the Spaceship Man.

I've been guilted into going to England for the holidays with the Almost-In-Laws. A Texas Jew's Ye Olde English Christmas -- how's that for a high concept? Clare and the kids left last night. I leave next Wednesday and will be back Jan. 4.

Hope to talk to you soon.

Regards,

Gary

12.18.04

Scouting in Malibu today, get a glimmer of a new way of regarding shots. It's not so much a matter of finding the perfect spot, as of taking the available resources and organizing a good shot. Need to create a situation that allows that moment of organization, of gathering to take place.

1.7.05

Review Day 1 Dailies with Steve. He has a better mind for the details, for the moments and gestures than I do. My mind wanders. My attention is inattentive. Maybe I have shifted to being as writer. Someone who writes a sentence and it feels good and it is gone, gone in the sense that it is something that I no longer hold on to.

See the lack in certain shots, how they could have been better. If I had been thinking.

But the panning to bring the statue's butt into the FG is funny.

And in Take 1 of the long dialogue scene at 3200 Airport Avenue, the way that the camera reacts to what is happening gives the scene a feeling of "reality" of being crafted but unstudied. I think it's a good model for the style of the film.

There is clearly enough material to edit the sequence, and there are a number of choices that are possible, depending on what the angle of attack is. For example, the reverse in the bathroom stall conveys more of a dirty old man feeling, just from the way that Stephen looks vis-a-vis Cory. And in the hallway, when he subs "strange" for "dark," Steve thinks it is a mistake that helps withhold where exactly the scene is going. See so clearly the value of coverage, and what can be gleaned from "mistakes" and from the variants that often occur between takes.

So it seems that I still capable of shooting a cuttable scene.

1.16.05

Get what I would call THE CALL from Campbell yesterday, so feel the need to get back on the case, after writing THE CALLERS and BE MY BABY.

Which first means redoing the blocking diagrams. Tell myself (and it will be easier if I come to believe it) that this is a positive thing, forcing me to reimagine the movie. Playing another version of the game, refining the playbook. That there are muscles to be strengthened from the exercise.

The competent connection of shots is such a small part of it (I remind myself).

RE. DIRECTING

I am writer about to do something out of the ordinary, out of my ordinary routine. Approach it in that context, of being a strong writer. Imagine the shooting situation as one that I can effect, as if I were writing the scene. Because that is what a director does, give shape to the events in from of the camera. Consider the actors and the space that they inhabit and the way that the camera describes that space as a text that I am shaping. Give it my rhythm. Follow the idiosyncrasies of me, of my eye, of the way that I want to shape things. Consider the actors and the objects as a form of text that I can place, edit, move around. Three-dimensional writing.

Even if there is more to the making the movie than that metaphor, using it plays to the confidence and strength that I feel as a writer. That confidence is born of the results I have been getting and the fact that I do it practically every day. There is an ease and a fluidity of it being a daily activity. One that I face with joy. If that can at all infuse me being (or playing) director, that is a good thing.

1.23.04

Had been stumped about the scene where Richard explains his situation and asks to stay on in the apartment. Was locked into staging the scene with the girls on the couch, and Richard pacing back and forth as he explains. Even think of a clever shot, just showing R's torso as he paces and the girls's faces, then boom up to a veiw of the back of R's head to punctuate the end of the scene. Can't bring myself to really like that plan. And so sketch an

alternate version. J (or K) at the table having a snack, K (or J) on the couch, Richard between them. Less of two against one, rather, Richard caught in the middle of a casual array. Because I went back at the ground zero question of some interesting behavior as the starting point.

Redoing the blocking diagrams is a second draft of how to shoot the film. Strength in refinement. Should make for a better movie than just pulling out the shot lists from last May-June, dusting them off a bit, and proceeding with the shoot. Need to keep going through the mode of making directorial decisions. To become a practiced director again, on paper, in private, before the wickedly fast routine of public directing, and the permanent record that results in a film.

1.28.04

How can I prepare to direct actors? What instructions enhance rather than dilute performance?

When we shot the bathroom sex scene, I could tell that Cory wanted more, but she was doing fine. Felt to me like tweaks would diminish her performance. Told her that she didn't need any comments, but could have phrased it in such a way to boost her confidence. And, yet...more confidence might have tipped the performance into a different angle.

When I re-watched the casting tapes, noticed how many times the actors got worse with the comments, even if they made a skilled adjustment. As Dan put it (10.25.04) "maybe you like the evidence of a person more than you like them to be an extension of your idea."

What is good acting? (Other than knowing it when I see it, like food tasting good without a concept or language to explain why). When I feel engaged with observing behavior. When the actor helps (allows?) me to become engaged with the unfolding situation.

Think of Bresson, as a concept, rather than a cumulative impression from his films. The idea of the actor inhabiting a space in solitude. As long as an actor is thinking, does it matter about what?

Do I need to isolate an actor in a close-up to provide the dramatic space for performance (of this sort) to unfold?

What do I get from asking all these questions?

If ultimately, retroactively, I conceive of CRASHING as a purely subjective story, that it is revealed in the end as all taking place in Richard's head, that it is entirely his fictional creation, then Richard's performance is as a dreamer and a creator of the world that he walks through. And all the other characters are splinters of him.

1.29.05

Give some hints of the dream, of utter subjectivity along the way?

As I slog through the shot lists, in the process of recreating the blocking diagrams, feel surges of confidence (along with surges of exhaustion/dismay). Just the process of converting my pencil notes into the computer doc makes me ponder, wonder what I meant when I made the note/correction. Sloppy confidence born of urgency, of impatience to get to the end, to get it done, to eat the meal before it cools. The rush to feel empty and wonder what is next.

Interesting and scary how ideas are a product of how I am feeling at the time. The crazy ideas that lurch and lurch me to a stop. Is it because I am exhausted? Is it because I have reached the limit of my ability to make decisions that I am confident of (can be after an hour or after ten minutes depending on...).

Feel that I can only make so many decisions at a time. And then it is all blankness and if someone speaks to me that is just noise, the fragments of words that I can barely assemble into sentences. Just let the sound wash over me (under me?).

This fatigue worries me as part of the speed shoot that I am facing. I need time to rest and regroup. Will this planning remove some of the need for that?

The decision, or decisions, that stopped me tonight, was the scene where they discuss TTWD. At the end of the scene I can cut to Richard alone. But, what if there was some sort of continuous camera movement that bridged the time, a fluidity between his talking to the girls and being by

himself. Would that give the hint of utter subjectivity that I have been recently toying with?

And that idea springs from an idea of Dan's.

So what is mine? Confront the narcissism of liking what I have done, because it is from me, because it reflects me. Have I learned to be more demanding? And to deliver on that demand? Or have I just found an easy (easier) way to answer my own demons. Cheating/playing to an audience (me) that I know too well (or do I?).

Re. the shot list -- need to keep reviewing it, thinking about it, trying different ideas at different hours, starting over again, and again, trusting the good ideas to survive. Learning to trust myself, again. Remembering this as the slow return from debacle.

1.30.05

RE. ACTING

Quite simply, she appreciated that the power of the screen actress lay not in impersonation or performance, in the carefully worked-out personal narrative of stage acting, "but in the movements of thought and soul transmitted in a kind of intense isolation

--David Thomson quoting Lotte Eisner re. Louise Brooks (New Biographical Dictionary of Film)

Implacable framing not appropriate (re. NFU).

Dream framing appropriate (but what is dream framing?)

Fantasy TTWD cast: Peter Sarsgaard - Maggie Gyllenhaal

Alt TTWD cast: Ron Livingston - Lisa Sheridan

1.31.05

Re. Lily Bernstein as a sax-playing Haley. Feels exciting in the moment the idea occurs to me. Expect Alain to be enthusiastic but he's not (too arty, he says -- which raises the question of what level of artiness in an unabashed art film -- or have I been abashed all along, unknowingly?).

The enthusiasm of an idea. A collaborator's reaction to the idea. The worth of the idea in and of itself. How my attitude toward the idea is colored by reaction.

Certainly. Confidence. Variable concepts.

As with the shot lists, or a day of shooting, go in and out of a groove. What is the stability that anchors?

Is consistency a function of personality? Of accessing personality?

But...think about how the story shape was helped (I think) by Dan and Alain.

How can a decision feel right, and then not. The transition, the gap of that.

2.1.05

Note: Both K & J are in top in the sex scenes. Consider K not on top, or does that take away from the humor of repetition? (yes)

2.4.05

I wonder if I really do like directing. Feels like an onslaught of decisions that aren't all that fun to make. Sometimes fun to ponder. Sometimes. Sort of.

As opposed to writing. Where there is this vagueness, a wispieness to the images, because they are forever translated from black and white symbols (the typed words). Because as long as I am happy with the words, they don't need to be ratified. Or modified. Or reconsidered.

Being in myself versus being in the world.

And there is a directness to the words. Even before they are edited. If ever. These words will be read by me how many times -- once? Never? In theory the power and the pleasure is just saying them, saying them in a way, with my fingers, in which there is the foretaste of permanence.

Tell myself that I am learning a lesson about choosing.

And yet I feel no closer to making a choice. It washes over me, as possibility. Possibility aggravated by complexity.

Well, I could ask Alain about this or that. But then I would have his answer not mine.

It's okay to have these uncertain hours and days now. As long as it leads to the necessary certainty when certainty is necessary.

Tell myself (it's all telling myself, so why the redundant preface? Because I'm trying to instill authority to a statement that I am suspicious of) that it's okay not to do two hours as long as I manage something like 500 words a day while I work on the film. Appaling how many hours of mundance drudgery a movie requires. Must remember that when I tell myself, beg myself to do it again.

2.7.05

DAY 2 (of principal photographY)

Intent on getting to Fox early, expecting problems.

Which start at the Pico Gate, where the drive-on is for the Galaxy Gate. Cell phone (glad I didn't cancel it) call to Tiffany in the Arrested Development production office, then I re-que in the incoming line of cars. Pull out my Moleskine and for want of another inspiration, take a stab at writing BE MY BABY as a novel. To see what a first scene might be like.

Getting through the gate with a pass to park outside of Stage 5 is the hardest part of the day. Everything that needs to be scrounged is. Noise from open doors, workers, saws. (Silenced by Alain yelling that camera is rolling. Then David Cross says something about honey attracting bees but not vinegar and goes to politely ask whomever in the darkness for the quiet; feel chastened by his politeness.)

Lights set, Calleigh there, rehearse the opening scene, with me as Space Station Man. Except for the sight of my grizzled greybeard self, I like my performance and consider doing a take with me starring. Except for not quite knowing my lines. Panic of the camera move not being settled in and because of that wonder how suited I am to any of this...but then the shot does find a groove that I like and...my ideas of coverage fall away as I see one uncut, repeating shot, and variations on it as the pattern, the structure for the sequence. There is that to hang on to.

As we are wrapping, Andrew tells me that it is the most complicated handheld move that he has ever done.

The busy hands of a three person crew -- I read cues for David's internal VO, tell him when to wake up in relation to the camera move. Do the slate and script notes. Later, shed a few tasks to Alain.

Cascade of decisions. The camera move has clarified itself into what feels right. But Cross says, "Mr. Memeory, what happened last night?" And after two takes I tell him not to say Mr. Memory, because it seems to be overselling the prop. Now, I wonder. Was his instinct better than what I was fixed on?

Feel some guilt about having both Calleigh and Holly for the same role, but on Friday I was fearful of blowing a surrealist opprotunity.

Was the necklace soft on autofocus? Looked like it to me and yet I said nothing, and now I have this loud doubt.

Nagged by imperfections traceable to me.

But the boost of having shot a scene on a sound stage at Fox, for free. The girls are non-SAG, and David Cross signed a release without any SAG paperwork.

But he looked disappointed to learn that I was shooting the scene a second time with a second actress (though I think I told him, or did I?). And somewhere in the many takes, when I had a direction I could not convincingly articulate, I think I lost him...he scampered away...didn't feel right to talk about LAST BIG TOE...

Visited on the set by Roberta, the DGA rep, embodiment the Guild's doubt. Alain called at nine, and she came, asked how we swung a shoot at Fox -- because the Russos are executive producers, Alain explained.

So, Day 2 (two months after Day 1), the slow accumulation of what will be a movie.

2.12.05

Call Campbell yesterday, expecting to leave a message, as per usual. But he answers and commits to shooting two

days, March 3 & 4, when he is LA for the premiere of the movie he directed, OFF THE MAP.

Suddenly faced with the actuality of the movie, of shooting it. Need to finally cast J & K, or Diane, or some combo of the three to fill out the two days. This, on the eve (literally) of my trip to Houston.

Read the script on the plane. For the first time allow myself to unswervingly imagine Campbell as Richard. And Lizzy Caplan as Jacqueline, Margo Harshman as Kristin. Must work to keep Margo in mind. Has time created uncertainty? Or is it that I used my two strongest runner-ups in the two "fiction" scenes that I've shot -- Cory Singer as the coed, Calleigh White as Space Station Woman. Would they be better as Kristin?

Haunted by the fear (can one be haunted in advance, is there such a thing as pre-emptive haunting?) by the fear of a mistake. Of saying later, hey, it should have been HER instead.

Last week I looked at the LOVE MACHINE casting tapes. Emily Proctor wasn't that good (not that the girl I did cast, whose name I can't remember [Lisa], was). But that was rushed in a way that this has not been.

I see the prep work in the accretion of files -- props, locations, story days, &c.

Yesterday, Evan praised the script (had given it to him a month or two ago soliciting a thousand dollar investment). He said (paraphrasing): very profound, quite moving, Campbell is perfect, the girls are great (so serious about their writing, not what you'd expect), in a different realm from everyone else (dealing with serious, complicated stuff).

