

Script / Conference

Minimum Basic Agreement

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Forewarned

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Who are the speakers in these exchanges? How many are there? Which speaker says what? Such are the first questions anyone contemplating production of this script (if script it be) is likely to have.

Nor is it unreasonable to suppose the playwright capable of supplying some guidance in these matters, since what, after all, is playwriting, as a general thing, but the supplying of guidance in these matters?

I am afraid, however, that in the present instance no such guidance will be forthcoming. If I knew *who speaks, how many speak, which speaker says what*, I cannot think why I should have hesitated to share this information with those most in need of it, *i.e.*, to have written a script of the usual sort. The present script (if script it be) represents what I have felt able to offer in the absence of such information.

But how did such information ever come to be lacking?

It is natural for a reader of these pages to fancy him- or herself in the position of one who overhears a conversation on the other side of a wall and imagines that, but for this interposed barrier, the number and identity of the speakers would be plain enough. It is no less natural to assume that the author himself has had access to events on the other side of that wall—has, indeed, transcribed those very events in his script—and might easily enough have passed the details along but chose instead, for some unfathomable reason, to withhold them.

Such, however, is far from being an accurate description of how—or rather, of *when*—this text was composed. For all that is most puzzling about *Script / Conference* comes of its being written not in a different manner but *at a different moment* from most scripts.

There is perhaps a stage in the evolution of any dramatic text when its author's clashing impulses—to accrete, to qualify, to counter, to emend, etc.—have not as yet become associated with a set of clashing characters, a stage when “the play” is as yet mere crossplay.

It is this moment in the writing process that I have sought, for once, to get down on paper. It is the transcript of this crossplay that I set before you as the script.

Thus, despite appearances there is “nothing missing” from the pages in your hand—or at least, nothing that ever had a chance of being present. The specifics you would like to know from me—who or how many say what to whom—I myself never knew, nor could have known, since I wrote the text at a time when these questions were still in play—wrote, indeed, the very play of these questions.

And how is one to put onstage the writing of a moment when writing could not as yet supply the necessities of the stage?

I invite you to imagine two very different productions of *Script / Conference*.

In Production **A**, the text is assumed to be that of a conventional playscript which, though at first glance seeming to lack most of the details usually found in such texts, does in fact contain and will at length disclose them to anyone willing to tease out a few implications.

So, for example, *no action* is specified—but presumably the action is a series of “story meetings,” over the course of which a movie about a painter who loans his pictures for use in a movie is plotted out.

There is *no setting*—but, since such meetings usually take place in the conference rooms of studios or production companies, one might plausibly stage the script on a set representing such a room.

There are *no characters*—but the tone or drift of the unassigned remarks often as not implies a certain type of speaker. For example, the story-synopses with which (most of) the sessions open are presumably read back by a secretary. The frequent interjections preceded by “Rule One!” sound like the wisdom of an industry insider. The many allusions, in and out of season, to auto racing signal the presence of a stockcar enthusiast in the group. The formulaic “And on that note” which concludes each session

is most likely uttered by some sort of chairman-figure. And the comments of the single voice that speaks (most of) SESSION [6], bearing as they seem to do on the evolution of a painting-in-progress, may safely be assigned to the picture-lending painter himself.*
Etc.

A production that made all the foregoing (perfectly reasonable) assumptions would presumably have as its stage action a series of production meetings, set in a conference room, over the course of which a group of recognizable Hollywood types rough out the screenplay for a movie about a painter, who at one point (SESSION [6]) himself appears “in front of the curtain” to assess the emerging work.

Now imagine another, quite different staging of this script—Production **B**—with a course of action somewhat as follows:

A stagehand carries on, disposes about the stage, interconnects, tests, dismantles, and eventually carries off, the components of an elaborate audio hookup.

