Why I Like Writing and Hate Directing:

Confessions of a Recovering Writer-Director

I don't really hate directing. But I want to share a few thoughts and personal experiences which – I would hope – might shed a bit of light on how I go about making films. It would be great if any of it were useful in your research on how some writer-directors work.

I'll try to focus on the give-and-take between the writer and the director, highlighting the tension and synergy when the two tasks are performed by one artist.

1.

People usually chuckle when I say that I became a film director in order to make sure a bad director does not ruin my screenplay. It's a joke, but as with many jokes, there is some truth to it.

However, deciding to start directing was not purely self-defense or – script-defense. The decision also involved offensive-minded plays, chief among them the desire to engage in creating works of syncretic art – film.

Film employs tools developed or derived by other art forms (visuals, drama, music, words), as well as uniquely cinematic modes of rendering (such as film editing). Still, it seems self-evident that – at least as far as the conventional narrative film is concerned – the centerpiece of any individual film is the story.

I don't mean the plot. I mean the story.

People like stories, they like hearing and telling them.
Why? Why do humans like stories? Why do we *need* them?

Is it because hearing and telling stories brings us closer to other people? Or is it because we like hearing how other people (even if they are invented) behave? Do we like learning how gods, or movie stars, or neighbors, or geniuses behave? Do we then learn from those stories how to behave ourselves? Or do we learn answers to important questions from stories? Answers such as – is love worth it?, or what is left behind when we are gone?, or is sacrifice a good idea?, or does good always triumph over evil?, or does the strong guy always get the girl?, or should I be pretty and faithful if I want my prince on the white horse…? Do we like the fact that stories are better ordered than our lives?; our belief in cosmic or poetic justice is reinforced, as most stories have happy or satisfying, cathartic endings. Or do we simply like the experiences we get out of hearing stories which attempt to parallel real experiences – except we don't have to suffer the real consequences as this is *only a story*.

Really – is storytelling and storyhearing a form of human interaction on the par with the intercourse? Why are many of us addicted to soaps, or jokes, or history, or memoirs, or gossip, or movies….?

Whatever the reason, fondness for stories cuts across generations and cultures.

Are we hard-wired to need stories? Isn't pretend play in earliest childhood an early way of telling stories? I've heard people find stories in Jackson Pollock's squirts and dribbles or in Mike Rothko's soft squares and rectangles. (Personally, I love Rothko and admire Pollock, but I see them as pure non-narrative form, like music. Which doesn't make them any less enjoyable and profound. On the contrary.)

2.

As a film director, it is my job to tell a story.

I don't think that directing narrative film is about the visuals or the fancy shots or even about good scenes that stick in the mind of a critic. It is the director's job to truly, deeply understand the screenplay – and I don't mean only the plot or the characters – I mean the meaning, the themes, the connections to our experience and even to our subconscious that go beyond the pure mechanics of the plot. The good director gets to the essence of the story, then makes sure this essence is communicated, amplified, shaped and defined by all cinematic means at his or her disposal: casting, performance, blocking, framing, pacing, color, music, tone, sound… they all work towards one goal.

Towards telling a story well.

So, the director tells a story, but he or she is not the one who puts it on paper. The director is not the originator. The big bang has already taken place by the time there is a director on board. It has taken place months or years earlier at the humble keyboard of the writer. (Of course, the big bang could be a big whimper if there is no powerful medium to amplify the bang.)

3.

I am a writer-director. I tell my students that while I write, I – the writer – don't let near me the other part of me that is the director.

I want to protect the freedom of the writer, I want to be free to fool around, and that is why I need to avoid Milcho the director. He always worries. He worries about how to bring things in front of the camera, whether we can find an actor who can deliver such a difficult role, how to convey the foreboding feeling while keeping the pacing brisk, how to shoot a convincing battle scene on the inadequate budget, how to get the crew to the best-looking locations… Milcho the director is much more responsible, restrained and concerned than Milcho the writer.

In other words, while I write a screenplay, I try to stay with the writing. I try to do the things writers do, and I avoid thinking of things directors do (such as casting, visualizing, blocking or thinking about music).

As a writer, I try to balance things between the fun of creation and the requirements of the piece I am writing. I am not talking about the practical requirements. I am talking about the requirements that stem from the responsibility the artist has to his or her work. I don't think the artist has a dialogue with the audience or with the film critics or historians – he or she has a dialogue only with the work of art itself. The audience can always be bribed, something well illustrated by the success of the formulaic blockbusters. The critic or the historian can be bribed too, as illustrated by the art-house genre or the Sundance genre or the film-from-an-exotic-country-at-a-major-festival genre. In other words, working within the expectations of the viewers is a way of brining them.