Rereading the script on the plane, it is good, it flows, the ending is poetic and moving. I need to take confidence from that. And do my mulling now -- e.g., work out the logic of Richard carrying the legal pad into the subtext kitchen scene. Seems like he should have the legal pad with him at Chung King, it is his fixture. That is the type of detail that impacts props and staging that I want to work out now, as much as possible.

Meditations upon a non-football playback. Keep seeing myself as the quarterback rehearsing for the split second decisions to come.

Feel confident in disagreeing with Alain's aesthetic pronouncements. The script gives me confidence. Confidence breeds decisiveness. These are the keys to the success of the shoot.

Marrying my introspection to the outward process of filmmaking, the shoot. The part of the process that is out in the world, among people, in landscapes, capturing.

2.17.05

NARRATIVE UNITS

1. The events that get him to the apt -- frustrated writing, Malibu lock-out.
2. UCLA -- class, Art Dept. Courtyard -- The Invitation.
3. First Night: get stoned, book talk with K, late night talk with J.
4. Second day: alone in apt, starts spying.
5. He reads J's fiction, he starts writing -- "ecstatic writing" (with J present).
6. K returns (almost busted), he reads her fiction.
7. Coffee bar, comes home alone.
8. Day 3: J & K reading TTWD (breakdown scene), talk about book.
9. Kristin seduces him, bed, after: discovered by J.
10. Day 4: Awkward breakfast with K, he reads K's poem.
11. J comes home and seduces him (in flashback).
12. K returns, catches them in bed, fantasy of menage, then not.

13. Kristin's fiction -- bathroom sex, dial with K about her story.
14. Art Dept. Courtyard II with Diane.
15. Climax scene -- He's busted for writing about them
16. J's fiction, K's fiction, R's fiction, R at Diane's

2.19.05

As I face the shot lists & blocking diagrams (separated into their own notebooks so I look at them simultaneously): don't do something just because I have it down on paper. But: what about the thought that behind these paper formulations?

Haven't settled the issue of POV -- amorphous and fluid POV would fit with the subjectivity that is revealed at end (that Richard could have been writing the whole thing).

Additional subjective clues that make sense in retrospect?

The leakage at the end, with (hopefully) the Space Station Man (David Cross) reappearing play to this scenario.

Thursday: Read Izabella Miko. Must I discount her sex appeal? Or take that as part of the movie? When I ask her to improv, she gets better. Regard improvisation as part of the movie. But must keep it from getting verbose.

Then, Lizzy Caplan and Margo Harshman read together (with Alain doing the OS dial). Surge of energy to see two good actresses do the material. Switch them off as J and K. Lizzy can do both roles.

Alain's opinion: Margo very good, but she looks too old, lacks a certain facial mobility. When we play back the casting tapes, there is no sound -- switch is still set for external mics (re. Fox Stage 5 shoot). So just the visuals.

Don't subscribe to Alain's dirty old man scenario, that Richard should seem thirty-five.

Izabella looks better silent.

If Alain had ravingly endorsed Margo maybe that would pushed me past the doubts I've felt. But I have doubts attached to everything, to some degree.

Input is useful only as it helps me refine my opinions, my decisions.

So...make the call the next call, cast Lizzy Caplan. But not sure which role she will play. Yet another anomaly of CRASHING.

2.20.05

Any shot encapsulates a piece of time. Any two shots, even when ended with the intent of presenting seemelss action, fracture time.

Consider the fracturing that takes places a "simple" scene: Richard beinbg locked out of the Maliby house. Trying to find the simplest, most direct sequerence of shots that conveys a lot of information: expensive house, suitcase oddly on the doorstep, locked out, his non-angry reaction (passive, non-confrontational).

Fluctuate from telling myself to attempt a radical style versus contemplative (which seems to come to me naturally, even though it's Dan's choice of word than I apply [to myself]).

ALT: Seat-of-pants camera coverage that keeps audience on edge (taste of that in bathroom sex corridor scene).

Danger of being too quick to dismiss the shot lists? Take them as my best guess (as is the script). Take them seriously, but be ready to change.

Talk to Zak about possibly shooting March 4. His fiancée asrrives from London this Friday. Which adds presssure to complete the blocking sessions with Andrew and the makeover with Peter. Hate that I have to think about Zak as a production factor.

2.21.05

> I've thought about trying to make the CU's relational. Trying to make as many MCU's overs -- even close shots should try to give some sense of relationship. Try to

catch a piece of the girls in any CU of Richard -- dirty singles/overs. Does this go against subjectivity?

DAN: Yeah, I guess. My first reaction is that I'd like it better if you felt free to isolate the characters in their own shots when appropriate. The interconnections will change the feeling, make it feel more like an overview of a group setting. But maybe you can make that work.

> As I face the shot lists & blocking diagrams: don't do something just because I have it down on paper. But: what about the thought that behind these paper formulations?

DAN: I like to follow my diagrams! But there are no rules about this. Sometimes you have to change no matter what, because of the set being different than imagined. So there's no getting around the need to create in the moment.

> Wouldn't say that I am scared, but I am very nervous. But I am in much better shape than the last time I tried to make a movie.

DAN: It'll be fine. Even if you just go on cruise control, it'll be a good movie.

GW TO DAN:

DS--

You're point about isolating the close-ups is well-taken.

I still haven't come to terms with the subjectivity of the piece. Subjective vs. contemplative (a word you first applied).

Maybe the underlying problem is applying intellectual constructs to what must fundamentally be an intuitive process. Not that I can stop doing it.

I've got a 37 page shot list and have done blocking diagrams twice and still can't say that I know the best way to shoot the film. When I read the script, I try to play the images in my head and it just doesn't happen. Not effortlessly. I remember when I was making BEAT I could do the storyboard in my head -- it was a mental exercise I undertook in the long drives from Mexico City to Lake Patzcuaro. But each movie is different, right? (All writing projects seem to be.)

Does it really matter if a scene is competently put together? Maybe, yes I suppose, if you want suspension of disbelief.

Maybe the problem comes down to this: I can write a sentence that I know sounds like me, that matches the rhythm of my thoughts. And I'm not so sure I can do what visually. With stills, I can frame things up as my eye sees them, but movies are much more elusive. I guess I'm after a certain subtlety of language and I'm worried I can't achieve that. The pat aphorism I've been telling myself is this: I used to write novels as a filmmaker, now I want to make movies as a novelist.

I'm sending along the shot list separately -- check out the "general rules" at the end of the document.

Regards,
Gary

DAN REPLIES

> Does it really matter if a scene is competently put together? Maybe, yes I suppose, if you want suspension of disbelief.

DAN:

Ah. You can just shove it together, and the script will still work. Maybe you should think of it that way: the script will carry you if you just show up on the set, and then anything else you do visually will be gravy, a little extra.

> Maybe the problem comes down to this: I can write a sentence that I know sounds like me, that matches the rhythm of my thoughts. And I'm not so sure I can do what visually.

DAN:

I think that's just the way direction is. It's a weird thing - it doesn't "sound like you." I really think it's for others to decide whether the film sounds like you.

2.22.05

DAN REPLIES TO "GENERAL RULES" SECTION OF SHOT LIST:

> My tendency to plan too many angles rather than trust to find the best angle while shooting.

DAN: I say do a bunch of angles if you feel like it. Why put pressure on yourself to find the right angle on the spot? If you find it, great; if not, cover yourself.

> Instead of perfecting one master, try alternates.

DAN: Especially if the way you're shooting doesn't require a lot of relighting.

> Handheld simulation of "dolly" moves. (How disruptive are shaky camera moves to the contemplative style of the piece?)

DAN: They'll be fine. **A few contemplative moments go a long way.**

> 2-shots to emphasize relationships, comedy.

DAN: I don't think you can do without two-shots in this movie.

> Just do whatever tricks appeal to me -- the unity is the fact that I'm making all the choices.

DAN: That's right!

> Stylization should never sacrifice capturing expression body language that maximally conveys emotion/interaction/relation.

DAN: Yeah, leave some room for the actors. They're good characters - they'll take care of themselves.

> Minimize framing adjustments (ala NFU)???

DAN: I don't think you have to minimize those.

> Establish the ritual/primacy of hiding legal pad early -- shoot additional CU's?

DAN: Yeah, good idea.

> Possible strategy: long continuous shots, cut/jump out the draggy pieces.

DAN: That should work.

> Unlike the grammar of TTWD, Richard isn't always between two women.

DAN: True. He's much more autonomous.

CHART CONTEMPLATIVE MOMENTS:

--Chung King, as he decides he doesn't like what he has written

--Setting on bench at UCLA

--Before he goes to sleep the first night?

--Decision to enter K's computer (moment of decision in living room)

--As he writes (beginning of ecstatic writing section)

--After coffee bar, home alone

--Writing (K comes in and seduces him)

--He reads K's poem (the day after)

--Alone in house writing (K's room, J's room, couch) (Ends with J's return, J seduces him)

--Writing on Diane's couch

Contemplation should be part of the act of writing. The stillness as he ponders words.

Izabella Miko comes in and reads again. Alain is there. Record sound this time. She excels in the post-coital scene with Richard. Passable (or better) in "The Mezzanine" scene. But seems lost, struggling in the final confrontation (that she reads with Lizzy Caplan). Said that she didn't get the sides until this morning and she had two other appointments.

Keep wanting to talk myself into a casting choice. But also recognizing that tendency. Alain has talked me out of Margo. Is ready for me to choose Izabella -- good actress,

beautiful, conveys vulnerability which creates audience sympathy, etc. Difference

2.23.05

Casting sessions in my office: Marina Black (articulate, too old), Izabella alone (don't tell her about the missing sound of the previous tape), then Izabella with Lizzy. Alain does the reading.

In the talk after, Izabella acceptable but not a knock out (not like Lizzy).

Show the Izabella tape to Clare when she comes back from teaching screenwriting class. She likes it okay, certain moments, but talks about the girlie thing -- is she seeking approval -- and in terms of her intention of where she is in the story -- is she attracted to R, is she flirting with R, subtext -- theatre questions or classical questions, Clare questions certainly, and not bad, good actually, but not me, not my process. What do I want? For her to tell me that it is okay to cast Izabella. Which she can't. Or shouldn't.

That is the stress that I wake to.

Gail has casting suggestions, wants me to come to the studio to show her my casting tapes, which thrills me, to have her direct evaluation.

Scared about starting the process, scared not to expand the universe of choice from beyond Margo and Izabella. Reach the decision that I will just shoot with Lizzy if need be rather than make a rushed choice as to the other femme.

Alain is in a receptive mood to attentively listen to all by reasons pro and con, to and fro.

Meet Peter Ellis at the Tiki to pick wall colors. Show him the tape and he says Izabella, definitely. Pick mauve for J's bedroom, then Peter comes over to Pico Place for lunch. Clare tells Peter how she has learned from me to protect her own interests -- my shining example of selfishness, albeit arctic selfishness, or, rather, the selfishness of the artist. Did I become an artist or want to because it was a prime, nearly (to me) irrefutable reason to be selfish. That selfishness was inherent to the activity and

if selfishness is inherent to me then why not combine inherencies?

So, the movie is happening. Actors, paint, deals...

Schlepp my casting tapes to Gail Levin's office. She watches Izabella and Lizzy, then brings in Andrew and another associate. Gail likes Izabella's read of the post-coital scene, has trouble understanding her dial, sees her waffling in the confrontation scene. Andrew is sold when he sees the adjustemtn she makes when I do a retake of the second half of the confrontation scene.

Then I show them Margo's tape. Gail says she sees that I am missing with Izabella, but thinks Margo could be on "The L Word," just antother form of Alain's criticism re. lack of vulnerability (a form of sex/charisma?). Gail thinks Izabella is haunting-poetic-ethereal. Thinks I should do anotehr round of quick looks before making that my choice.

Campbell calls while I am in Gail's office.

2.26.05

Double deja vu -- being in the Tiki with Peter and Andrew, then looking in the front bedroom, freshly painted TTWD mauve.

Move some boxes to the airport office (one stack's worth in the corner of the rented south side office). Some stuff goes to Pico Place, including the futon, which I can't quite bring myself to throw out. Move the particle board cabinets into the living room, put the TV on top of that. Then Peter and I cart the black TV cabinet down to the garage and break it apart. Move the pole lamp from Pico Place to Tiki. Even with minimal wall decoration, it looks good. And for the first time since I moved to Pico Place, the back room is cleared out.

Long day of details which leaves me scared what is missing.

After the kids ar asleep, meet David Kaplan at Chung King, but I do all the talking to secure Chung King as our restuarant location.

Two trips to Steve's, three or so trips to the Tiki...that kind of day...details...consider this a parital record of how a day gets filled with doing stuff for the movie.

3.18.05

Got to get back to this journal as something uncensored for myself rather than something I'm eyeing as a publishable document. A variant on Henry Miller's dictum "lying in a diary is the height of insanity" -- writing a diary for public consumption is the height of closeted ego inanity. Undermines, erases it's usefulness as a tool. Worry about later later. There is no later now.

Finally watch the first day's dailies of Campbell. Shot too many takes, as I always seem to do. Don't really need more than one take of anything with him, two for protection.

At the kitchen table scene in the Tiki when he flubbed the line I clearly saw the surprise in his voice when I wanted to pick it up from the top, rather than at the flub. He knew that I had all I need even if I didn't.

Regret questioning his choice (instinct) of how to handle the last Diane/Art Courtyard conversation. Suprised by his choice -- which was probably correct, given his intelligence and command of character. He has said that he wants to reveal something new about the character in each scene. He probably knows better than I where to be by that late scene. At least I think that tonight.