As the stagehand labors to set up and take down this sound system, the words of *Script / Conference* (read by several voices? a single voice?) are heard coming over it. The phases in the assembly, testing and dismantling of the audio equipment are correlated with the phases of the read text somewhat as follows:

*Of course, these reflections might equally well be heard as those of the author of such a text as *Script / Conference* upon *his* evolving work.

During SESSIONS [1]—[5]:	The audio components are brought out and interconnected by the stagehand.
During SESSION [6]:	The stagehand fine-tunes the system he has just installed.
During SESSIONS [7]—[8]:	The stagehand disconnects and carries offstage the components of the sound system.

The question is: of these two hypothetical stagings, **A** and **B**, which should be viewed as more faithful to the text it stages?

Production **A**, while based on a whole string of plausible inferences from the script, nevertheless seems to represent a fundamental misunderstanding of it. For such a production appears determined to regard the script as providing information which it not only does not provide but, so to speak, *sets its face against* providing.

No such criticism can be leveled at Production **B**, which, far from assuming any particular course of stage action to be mandated by the script, simply goes ahead and invents one. It thus steers clear of founding itself on a misapprehension of the script by declining to found itself on the script at all. (Of what play could Production **B** *not* be a possible staging?) If there is everything about this text to discourage such an approach as Production **A**, there is nothing about it to encourage such an approach as Production **B**.

Nor is this dilemma incidental to the two particular stagings I have proposed. While there are no doubt all sorts of ways to mount *Script / Conference*, any one of them is certain to founder in the manner of either Production **A** or Production **B**. To the point where I am almost tempted to say that the “event” which *Script / Conference* offers to be staged is, precisely, this foundering.

But this would be only a manner of speaking. The truth is, *Script / Conference* offers *no* sort of event to be staged. What it “dramatizes” are the conditions prevailing in the dramatic text—the crossfire of unclaimed impulses—at the moment just before things reach the point of an event. What manner of *stage* event may be said to render (or, for that matter, to betray) a text that has not got so far as proposing an event to the stage?

Here, then, is a script (if script it be) that cannot validate, that *has no way* of validating (or invalidating), any interpretation it might evoke, that would not know how to stand behind (or against) a particular production of itself if it tried, that has no fairer words for its executants than: “Expect nothing further of me!”

Such a script can be neither faithfully realized nor willfully subverted. It may thus be felt to offer a way out of, a way to think past, the tired opposition between “faithful” and “subversive” interpretations. But in truth all it can with any certainty be said to offer is its lack to be your lack, its trouble to be . . . trouble for the theatre.

Script / Conference

SESSION [1]

~We take up where?

~They're making a painter biopic. They need someone to do the guy's pictures for them. So they approach this painter.

~Painter at first reluctant

~Why?

~He worries what the color-stock will do to his tonal balances

~He's absorbed in angling for a Biennale berth

~He's got problems with the script

~Such as?

~Such as, he's read it

~Agon of a differently abled toe-sketcher who, with all the odds against him

~Drama of a substance-abusing Gulf War vet who, in a cycle of delicate gouaches

~Saga of a visually gifted pit-monkey torn twixt the worlds of studio and stockcars

~Stockcars?

~Do we really gotta write these other people's picture for them?

~We do not. It's the pickle of the guy lending his paintings to the movie, not the movie, that we're punching up

~Sample punch?

~Oh, like, say, the screenplay calls for the painter-character's oeuvre to go up in flames

~Flaming stockcar crash

~Stockcars?