(On a related subject, I must quote the wise man who described the relationship between the artist and the art critic as similar to the relationship between the donkey and the zoologist.)

While I write, I simply write. I keep the dialogue with the work itself going, and I try to have fun. I often start with a *feeling* or with a *formal concept*, then move on to the plot. Creating the plot is easy, something I've learned from the stories I've loved all my life: comic books, serious books, historical research, good jokes, folk tales, other films….

I write as if writing for another director, someone competent who will understand and appreciate the screenplay for its plot, characters, themes and depth, another director who does not need too many words or details in the screenplay, but who will occasionally appreciate an incisive sketch of the proposed visuals, or a fun twist of phrase in stage direction. Someone who will further develop the written word into a full-blown film.

I focus on:
. the plot (which is the skeleton I hang everything else on);
. the people in the film (also known as characters, who are sometimes versions of people I know in real life: twisted, re-imagined, combined, complicated or simplified);
. the dialogue (keeping it fat-free, while aiming to have the characters *speak*, rather than sound as if they were trying to deliver plot points or suggest emotions on behalf of the filmmaker),
. but most of all, I take great pleasure in the wonderful *surprises* that can happen only when creating art from scratch, when writing or painting or composing…. When imagining and inventing. I try to enjoy the great sense of freedom that comes with creating from scratch.

These irreverent surprises are why I write.

Even though I treat the screenplay like a game of chess, I sometimes do not have a rational explanation, no good reason (nor rhyme) for the way things go in my writing. The overall structure is there, and I stick to its common sense diligently, but on the ground – where it matters – I follow my nose, fancying myself a prairie hunter. Even though perfectly sharp and sober, I sometimes act as if drunk and dare to take a wrong turn. I try to listen to the story the way one listens to jazz: "This twist *feels* right, that one just does not." My criteria are sharp and precise (to me at least), but by no means

rational. Often the rational explanation is not obvious at first. Sometimes it never is. In other words, if something feels right, I will put it in the screenplay, but I won't necessarily have a good rational explanation as to why. It will just *feel* right. Still – and I want to underline this – it must feel right, it cannot be haphazardly thrown in, it should not be driven by exhibitionism or lack of discipline or – even worse – laziness, or – heaven forbid – narcissism. As a matter of fact, the answer to the *why* question must be rock solid – it just does not have to be a *rational* rock solid answer.

I play in the sandbox with my keyboard, but I am aware that I am now a responsible adult.

(With this issue of intuition vs. the rational in making films, one could argue that experience in telling and hearing stories can make you internalize the rational, so then it comes out as intuition.)

At the beginning of the process there is the bread-and-butter of the script, the humble, but strong skeleton upon which we will hang the flesh, nerves and handsome face of the screenplay – the plot. Its gallop toward an emotionally satisfying conclusion is driven by common sense, but not by the need to have rational clarity.

This is one of the disagreements I have with the Hollywood script doctors. We do not have to understand everything in the script to like it. I've seen many films that I fully understood, but I was still sorry that I wasted two hours of my life. I've also seen films that I do not understand to this day, but the thought of them fills me with joy. (I guess I prefer the script witch doctors to the Hollywood script doctors.)

Then, once Milcho the writer has completed the final draft, he delivers it to Milcho the director. The director in me usually accepts the script. He doesn't need many meetings, pitches or rewrites.

Then Milcho the director fires Milcho the writer.

4.

Let me repeat – I don't really hate directing. After all, directing is when you take the story to another level, add fantastic new dimensions. You are creating or re-creating worlds and landscapes, especially mind landscapes.

When I – as director – sit down to do the director's work – casting, storyboarding and blocking, location scouting, acting rehearsals – that is when I begin to get into the script, analyze, dissect, and expand upon the themes and tone of the screenplay. This is when I begin to *understand* some of the surprises the writer in me had put in the script. However, I dare not change things on paper, except for details that help clarify and refocus the ideas, themes, characters and plot.

When making directorial decisions on things that *seem* unrelated to the story – such as casting choices, or visual direction (the blocking, the mood, the colors, the lighting, the lenses) – I often get back to what the film is about. What is it that the writer wanted to say, as my grade-school teacher would put it?