Lesson: take the time to fix stuff that bugs me before starting to shoot, and then just do a couple of takes. Don't be so impatient to start shooting. Listen to the objections that others raise.

3.22.05

Dan--

We can wing it, but it's better if we can make a plan, especially if you want to see both kids. Classes, birthday parties, play dates, naps -- it can get complicated.

Regarding credit, it's always a drag to deal with. I'll come up with something aesthetically pleasing.

Looking at the dailies, I shot way too many takes. In retrospect, I found myself getting flustered with delays, and, being anxious to shoot, bulled my way into it. I

think I will try and take more time at the outset to fix things that bug me. Anyway, that's what I'm telling myself tonight.

There were some transcendent moments, listening to the dialogue come to life via Campbell. I had a moment where I thought, wow, he's a better version of me. There were definitely some moments of feeling a dream come to life, and that was exciting.

I felt a bit lost about other things. I've gotten used to writing, which means that I can adjust my work rhythm however I see fit. I can match up to the relative alertness or torpor of my body and mind to the writing work at hand. Directing, you have to do it in the slotted moment, tired or not.

Sometimes I'm not sure how or even if I want to intervene in performance, other than having set up the situation and framed up the image.

I give it my best guess but the rhythm of things and how the shots and scenes will ultimately fit together feels elusive.

I'm still not sure if I am a top notch director, but I'm trying to be calm and honest about letting this film be a test case.

Regards,
Gary

Gary,
> Regarding credit, it's always a drag to deal with. I'll come up with something aesthetically pleasing.

It doesn't have to be a drag. I don't need a credit.

> Looking at the dailies, I shot way too many takes. In retrospect, I found myself getting flustered with delays, and, being anxious to shoot, bulled my way into it. I think I will try and take more time at the outset to fix things that bug me. Anyway, that's what I'm telling myself tonight.

Ah, there are a lot of worse things than having too many takes!

> Directing, you have to do it, whatever, in the slotted moment. And sometimes mind is tired.

Yeah, it's like war. It's best suited for people who like dealing with chaos.

> Sometimes I'm not sure how or even if I want to intervene in performance, other than having set up the situation and framed up the image.

You can probably trust your instincts. If you're satisfied in the moment, then the movie will probably work in one way or another.

> I'm still not sure if I am a top notch director, but I'm trying to be calm and honest about letting this film be a test case.

You're setting very high standards for yourself - you think you should be in total command all the time. But there are a lot of ways to direct a good movie. - Dan

3.24.05

DAN'S REPLY TO MY REPLY:

> That's the core problem -- I hate chaos.

Me too.

> You're setting very high standards for yourself - you think you should be in total command all the time. But there are a lot of ways to direct a good movie. - Dan

> Such as? Feels like a lot of it comes down to dumb luck. Weird how it is on some levels such a mechanical process and in other ways so utterly mysterious.

Directors don't do anything - they just advise, or influence, the people who actually have jobs to do. And influence is an infinitely subtle thing.

Some good directors don't seem to do anything on a set. And yet the film comes out with their personality. - Dan

3.25.05

re. Kristin's Tristram Shandy dialogue line:
 Tristram Shandy described by one critic as "not so much a novel as a structure built around the space where a novel should be."

3.26.05

Feel grossed-out by how I shot the second courtyard scene. Typical TV coverage. Desperately wish that I had a different 2-shot, a long shot to close the scene.

How would I make films if I didn't know anything about conventional coverage?

It's not that I want to style to be overheated or overwrought. Just that I didn't find the visually best way to tell that scene. Pedestrian. Camera not in the serviced of the emotions.

Classroom scene: hate the hulking forms of Alain and Glanzer standing by the door. Alasin looks like a teamster goon in his baseball cap. Specualte that my annoyance is greater because I know who those guys are. But it is distracting to have just two people standing.

LESSONS FROM FIRST CAMPBELL SHOOT:

- Get a soundman
- Read the script before shooting any scene
- Shoot less takes
- Take more time to set up a scene, take less time shooting it
- Avoid "typical coverage" but not at the expense of properly shooting a scene.
- Should have taken more time to discuss the courtyard scene with Andrew before shooting it.
- Try to find a button for each scene (which the courtyard scene lacks). If I had thought about it, I might have been able to do a stageline cross at the end.
- Identify early on the things that annoy me about the image that can be changed.
- Imagine having to watch the scene forever (which is basically true).
- Take a breath
- Listen to crew input (re. sound)

3.27.05

> So we if hate chaos so much, why do we do it?

Speaking for myself, I was drawn to the art form, and was horrified to discover that I wasn't temperamentally suited to the practical aspects. -

Dan

4.3.04

Danger of sameness re. coverage

Sex with J -- how to cover?

Dan comes over for dinner. Show him dailies -- feel self-conscious when Clare is watching, sense her criticism of Lizzy.

DAN re. LIZZY:

She signals too much. She shouldn't hit the lines so hard. Re. the table scene -- she thinks too much about signalling the transition -- "don't worry, it'll come across."

"Don't to show so much.

Don't illustrate what you're thinking -- it'll come across.

Don't worry if we miss a little.

Listen without signalling."

DAN re. IZABELLA:

She plays it too provocative -- tone it down. She already looks provocative. Less sexpot. (They're both playing sexpots.) Kristin needs to be more down to earth.

GW re. IZABELLA:

self-aware, project a reticence, a tentativeness that comes from that.

Dan says that the whole situation is provocative -- three beautiful women.

Tell Dan that I don't know what to say to the girls. He understands -- how baffling it is to be confronted with beautiful women. It's a blankness I have, and inability to know what to say to make it better. An indeterminate zone that I am in as it comes to life. That's why I write down his comments word for word, as something to absorb and say.

He says that the footage has a distinctive look, he points out a couple of shots that he says look like I my footage. I say, I wish I knew what that is. Dan says, don't worry about it.

Weird how showing the film for Ron Judkins and Dan forces me to look at it, and in a new way -- the impact of an audience -- sensing how others will perceive it.

Dan singles out Calleigh as the most heart-stopping, she's got something, she could go somewhere...tell him about not casting Meg Ryan as Haley (Gorcey was fine, DS sez). How easy it is to play to my doubts, how Dan has the opposite effect (reassuring me).

4.5.05

re. the weaknesses of the March 3 & 4 footage -- think about how if it is surrounded by stronger footage, then the deficiencies melt away. The viewer is so predisposed to apply continuity to performance, space, time, &c. Ponder this as an aesthetic reality, as an aesthetic strategy, and as a way of assuaging my regrets for what I didn't do, my failures as a director (to correct performance, to fulfill the plan of a stageline cross in the courtyard scene [an easy enough matter, had I remembered]).

4.16.05

This week, set May 23 as the shoot date to complete all of Campbell's scenes. All the actors available, but Andrew not. Not freaked by that. Less disturbed that I thought I'd be.

Lacking something better to do (nothing I feel like writing), watch BEAT for the first time in a year or two. Tell myself that I don't care what anyone else (Clare, Alain) says, it's a really good film. Remember things like: disputing with Steve that we held too long on Kiefer crying as he cradled Courtney. Wasn't until the recut that I insisted that it be shortened, for the good. Or how I didn't like a take of Ron's new VO, Steve didn't want to change it, but Cindy made a face that said that it should be changed, and it finally happened.

Learned, hope I've learned, to trust my initial instincts and to insist on them. Not to seek a consensus (even a consensus of two) that dilutes my opinion.

I'm always alone as a filmmaker/artist. I'm the only person who was there for A VOYEUR, still around today. Something along the lines of: you enter the world naked and

you leave it the same way. Trust my continuity. Insist upon it.

4.29.05

GW TO DAN:

But the thing that scares me most (other than the excruciating pain that a kidney stone can cause) is the acting. I just don't feel I have a handle on it. The language to use. The intuition and confidence to judge what is good and what is not and to skillfully use words to make the proper adjustments. I am genuinely scared and am trying to figure out a way to get a handle on this before we start shooting.

DAN:

I hope I didn't contribute to this with my comments. Really, in the worst-case scenario it's still going to be a good film.

A fear like this, which occurs well after you've already shown the ability to get good performances, is a front for some more general distress. In other words, you have this anxiety at this point in your life, and it's attaching itself to the filmmaking. LAST BIG TOE may have been the trigger that loosed this anxiety, but it isn't the cause - the anxiety must be coming from somewhere deeper.

You don't have to solve the problem of where the anxiety is coming from - that can be pretty hard to do. All you can do is tell yourself that the anxiety is what it is, and not a sudden loss of talent. The footage is quite good.

You shouldn't get too theoretical about the acting: you just have to trust your instincts. Remember also that you don't have to be articulate about what's bothering you - it helps if you know how to talk to actors, but if you don't, they'll try to give you something different anyway. If I were you, I'd just watch the rushes with an eye to finding the acting you like. Don't torture yourself trying to come up with words to describe it - just try to recognize it.

GW:

> It's pretty scary to face the prospect of shooting 70 pages in 6 days. I get exhausted just thinking about it.

DAN:

Yeah, especially when you have health concerns. I suspect that the old adrenalin rush will kick in, though.

5.4.05

ALAIN re. IZABELLA/KRISTIN:

She has a different self-image than what she really looks like. Insecure about how attractive she is.

ALAIN re. LIZZY/JACQUELINE:

Her self-possession overpowers her looks. **She has to seem vulnerable without being aware of it (the vulnerability of a young person).**

(After viewing dailies with Steve:)

Charm is the key. I'm making a Noel Coward film.

Disturbing how my attention wavers during dailies. Feel that I am watching from the inside, then not. What staretgies can I evolve for maintaining focus?

Shot too many takes. If I am going fishing for certain line readings, do those as pickups not as complete takes to save time & actor's energy.

Coverage for end of Art Courtyard scene is atrocious -- no decent 4-shot. Needed to step back, walk around, really think about the coverage. Could have done a nice matching pair of 2-shots if I had had more presence of mind.

5.7.05

What was once a month and too much time to fill with prep is now two weeks. On the verge of not seeming there's enough time to get ready.

Pretty much ended the two week surge of work on the Laurel Canyon novel at the beginning of the week.

What I most need to get ready is my mind. Learn to return to methods that work.

Certainty of judgement. Trust of intuition. Knowing what I like and knowing how to say it.

Inspiring not alienating coworkers. (Go from a positive meeting with Ron Judkins to pissing Alain off because he

says I'm argumentative about a new guy that he wants to bring on).

5.9.05

Irked by my failure to shoot a proper 4-shot in the Art Dept. Courtyard. I remember remarking to myself how great the four leads looked together, and yet I failed to film that. I could have moves the foursome off-axis and avoided the window reflection problem. Or I could have shot between Campbell and Alex. I failed to take a moment to reconsider the scene as it was unfolding in front of me, and to make adjustments. Curses. The imperfections of the film accumulate.

Learn to recognize my feelings, the things that excite me on the set, and let those guide the filming. Trust my eye. Trust my eye in the moment.

Also noticed tendencies in Andrew's footage that I didn't like -- zooming to adjust, reframing within an MCU. Push for the old school old style aspects that are ME.

Style is a relatively transparent cloak for me.

5.15.05

End of the weekend. Didn't earn a green check mark for either day.

5.17.05

Alain in curmudgeon mode on phone (Andrew hasn't returned the camera manual), this after a sleepless night with Harry.

Directorial influence as a function of personality (as if that could change between now and Monday).

ATTRIBUTES

- decisiveness
- if indecisive, make that charming
- relentless
- focused (how to diffuse Campbell's wisecracking?)
- watch closely
 - actors
 - rhythm/pacing
 - props

camerawork
 --charm
 --make everyone's contribution feel valued

re. FINAL SCENE

J & K's pique is tempered by their knowledge/guilt that they were using him. What else could color their anger to keep it from being one-dimensional?

DAN-

re. The Final Confrontation Scene: I'm thinking that J & K's pique is tempered by their knowledge/guilt that they were using him. What else could color their anger to keep it from being one-dimensional? Need to get some handle on this scene, to figure out what to say to the actors (and myself).

Well, the last days are upon us. I feel some certainty about how to shoot certain things. Can I expand this to encompass the entire script? I do some work and then collapse into a nap, revive later in the day and have what seem to be some good ideas. What's scary about a shoot is that you sort of need all the ideas to be good all the time. I'm trying to relax into a mood where I can just try and have a good time (if such a thing is possible). Return to my goal to see if I can actually enjoy the filmmaking process rather than have it be an activity filled with dread beforehand and regret after. I must say that I genuinely alternate between thinking that I am a good director and feeling that I am not.

Oh, well -- at least I was able to read through the script and get excited about a couple of ideas.

Gary

DAN REPLIES:

The girls weren't breaking into Richard's computer and diary, though. So there wasn't an equivalence, and, human nature being what it is, I'd guess their anger was pretty pure before he showed up.

What changes their anger for me is Richard's defense, which suddenly they **have** to relate to: he was single-minded about the writing. His behavior supports this: there's

nothing sheepish about his manner, nothing prurient - he's the same guy who told them to use whatever they could in their writing. And then, there's another important factor: they can see that Richard doesn't care about them that much: "Sorry, I'm a writer, I went too far but that's my job, anyway I'm leaving, it was nice knowing you." And they still care about him more, for whatever reason - maybe his fame, maybe his teaching, maybe the fact that they're women. Put together his effective defense and his playing his trump card - "Anyway, I'm leaving" - and their anger is fragmented. If he just gave the defense, the anger would still have a lot of force; if he just said he was leaving but looked culpable, they'd tell him to fuck himself or call the police. But Richard is good at not allowing himself to be on the wrong end of a power struggle.