~And our man

~Who maybe once lost six months' worth of drawings in a studio fire

~Isn't keen on a bonfire being made of his vanities

~Or he could just be holding out for a night with that smokin' production assistant

~They patiently explain this stuff can be simulated

~No use. Just the very *idea* of such a thing

~What can you do, he's an artist, images ring his bells

~But the production assistant, a principled recent graduate of the USC film program

~And gay to boot

~And even assuming his loaners escape the (digital) flames

~Still the little matter of what to do with them afterwards

- ~Can't exactly welcome them into the catalogue raisonné: they're "somebody else's"
- ~Can't exactly kick 'em to the curb: they're from the master's hand
- ~A dilemma for the ages
- ~Right up there with sex and death
- ~Whereas, let him claim to be merely whacking out Mr. Fictive's daubings
- ~And watch him get savaged by a hostile art-establishment
- ~With zero sensitivity to the detail
- ~Tiny detail
- ~That he was all the while painting *as the character*, for god's sake
- ~Laboring under *his* illusions
- ~Making *his* wrong turns
- ~Up and up pile the difficulties
- ~To the point where, for all the obvious allure of the project
- ~The exposure
- ~The licensing fees
- ~Our brush-for-hire finds himself coming down
- ~More and more against

~In fact, he is cell-in-hand to phone in his refusal

~Not the first or last thing he'll be phoning in

~When, lo! The producers . . .

~In the eternal manner of producers

~Sensing their fish about to slip away

~ . . . sweeten the pot

~They dangle before him

~A first-dollar participation deal

~Sweeter!

~Auxiliary market-rights

~Sweeter!

~Exclusivity

~No, wait, here it is: we have them offer to build the entire visual concept of the movie around his painting style

~By which, as by nothing yet

~Yes, because here might be a way to fix everything about the screenplay that's bugging him

~If they're willing to let his work impact the picture's look, why not its plot?

~Its characters

~Its dialogue

~"He painted *these* and you'd have him say *that*?"

~Forty-five second montage, over the course of which

~We watch him ponder

~We see him waver

~We send the production assistant round to his flat

~But yet, but always

~The balance remains untipped

~Finally he decides to dump it all in the lap of his mentor

~Pops, a crusty old graphic designer

~Pops, a legendary figure on the stockcar scene

~Stockcars?

~Pops, his wise old painting-master from the conservatory

~An old-school European High Modernist

~Whose own failed career

~Whose debts

~A voice from the garret

~One would think. But surprisingly . . .

~Or not so surprisingly

~ . . . “Mine boy, chou vill ritch millyuntz”

~That’s all our Rembrandt needed to hear

~He's sold

~He's delivered

~He reaches for his pen

~And all that *will it seem his stuff or my stuff* stuff?

~Temporarily off the table. He's focusing on those "millyuntz"

~In royalties?

~Of viewers

~He signs on the dotted line

~Pictures loaned to the pictures. Thousands cheer.

~MATCH-DISSOLVE to "Pops" furtively endorsing a check from the Studio head

~Now at last his little grandson

~Can have that operation

~Now at last he can spring for . . .

~That weekend in Cancún with the production assistant

~ . . . those repairs to the conservatory roof

~Seems to me I've heard this song before

~Rule One: Be not, in your flight from the obvious, too obvious

~And on that note

SESSION [2]

~Let's hear what we've got

~*Painter approached about doing the pictures for a painter-picture goes back and forth: the compromises, the exposure. But, in the end, why not?*

~Now, with the painter safely on board, the Studio demands changes

~Eetsy-beetsy script polish

~Hi, welcome to Development Hell, I'm your demon, Jeff

~Kind of thing?

~Picture will now focus on a *failed* artist, one who betrays . . .

~Squanders

~Tramples on

~ . . . his own best gifts

~But if they're now going with a *failed* artist, wouldn't that imply—?

~Exactly. Our boy will be called upon to churn out failed work

~Work of a failure

~The diff/ being?

~Rule One: no tempting philosophical sidebars at story meetings

~Which, in effect, amounts to requiring of him

~That he fail at painting

~Paint failures

~However you like to put it

~In the eyes of all those “millyuntz”

~Up there on the silver screen!

~Naturally, he wants out

~Beulah, pass me my fine-toothed comb!

~INSERT SHOT of a contract being paged through and paged through

~But of course he turns up zilch

~No sort of pay-or-play provision

~Nothing like a “likeness clause”

~As for anything approaching “script approval”

~Are you kidding? For a technical adviser?