For example: let's say that we – the writer, the director, the heads of departments, the actors, the people I test the film on telling them the story or asking them to read the screenplay – have somehow decided that the film we are making is about how optimism and warmth and the will to live and to love triumph in the face of obstacles, mental problems and selfish society; in the casting sessions I will prefer the actress who offers this kind of energy, and I would encourage the actresses who approach the character from a darker perspective to give the character a heart of inextinguishable belief that things can be good *in spite* of everything. I will make decisions guided by the discovery of what the film/the script is really about. Of course, not all decisions are dictated by the big picture, but the important ones should be. The big picture should be hidden in the detail. The god is in the detail. It is up to the good director to decide which detail is hiding god in its nucleus, and which detail is simply detail.

Early on, I analyze and discuss the intentions of the screenplay with the production designer. We come up with visual expansion on the screenplay, while at the same time I create the storyboard and discuss the approach with the director of photography.

Regardless of how well-written a screenplay is, the characters are incomplete until the actors and the director put their fingerprints all over them, internalizing and then spitting them out. I believe that a good actor will know more about his or her character than the writer or director.

I continue with this process of dissecting the screenplay and putting together the outlines of the film through pre-production. If there are changes in the script at any time during pre-production, we put them on paper, and distribute them to everybody. For example, while rehearsing with the actors, there is always a continuity person present, and she will amend the script.

And on towards the task of actually shooting the film as closely to the script as possible.

5.

Everything I said might sound as if I have a well-defined way of writing and then translating the written word into a film. It is only partly true. My experiences have been all over the map. Thank god.

For example:

I toyed with the five-page synopsis for *Before the Rain* for about a year and a half before I felt ready to write the screenplay. Then, once I sat down, it took me about two weeks to write the first draft. What you see in the finished film is basically what was in that first draft. In the meantime, in development and while we were prepping, Channel 4 asked for a number of changes which had mainly to do with script doctoring by the book. I fought them, but consented to some. When Channel 4 pulled out of the film two weeks into production, thinking we would never finish the film, I promptly threw out the changes they demanded. Once we started shooting, I stuck to the script as to a gospel, even resigning for 12 hours when I realized that the producers – without telling

me – had removed several small scenes from the shooting schedule in order to save time. (They reinstated the missing scenes.)

On *Dust*, by contrast, I did many drafts, and the script really came together only when I rewrote it at one point from scratch during the long financing and development process. At that point, I simplified it and trimmed it by more than 20 pages. We did extensive historical research as half of the film was set in the Ottoman Empire and the American Wild West. Our bibliographical list consisted of more than 160 entries. All of this detail and the ambition of the film guided the director in me to a lot of detail in the finished film. This contributed texture to the tissue of the film, but was contrasting the lean nature of the text.

I was also hired to make a film for 20th Century Fox, *Ravenous*. It was written by a young Hollywood writer and it held the potential of a dark vampire-themed film about cannibalism in the snow-covered mountains of the Wild West. I saw it as a dark tale along the lines of *Rosemary's Baby* or *Fearless Vampire Killers*. The studio saw it as *Scream 5*. Shortly before we were scheduled to start filming, the studio head flew to London from Los Angeles; the writer and a creative executive came with her. The producer and I were summoned from Prague where we were prepping the film. Over a 20-hour session at a nice London hotel we went through the script line by line and the studio head changed a number of things before we went into production. The thing I missed the most after the surgery was a surreal adrenaline-fueled cannibal chase scene in the snow which saved the studio some money, but left a gaping hole in the middle of the story. Predictably, *Scream 5* won and *Rosemary's Baby* meets *Fearless Vampire Killers* lost, and I was soon off the project.

On *Three to Kill* I had the opposite task – I was writing a script for another director. I was adopting a noir book by the French writer Jean-Patrick Manchette for a young Italian director. The book had previously been made into a film with Alain Delon, but I had not seen it and insisted on not seeing it. The book was lean and mean, to the point, and verb-driven. It was easy to turn it into a screenplay. What was more demanding was trying to discern what the first-time director wanted, what would excite him and what would highlight his strengths.

6.

Allow me now to zero in in greater detail on three other examples from my writing-dash-directing experience, which should better illustrate my working process in light of the theme of this conference.

In my film *Before the Rain*, there is a sequence consisting of three scenes featuring Aleksandar, the protagonist, and his extended family and friends: (1) feast, (2) wedding and (3) bedroom.