> I must say that I genuinely alternate between thinking that I am a good director and feeling that I am not.

>

> Oh, well -- at least I was able to read through the script and get excited about a couple of ideas.

Sounds as if you're fine. Good luck! - Dan

5.18.05

GW TO DAN:

Dan--

Your analysis is as usual cogent, insightful, and I find myself agreeing with it. It's disturbing that I don't have the same level of insight into my own material. Oh, well, I guess if someone has the insight that's okay. But that's one of the ways that I feel less of a director these days. Which is not to say that I don't have some intuitive untutored abilities, but more as a writer, it would seem. We'll find out next week.

Gary

DAN REPLIES:

A lot of artists don't critique their own work that way - I don't think it has anything to do with creativity. It's more criticism, really. Direction is about getting what you want somehow - but there's no one way to do that. - Dan

5.19.05

WHY THIS IS A BETTER SITUATION THAN LOVE MACHINE

- Script better, more finalized, less flux
- I wrote the script by myself, it's my material
- Better cast
- Have already had a digital experience
- Building on Alain's "White Nights" Experience (AS, Paulo)
- Smaller scope of production
- Better production design
- Shot lists & blocking diagrams - much better prep
- Shooting experience going into main shoot (opening section, classroom, bathroom sex)
- Not seeking Clare's approval
- Willing to put production first

6.1.05

Shot the real estate fiction today. Even after a fitful night (Harry woke at 1 AM, intchy and inconsolable, Dot oke at 3 AM with a nightmare, so I slept with her, then Clare came in at 6 AM, her wound from the pulled wisdom tooth bleeding, so off to the dentist, then I rose at 7 AM to work hard to get the kids to shcool by 9 AM), the adrenalin kicked in. The shoot went smoothly.

REGRETS

- Not trying a different, more disorienting POV to set up the POV-fucking shots.
- Not getting Lizzy to do more "getting dressed" business

PLUSES

--I shot more variants on a set-up than just redoing the same shot over and over. This was particularly true of the set-ups in the bathroom, especially the CU's of Lizzy, which were all different.

6.3.05

Steve re. Voice Over: should play against the action, in *counterpoint*.

6.16.05

Main shoot: June 6 - June 11.

June 5 -- Picked up Campbell at the Long Beach Airport. Got there very early and instead of forcing myself through

the script again, daydreamed and read Lilian Ross' "Portrait of Hemingway."

Driving back, for the first time talk to Campbell about the script, the character. Excited talk that I expect to continue through dinner, but once we stop in Venice to pick up Matt Maloy's car, which he is borrowing. he's done. Stop by Pico Place to get him a tape of TTWD.

Too late or too hard to recapitulate what each shooting day was.

The first master, entering the apt., I cut before all the dial had been said, and that turned out to be the best take, which we never quite got back to. Peter Jensen was the cameraman the first day, and the one scene we checked, a very nicely composed 2-shot, one of two set-ups to cover the scene where Richard asks permission to stay, was unusable because of lens dirt. What other terrors lurk in the unseen dailies?

I'm mindful of bringing up Campbell's energy, of making him "warmer." This is an AS admonition that I perhaps pass on too directly. I'm constant about it. Would I have directed the movie better, would it have turned out better if AS had said nothing, or if I had not listened to him?

At the end of the first or the second day, I wonder why Campbell is doing the movie. He doesn't seem to be having much fun. Is it me? I keep wondering what else I can provide?

The second or third day, AS is complaining about too much shoe leather, of scenes walking through the apt. that won't survive into the cut. The absence of cutting options.

I try to streamline some of Campbell's business and he complains that I am removing the subtlety from the script. he says that what he liked about the script is that it spend time with moments that most movies gloss over. Am I self-editing those out at this early stage?

I tell myself (having yet to see the footage) that it is all there, all that I need.

Day 5, shooting in Kristin's room, which is tight quarters, Campbell complains that AS is in his eyeline,

"Show some motherfucking respect." And after he moves to the otehr side of the room, repeats "show some motherfucking rresepct." The second motherfucking seems uncalled for. I fear that AS might explode, and when I ask him later, he says, "what, am I crazy?"

Re. Campbell re says, "You rode him hard and put him away wet."

Day 6, wrapping up[the stuff in J's room, Campbell says, "I know you think I'm a pain in the ass..." and I say no.

The day before I ask him about TTWD and he says that he couldn't watch it becuae he thought Villard was such a terrible actor, "NFU was beautiful, I rmemeber seeing it, and BEAT, it's probably great, better than you think, but i just can't watch a film where I hate the acting." I don't think it's strictly a head game that he is playing.

I am forced in ot the role of Dad, I have to interuupt Campbell's banter with the other actors to call a take. I have to stop the fun in between take stuff.

I look at my watch a lot, clocking if I can afford to do another take, if I need to move on, and the actors remark on it, as a sign of boredom, inatttention . One of my feelings. To feel the pressure and to not hide that I am feeling it.

So Campbell and I are mostly polite, cordial, but there is tension, a lack of connection, a distance that I can find no way to ease. Our good-bye is not heartfelt or congratulatory. With something of a shrug he says, "You have four great actors." And I read in that, well, with this script and this cast, did you fuck up as director?

I wonder now if the camera was too close, if the coverage was too conventional.

I wonder if Alain influenced me toward the mainstream, which is pointless in this type of venture.

That aside, I felt at the end of the week that I was a director, a good director, that I could move the crew along, that I could reorganize a scene spatially and in terms of coverage when my original concept did not work. That I could sustain an intense pace of work, that I had the ability to concentrate, evaluate. That I could shoot

66 pages in 6 days, without drinking any coffee. And this with fitful sleep most nights.

Could I have been truer to the script? Could I have honored Campbell's instincts-intuitions more? I don't think he did anything that he didn't like. And where there was a dispute, which were mostly minor, I'm pretty sure that he have it both ways.

Now I am naxious about what the film is. Is it good? And I am anxious about finishing it properly in time for the Sundance submission.

6.19.05

The two regrets that play in my head: that Campbell didn't have a better time, that he and I didn't have a better relationship. And, two, that Alain had too much sway over me, pushing the film toward charm/mainstream. Now think that Campbell's darkness (what there was in his intial approach) would have played against the natural bounce of the girls.

Tell myself that he gave me what he wanted in the first take, trust that, go with it as much as possible.

6.22.05

Lessons from watching dailies:

--Should have used the tripod in some tituations, rather than reflexively never using it. Forexample, the shot from behind the couch, J. in FG, R in BG -- the movment of the couch in the FG (stiped fabric) is distracting.

--the annoyance of having the main window closed for the entire shoot. Dare to have spend a thousand bucks of whatever to have put ND gels on the window, or at least found some situations to have the window open.

6.25.05

Shot the Barton-Charlize fiction yesterday. Used a tripod -- in part, my reaction to the needless handheld shots in other sections of the film, plus it's a subtle way to differentiate the fiction.

Last minute shift from arroyo (desert-day) to downtown-night for the paper burning. This got us off of an absurdly early call to dully burn paper in daylight.

Shifted bowling ball from purple to blue. Sequence shifted and sharpened into something very nice.

First shots: on Monterey Street, where I shot TTWD.

Randy Hastings, my discovery from YMCA Camp Big Bear, played Barton.

Staged the stoner scene in Alain's garage office, did the piss bottle car wreck in my Honda, stole the bowling alley at Bayshore Lanes (Andrew bumped into a security guard, one of three for anti-gang protection, I assume), burned a paper fire in Alain's front yard, then cruised downtown with moments of despairing wandering while looking for a spot to stage the burning of the manuscript.

Home at 1 AM, throat sore from smoke, reviewing the sequence in my mind, realize that I forgot to do the POV shot of bowling ball into Barton's face. What a lapse, but correctable.

Also noticed that I can't stop looking at my watch while shooting.

The day: 2:30 call time at Alain's. Shoot Silverlake, Alain's garage, Alain's house, Alain's yard, driving scene, bowling alley, and two locations downtown = 6 locations, wrap at approx. 12:30.

Once again, after the work started, I comfortably felt like a director again.

6.29.05

Record Izabella's narration and shoot a pickup close-up for Scene 31. Sound problems: hovering helicopter, weed eater, hose, siren -- how lucky we were during the shoot. By the time we get to the CU I'm ready to be done -- relegate myself to holding the reflector board rather than the camera, defer to Alain's hocus pocus about eyelines for the close-ups. With Steve there more talk than about any other shot.

Hard enough to attentively watch the dailies much less cut the movie together.

Wonder at times what Campbell must be saying or thinking about me elsewhere.

7.1.05

RON JUDKINS' THOUGHTS ON THE SHOOT:

--Should have spent the money for ND gels so could have the windows open in the living room

--Prep duvateen, velcro straps for quicker, easier blacking of windows

--Someone in charge of tech, so camera always had the right settings (re. letterbox instead of 16:9 for Real Estate Fiction and first day of the main shoot)

UPON FINISHING WATCHING ALL THE DAILIES:

--I often shot too many takes, particularly of the master.

--Often Campbell was best in the first or an early take.

--I'm not sure that I gained much by trying to "bring up his energy"

--I think Alain's influence was good in pushing me for coverage. I think his carping about shoe leather and long stretches of "business" pressured me to to unduly speed up the action and polish away interesting details. Alain's influence, and my response to that influence, was perhaps the wedge, or part of the wedge between me and Campbell.

I felt very pressured to get the film shot and I think I was too transparent in transmitting that pressure. It was rude and distracting that I looked at my watch so much.

7.12.05

RON JUDKINS RE. "WHITE NIGHTS"

--W.N. not well-directed -- pace is too much the same throughout.

--actors seem like they are saying lines rather than giving the impression that ideas are occurring to them.

This makes me wonder about CRASHING, about my directing.

7.15.05

Yes, I could have gone much more with first takes. Which would have made for a snappier, less exhausting shoot.

Again, feel that I pushed myself (inner voice) and allowed myself to be pushed (Alain) toward more conservative, middle-of-the-road filmmaking. For no reason, other than

the whimsical hope that that would make the film more salable, or that it might lead to my belated embrace my the mainstream.

Think of Rivette. At this point (was there ever any other point?) there's not point than doing anything other than making personal films. Cloak of art to mask failure? Justification for the decaying self?

7.20.05

Watch the first cut with Steve at his house, then he drives me to the airport. Not quite enough time to sort out computer shit so that i can watch the cut on the trip (because I am antsy to leave for the airport where I now have plenty of time to cool my heels).

Izabella is the weakest of the three by four -- lots of forced readings, off moments, and her reading of v.o. almost always sounds wrong. Campbell is a bit flat (as expected). But, that said, plenty of moments that work and I'm optimistic about the film. First cut is 98 minutes, fifteen minutes should be whacked out for starters.

8.31.05

STEVE TO GW:

Not that we'll be dealing with this anytime soon, but the mocked-up

books on my desk just inspired a thought for a (potentially lengthy)

title sequence: a montage of stills tracing the success of TWD --

reviews, sales charts, the Variety announcement of the movie deal, an

ad for TWD: The Movie, etc. etc. Maybe it ends with a stack of copies

on the remainder table, as seems to happen to all books eventually, or

a copy in a yard sale for 25¢. Just something to stick in the back of

your mind.

Took that additional line out of the poem -- seems to work fine. Thanks

for coming by on such short notice.

-- Steve

9.2.05

GW TO STEVE:

I mailed DVDs to Dan Sallitt and and Peter Ellis. I also gave one to Andrew last night (he is my back-up re .TTWD -- he'll do a transfer from 3/4").

So, at your convenience, I need to get another DVD from you so I can watch it again and experiment with music cues.

Maybe we could get together tomorrow and sort through our notes.

To overstate the obvious: you're doing a great job cutting the movie. I feel very lucky. The incrementalism is working. The question is how to get the film into its best incarnation for the Sundance submission.

I guess I felt a little depressed by the screening -- it was weird seeing it with a group of people for the first time, even though everyone was basically an insider. I'm still trying to sort out the difference between a private (us) vs. a public response. I was expecting people to laugh more. Maybe the combo of title sequence and music will help accomplish that, but I also feel it is a matter of editorial timing.

Keep an open mind about losing "write from yourself" in one place. But of course I don't want to take that out just to take it out.

Regarding the post-TTWD discussion, it's J's scene -- the tension comes from her really grilling Richard about what he is writing.

Can we cut to night without a dissolve? Does a dissolve slacken the pace too much?

Anyway...talk to you tomorrow...

Gary

9.3.05

STEVE TO GW:

Hey --

Got your notes regarding titles. I'm still sorting through my ideas, but I'll get 'em to you as soon as they're coherent. Was there a specific reason for the number of images you suggested, like accommodating a certain number of credits in between? It seemed to me to be at least 25% too many for the mini-story we're telling.

On Sep 2, 2005, at 8:14 PM, Walkpix@aol.com wrote:

> I mailed DVDs to Dan Sallitt and and Peter Ellis. I also gave one to
> Andrew
> last night (he is my back-up re .TTWD -- he'll do a transfer from
> 3/4").
>
> So, at your convenience, I need to get another DVD from you so I can
> watch it
> again and experiment with music cues.

I'll burn one this morning. Ernest gave me a few cues he thought might be of interest; I can make a copy of that CD for you as well.

>
> Maybe we could get together tomorrow and sort through our notes.

I'm feeling pretty crappy -- a cold or sinus infection hit me Thursday night and I'm still pretty knocked out. I don't think I have the energy for much of a get-together today.