~Which, when you come right down to it

~For all the huffing and puffing

~Is all our guy is

- ~ “All right,” he thinks, “sooner than see my works held up as failures” . . .
- ~Images of failure
- ~Failed images
- ~ . . . “I’ll walk”
- ~But they
- ~They-the-Suits
- ~Threaten a lien against profits from his upcoming Pace Wildenstein retrospective
- ~Rule One: No film ever went bust trashing a corporate legal department
- ~Little man, what now?
- ~I’m coming at you from a whole new direction
- ~Call it left-field
- ~Let the painter have this entirely new path he’s been yearning to venture down
- ~Rule One: The road picture as we have known it is *mechullah*
- ~*Stylistic* new path, jo-jo
- ~He could first be seen diddling around with it under the credits
- ~Which—bang!—therefore only now come home to roost
- ~A path, however, he could never quite bring himself to take
- ~Backlog of commissions in the old manner
- ~Dread of a misstep

~Of course, if and when the long-lobbied-for Genius Grant

~Meantime, however, best keep to what one knows

~But now suddenly in this standoff over the movie he sees his chance

~His chance?

~To give the “bold new style” a dry run in safety

~Namely, by offering instances of it . . .

~Oh, *I* see!

~ . . . as the *failed* efforts of the painter-character

~Because, don’t you know, as the genuine “new article”

~This work of his is bound to look like nothing to the Studio types

~Too dumb to notice

~Too smart to care

~Whereas the arbiters of the art scene

~Who may be counted on to recognize the Coming Thing when they see it coming

~Confidently hail the Inevitable Next Turn in Western Art

~So, in a single stroke, our painter gets his work . . .

~Best work ever

~. . . before those “millyuntz”

~Plus, he has the satisfaction of torpedoing this whole dumb project of theirs

~In that?

~In that its would-be “images of failure”

~Failed images

~The product of a so-called burnt out imagination

~Instead get themselves hailed as evidence of a Major Breakthrough

~And if perchance they don't?

~“Don't look at me, I'm only painting as the character”

~Stunned silence

~Of total incomprehension

~Beulah, peel me a laurel

~And on that grape

SESSION [3]

~Read!

~Painter brought aboard to supply pictures for “failed painter” biopic subverts project into launching pad for own trail-blazing new work

~Right. Well, so, how’s the Great Stylistic Breakthrough breaking for him?

~Brace yourselves, I am about to send your way this totally unlooked for, undreamt of—

~Wait, let me guess. We have our fellow find

~That all this getting-into-the-head of the painter-character

~Which began as a mere façade behind which to work out his new idea

~Is gradually impacting on

~Is gradually emerging as

~*Itself* the new idea

~Not too gradually, precious friends: we still wanna bring this baby in under an hour-forty

~To the point where our guy’s whole recent output

~Is starting to look more and more like—

~Like?

~ . . .

~The Angel of Silence Passeth over La Cienega Boulevard

~First-ever recorded sighting

~Here's the thing. If our man's big arc is *what do you know, I can only paint as the character*

~Then we're gonna hafta give lots more thought to what the character . . .

~To *how* the character

~ . . . actually paints. Can't just leave it at "toe-sketcher," "combat gouachist"

~No, no, we gotta make him . . . what? Pitch me.

~A Hard-Edged Color Field Abstractionist who can only work with a fruit-dish before him and so feels a fraud

~Crazier

~A blocked painter who turns to modeling in the hope he may, by his pose-shifts, drive forward in another's hand the brush that lies idle in his own

~No, wait, here it is. Let the character be a portraitist who finds he can only get down to work each day after his sitter has gone home for the night. Whereupon, working from her flicked ashes

~Perfume traces

~Cushion imprints

~This Painter of Absence

~(Note title potential)

~This eye refused its fill

~Fills with images of all it has been refused

~We just lost the multiplexes

~We just lost me

~*There's* the painter our painter

~Turns out to have turned into

~Or at least whose oeuvre he turns out to be turning out

~We let the light dawn gradually

~Under a montage of tortured easel sessions

~As, in voice-over, he hammers out the whole psychology of the thing

~Which, by the way, is what?