Aleksandar has just returned from London to his remote village in the Macedonian mountains, and the family throws a feast for him. His cousins and aunt have gathered around a table, drinks and food keep coming, people chat and joke. It is a scene of warmth with a whiff of threat hanging in the air. The overall feeling is that of familial comfort. In the screenplay, this first scene of the sequence – the feast – peters out,

ending on a mild joke. Then the merry family hears the heavy sound of drums and music approaching – a wedding party.

Next – in the second scene – we see the initial group observing the village wedding from a little knoll. A glorious wide shot of the village and the river of people cascading down its steep streets resembles an old painting. The bride in heavy traditional costume is riding a horse, guests dance and wave a flag as the drummer and musicians play syncopated folk music. The portrayal of an ancient ritual helps establish the context and the contrast. A few lines of drunken dialogue from the group observing follow, one of the characters falls of a chair. End of scene.

Then a hard cut takes us to Aleksandar's bedroom. He is hung-over and an old flame comes to pay him a visit. Scene three.

That was what the writer in me wrote.

However, the director in me was not entirely satisfied. I didn't want to be rude to the writer, but it was not working, really. Yes, the necessary information was delivered, the relationships within the family and the community were established. The characters were sketched out for further development. The tone of this new portion of the film was set up.

However, the inner dynamics of the sequence were creaky. We were already almost two thirds into the film and languid introductions would be counterproductive. We needed to be thrusting the action along at the same time as we were introducing new characters (two thirds into the film) and establishing new relationships and action. In addition, we were recently coming off a montage sequence that got us from London to the remote village, and now needed to get going.

Of the three scenes which constituted this family sequence, I felt that the problem was with the first two. They were slowing us down, and we couldn't afford that. Yet, we needed the information and the tone that the feast scene provides, as well as the wider context provided by the wedding scene. There was also the added bonus of serious production value in the wedding scene – beautiful tableaux, wide shots, dozens and dozens of extras, exotic costume, fascinating music…

I did two things to try solve the problem. One of them I seldom do, but the other one I sometimes employ, even though not extensively.

I made a change to the script on the spot, while filming. That is the thing I very seldom do. Not that the script is sacred, but by the time I start filming, I usually have gone through several drafts, extensive analysis while storyboarding and scouting, and weeks of rehearsal. All the changes that I may feel are necessary would have already been implemented.

This change to the script while filming involved the end of the feast scene. I felt that as written it was ending with a whimper. I asked for a few moments to think, something the director was not supposed to do on this film, considering how tight the schedule was. I decided to add a little coda. The family has been eating and drinking for some

time when – according to this change – a white-bearded grandpa says in an improvised non-sequitor: "C'mon, Alex, take a picture of us." So, Aleksandar – who is a Pulitzer-winning photo-journalist – sets the camera on automatic and runs to join his family for a group portrait. As they face the camera with smiles, a fly lands on his forehead. He smacks it dead at the very moment the shutter clicks and he is posterized with the hand on his forehead and a silly grin on his face. Everyone laughs and we have one of the iconic moments of *Before the Rain*[1], a still that ended up accompanying many newspaper articles about the film, and at least one about the Balkans in general.

The scene ended with what it was about – the family, but it also ended on a completely unexpected, humorous note. This coda made the scene more human, and it also provided a micro-crescendo which set the table for a hard transition to the next scene.

The second thing I did in trying to make the sequence work better is something I *sometimes* do – I changed things in the cutting room. This is not the infamous "We'll fix it in post." It's rather a re-write.

I often tell my students: The director who does not exercise the possibility of refocusing, recalibrating or outright reworking the story in the editing room is passing on a mighty storytelling tool.

What you have on film or on your hard drive as you begin the editing process is *always* different from what you had on paper. That's the nature of the medium. It is your duty as a director to assess what you have in the can, to see the new strengths and weaknesses of the material you have in the can and to find the best way to exploit the former and underplay the latter.

Like it or not, the editing room is where you write the final draft of the film.

So, I killed the wedding scene. It wasn't adding enough to the film to justify eating up valuable time so late in the game. The buildup was too slow. And as for the production value and the ritual? Most of it I threw away, but not all of it. I moved several shots – the beautiful wide shot of the village with the many extras, and a couple medium shots of the backlit drummer and musicians – to an entirely different place in the film. We moved it to the moment after Aleksander has decided to take action and is on his way to the sheepfold. He hears the distant sound of drums. I actually used a casual off-screen glance by the actor, added music a couple of seconds before he looks off screen and then cut to the few wedding shots, as if they are his POV from a hilltop down at the wedding in the village.