> To overstate the obvious: you're doing a great job cutting the movie.
> I feel
> very lucky. The incrementalism is working. The question is how to
> get the

> film into its best incarnation for the Sundance submission.
 >
 > I guess I felt a little depressed by the screening -- it was weird
 > seeing it
 > with a group of people for the first time, even though everyone was
 > basically
 > an insider. I'm still trying to sort out the difference between a
 > private
 > (us) vs. a public response. I was expecting people to laugh more.
 > Maybe the
 > combo of title sequence and music will help accomplish that, but I
 > also feel it
 > is a matter of editorial timing.

What can I say but "yeah." I felt the same way about the screening -- I hoped people would find it more entertaining, or at least express that more audibly. But Ernest said he thought it worked pretty well as is, and that having a functioning cut without much music is a good thing. He suggested Albert Brooks as a model, where the music helps tell the audience that it's okay to laugh at this guy.

Overall, I still feel pretty good about the current cut despite the somewhat lackluster response. I'm hopeful that some relatively minor polishing can make things snap.

>
 > Keep an open mind about losing "write from yourself" in one place.
 > But of
 > course I don't want to take that out just to take it out.

I'll keep it in mind. I'm not opposed to it -- I simply didn't feel it was overstated myself.

>
> Regarding the post-TTWD discussion, it's J's scene -- the
tension
> comes from
> her really grilling Richard about what he is writing.

This is a good note -- it's exactly what I, watching
Thursday night,
felt needed to be sharpened in that scene, but you've
articulated it
more concisely than I had managed to. I almost feel that we
need to go
through the whole thing scene by scene and list the
intended text and
subtext of each scene, to create a list of editorial goals.
Maybe
that's a little too mechanistic and checklist-y, but at
least thinking
about it might help. Actually, I think we're in decent
shape
narratively (that is to say, on the "text" level), but
sharpening the
subtext is a big priority. (Regarding the narrative,
though, Ernest
reiterated that he was confused by both K's bathroom
fiction and the
three-part end fiction -- not understanding until too late
what the
heck he was seeing; Cindy was confused, too. Maybe
establishing a "J's
fiction" cue that can be reintroduced when we go into her
piece at the
end, and using the same cue from K's earlier fiction in the
bathroom
scene might help. I don't want to over-explain, but having
people get
lost is at least as bad. I believe the final fictional
triad is going
to be intensely satisfying once we get it to work -- I
think the
audience will really enjoy seeing these three writers'
experiences
dovetail, but we have to make sure people get how it
relates to what
they've been watching for the previous hour.)

>

> Can we cut to night without a dissolve? Does a dissolve
 slacken the
 > pace too
 > much?

I think the problem is that the tension of the preceding
 scene
 dissipates before the transition (as you more or less said
 above),
 rather than any problem with the transition itself.

>
 > Anyway...talk to you tomorrow...
 >
 > Gary

I'm going to go lie down now. I'll call you later.
 -- Steve

GW TO STEVE:
 re. CREDITS--

I agree that 15 images are too many. I can't get it down
 to less than 13 cards, and that's presuming I can move
 Production Design to the end credits. Not sure how to
 alternate between two cards together and one card solo to
 reduce the number of intervening images that we need.

Sorry to hear you're sick. I'm free after 12:30 to stop by
 and get the DVD the music CD from Ernest.

I like Albert Brooks as a model, but you know going in from
 his persona that it's going to be funny. And the music for
 his films is way too mainstream and shlocky for my taste.

I think your idea about listing text and subtext is very
 good and well worth doing. I did something similar as my
 directorial homework.

Maybe a useful concept is "good will" -- or whatever term
 we invoked when we cut The Mezzanine scene -- we were using
 up audience good will for not enough result. That applies
 at a macro level, of course.

That said, I really want to stick with what I like. What
 we like. Judicious trims will accomplish a lot. I really

think we can make it sharper and funnier, and not just with music. Guerss I'm blathering platitudes now so I'll stop.

Regarding the ending, we've got VO from the three characters, so how much more do we need to make it clear? Maybe a close-up of K writing before we see her fiction? At first blush, hat seems a bit inelegant to me.

I studies the TTWD and discussion scene last night. Here's a thought: cut from ther single of J to a two-shot of J & K, and withhold the CU of R. Make it more about them talking to him off camera. Withold the 3-shot for later in the scene. Try to maximize the effectiveness of this contemplative and yet confrontational (2 against 1) master. Maybe arrive at the 3-shot for the grilling at the end of the scene.

Regarding TTWD itself: lose the two shot at the begnning so there is no geography established and pace up the whole thing.

Talk to you,
Gary

9.30.05

Reshoot TTWD scene in my Pico Place bedroom. Had planned to show Orlando (& Diana) the scene, but he didn't want to see it and that seemd like a fgood idea. But in my dirfections I was trying to have him match aspects of it.

Felt weird -- liberating? out of body deva vu-ey? -- to be reshooting a scene 20 years later.

Felt all the tnesions the night before, the stomach ache uincertainty and tension of what is to come. Worry that I will want to go to the bathroom evfery five minutes and then don't even think about that the whole shoot.

Field a three person crew: Alain (script notes), Andrew, and Scott (Ron's sub for sound). Shhot a bit too much, as usual, but improvise a couple of extra shots.

The night before tell myself that I don't ever want to make another film, too much stress and tension, and now after the shoot, I can't wait to do it again.

10.4.05

Expected to be excited by TTWD scene, but I hate it. I don't like how the actress looks. I curse myself for not double-checking the crucial close-up of Dick (Orlando) -- camera is too far away.

And because I was locked into recreating the coverage of the original TTWD scene, it is visually very plain. It is the least compelling of all the fantasy sequences. I should have erased all memory of what the scene once was and tried to reconceptualize something visually compelling as a stand-alone piece.

I'm left feeling stupid, contemplating a reshoot.

10.17.05

EMAIL TO STEVE:

Those two additional scenes do seem inspired. I am grateful.

Here's a thought: the flashback to the bedroom (guilt is just the foreplay) might play better if it ends on R's close-up. There's something a little unsettling about going from a CU of K to having her in the foreground. It seems to make it too much about her.

I complained that ending the scene on R's CU was too narcissistic -- but that is perhaps an irrelevant plaint.

Maybe we could try cutting to R asleep (day? night?) then dissolve into the shot with K in the FG from that.

Here's another idea, if we have the coverage, or can grab it from another scene: Cut to a CU of Kristen at the kitchen table. She looks toward the couch (then maybe looks away). Cut to a CU of R asleep. Then cut to the 2-shot we currently use). Well, that sounds a bit too complicated, but I had to say it.

Maybe it's fine the way that it is, but I can't help musing on the optimal transition to the morning scene given the footage that we have.

I don't like that R is lost in the shot at first. We don't see him until we stirs. And yet...I guess that fits the m.o. of the film -- we don't really know what the shot is about until we are in the middle of it.

Well, there, I've talked myself into loving what we have.

11.8.05

Last niggling cuts. Can't bring myself to say that picture is locked. Worrory that I am trying Steve's aptience.

Fret over titles. Credits. Strange to be sleepless this far along in the process.

12.17.05

Gary,

> We leave in a couple of hours for the airport and England. Back 12/30.

Sorry I didn't get back to you before you left. Hope your trip is/was good.

> The DVD I amiled you has about half of Ernest's MX. Curious to hear your
> thoughts.

The night before last I watched almost half of it. I'm getting to the point with the project where I don't trust my judgment, but I'm feeling as if this version is more cutty than the August one that I saw, with a little less sense of space and time. It's hard for me to be sure without a careful comparison - I remember feeling it during the courtyard scene, and also sometimes in the three-way scenes in the apt. (maybe the one where J. points out that Richard's wife might have good lawyers too). I always like it better when I feel that the shots have some room to breathe.

The interpolated scene while Richard is peeing has the advantage that it gives K. some screen time in the early scenes in the apt., but I think I liked it better when the flashback wasn't there. Maybe if it had been shown already that Richard had been talking with K., it would work better for me.

I certainly don't think the film is ruined or anything, but I think I liked the rhythm better before.

> Am planning to try cutting down the long courtyard scene between Richard and
 > Diane, to try starting with Richard asking Diane "what about you?"

You already shortened that scene, didn't you? I noticed some missing material (right around "That phrase deconstructs itself"). Do you think that scene needs to be shorter? What's the problem you're trying to address?

> Have been thinking about starting the casting of either BE MY BABY or CALLERS -- CALLERS is easier to cast, but it's hard to face all the hassles and tensions of a production that is more a piece of entertainment than a statement of how I feel about myself/the world (sort of the same thing in the narcissist's universe).

Do you like the CALLERS script?

I got about 3/4ths of the way through BE MY BABY before I got derailed. I definitely felt as if the playboy aspect of the character was brought under control by your last round of changes. I recall that my biggest problem was when we started finding out that Alan hadn't had that many relationships after all, and that he'd been in a previous relationship for a long time. I felt as if the whole movie had been predicated on the fact that this guy didn't feel comfortable in committed relationships, and that he was suddenly a different guy in the second half, with different issues and a different past.

Lots of good stuff too. I still have my detailed notes.

I'll finish CRASHING soon. If we have a transit strike soon, I should have more time at home than I know what to do with. - Dan

GW TO DAN:

If the film seems choppy, I certainly want to know. In UK now and freezing out here in the computer room.

Wanted to shorten the courtyard scene because that whole section of the film feels like it goes on forever -- a wide swath of pedestrian filmmaking at the beginning of the film. The whole long rap that Richard gives deconstructing himself is stuff that we learn in other places. Anyway,

that scene seems to go on too long and the first part of the film feels slow relative to the rest. But that could be me, either bored or overreacting to comments.

I don't think the 3 way scene is shorter -- I'll have to compare.

As always, you're detailed reponse is much appreciated and taken most seriously.

Regards,
Gary

12.20.05

> Hard to get psyched up to start the next flick.

Amazing to me that you can even think about the next movie before this one is over. I'm still not ready to think about another movie, and all I'm doing with ATSAS is clearing the rights....

> the Sundance thing has somewhat shaken a heretofore unassailable
> confidence in the picture.

You know, I wonder if they thought, "Well, BEAT was a flop - this guy had his chance already." Who knows.

I think you have to be contemptuous of these people if you're making movies that aren't cookie-cutter. You have to thumb your nose at them. God knows they deserve it. Why should they exhibit good taste with your film when we see their bad taste with everyone else's movies?

> Plus it is sobering to realize \i've spent most of this entire year
> making the flick -- one year fro 75 minutes of low buedget fiction.

Most of an entire year! That's nothing for a movie. - Dan

12.21.05

GW TO DAN:

Regarding moving on -- it's hard to lavish much more creative thought on CRASHING other than trying to finish it, that last 5- 10% or so without fucking it up. Guess I feel the wings of mortality beating and would still like to try and have a significant career at this late date. Hope springs eternal.

Yeah, though, I should stand up more for what I do -- or try and do. Self-censorship is such a bitch.

12.24.05

DAN'S EDIT NOTES RE. DECEMBER '05 VERSION

Gary - okay, here are fairly comprehensive notes about the editing in the 8

Dec 05 version. Good film! - Dan

=====

Slight reservations about the titles, because they tell part of the story that the movie already tells quite adequately. Now we don't get to learn Richard's situation gradually. For instance, the sci-fi scene at the beginning is immediately comprehensible, whereas before you used to have to wait for the full meaning.

There are parts of the classroom scene that are cutty, but that scene feels as if you wanted it to be a montage, so it's not a problem. I do wish that his introduction to the class, though, were not done so elliptically, that there were more continuity between the suitcase section and Diane's introduction.

I have a vague memory of good material in the classroom scenes that is gone, but I'm not sure about that.

I suppose the answer is no, but: is there any take of Isabelle saying "So, is it true that you don't have a place to stay tonight?" where she is

more casual, less vampy? That's the first time we see her, so it would be great if she didn't come on so strong right away.

The courtyard scene in general isn't cutty, but I miss some of the lost dialogue. It does get a little cutty when K and J show up - not fatally so, though. But I really wish the final shots with Richard and Diane were less cutty - I really think the sense of space in this scene needs to be restored at the end.

I wish the Tiki introduction to Richard's arrival at the apt. weren't so very short - this seems like exactly the time to take your time.

The very beginning of the pot scene seems a little rushed and cutty. The rest is fine (and it's a very good scene).

You are often cutting quickly right at the beginning of scenes, which I think is the best time to be gradual.

Lots of the cutting seems to be right on the dialogue, with cuts between lines (i.e., the scene with Brad). That's okay, but the style can look cutty quickly when things get rushed. because it looks as if the dead air has been eliminated. Whereas cutting in the middle of dialogue, or before or after dead air, has the advantage that you can fool the viewer into thinking that rhythms are natural, even when a lot has been removed. Anyway, the Brad scene is fine - I just wanted to comment on a general editing tendency.

Kitchen table scene basically cuts fine (and is excellent - Lizzy is great in it.)

The scene with K leaving for class in the morning could be more leisurely for my money. No big deal, but the cuts come a little fast.

I feel as if the voiceover after Richard breaks into K's computer is a little rushed. We don't really get to hear a good chunk of her writing.

Something bugs me about the cutting in the "I have no money" scene. The first cut (before "Only if you let me pay...") definitely feels as if a pause was excised. (Same as in the Aug version.) The second cut (after "How good are your wife's lawyers?") might be okay if Richard's sigh weren't there - it's timed oddly. (Changed from Aug, but both versions feel imperfect.) The next two cuts feel funny because they land too close to the end or the beginning of dead air. (The first of these two cuts was in the middle of dialogue in Aug, so the rhythm felt better in that cut.)