~Starting TIGHT on a single brush-stroke

~Who is this guy?

~We WIDEN TO REVEAL more of paint surface

~What's up with him?

~SWISH PAN of entire canvas

~Where's he coming from?

~What is truth?

~When is lunch?

~Whither Hollywood?

~That's "whither" with a *h*

~Leave us hope

~And on that oft-voiced hope

SESSION [4]

~Scroll it back

~*Picture-lending painter finds he can now only paint the pictures his character in the picture might paint*

~Fresh element

~Jump start 'er

~Blindside me where I least

~Right about now

~The Studio decides they want some actual painting footage

~And our brushman-hero

~Is asked to lend a hand

~What's he all this while been doing, if not—?

~No, no: *literally*. They want to film his hand moving over the canvas

~Do the painting as well as the paintings? Hm

~His doubts, his scruples

~“How, with an entire film crew hovering . . . and in all that bad artificial light?”

~But at length

~And no very considerable length

~Everybody wants to be in pictures

~Farewell, my scruples

~He signs as “The Painting Hand”

~How would the billing work on that?

~In the role of The Painter: wrist up, Joe Blow; wrist down—

~So now here he is playing his hand as best he can

~Which—Rule One—in this business is all anybody can do

~But, after a few takes, it's already growing clear to him . . .

~As to whom not?

~I see you coming from a city block off

~ . . . that he can never now be content to . . .

~Cut it off at the wrist?

~For, he reasons, as sole deviser of the style this hand executes,

~*Who but I* has a grasp of what drives forward this hand?

~What this hand is reaching out toward

~What this hand would close around

~In short . . .

~Look who's got the acting bug

~Rest of somebody wants to join somebody up there on the silver screen

~ . . . the conviction gains steadily upon him

~That none but he can play the painter

~Play the rest of the painter

~*Le stylo, c'est l'homme*

~Little man, you're going out there an extremity

~But you're coming back an extreme

~So he presents the Studio with an ultimatum

~My paintings *and* me—they's the terms

~Cast me or cast me forth

~Well, of course, they . . .

~They-the-Suits

~ . . . aren' t having any

~A complete unknown?

~With zero proven box office appeal?

~Who knows if he can even act?

~Oh, yeah, act.

~And even were they so inclined

~Which we make blindingly clear they're *not*

~By now . . .

~Long since!

~As part of the initial package

~ . . . they'd have locked in a Bankable Quantity as their leading man

~So,

~Politely,

~But unmistakably,

~Taking care to accord his very real talents their due
~And pointing to the contractual ties-that-bind to their oh-so-Bright . . .
~And oh-so-bankable
~ . . . Particular Star
~Regretfully
~But firmly
~It's: thanks but no thanks
~Meanwhile word of these tensions
~Has somehow Filtered Upward
~To the Bright Particular Star
~(henceforth, the B. P. S.)
~Who, having always done his own stunts
~And being (why not?) something of a Sunday painter
~Is making noises about walking
~He gives the producers 48 hours "to do something about this crazy"
~After which, he's going to have to "re-evaluate my commitment to the project"
~The whole package is coming undone
~This they cannot have

~So . . .

~Citing irreconcilable differences

~And skyrocketing day-costs

~ . . . they fire our painter off the picture

~Whom next we glimpse . . .

~Embittered by his brush

~(Pun very much intended)

~with The Industry

~ . . . holed up in, yes, a garret

~Where, seeking only to resume his own work, he finds to his dismay

~The lesbo production assistant stirring chile?

~That he can't paint any more?