This gave the moment a different meaning. The lively wedding was not only establishing the social context, but it was now being contrasted with the tense action unfolding at the finale of the film.

[1] I riffed on this moment in my next film, *Dust*. An Ottoman major is having a photo taken. He and his soldiers are posing with the severed head of a local rebel, when a fly disturbs the major. He slaps it at the very moment that the photo is taken. His sudden movement causes the head he's holding in the other hand to exit the frame of the photograph. History registers the mundane and misses the historic.

Back to the original sequence: here is what we had in the film after rewriting the script on the set and in the editing room: a warm family gathering streaked with hints of danger that ends on a seemingly goofy high note (which becomes iconic once the film is released), then a hard cut to the bedroom scene which proceeds as written.

The combination of a small, but important re-write during filming and another intervention in the editing room helped fine-tune this portion of *Before the Rain*. It established and propelled the dynamics of the plot and the relationships, while moving the film at a clip.

7.

Allow me another example from the same film of how the writer and director in me collaborated:

At another point in *Before the Rain*, a couple is on the run. He is a young Macedonian defrocked monk, she is an Albanian teenager in distress. A gang of Albanian men – her family – surrounds them. They are looking to save her from an opposing clan. Still, when the armed band lays their hands on the couple, her grandfather punishes and humiliates her publicly, beating her brutally, albeit reluctantly. Then her brother erupts in a fit of jealous rage and shoots her dead.

Now, in all the drafts of the synopsis, the brother killed both the girl and the monk. This was a befitting tragic end to the modern-day civil war Romeo and Juliet. They are both dead.

Yet, Kiril, the monk, refused to die. It didn't feel right to kill him. I don't know why. I could claim a number of rational explanations why not to kill him, such as that in *Before the Rain* different ethnic groups always kill their own, making thus the point that any war, and especially a civil war is in fact fratricide. The brother and the monk are not related.

However, the real reason was that Kiril, the character, simply refused to die. I tried killing him on paper, but he wouldn't budge. And I followed his wishes.

The fact that Kiril did not die on the mountaintop gave me the opportunity to bring him back later in London. It also allowed me to have him sit on the tattered suitcase next to her body, looking on in silent shock as the life drains out of her. It allowed for a final exchange between the lovers: he says, "I'm sorry," she – referring to their inability to understand each other's languages and to his now broken vow of silence – puts her finger on her lips, "Hush."

The tone of the silent goodbye scene was developed *after* I completed the screenplay. The director contrasted wide shots of a sole human in a vast, spectacular landscape with tight close-ups of the dying girl and the stunned ex-monk[2]. These close-ups turned out to be an important tool at this point in the story.

[2] Since we were running out of time during the main shoot, we picked up the closeups of Kiril and Zamira against sky and neutral background on several later occasions – a few weeks after we filmed that particular

As for the wide shots – we invested a lot of time and energy in finding the most appropriate locations. We ruthlessly combined different places, creating cinematic space which does not exist.

I also filmed the gang walking away in silent procession after Zamira's death, passing by the heart-broken Kiril seated on the brown suitcase. In the editing room, though, I decided to eliminate that part of the scene, as it felt at odds with the quiet and intimate way the scene was building to a crescendo. The music suggests a fleeting moment and the scene ends with a single flute accompanying the image of a lone boy under a solitary tree. He is alive, but alone. On the wings of the solo flute, we travel from the Macedonian mountains to a claustrophobic shower stall in London, where a woman breaks down in tears under the shower. Part 2 begins.

I remember watching this moment with an audience at the Cineteca de Bologna. I somehow managed to view the film as a viewer, not a maker, and I was excited by the leap, the emotional crescendo that is irreverently cut off.

This became one of the most important (and I dare say, poignant) moments in the film, a pivotal point when the cheeky leap from a place to a distant, seemingly unconnected place happens right after an emotional high note. It almost feels like a leap in time. The lift off and the landing together create new quality, presenting the director with an opportunity for a subdued (or an operatic) tour-de-force.

Even though the script called for this jarring, radical leap in the story (leaving behind everything we had developed to that point – the story, the characters, the setting and the atmosphere in Macedonia), the tone of this transition was developed by the director, not by the writer: the pacing, the music, the contrasting colors, the contrasting shot size, the timing of the change…

In other words: even though the potential for this moment of directorial fireworks emerged from what was on the page and from the writer's freedom to be irreverent, it was dully amplified by the disciplined directorial work.

8.