By the way, ending on a closeup of J in this scene helps to strengthen the already-strong impression (created perhaps by the removal of some of K's scenes) that Richard is initially interested in writing only about J. I think I like the Aug version better here, where it cuts from a long shot into J's fiction, leaving us to figure out what's going on.

I think Lizzy will be a star....

No strong feelings pro or con the music under J's fiction. It gives a comic tone, but I don't really mind.

The first cut in the "giving J literary advice" scene (after "So, what'd you think?") feels too cutty, as if it removes needed space. Otherwise the

scene plays fine - I think you shortened it, but it doesn't feel chopped up, it just feels short.

The music works very well in the excellent "a character from my novel just walked into the room" scene. The cutty cutting in this scene is great, because of the contrapuntal solidity of the voiceover.

In the scene where Richard finds out that his money is back, I wish that first closeup of K wasn't there - it feels like too much. I don't mind the closeups of K after you give Richard his first closeup, though I liked it better when you did the whole first part of the scene in medium long shot in the Aug version.

You successfully took the curse off the "I have a nice ass" line. But I feel as if Richard's praise for K - "Let's just say I like to watch you walk" - comes out of nowhere. Didn't there used to be some other praise to set it up?

There's some great stuff later in this scene - a great handheld tracking shot or two, Campbell's reaction to the piss bottle.

I like the scene of the imagined conversation in the coffeehouse after Richard leaves - I like the doubling of the sound track.

I so like the heart-shaped box with the condoms - it's the whole movie in a single image! - that I would hold the shot a beat longer.

I'd like a little more space at the beginning of Richard's closeup after the great line "I've considered writing legal novels."

This is a good scene, and the perfect setup for the impending sex.

Music is good during the sex scene with K.

I love the shot of them reading the magazine together.

The later scenes aren't as cutty as the early ones.

I'm not listing all the awesome moments, coz I probably listed them last time, but there are a lot of them.

The confrontation scene is the first scene in a while that gave me problems, cutting-wise:

- the first shot needs a beat more space at the end, I think. In general, I think it's important that that whole first exchange of glances not feel rushed.

- I really miss the dialogue before "You've been spying on us," but, assuming it's gone, that shot needs more space at the beginning, to indicate that K has processed Richard's reaction and found it wanting.

- Then the scene settles down, but there's something wrong with the cut before "You can't just say 'This is what I do.'" J's facial expression is cut off by the edit.

- You try to elongate the moment before, "Look, I should leave," which is a good idea. But I think you should do it with one cut instead of two. It doesn't feel right to cut in a shot with no dialogue, just to lengthen the gap.

- What would you think about removing the CU of J just before the fantasy starts? Just a thought - don't know if it would work.

I like the music in the final scene with Diane.

Don't let anyone tell you this isn't an excellent film!

12.26.05

RE. "FINAL" EDITING

Experiment with placement of music cues

Carefully study 8/17 cut against 11/12 (?) "locked cut"

Dan's notes

Leave courtyard scene alone?

12.28.05

In an email dated Mon, 26 12 2005 8:31:51 pm GMT, **PetNewman** writes:

Hi Gary,

>

>I hope you and your family are having a wonderful holiday in England.

>

>I've just gotten back from our trip to the Bahamas, and wanted to bring you up to date. I've read the Janis rewrite several times and I am very encouraged. Because Greg, Bill, and I have all been traveling; it's been difficult for us to coordinate our reactions. It might well have to wait until after the 1st of the year for the group of us to get back to you. Obviously, out of courtesy, our first call will be in to Penelope. I didn't want to leave you hanging. I am quite pleased with what we have now.

>

>Last night my 16 year old son and I had the pleasure of watching your new film CRASHING. It's really quite good, and we couldn't believe that Geoff Gilmore didn't want it for Sundance. The writing, directing, and acting are all really strong; and the picture looks great. Did you really make it for \$5,000? Anyway, I'd love to talk to you about it after the 1st of the year. Even in these difficult times, I think it's a strong candidate for theatrical distribution; and would be happy to help you out with it.

>

Thanks and All the best,
Peter

12.28.05

GW TO DAN:

Dan--

Thanks for those remarkably detailed editing notes.

We're still travelling (abck Dec. 30), so I won't be able to fully assimilate them until after I get back.

I get what you're saying about the opening credits -- they were in reaction to early screenings when viewers didn't realize that it was a comedy until very late if ever. I thought it helped make the film more accessible -- maybe it's wimping out. Certainly your comments make me feel ambivalent about it. this morning. Even for relatively sophisticated viewers, I get some confusion regarding the opening "spaceship" scene, even with the title sequence. I know I'd get a lot of resistance from Steve to taking it out, and I would worry that it would make the film harder to sell.

(Peter Newman, who produced *The Squid and the Whale* (which won best director and best script at last year's Sundance) just saw the film and was utterly baffled that Sundance didn't accept it. He thought the film had a strong chance at theatrical distribution and is ineterested in working as a sales agent for the film -- got this in an email today.)

Alain really didn't like the music under the writing scene ("the susurratation of cotton sock on shag") although he thought it was okay during the sequence in J's room, and the very end of the sequence when J dissolves away as she leaves.

The bulk of your comments about being cutty are well taken. Probably in a number of places we simply might not have the footage. Sometimes our coverage was pretty lean, and we've already used every frame available.

It's sort of depressing to think that we've made the film worse. It's disturbing when you think something really works and it doesn't. I certainly feel chastened that your analytical powers are so much greater than my own. I feel that I mostly just bumble about trying to write dialogue and scnees that I like, without being able to explain why they work or why they are good. Clare thinks that because I don't clear sense of how my stuff effects an audience (citing my miscalculation of showing the film to my family), that I don't have much chance of reaching an audience. She's always harping at me that I can't explain what my stuff is about.

I'm also worried that Steve is burned out after putting so much time into the movie without it being finished.

I really appreciate you putting so much time and thought into this. I hope there is some way I can reciprocate.

Regarding, BE MY BABY, I think I understand what your saying, but am unclear what you think I need to do to rewrite the script.

I already asked, but don't think you replied -- what do you think about Campbell Scott as Alan? Mark Ruffalo's agent is supposedly reading the script, but you never know.

Anyway, I've got a cold and feel foggy brained today, and am certainly dreading the prospect of moving to England for a year in 2007.

Gary

DAN:

> I get what you're saying about the opening credits -- they were in reaction to early screenings when viewers didn't realize that it was a comedy until very late if ever.

I didn't know that. For this film, though, I wonder why people have to realize that it's a comedy - it doesn't seem as if you need audience laughter.

> I thought it helped make the film more
> accessible -- maybe it's wimping out. Certainly your comments make me
> feel ambivalent about it. this morning.

It's not a huge deal. I can live with it.

> Even for relatively
> sophisticated viewers, I get some confusion regarding the opening
> "spaceship" scene, even with the title sequence.

I mean, obviously it's confusing for a while. Do people not get that it was a story Richard was writing?

> I know I'd get a lot of resistance from Steve to taking it out, and I
> would worry that it would make the film harder to sell.

Really? If it makes the film harder to sell to take it out, then I wouldn't worry about it too much. I was just being a purist.

> (Peter Newman, who produced The Squid and the Whale (which won best director and best script at last year's Sundance) just saw the film and
> was utterly baffled that Sundance didn't accept it. He thought the film
> had a strong chance at theatrical distribution and is ineterested in
> working as a sales agent for the film -- got this in an email today.)

Cool!

> Alain really didn't like the music under the writing scene ("the
> susurruration of cotton sock on shag") although he thought it was okay
> during the sequence in J's room, and the very end of the sequence when J
> dissolves away as she leaves.

I didn't have that reaction, but, again, to me that's not a matter of life and death one way or another.

> It's sort of depressing to think that we've made the film worse.

I'm not sure of that. I didn't catalog the things that worked for me - maybe some of the good things were created with the later changes.

> I certainly feel chastened that your analytical powers are so much
> greater than my own.

I haven't been sweating over the film for a year - it makes sense that I

would be fresher. Of course, that doesn't mean that you have to listen to me, either, if you disagree.

> Clare thinks that because I don't clear sense of how my stuff effects an
> audience (citing my miscalculation of showing the film to my family),
> that I don't have much chance of reaching an audience. She's always
> harping at me that I can't explain what my stuff is about.

I'm no expert at reaching audiences. But you just made a really good film
- I don't think it's impossible at all that you can reach an audience with it.

If you can't explain what your film is about, you certainly wouldn't be the first good filmmaker to be in that position.

> I really appreciate you putting so much time and thought into this. I
> hpe there is some way I can reciprocate.

No need. I hope it's helpful, and not just a source of more confusion.

> Regarding, BE MY BABY, I think I understand what your saying, but am
> unclear what you think I need to do to rewrite the script.

Well, I wasn't explicit - I suggested changes, but didn't come up with the changes. Remind me to send you my notes when you get back - or do you want them now? I got pretty far into the script, but didn't finish.

> I already asked, but don't think you replied -- what do you think about
> Campbell Scott as Alan? Mark Ruffalo's agent is supposedly reading the
> script, but you never know.

I thought I replied - I think he'd be good. Ruffalo doesn't seem as good for that role, somehow.

I was very appreciative of the fact that Campbell and Lizzy were so excellent. It's a break to get such good actors. After what I think is a rough start, Isabelle does well enough - she doesn't seem outmatched when she's together with Lizzy.

> am certainly dreading the prospect of moving to England for a year in
> 2007.

I didn't know about that.... - Dan

2006

1.3.06

GW TO DAN RE.EDITING NOTES (finally printed them out and read them in detail):

First day back at the office -- printed out your notes -- I've got a few questions. The plan is to watch the 8/17 cut with Steve today, and then to watch the 12/8 "final" cut tomorrow.

You thought the "Tiki introduction" shot was very short -- did you mean the exterior?

re. "The first cut in giving J literary advice" (the shot over Campbell's shoulder in which he is doing some VO which ends when he looks up at Lizzy) -- did you think the gap between the VO ending and Lizzy speaking was too brief?

re. the pool/advice to K scene. There used to be praise at the very head of the scene -- I don't think it was contiguous with the "Let's just say I like to watch you walk." Do you think there is benefit in putting this dial back at the head of the scene to help to set up this exchange that follows a bit later?

re. the scene where they read the magazine in bed together -- there is a post-coital music cue that runs through that

scene and several others. I object to it on aesthetic grounds -- that my having a piece of music that bridges several scenes that are supposed to take place over a period of time, the sense of time passage is homogenized. Did that music cue work for you? Do you think I am being too theoretical.

As an aside, I think you are much better at being theoretical than I am. (Such as by expounding on the theory that the whole first section of the film is too conventional). I worry that when I get theoretical then the theories start to hobble whatever instinctive grasp I might have of the matter at hand.

Haven't gone through your BMB notes yet. A bit distracted by the latest bout of tension with Clare. A bit haunted by your most reasonable caution that at some point there will be a big loss.

I re-read the BMB script on the plane and had these thoughts:

--start the movie with him playing "Malaguena" post-coitally for J? This would set up how his use of guitar is reconfigured later (such as the birth scene).

--What if I cut the "Louise only" scenes from the script and made it strictly from Alan's POV? I could take the early scene of Louise "cool-hunting" and perhaps make it a scene that Alan is there to co-experience (if we need to see an example of her work).

One of the by-products of this is that we would lose a sense of Louise's friends as a force against Alan. Without a rewrite, the first appearance of L's friends would be near the end, when Alan is fixing up L's house and the friends are there.

--Cut the make-up girl flirting with him in Oprah's green room? Is it too sinnerish/babe magnetic to (cumulatively) have so many girl's being flirtatious with him?

--GENERAL: how to reveal that he was shy earlier in life? Do excerpts of THE MASTER DEBATER novel do this? Should he tell Louise about his shyness sometime late in the story (such as the scene at Peet's when he says she needs to respect him) or is that too on the money?

--Is the woman flirting wioth him at Home Depot too much?
(ala the flirting in Oprah's green room)

--I would keep the receptionist flirting (when Alan drives Louise to a meeting).

--When Alan looks inthe mirror prior to going over to Louise's (she has called him in the middle of the night to come over). Add a flash cut to Ben? Or is that too literal?

--Cynthia, another conquest, at the LaMaze class -- too much?

But I guess th BIG Question is this -- do you think this project has the same potential as CRASHING?

I've been thinking of trying to write it as a novel, putting it in the form of a journal.

I'm kind of scared of making another film and not having it come out so well. In many ways CRASHING feels lucky and that luck might not be so easy to duplicate again (so quickly).

Stephen Gyllenhaal loves the script and would like me to let him direct it. It would feel a bit weird to have someone else direct a version of my life. But on the other hand...

I'm back to working on the Laurel Canyon novel after the hiatus to write the Janis script. I reallt like writing novels. When I get depressed I tell myself that not many people can make movies and write novels well (guess it's okay to display some ego in these emails).

As always, thanks,
Gary

FROM DAN:

Gary - I haven't got the notes with me, but I'll answer as best I can.

> You thought the "Tiki introduction" shot was very short -
- did you mean the
> exterior?

Yes, that's what I meant.

> re. "The first cut in giving J literary advice" (the
 shot over
 > Campbell's shoulder in which he is doing some VO which
 ends when he
 > looks up at Lizzy) -- did you think the gap between the
 VO ending and
 > Lizzy speaking was too brief?

I'm afraid I need to check my notes on this....