~Worse: that he can *still* only paint as the character in the film he's been fired off

~Not before he has spent half the day dressing up as him

~Psyching up as him

~Tooling around in his late-model retrofitted Ford Taurus stockcar

~Stockcar?

~Can he so much as lay in a graded wash

~On his big new absence-in-progress

~*Della on Her Day Off*

~*Sara When She's-a No-a There-a*

~And on that grating note

SESSION [5]

~From the top!

~A painter hired to supply the artwork for an artworld biopic goes from feeling “Why not paint as him?” to “Only I who paint as him grasp him” to “Who but I as he?” Consequent clashes with film’s Bright Particular Star and firing off the picture of the painter, who, seeking to resume his own work, finds, to his dismay—

~What if we swung the beam off our tortured genius for a little

~And rested it upon?

~Those hard-pressed Studio boys

~Their Very Real Dilemma

~Where, O Where

~And always with the meter running

~Their desperate scramble for a replacement

~Which we show in the form of a 45-second montage comprising:

~Studio visits to Painter 2, Painter 3, Painter **n**—

~But every time

~Either the work trotted out is wrong for the character-as-storyboarded

~Or they find themselves locked in a replay of their dealings with Painter 1

~GROUP SHOT of dead eyes poring over dead conceptions

~SLOW PAN of many noses with a solution lying under them

~SFX: Little bells going off in little heads

~Finally, in desperation: “What if we made the character a Conceptualist?”

~Yes!

~Who, unwilling to so much as lay down a mark

~Offers his unprimed, unframed canvases to be the show

~“Painter of Absence,” and all

~So much for the vast dilemma of where we go for our pictures

~Pictures? What pictures?

~Momentary euphoria

~Succeeded in brief space by:

~“God! as if a painter-movie weren’t already box office poison”

~“Now we don’t even let the guy pick up a brush”

~*Let* him pick up a brush! Let him paint his little heart out—so long as we . . .

~We-the-audience

~ . . . Never get to see the results

~Why not?

~Mmm . . . Pathological perfectionism?

~Life's work buried in a mudslide?

~Eve-of-opening art heist?

~I like the mudslide

~Actually, there's this process now for lifting mud off acrylics

~Somebody's been working in industrials too long

~But at length

~And no very considerable length

~“Look, this is the motion picture business, not the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, we gotta get some pictures up there on the silver screen”

~Flat out of better options

~They approach the film's own art director

~Who isn't *too* eager

~Or too talented

~When lo! the Bright Particular Star shyly lets fall

~*Shyly?*

~That, mmm, well, he's been known to do a little painting himself

~This town is full of Sunday painters. Think Leonard Nimoy. Think Tony Bennett.

~Nothing to write home about, but—hey! we're talking a *failed* painter, yes?

~“What if I was to let you have my character's pictures *myself?*”

- ~Embarrassed silence
- ~Accompanied by furious whirring of wheels in heads
- ~They need this guy
- ~And his commitment to the project
- ~Never of the very firmest . . .
- ~What odds he'll ever land another action flick after this stint as Mr. Sensitive?
- ~ . . . has been visibly wavering since the recent dust-up with Scrupulous Sam
- ~In fact, they are looking at a situation with definite walkout potential
- ~Which to avert, to what lengths would they not?
- ~Besides, these paintings of the actor's . . .
- ~As glimpsed at charity auctions and featured in *USA Today*
- ~ . . . are actually fairly presentable
- ~Or at least not actively embarrassing
- ~Plus, there's the publicity tie-in
- ~"Paintings by Player Play Painter's Pictures in Painter Pic"
- ~Someone even has the temerity to suggest
- ~That the Bright Particular Star might be willing to re-negotiate his percentage

~Possibly even work for Guild Minimum . . .

~What universe are *you*—?

~All right, scale plus ten and a back-end bump

~ . . . since, after all, wouldn't he now be receiving

~A degree of exposure no amount of money could buy

~Long story short, in the end . . .