The final example from my experience as writer-director is probably most challenging, but so was the film.

At the very beginning of the process of creating *Mothers*, I had a real-life story. A series of rape-murders of retired cleaning women in a small Macedonian town leads to the arrest of a journalist who was reporting on the very same crimes. He is then found dead in his prison cell, his head in a bucket of water. The authorities declare it a suicide by drowning. I was interested in this unusual story, but I was also very interested in the background – the suffocating life in a small town.

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scene, in a different location in Macedonia; and during post-production, in London, some six months after we initially shot the bulk of the scene.

I knew this story was going to be only a part of a feature-length film. I did not see the documentary as a full-length film. Instead, I saw it as only one segment in a film consisting of three parts. These three parts would contrast and complement each other to create a bigger whole. I was not interested in telling the story of the crime and punishment, but was instead interested in telling the story of telling stories.

As I was developing the other two parts, I realized I had to start filming the documentary while the iron was hot. I did not want to run the risk of the real people involved in the story getting too far from it. There were also practical considerations – what if the story in their heads started to change, as stories always do, or what if some of them became unavailable?

So, I started filming the documentary, while I was still working on the big script.

I went to the small town, shot establishing and mood shots, found a local collaborator and started putting together the puzzle. I interviewed the families of the victims, the family of the journalist, and then the investigators who broke the case, the judge involved, the forensic pathologists, etc.

The information I was putting on film (or, rather – on hard drive) was in turn informing the big picture. I dropped the initial idea of making three versions of the same events – fictionalized, a fake documentary and a real documentary – and focused instead on creating three completely different stories which connect only on a different plane.

Mothers was intended as an experiment of sorts – two parts of the film fiction, and the third a documentary, so I started searching for the two fictional stories. In terms of the narrative, these two stories were supposed to have nothing in common with the documentary, except for thematic echoes and amplifications. They were, however, going to be connected by tone and the big picture itself: the nature of truth. And how we tell it.

This is a fairly unusual combination – fiction and documentary. We perceive the two in a completely different way; our expectations and the way we experience them are different. And therein lie the experiment – *what will happen if we treat both as simple means or tools in telling a story*, the way an artist like Rauschenberg mixes photographs or even a blanket within an old-fashioned painting?

For parts one and two of the film – the fiction parts – I chose real-life stories told to me by friends. The event underlying part one had happened some eighteen years ago; the one underlying part two more than thirty years ago. One happened to a little girl in a big city, the other to old folks in a deserted village. They had seemingly nothing in common with the documentary about a serial killer of retired cleaning women and a suicide in a bucket of water.

Yet, they felt like they fit perfectly together. The contrast and the resonance felt just right. I had my three sides of the triangle-film.

So, while filming the documentary, I went about writing the fiction. When I felt I had shot enough of the doc, I started preparing the filming of the fiction parts. After I filmed

those, and after we edited the doc, we went back to the real-life small town and filmed the missing links in the documentary portion.

The day-to-day writing of the fiction screenplay was not affected by the developments in making the documentary, but shooting the doc had opened the doors to better thinking about the rest of the big picture. The writing and the directing did not exactly happen at the same time, but I came as close to interweaving the two in the same span of time as I would ever dare.

Thus, in *Mothers* I wrote, then filmed, then edited, then wrote again, then filmed some more, then filmed yet again, and then edited the whole. This is very different from the way I always work. The writer and the director in me interwove their work on this project. The writer let the director shoot before the entire script was finished, and the director started shooting before the entire screenplay was finished. This was new and it was different.

And, in a significant way, it was also liberating. It allowed for freshness that is seldom possible when making a film. It allowed a certain level of spontaneity that the necessarily bulky process of filmmaking restricts. This freshness and freedom marked not only a new approach for me, but also new quality in that I was able to let the instinct have a bigger part in the final product. I wasn't writing lines of dialogue on the set, nor letting the actors improvise, but I was shaping the structure of the overall screenplay *after* I started filming. This was an experiment in a somewhat different film form, yet I was very happy with the experience and with the result.

I don't know whether I'll ever replicate this experience, but it certainly opened new possibilities. It demonstrated that it is possible to make intuition play a bigger part in the creation of this bulky cyborg animal called film.

I think that I would be more open to other experiments where strong intuition or well thought-out framework would allow for a different schedule or a different kind of give-and-take between the writing and directing segments of the process. If this means more fun (while still effectively managing the overall practice of making a film), and especially if it results in a good film, I'd be game for it.