

March 4, 1983

Dear Leslie,

I thought I would write in my journal but then I decided to write this to you. Tonight, Gently Down the Stream was shown at the Lucky Strike, a club on Stuyvesant Street (across the street from where A. lived after we broke up, down the street from where A. and I lived when we first moved to NY and were happy together, and where we lived also when we split up). It was a group show-I think I earned 75 cents for it. Manuel DeLanda, Benning/Gordon, Kobland, von Zeigesar, et al. Two women from the Heresies Film issue whom I really like were there-and the monitor (E.) from the Millennium which, in some way, rounded out the picture. I was extremely nervous before the film, and got stoned, and hence got more nervous. I was worried about what C. and G. would think. But secretly I felt as if I was about to surprise them with the film-as if the film's strength wouldn't be determined by their response to me (that then i.e. I'd think it was good because of their response) but that they would be determined by their ability to fall prey to the film. As if I'd laid a trap for them and was waiting to see if they'd fall into it, rather than that the film (and I) was waiting to become "real" as a result of their response. It's one of those perverse cases of confusing hindsight with the original feelings I had when making the film-so I guess it's hindblindness? Does that seem wierd? It does to me. And then I watched the film clutching my sides, with a secret smile on my face (embarrassed to show my cowboyish Yippee! Attago! Waowiee! Looker that frame looker that cut! feelings) because for once I was enjoying the film. I felt as if I'd made it for myself. That it was a gift to myself. That every choice was made completely for my pleasure. And yes. But I also started feeling strange, as if it had its own determined, predetermined trajectory. One that I couldn't see before, because I was making it. And so it took me, forced me, dragged me headlong through the paces until the moment that I knew it was complete (when the words MY TONGUE first appear in the last dream), and whatever that means, I was forced to stare it straight in the face, though I felt like a kid pulling HARD in the other direction from where "grown up" is trying to drag me. So then of course I got the shakes with a vengeance, and when the film ended I was so embarrassed. G. was the first to give me a good word. G. eventually admitted that she thought it was good. And yes, I was pleased and flattered to hear that; I started stuttering and reached for my beer, and we spoke a bit more. But I suddenly felt very apart from them, settling away and down into some private, noisy little corner of myself. Because I knew beforehand that they'd probably like it (though of course I leave the possibility wide open that they wouldn't like it or would have strong objections to something in it-and I could even relish that event, as you'll see-), and I felt discouraged. I knew that I was beyond the experience of that film: not in quality, but in some more horizontal manner. It had done its work on me, I had given it all I had, and so necessarily it would speak some truth to those who would want to hear or would enjoy hearing what I needed to hear and enjoyed hearing when I made it. But somehow, tonight, seeing through the film to the essence of what it afforded me in certain pleasures, I felt as if I'd suddenly turned my hunchback away and started plodding on to the next thing, which at first will/would (must?) seem like a torment until I can find what specific pleasure it will afford me. Because I can't go back to that old film for any (unfamiliar, surprising, unnerving) pleasures anymore-I know them, and I'm still afraid and ignorant of the next ones. A no-man's-land I'm in right now.

When I know what delight or spark of thought I can give or share with someone, I get bored. When I know pretty much how much a film can or can't affect someone (what its strengths and weaknesses, limitations, failings are), I get bored. There always must be something that's unfamiliar, if only so that one can overcome fear enough in order to make it familiar. Yes?

much love,

susi

P.S. [...] Has anyone ever talked literally about what happens when they "break up" with a film they've made?! And what we stand to learn and suffer from that?

Dear Su--from a list of things to tell you--

A. [redacted] months [redacted] been speechless [redacted] Also [redacted] speak [redacted] spoken.
 B. [redacted] I [redacted] people [redacted] spark [redacted] talk around [redacted] cannot say
 [redacted] circumscribe [redacted] incompleteness [redacted] wound [redacted] healed?
 [redacted] figures [redacted] excess [redacted] shrill [redacted] awful.
 C. [redacted] erases. [redacted] Maurice Blanchot's writing,
 [redacted] jack-knife [redacted] sentences, passages [redacted] moving [redacted] turn around.
 [redacted] the fiction [redacted] the writing [redacted] foregrounded [redacted] thrill
 [redacted] seeing [redacted] working [redacted] seduced

D. [redacted] shyness [redacted] wish [redacted] [redacted] viewer
 [redacted] don't investigate [redacted] involvement [redacted] [redacted]
 [redacted] We get nowhere [redacted] stop thinking

E. [redacted] dynamic [redacted] communication
 [redacted] seductress, student, victim [redacted] work [redacted] lover, trickster,
 never reducible to one (or the other) [redacted] never contained [redacted] hermetically sealed
 [redacted] strong [redacted] life [redacted] pleasure, labor and trial, years and others.

"first person" [redacted] confidence [redacted] self [redacted] work [redacted] questioned,
 [redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

F. Last night [redacted] elderly woman [redacted] silent film [redacted] tape-recording
 laughter and silence [redacted] stituting [redacted] film [redacted] aural braille [redacted] recon-
 woman [redacted] screening of Adynata [redacted] "you know, I loved your film, same
 but I was just wondering if you could maybe be a little more clear." [redacted] wonderful
 [redacted] again [redacted]

XXXXXXXXXX

G. [redacted] writing [redacted] re-invented [redacted] real [redacted] overheard
 framing [redacted] (a verbal snapshot)

"That's the way she is. That's the way she is. That's the way she is. She's like
 that. That's all she is. That's what she is. I know what she is. I know. I
 know. I don't think she trusts herself. Uhh unh. Uh huh. It ain't like that.
 She is evil."

"That's family. That's as low as you can get. Anything she does that's OK. That's
 A-OK. Yeah, that's her. Hey, I'm not surprised. Hey, that's the way she is. You
 see what I'm saying?" (Hands up in the air.)

"Something went on in her mind she thought she was married. She sent out the in-
 vitations. She's not married. She thinks she's married. But when the story really
 came down she's not married. So she's got a lot of problems thinking she was mar-
 ried. It's psychological."

"She got her hair weaved out like this. Makes your head look big. She was in a real
 deep slum and depression. What I'm telling you she did it for the wrong reasons.
 It's an investment but she did not do that for any right reasons."

"She did not need none of that stuff. Nothing. She did not need that car. She
 did not need that foster child. She doesn't know what she needs. She just wants
 men and then runs them away. And that's the kind of person she is."

H. [redacted] share
 with you [redacted] letter [redacted] grim [redacted] letter

[redacted] strange [redacted] letter [redacted] jokes?
 [redacted] wastebasket [redacted]

Much love, *Colu*