~To the amazement of the entire motion picture community

~ . . . the deal is inked

~That very afternoon the B.P. S. runs them out to his beach house full of masterpieces

~Where the art director . . .

~Fighting down the conviction that any one of *his* canvases is worth a thousand of these

~ . . . makes the final selection

~Next morning principal photography resumes

~So, now . . .

~All in a 45-second montage

~ . . . the picture gets made, is test-marketed

~ Premières

~And bombs

~Bombs *huge*

~*Ishtar*-huge. *Bonfire of the Vanties*-huge.

~Yesterday's lunch

~Hollywood's grimmest opening night since *Heaven's Gate*

~But . . .

~To the surprise of the entire industry and his brother

~ . . . the Bright Particular Star's very real gifts as a painter

~Are universally hailed

~Well . . . widely recognized

~Well . . . receive a couple of bemused, back-of-the-book paragraphs in *Artforum*

~Sufficient, at any rate, to pull him in one o' them thar Genius Grants

~Such as our dismissed painter has been angling for for years

~Speaking of whom . . . hello?

~Any you boys seen anything of . . . hello?

~Suspect last glimpsed headed north on, heading east on . . . hello?

~Earth to artist, do you read me . . . hello?

~And on that plangent note

SESSION [6]

~It drops off, certain in brief space to resume. Yet let me try whether I may not—in this unworked interval between what is brought forth and to be brought forth—see what I've got.

Grant a certain freedom of handling—the colors dragged from region to region, the overpainting, the painting out—yet do I not, after all, gaze upon at least the outlines of a solution that, in middle tones, upon a subtler ground, and respecting always the logic of the materials—

~Hell . . . *lo* . . . oh . . . ?

~Ah, man, open your eyes! What fronts you here but a turmoil of touches ventured and touches met that, dearly as one might wish to see sum to a balance, at most hold open any balance struck to likely further—

Stay, though. How if one were to propound this holding-open of the design to further onslaught as *itself* even such a design as may at length, must at last—? And how if, even on that note . . . ?

SESSION [7]

~Is we back?

~Where we been?

~Who dat man?

~O Thou Incommunicable

~Or, at least, incommunicado

~Great Looker Down on all our projects

~Do thou look down on us

~Don't worry, he does

~Never, never, never imagine yourselves forgotten

~We'll hear when we hear

~And in the meantime?

~Take and read

~Picture shot with star's own paintings for pictures tanks at box office but proves launching-pad for its painter-star's new life in art

~Yes, OK, fine, but meanwhile what's become of—?

~Wait! I'm getting there

~When next we glimpse our sacked limner, it's as the subject of a Bill Moyers interview segment

~“Painters Who Can Only Paint in the Character of Other Painters”

~While at his side the former production assistant . . .

~Now his press rep

~ . . . fends off the importunities of the film crew while pouring juice

~Final ironic descent into irony

~Bottom bumped, fade to black, roll credits, house up

~Hold on! I ain't dead yet! Post-interview, the painter confides to Bill that he's dug being on camera so well that henceforth he intends to focus his energies exclusively on film

~You mean, he's now gunning for a career as an actor?

~Mayhap, the very career the B. P. S. tossed aside when he went off to paint on the Genius Grant?

~So it would now be *the painter* up for all those action roles?

~No, no! He goes on making pictures, but exclusively on camera—help, somebody!

