Widescreen Dreams

Horrigan, Patrick E.

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Notes

Chapter 1. The Happiest Family in All the World!

1. This and the following three quotations are taken from the first page of Ernest Lehman’s script of *The Sound of Music*, the first two pages of which are reproduced in Julia Antopol Hirsch’s *The Sound of Music: The Making of America’s Favorite Movie* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1993), p. 35; ellipses in original.

2. This and subsequent dialogue is quoted from the film’s screenplay by Ernest Lehman. Since none of the screenplays for the films I discuss in *Widescreen Dreams* are in print, all film dialogue in the book has been transcribed from videotape.

3. For a discussion of the cultural significance of “vocal crisis,” see Wayne Koestenbaum’s *The Queen’s Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*.

4. The clinical term for this is “trichotillomania,” or “compulsive hair pulling,” affecting between two and eight million people, 90 percent of whom are female; see “Trichotillomania: Compulsive Hair Pulling” by Nancy Goldberg. For a psychoanalytic account of the disorder, see Louise J. Kaplan’s *Female Perversions: The Temptations of Emma Bovary*, 397–404.

5. In his essay “Musicality, Essentialism, and the Closet,” Philip Brett eloquently describes the connection between the pains of gay childhood and the compensations of piano playing: “Music is a perfect field for the display of emotion. It is particularly accommodating to those who have difficulty in expressing feeling in day-to-day life, because the emotion is unspecified and unattached. The piano, let us say for example, will thus become an important means for the attempt at expression, disclosure, or communication on the part of those children who have difficulties of various kinds with one or both parents. To gay children, who often experience a shutdown of all feeling as the result of sensing their parents’ and society’s disapproval of a basic part of their sentient life, music appears as a veritable lifeline” (17).

Outtakes I

1. Quotations from the teleplay by Tere Rios.

2. Quotations from the premiere episode of *The Partridge Family* taken from the teleplay by Bernard Slade.
Chapter 2. Love Barbra

1. Dialogue from *Funny Girl* quoted from the screenplay by Isobel Lennart.
2. The production designer, John De Cuir, had earlier designed the sets for *The King and I* (1956) and *Cleopatra* (1963), and there are traces of Eastern exoticism and Roman decadance in his sets for *Hello, Dolly!* De Cuir won an Oscar for each of these three films.
3. Quoted from the screenplay by Ernest Lehman.
5. D. A. Miller offered me this interpretation of the Streisand fan’s relation to the star.

Outtakes II

1. Quoted from the screenplay by Paul Zindel.

Chapter 3. The Wreck of the Family

1. These words follow the opening credits in *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972), produced by Irwin Allen for Twentieth Century-Fox; all subsequent quotations are taken from the screenplay by Stirling Silliphant and Wendell Mayes.
2. The late-nineties rash of disaster films, including *Twister, Speed* and *Speed 2, Volcano, Daylight, Dante's Peak,* and *Titanic,* though they indulge our appetite for witnessing other people’s lives come undone, differs from the seventies disaster films in several respects. The nineties heroes tend to have extraordinary expertise or access to extraordinary technology for coping with disaster, whereas the seventies heroes have to rise to the occasion. The nineties disaster is personified, making it more like a self-consciously willful monster than a meaningless natural occurrence beyond human ken. The nineties films feature less blood and less individuated human suffering; they are more reluctant than seventies films to let good people die. The nineties films take a more narrowly focused look at the interpersonal dramas of the main characters, to the point where, as in the case of *Titanic,* the central, heterosexual love plot (the story of a cross-class shipboard romance) eclipses all the other characters along with their narrative possibilities. The seventies films, by contrast—and *The Poseidon Adventure* is a prime example of this—tend to view all of the characters in the same way: from a distance, as “little people,” remarkable for the kinds of heroism and know-how that ordinary people are famous for showing in times of distress.
3. One could argue that, beyond the film’s invitation to sympathize with all of its characters, men and women, young and old, fat and thin, adventuresome and timid, the very mise en scene of *The Poseidon Adventure* (upside-down space) evokes in the viewer a kind of gay subjectivity for which conventional positionality has been completely “inverted.” See Lee Edelman’s “Seeing Things: Representation, the Scene of Surveillance, and the Spectacle of Gay Male Sex” for a discussion of the psychoanalytic links, ever since Freud, between male homosexuality, spatial disorientation, and the blurring of subjectivity with objectivity.
4. In *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests what might have occurred to middle-class parents such as mine when they thought of Gothic novels like *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: “A story, Gothic in its own right, from Beverley Nichols’ twentieth-century autobiography, *Father Figure*, will illustrate the particular comic, educative, and terrorizing potential that the Gothic novel and the ‘unspeakable’ had realized by the first decades of this century. Nichols’ middle-class parents had a higher-class male friend who rouged, acted effeminate, and would to a knowing observer have seemed from the first glance to be telegraphing his homosexuality. The elder Nicholses, reactionary but unworldly, saw none of this. They were simply delighted that their friend took such a keen interest in their young son. One night, though, Beverley’s father came into the boy’s room drunk and found him with a copy of *Dorian Gray*—a present from the friend. The father nearly choked. He hurled the book at his son. He spat on it over and over, frothing at the mouth. Finally he began ripping the book to shreds—with his teeth” (95).

**Outtakes III**

1. Quotations taken from the screenplay by Paul Gallico.
2. Quotations taken from the teleplay by Stewart Stern.

**Chapter 4. Like Home**

1. This and other quotations are taken from the screenplay by Joel Schumacher.

**Chapter 5. Coming Out, with Al Pacino**

1. This and other quotations taken from the Academy Award–winning screenplay by Frank Pierson.