> re. the pool/advice to K scene. There used to be praise
 at the very
 > head of the scene -- I don't think it was contiguous with
 the "Let's
 > just say I like to watch you walk." Do you think there
 is benefit in
 > putting this dial back at the head of the scene to help
 to set up this
 > exchange that follows a bit later?

Yes, that's what I was hoping for. Currently the line
 seems to come out
 of nowhere.

> re. the scene where they read the magazine in bed
 together -- there is a
 > post-coital music cue that runs through that scene and
 several others.
 > I object to it on aesthetic grounds -- that my having a
 piece of music
 > that bridges several scenes that are supposed to take
 place over a
 > period of time, the sense of time passage is homogenized.
 Did that
 > music cue work for you? Do you think I am being too
 theoretical.

I didn't mind it. The music gives it a different feeling,
 but not a bad
 feeling. I'm not sure which way I prefer - either way will
 be good.

> A bit haunted by your most reasonable caution that at
 some point there
 > will be a big loss.

I don't mean to be a Cassandra. Who knows what will happen?

> I re-read the BMB script on the plane and had these thoughts:

I'm way too stale to comment, I'm afraid - I would need to re-read.

> --What if I cut the "Louise only" scenes from the script and made it

> strictly from Alan's POV?

Why? You lose lots of the best scenes this way. And Alan's viewpoint is kind of mysterious, not always easy to identify with. That's fine, but it might cause problems if you go first-person.

> One of the py-products of this is that we would lose a sense of Louise's

> friends as a force against Alan.

Those scenes are good, too.

> --Cut the make-up girl flirting with him in Oprah's green room? Is it

> too sinerosh/babe magentic to (cumulatively) have so many girl's being

> flirtatious with him?

I don't know. Will Alan be extremely good looking? Will his on-screen behavior with women be unusually effective?

If you cast someone like Campbell, you can probably get away with a fair amount of this. People know that a movie star is playing a role, and will accept the attention more readily, I think.

> But I guess th BIG Question is this -- do you think this project has the

> same potential as CRASHING?

Hard to say. I thought there was a lot of good dialogue, but the totality

doesn't come together for me in the same way. This project will always be quieter than CRASHING, not as compelling from a story point of view.

I guess I would need some resolution to my big problem (Alan's seeming to be two different people at different points in the script) before I could answer.

> I'm kind of scared of making another film and not having it come out so well.

Boy, that can be paralyzing. I think you should just go forward and try not to worry about that. The script certainly is good enough to justify working on it.

> (guess it's okay to display some ego in these emails).

It's okay with me! I wouldn't know where to begin writing a novel. Sometimes I think I'd like to try short fiction, though. - Dan

Watched the 8/17 cut today. Will watch the 12/8 cut tomorrow.

One new point that did come up -- in the 8/17 version in the Final Confrontation scene, K hugs R at the end. This hug makes for a cleaner more decisive edit of J staring at R to start the "fantasy" scene. I eliminated the hug because it didn't feel right that K (particularly as that character now comes across) would be so quickly forgiving. But I am sorely tempted to put it back in for how it helps the story flow.

In general, I think the later cut of the film is much better. More tomorrow.

re. BMB--

DAN: I guess I would need some resolution to my big problem (Alan's seeming to

be two different people at different points in the script) before I could answer.

As I see it, when his writing career plummets he is thrown into a crisis that makes Louise's offer tempting. I intended that to be the parallel of the crisis I was in after the utter failure of BEAT, which is when the Clare thing came along. Of course I have radically simplified the ambivalence of my situation with Kathy. But I remember feeling very incomplete, as if I was destined live an unfulfilled unchanging life at the Tiki. Something like that. As always with my work, it's very hard for me to see certain things. The blind spots of even semi-autobiography.

Gary

Gary - took a look at the film at home.

> re. "The first cut in giving J literary advice" (the shot over Campbell's
> shoulder in which he is doing some VO which ends when he looks up at Lizzy) --
> did you think the gap between the VO ending and Lizzy speaking was too brief?

No, the gap is fine. Actually, the timing of everything would be fine, but I think there's too much removed from the action of Lizzy sitting down, so that her movement across the cut seems jumpy. I guess it's not a big deal, but it jolts me momentarily.

> re. the scene where they read the magazine in bed together -- there is a
> post-coital music cue that runs through that scene and several others.
> I object to it on aesthetic grounds -- that my having a piece of music
> that bridges several scenes that are supposed to take place over a

> period of time, the sense of time passage is homogenized.
 Did that
 > music cue work for you? Do you think I am being too
 theoretical.

The thing is that the music is really good.... I don't
 mind the effect at
 all, but I can relate to your objection, and I think the
 silent approach
 will be fine too.

- Dan

TO DAN:

Thanks for checking that out -- just sent you an email
 before I read yours (I do "automatic AOL" -- it sends and
 retrieves with minimal web time).

I'll be able to check out the rest of your notes tomorrow.
 A number of them can't be done because we don't have the
 footage, etc.

Out of today's session, among other things: we will try to
 restore a beat on Richard after he is asked "Do you still
 get stoned?" There's nothing extra to add to the head of
 the actual "getting stoned" scene.

We will try to restore a good chunk (but probably not all)
 of the medium shot in the scene that precedes the subtext
 scene.

Final Confrontation: Try to add back "If you're aware of a
 flaw cvan't you correct it..I can try" Also, maybe the hug
 as I previously queried you. In addition, will take a close
 look at all of the editorial points that you raised about
 that scene.

regarding MYX cues I did have an additonal question. In
 Richard's fantasy at the end, originally I had the MX cue
 start when the camera started moving (after R had popped
 out of existence) -- Ernest has scored it to start quite a
 bit sooner. I wondered how you felt about that.

As I recall, the music cue that runs through the wirintg
 scene didn't bother you. Is that so? I bring it up
 because it was the only thing that bothered Alain about the

12/8 cut. He didn't think there should be anyh music under the VO line "the quiet susurraton of cotton sock on shag". He thought MX was okay for R speculating about J in her room and also for the end of the sequence when she fades out of existence as she walks away, but he didn't like it under the VO that forms the meat of the scene. He thought it fought against the dense VO, weould make it hard for viewers to get the full impact. He thinks the sequence is extremely strong and that it does not need music.

In general, Alain thinks that because all the various character/sympathy issues have been worked out (he was critical of Campbell not being sympathetic in the early scenes in the first cuts we did) that any additional editing changes will have negligible impact on the film.

Gary

1.4.06

JAY A. RE. THE FILM:

Too much of a puzzle

Overly articulate

Glib

He hides behind humor

GW: "That sounds like me"

> One new point that did come up -- in the 8/17 version in the Final
 > Confrontation scene, K hugs R at the end. This hug makes for a cleaner
 > more decisive edit of J staring at R to start the "fantasy" scene. I
 > eliminated the hug because it didn't feel right that K (particularly as
 > that character now comes across) would be so quickly forgiving. But I
 > am sorely tempted to put it back in for how it helps the story flow.

I can't remember how I felt about this part of the Aug cut. I do remember that I completely liked the way you handled it in the Dec cut. I was always an advocate of the hug in the script stage, but when I saw the way

you handled the transition to the fantasy, I didn't miss it at all.

> As I see it, when his writing career plummets he is thrown into a crisis
> that makes Louise's offer tempting.

This comes across, and makes sense. I wasn't referring to his desire to marry; what I think is odd is that he turns into a guy with a long relationship in his past and not that many affairs after all, whereas in the beginning he was plausibly a guy who had never had, perhaps could never have had, a long relationship, and who was seemingly having lots of affairs. - Dan

> Out of today's session, among other things: we will try to restore a
> beat on Richard after he is asked "Do you still get stoned?" There's
> nothing extra to add to the head of the actual "getting stoned" scene.

Can't remember this cut, I'm afraid.

> Final Confrontation: Try to add back "If you're aware of a flaw cvan't
> you correct it..I can try" Also, maybe the hug as I previously queried
> you. In addtion, will take a close look at all of the editorial points
> that you raised about that scene.

As I mentioned, I think that scene ended beautifully in the Dec cut.

> regarding MYX cues I did have an additonal question. In Richard's
> fantasy at the end, originally I had the MX cue start when the camera

> started moving (after R had popped out of existence) -- Ernest has
 > scored it to start quite a bit sooner. I wondered how you felt about
 > that.

I think I liked the earlier cue.

GW TO DAN:

In a message dated 1/4/06 3:57:35 AM, sallitt@panix.com writes:

<< always an advocate of the hug in the script stage, but when I saw the way you handled the transition to the fantasy, I didn't miss it at all. >>

I thought you were suggesting trying to take out the first CU of J that starts the fantasy scene. Maybe I am mistaken.

Your point is taken about trusted advisors disagreeing.

> As I recall, the music cue that runs through the wiring scene didn't
 > bother you. Is that so? I bring it up because it was the only thing
 > that bothered Alain about the 12/8 cut. He didn't think there should be
 > anyh music under the VO line "the quiet susurration of cotton sock on
 > shag".

I thought it was fine, but I also think it will work without it.

> He thinks the sequence is extremely strong

That's true.

> In general, Alain thinks that because all the various character/sympathy
 > issues have been worked out (he was critical of Campbell not being

> sympathetic in the early scenes in the first cuts we did)
 that any
 > additional editing changes will have negligible impact on
 the film.

Sympathy seems to be Alain's usual concern, whereas it
 doesn't always
 concern me. There's a moral to this situation: don't trust
 us if your
 instincts go the other way. Even your trusted advisors are
 disagreeing,
 so you have no choice but to take everything we say with a
 grain of salt.
 (Sounds as if Alain's concerns for sympathy in the first
 part went against
 my concerns for gradual development and rhythm.)

Whatever happens, the film should be good. - Dan

In a message dated 1/4/06 3:57:35 AM, sallitt@panix.com
 writes:

<< always an advocate of the hug in the script stage, but
 when I saw the way
 you handled the transition to the fantasy, I didn't miss it
 at all. >>

I thought you were suggesting trying to take out the first
 CU of J that starts the fantasy scene. Maybe I am
 mistaken.

Your point is taken about trusted advisors disagreeing.

TO DAN:

Screened the 12.8.05 today. A number of the things you
 suggested, would like longer, we just can't d -- there is
 no extra footage. Some other things we'll experiment with
 tweaking.

The only sig. thing that did come up was eliminating the VO
 "And what was Richard doing except critiquing himself in
 such a way that propelled his self-image in a way that he
 could live with?" This comes just before Lizzy sits at the

table and asks him what he thinks of her story. It seems pretty expendable, at least today, and will create a nice pocket of silence as J watches him write, before she speaks and sits down. What do you think?

TO STEVE, AFTER WATCHING 8.17.05 & 12.8.05 CUTS:

1.4.06 Editing Notes

IN GENERAL:

I was heartened watching the 12.8 cut, except for cringing a bit in the classroom/courtyard where in general you've done a masterful job of massaging the footage.

Many of the following notes are things to consider, to look at.

MALIBU

[Ernest has a music cue that -- R's theme -- that works for both the garage door and as a transition after the phone call from Malibu to into the classroom. I told him that with MX we will probably change the timing so the phone call does not prelap.]

CLASSROOM

--Try using long continuous shot up the aisle?

--approx 7:00 -- too cutty (from behind to front, etc). You said this was to eliminate head turn to suitcase. (BTW I could easily shoot a POV of the suitcase if you want to try that). If so, put the head turn back in if it makes this section smoother.

COURTYARD

Examine 4-way conversation and R/D conversation that follows to see if it can be less back and forth.

In the 4-way, can any of the shots be held longer rather than just cutting from side to side on dial lines?

With R/D alone can we use any more of the 2-shot (rather than just overs)?

I don't know if this will just make things worse, but let's take a look.

[The "Richard's theme" cue works pretty well starting when he says "yes" to the girl's invitation. It felt pretty natural to me and the music lightly underscored the whimsical nature of his decision. If you agree that it works, it can carry through into the Tiki. This music could help quite a bit.]

TIKI

--lengthen establishing shot

STONED SCENE

Any way of making the first shot of the girl's smoking any longer?

BATHROOM SCENE

Start with shampoo rather than towels? (you'll probably say no)

R WAKES UP FIRST MORNING

--First shot of K (R's POV) -- I know we can't lengthen the tail, but what about the head to give the shot a little more duration (or are we locked into the tilt down). Are we using the take that gives us the most screen time?
--lose dial: (keys) **to your apartment**

R TRIES TO GET ON K's COMPUTER

--the first password invalid CU is pretty shaky. Less bouncy take? I wish this one wasn't handheld.

Add a few frames to the TTWD book insert?

--when he reads her letters try adding back K VO "he's a jejune writer". I'd at least like to give it a listen. Even without extending VO, can the insert stay on the screen a little longer?

"I HAVE NO MONEY" SCENE

--cut points awkward as we discussed (and as per DS notes). First cut comes too soon (he soon there after looks away from camera.) Sort of the same problem with the second cut. I know you plan to look at this scene again.

WRITING SCENE/J RETURNS TO TABLE

"I didn't mean to interrupt" -- any footage (probably not) to start her in motion to sit down.

PRE-SUBTEXT SCENE

Use the wider what a bit more? Cut back to it on (get my money back "such as it isd"? Don't start CU's with K's close-up (cf. DS note)?

BOWLING ALLEY

Add to tail of shot of Barton

AFTER HE READS K'S POEM

Add a few frames after "fucked up can resonate"

HEART-SHAPED BOX

A few frames at tail? Don't think that will help but...

TTWD DISCUSSION

Any extra frames of Cu-R reacting to "I've considered writing legal novels"?

FINAL CONFRONTATION

DS notes?

Give his notes a read -- his most substantial ones are for this scene. Are any of them do-able?