~From here out, he exhibits filmed sequences of himself painting, not his paintings, as his art

~Thanks, I don't know why I had such trouble spitting that out

~Though, of course, the camera will also dwell long and hard on his paint surfaces

~For the visual excitement

~For the exposure

~As a hedge. By way of “keeping his options open,” shall we say

~All which, the critics
~Though mindful of more or less distant precedents . . .
~That documentary showing Picasso painting on glass, P.O.V the glass
~That footage of Pollock slapping it on while the cameras roll
~ . . . nevertheless hail as an Entire New Genre
~If not the Inevitable Next Step for Western Art
~So, now, when it comes time to select this year's Biennale entrants
~These flicks of the erstwhile painter
~Together with these smears of the erstwhile flick-star
~Find themselves representing . . .
~America
~ . . . their place and moment
~Set over against one another at opposite poles of the American Pantheon
~I think that's "Pavilion," actually
~Even as their respective creators . . .
~SPLIT SCREEN: the acting painter and the painting actor
~ . . . proud co-papas of the Certified New Thing
~Give joint press-conferences from the portico of the American Pantheon, bleep,
Pavilion

~In the course of which

~Old quarrels long since papered over

~They trade reminiscences of their early days in pictures

~Tales of a vanished Golden Age

~The Hollywood That Is No More

~And on that cloying note

SESSION [8]

~It's testing long. We gotta lose 6 to 9 minutes to bring 'er in under an hour-forty

~Not a problem. We bulked it up, we can strip it down.

~Beulah, peel me an accretion

~I don't really see—

~Well, for starters, the joint Biennale appearance can certainly go—talk about “tidy”

~And the painter and actor switching . . . roles or lives or grant-proposals, or whatever it was—phfff!

~And the hero promoting himself from *painter's hand* to *painter's self*—hasta la vista!

~Or Zee Beeg Discovery he can now only paint as the guy in the script—see yuh 'round!

~Or that whole scheme to pass his own new work off as his character's—heads up!

~Say goodbye to his getting talked out of his scruples by the wise old painting-master

~And to the wise old painting-master, who—face it—is only going to lose us the 18-to-34 demographic

~I'm thinking, does it absolutely have to be *pictures* the painter's loaning to the picture?

~Does it absolutely have to be to be a painter?

~Or a visual artist?

~Or an artist of any kind?

~Isn't the gist really: *somebody* loans *something* to a movie?

~Are we even totally wedded to its being a movie? Why not just: "loans something to a project"?

~I could cheerfully lose the whole film-world ambiance

~Something-other-than-pictures loaned for something-other-than-a-picture.
Something-fewer-than-thousands cheer.

~Actually, does anyone really need to *loan* anybody anything?

~Kinda your basic plot-premise

~I could cheerfully lose my basic plot-premise

~I could cheerfully lose the plot

~Lose the—?

~I grow, I change, I option fresh material

~Bye-bye, bathwater and so long, kid

~And all those characters we just leave spinning their wheels?

~Characters? Any you boys laid eyes on any characters? Can't say as I rightly recollects any—

~Oh, could be, every now and then, a voice or two raised in a squawk or two

~Don't rightly recall the last time I made out anything approaching a voice . . .

~*Awfully* quiet in here

~ . . . but for, possibly, the occasional stray impulse streaking by

~I could do without the stray impulses

~And on that note

~Or the recurrent motifs

~What universe are *you*—? Oh.

~Here it is

~Scene where they first

~Lots of emphasis on

~Someone could urge

~Line that up with

~The horror in his eyes

~The wonder in his eyes

~The something in his eyes

~Goose the backstory

~I'm looking at a P.O.V. deficit

~Artists, please!

~We go in here handheld

~Through a neutral density filter

~With plenty of fill-light

~The buzz on that is

~I say: four-wall it!

~You bring me a solid distribution deal

~With guaranteed pick-up

~And a dupe of the answer-print

~Hey! That clouds my title

~Still laying pipe for the big third-act aria

~*Just here* is where you want your opening toward

~We take it over into something approximating

~Or let it gradually evolve in a direction marked by

~With time, becoming less and less a matter of, more and more a question of

~INT/EXT

~TIGHT MEDIUM

~SMASH CUT to

~THE MORNING AFTER

~We WIDEN TO REVEAL

~Other than that, Mr. Gynt, how did you enjoy your onion?

~And on that off-note

WRAP