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Postscript

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reflect on being white? Did always being marginal, as an obvious sissy and then queen, make me more comfortable first with gay liberation and so writing about gay issues, and then second with the prospect of being discursively marginalized as male, white, and British? Is what I called the “ironic attachment” of Nino Rota’s film music grounded in what seemed to me a basic gay survival strategy? It would be absurd to reply to those questions in a way to suggest that what and how I wrote could have been undertaken only by a gay man—there is after all wonderful work on all those topics by people who would not consider themselves or even be considered queer, leave alone lesbian or gay (unless we allow queer such a wide definition that it evaporates). There are also many other circumstances not (or not exactly) of my own choosing that limited and made possible what I did, but being a queer and the idea of gay were decisive among them, and reading such letters as these, I’m grateful for it.

Richard

Postscript

by LISA HENDERSON

A year or so ago, a senior cinema scholar with whom I was talking about our Dyer collection expressed his interest and appreciation for such a project and described Dyer as representing an approach to screen studies that’s hard to preserve in a competitive world of metrics, audits, and hyperprofessionalism. Dyer’s work, we agreed, isn’t instrumental, although it is engaged, and his rate of publication would make any dean or provost want him on their roster come assessment time. Richard himself has said that if he isn’t writing, he feels like he isn’t doing his job, and indeed that it would take retirement to diminish the pressure he feels to author new work. As his readers, we are grateful, although we know that everyone gets to take a break, even Richard. The other “something” in Dyer’s approach, though—as this collection expresses—is the essential place of long and new friendships that take shape in the course of studying and working in one another’s air. Aside from our incomes, most of us are in the trade for the rare occasion of glory, perhaps, but more for the hopefully routine condition of intellectual community and solidarity. Richard, as contributors narrate, makes this easy, through his openness, his intellectual breadth, and the pleasure he takes in recognizing others as we recognize him. That isn’t a bromide; it’s structural.

Through proposing, planning, and presenting our SCMS panel in 2016, through deadlines, email (lots of email), review, and revision, through a collective reach for tone in a modestly epistolary form and our shared pleasure in submission, and on to editor Louisa Stein’s

generous responses and guidance, this project has made friends of us. Some of us started there, with Richard and each other, but not all. Doing this together, we have a place on one another's intellectual horizon, a place, I think it's safe to say, we will hold on to. These are the ideal circumstances of scholarly collaboration, whose tenor has been a tribute to the author we've hailed. As both new and seasoned authors ourselves, we invite graduate students and those faculty who are just starting to find their way to value their intellectual friendships even as there is no place to report them on an annual review or curriculum vitae. That valuing is hard to do when competition for scarce resources is the coin of the realm—and it's easy for us to say, with jobs and in many cases seniority. But we've all faltered in our academic pasts. When that happens, our friendships sustain us socially and emotionally, as we might say in published acknowledgments. Under all circumstances, they make our intellectual lives possible.

Over the course of a brave, resolute, and sometimes heartbreaking history in cultural studies, queer cinema, and queer and left politics, through an honesty both tranquil and demanding, and in the light and sustenance of cinema itself, Richard Dyer has built a sturdy and elegant set, a place where his friends, colleagues, and students land gently and creatively. We, in turn, find our way together through his example, and our scholarship is richer for it. That, we hope, is an approach with a history but no end, in strong and hard times. *