Add back "If you're aware of a flaw can't you correct it?"
"You can try."???

J'S FANTASY

I asked Ernest to extend MX cue. A while back I believe you said you had some idea you wanted to try.

1.7.06

FROM DAN:

> Steve really wants to cut from the last VO "the painful question of a lost
> love -- or two?" He thinks it's unearned, over stated regarding his relation
> with the girls. Do you?

No, I like that line. I like something big like that at the end,

especially as it's thrown away quickly.

> In the Final Confrontaion I'm going to try and restore
the opening dial "How
> did you know my sister's name was Kelly? etc.

I think that would be good.

> Also, the exchange "If you're
> aware of a flaw can't you correct it." & "You can try."

I can't remember exactly how this section worked at the
moment, so I can't
comment. - Dan

GW TO DAN:

Thanks for the advice.

What did you think about cutting the VO "And what was
Richard doing except critiquing himself in such a way that
propelled his self-image in a way that he could live with?"
This comes just before Lizzy sits at the table and asks him
what he thinks of her story. Cutting it would give a
pocket of silence of Lizzy watching Richard before she asks
him about her story.

Gary

DAN TO GW:> What did you think about cutting the VO "And
what was Richard doing
> except critiquing himself in such a way that propelled
his self-image in
> a way that he could live with?" This comes just before
Lizzy sits at
> the table and asks him what he thinks of her story.
Cutting it would
> give a pocket of silence of Lizzy watching Richard before
she asks him
> about her story.

I think the silence is long enough as is. And, if you cut
that line,
Richard's monologue ends with the reference to Jacqueline
Susann, which
isn't as good a place to stop. I say leave it in.

I revisited the end, and I can't picture that last monologue without the "lost love...or two" part. That's the payoff line. I think the speech will seem weak if you remove it. - Dan

GW TO DAN:

In a message dated 1/7/06 4:47:23 PM, sallitt@panix.com writes:

<< > What did you think about cutting the VO "And what was Richard doing
> except critiquing himself in such a way that propelled his self-image in
> a way that he could live with?" This comes just before Lizzy sits at
> the table and asks him what he thinks of her story. Cutting it would
> give a pocket of silence of Lizzy watching Richard before she asks him
> about her story.

I think the silence is long enough as is. And, if you cut that line, Richard's monologue ends with the reference to Jacqueline Susann, which isn't as good a place to stop. I say leave it in. >>

Actually the VO that comes before is: "She has definite talent as a writer. A voice. Subject matter. Theme. Not completely aware of what she is doing -- but who is? And why is self-awareness necessarily a defining quality?" NOT the Jaqueline Susann stuff.

Were you thinking of the same place? This piece of VO leads virtually all the way up to Lizzy's line "So what did you think"

Regarding "a lost love or two" Steve hates that line which is the origin of the proposed cut. Thanks for being a voice to stay the course here at the (relative) end of the course. Steve argues that, particulaly given the non-hug

ending, to call it love is overstated. I understand his point, but there would be such a gap if that line goes away. I would also invoke Steve's argument for other points -- it's not going to really stick or stick out for someone seeing the film for the first (or even the second) time.

Gary

2.1.06

DAN:

I do like a lot of the music in the film, but I bet you can also take a lot of it out without hurting anything. The only music that I minded at all was the more overtly comic music (like the cha-cha stuff under some of the literary scenes), and even that didn't really bother me. - Dan

We added some music to the phone call in Malibu and also the courtyard scene, that was basically what I call "Richard's theme" -- which is the music you heard in the major writing sequence and also in K's seduction of Richard.

Alain has a big objection to the music -- he thinks that it gets in the way of the writing sequence which he considers the core of the film.

He also think that it romanticizes K's seduction of Richard, and as such inapprropriately colors the scene. My initial impulse behind putting MX here was to have it for the POV shot of K on top of R. The current thought is to just pererve this snippet.

Of the cues you heard, he also didn't like the music for R's final fiction continuing after he stops writing and starts walking into the bedroom (it currently carries through to R getting into bed with Diane).

So it's mostly an issue of a taking a lot of the music out. I'm ambivalent and uncertain (so what else is new?). Seems like the only time I'm not ambivalent and uncedrtain is when I'm on the set and know that I have to make

irreversible decisions quickly or else. Mostly I want to keep from fucking up the film.

Gary

2.10.06

Dan--

In your 12.24.06 Editing notes you mentioned that you liked the music for the sex scene between Kristin and Richard. This cue begins as the TTWD discussion wraps up and Richard is alone on the couch, and continues through as they go into the bedroom and have sex.

Alain has objected that the cue romanticizes the scene -- he thinks that it particularly undercuts Richard's VO when they are in Kristin's room "there was a danger that it could ruin everything"

For now, I've tried it in very shortened form, as a piece of transitional music that bridges from the TTWD discussion to when Kristin comes in and sits down on the couch.

But another option would be trying to make the music more neutral (less whimsical) during Richard's VO.

For Richard's "fiction" at the end of the movie, I've shortened the cue. It starts after the girls and Richard pop out of existence, and carries through to him writing in Diane's house. In the new version the cue ends as Richard finishes writing -- so there is no music as he walks down the hall. But, as before, the music resumes when after Richard has talked to Diane and moves to cross out "on the couch" from his legal pad.

As always, eager to hear your thoughts.

Gary

5.23.06

EMAIL TO STEVE:

I did some more listening...

Malibu Seagulls -- I do think ther could be more squalking without interferring with the narr. Certainly there are holes after "talk" and "book". At the very least the volume can be raised on the squalk at the end of the scene.

What I would try is a couple of faint squawks and then a big one as a button on the scene (a trio). There are some clean seagull sualks in the art courtyard scene. If you don't want to fool around with this now, fine, don't.

Art Courtyard -- Should we try one of the new cues for the transition to the Tiki? This isa vestiginal piece. Just a thought.

Getting Stoned/Prelap -- Pardon my faulty memory. It's probably fine. But I do wonder if it would be funnier to have Richard's quizzical look to play under silence and then hit hard with the music on the cut.

Bathroom scene -- I see your point. But I wonder if the peeing could be moved up just a little bit, so that the peeing starts as he looks down, pewrhaps a few frames before.

MX Cue -- transition from TTWD discussion to seduction. Music cue should go out (or be out) when Richard says "hi."

7.16.06

Last veiwings, last tweakings.

Notice how distratced I can get even now with the production design, noticing the props, especially those with a personal historical significance.

Can see now how the fussy pen (J) and the pink top with the plunging neckline (K) can be off-putting.

When I ask Steve about pewrhaps removing a couploe of rames from a shot he says, "It's like we've made a pot of stew for an army of a thousand and you're asking if we add a pinch of salt, will that change anything.

Maija says she knows why there have been festivalk rrejections "Imagine an intern watching this...someone who's studies feminist theory, they're going to be put off by the clichéd situation, even though it's not that." I also can have feed her answer about how it is a middle-aged film.

I can feel the truculence in myself at saying, hey, see the irony of it or you are an idiot. But the truculence is in part being bound to an earlier sensibility, a dated

quality, that dooms me (to pick the most doom-laden word) to a certain mode of expression. Sexcual outrageousness has is bounded by codes of "acceptable" presen=tation, and good luck if you fall outside of the norm as it exists circa now. Dinocaus have trouble surviving.

Can I get to the bottom of why my films don't go over and still be myself, still do what I like to do?

8.7.06

EMAIL TO CAMPBELL:

Campbell--

This missive is long overdue. The family thing has been pretty crazy, something you're no stranger to, and my basic correspondence has suffered (as have many non-family things). I'm in England right now, in the midst of Clare's family. I'll return to Santa Monica the last week of August.

Pardon my less than up to the minute sense of show business, but congratulations on your TV Series.

Regarding CRASHING, I've delayed sending you a DVD of the film only because I wanted the sound work to be done. Not that there is a massive amount to do -- it's going to be a pretty sparse soundtrack, and the production tracks that Ron Judkins recorded are superb. The problems are in the 2 days that we did before Ron joined the troupe.

For a number of months I had trouble finding someone to do the post-sound on our non-budget. I have now found a great young sound designer and that last element is finally moving ahead.

That said, the final soundwork and color correction probably constitute 1% of the ultimate content of the film, and I'm more than glad to send you a DVD whenever you like.

I feel utterly lucky and blessed that you made the great effort to be in the film. I've tried to do everything in my power to honor your work by completing it on the highest possible level, to try and fully realize the impulse with which we undertook the work.

I cringe at some of the mis-steps that I took during that intense six days shoot -- such as looking at my watch, but

I felt such pressure to get the film shot from Monday to Saturday. I didn't share this with you at the time, but I was still a bit whacked-out and sleep-deprived from the surgery to remove the kidney stones the week before. And after we wrapped Saturday night, Sunday morning at dawn Clare announced that she wanted me to move out of the house and back to the Tiki. That didn't happen, and I mention it now only to give some emotional context to the adventure of making our micro-budget movie.

On other fronts, I have written a screenplay based quite directly on my backwards path into fatherhood (the tale I told you when we had lunch in Philly, fuck, almost two years ago). It is only slightly fictionalized, in that I made the "hero" a writer rather than a filmmaker (just don't have the stomach to make an insider film about a filmmaker).

Hope all is well with you and Malcolm. I look forward to meeting him someday.

All the best,
Gary

10.23.06
Geoff--

I have resubmitted CRASHING for Sundance 2007. Significant work has been done on the film since last year's submission.

In 1987 THE TROUBLE WITH DICK won the Grand Prize. I made the film for \$200,000, which at the time was a very small budget for a 35mm feature with SAG actors.

CRASHING, which revisits the themes and situations of THE TROUBLE WITH DICK, was made on DV for \$7500. So, 20 years later I was able to make this "sequel" for 1/25th the cost of the original film. If you select CRASHING, it might provide an interesting case study for the festival regarding the continuities and differences in filmmaking from 1987 to 2007.

Thanks again for your consideration.

All the best,
Gary Walkow

1.11.06

Hi Gary,

I thought you might get a kick out of this email I got about the "Crashing" trailer. I'm going to try and make the screening on Monday. Louise might come, but my agent can't make it because of the Golden Globes.

Best,

Ernest

Here's the email.

<<Hi Ernest!

Very cool about the movie! Congrats! I just saw the trailer and it looks very engaging and I loved the music I heard.

It reminds me of something that happened to me. A couple of years after college, I was out late with a group of people (don't worry, this doesn't get weird) and we decided to go to a friend's apartment because she had a pool in her apartment complex. It was summertime. It was late. We were young. We got to her apartment and she let us in. There are 2 people sleeping on the pull-out sofa in her living room (it was probably around midnight by now). We made such a disturbance that they sat up in bed. One of the people was my college psychology professor. He was old enough to be my father. He was married to someone else at the time. Awkward. He said, "Hi Beth. How are you? What are you doing now?" I remember wondering how he could make chit chat.

I know that's nothing like the script of the movie but watching the trailer sent me back to that moment. I hadn't thought of it in years.

If the movie shows in LA, please let us know!

Beth>>

9.13.07

Dear Gary and Joe,

I've just finished watching Crashing, and I am making a difficult decision to not program it at Black Bear.

This is more of a curatorial decision than a programming one. *Crashing* is very interesting and works on many more levels than most films. Though Campbell is a big name, his presence at a screening is not important at all. I'm sure anyone who sees *Crashing* would be fascinated to meet the writer/director, and to ask him questions. My problem is that this is a 12 film festival (including 5 documentaries), 7 of which take place on Saturday. Given the context, and the available time (noon-ish), programming *Crashing* at Black Bear right now is like pounding a square peg into a round hole.

I'm sure Joe thinks I underestimate the willingness of the Milford audience to go a little off the beaten track. But no matter how you describe it, *Crashing* sounds racier than it really is. It is a thought provoking study of creative inspiration, and a unique one. As a programmer of festival films and so called "specialized" films, I have no doubt that this film will leave some people scratching their heads, others needing to talk about it immediately, and a few pissed off about middle aged guys in relationships with girls half their age. In other words, a good festival film. I wouldn't underestimate the resistance to the subject matter among the middle aged, middle class, middle American audience (a good part of Black Bear), but I do believe if presented properly it can be well received. I can't present it properly at this late hour.

I'm not sure, if I had seen this film six weeks ago, how I might have positioned it or ultimately if I would have succeeded. But now, 12 days past my programming deadline, with no wiggle room and a schedule I'll be submitting in a few hours, I can't make this work properly for the film or the festival. If we had another screen, this would be on it.

Joe, thank you for giving this a try.

Gary, under better circumstances I would have loved to show this. I'd have loved conducting a Q&A. This is a

what independent filmmaking is supposed to be, and what we complain it has moved far away from. Please contact me if you have any questions at all.

Sincerely,

Matthew Seig
Black Bear Film Festival
mwseig@verizon.net
914-260-9568

Matthew--

Thank you for your thoughtful and articulate email. I think it summarizes quite well some of the difficulty the film has had in getting proper exposure and distribution. Even with 20-20 hindsight I probably would have gone ahead and made the film that I did, but I am quite dispirited with the world of "independent" filmmaking that I have trapped myself in.

All the best,
Gary

I suspect you would have made the same film. It feels true and perfectly realized, and that makes it exciting. By "feels true" I mean true to you, like you knew exactly what you wanted. I'm sorry to hear that getting exposure has been difficult, and I hate being part of that. It is a dispiriting culture, and our corner of it has been, I would say, in a crisis for years.

best regards,
Matthew

Gary, what you describe here is exactly what is impressive about Crashing.

--- Gary Walkow <gary@garywalkow.com> wrote: