

10-31-1979

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Gregory Fitz Gerald

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Repository Citation

Meyer, Nicholas; Rubin, Stan Sanvel; and Fitz Gerald, Gregory, "Nicholas Meyer: 10-31-1979" (1979). *Writers Forum Videos*. Video 22.

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WRITER'S FORUM

presents

Nicholas Meyer

10/31/79

A native New Yorker, a graduate of the University of Iowa, author of three and one half novels. The Black Orchid is coauthored with Barry J. Kaplan. Nicholas Meyer whose screenplay for the Seven Percent Solution was nominated for an Academy Award, wrote the screenplay and made his feature film directing debut for the Warner Brothers release Time After Time. Discussing Mr. Meyer's works are Stan Sanv~~e~~ Ruben, Associate Professor of English at the State University of New York College at Brockport, former director of the Writer's Forum, and a published poet and editor. The host for today's Writer's Forum is Gregory Fitzgerald, founding director of the Writer's Forum, author, professor of English at the State University College at Brockp~~o~~rt, and the Forum's current director.

Fitzgerald: Welcome to the Writer's Forum, ~~N~~Nick. Tell me, there's a question that's in my mind about your professional career. It's a mix between two genra's, the novelist and the film-writer director. How are these two things compatible or incompatible?

Meyer: Well, I'm always abliged to explain it, which I think is due to the fact that in the age of specialization in which we live you're supposed to do what you're supposed to do and if you're any more than that people raise eyebrows and say what do you mean by that? Are you an eye, ear, nose and throat doctor or are you a stomach doctor or are you just an eye doctor? You're only supposed to find your own

balewich and confine yourself to it. I started writing novels really as a kind of fluke. I was always interested in theater and film and as a member of the writer's workshop in 1972 in Hollywood, the writer's workshop--the writer's guild, I said workshop it's because we've been banding that word around before the cameras went on. As a member of the writer's guild, I went on strike in 1972 when the writer's guild went on strike and you had to picket everyday and were not allowed to write screenplays. And when I got through picketing, my legs had been exercised but what I refer to as my mind had not received much in the way of nourishment. I couldn't write screenplay so I started to write novels. And the, my career as a novelist which was sort of haphazard and arbitrary in its beginning, took off. And lent me some very agreeable notoriety. I enjoyed writing novels and I suspect that I will write more at some point, I hope to write better ones. They are, in answer to your original question asked I believe early yesterday morning, uh they are compatible in that they are um each have their own kind of fulfillment. Writing novels is a solitary exercise. You get up in the morning, the way I write them, put on a bathrobe, make a pot of coffee and stay home all day and you commune with yourself it's silent enterprise, nobody interrupts you and you really also have complete control over what you're doing, based on the kinds of contracts that exist between writers and publishers. They can't change a word unless you say they can. Same thing if you were a playwright

Dramatist Guild Contract, no one can change it. And it is strictly you and you can take as long as you want to say something, there's no space limit in novels as James Michener has proven. On the other hand, film making is a group experience, a social experience. It is a family experience, because the film crew becomes a family for three to six months or however long it takes. And I find that after one of these, I'm always willing to try ~~another~~ ^{the} another, you can O.D. on people and on the group experience and on the interaction and ~~the~~ politicking and on this and on that and you long to be by yourself in the quiet of a little room containing mighty men and writing by yourself. And after that you think you are going to go squirrelly if you don't meet sixty guys and go out on location someplace and go and do a movie. So, I like going back and forth

RUBIN: To extend the question a little further, is there something you feel you can do in film that you can't so in literary writing and vice a versa. Do you feel any sense of constraint or limit of possibility that is distinctive to the business?

MEYER: This is a complicated question because, in the first place it is true that as our society becomes increasingly illiterate if you want to reach more people you choose a film instead of a book. Of course, if you really want to reach a lot of people you choose television instead of film. One night on television more people will see whatever crap it is you mount than will an entire run time after time for example.

One night sixty million people sit down. You can't conceive this and then they're disappointed if there's only twenty million people who've seen it. So, in a very literal sense you reach a wider audience as we become increasingly illiterate. The Seven Percent novel for example I think sold 300,000 in hard cover and about 2 million in paperback. Well compare that with one night of "Laverne and Shirley" and there's a ballgame. On the other hand, I'm not really swayed by that I, because basically I find the person, I create fundamentally to please one person, which is me. And this is not meant to imply a certain arrogance or indifference to what audiences go for, all I mean is that I think if I like something, other people will like it, but I'm not going to try to second guess sixty million people that I don't know. So, if something seems to me to be more appropriate through a book and requiring more internal description, monologue, contemplation - then a book fits it and that's the way I'll do it, consideration is that the audience doesn't really enter into it. On the other hand, film is a form of drama and as a form of drama it must obey dramatic rules. It must move, it must have conflict. A novel is really a much looser format, you can do, I think a much more things in terms of playing around with time particularly. Films, to me, resemble dreams. And I'm intrigued by this resemblance and this a a fly, he can't find the airport. There's a, films are the closest things to dreams I've ever seen. You go into a place, I discovered them at a very early age and I've

never seen anything so terrified, in the arbitrary way it could bring to you any sensations and whether they were special effects or just how you just oppose different faces, scenes or ideas, The way music enters into it. Movies are fun, I like movies.

FITZ GERALD: Does that have a psychoanalytical significance; the fact that it is dream-like?

MEYER: Well, it would be like, to belabor the point, the resemblance ~~is noted~~ I don't know, you are asking a question, I presume in part because my father is a psychoanalyst or because I've been an analyst. No, but I know it is the closest thing to a manufacturer's dream, as opposed to the way you go to bed and letting your unconscious do what it is about. I can make a dream and in fact you could look at films as dreams of certain people. There are also variables of how much control you have and what is arbitrary and what could not be controlled. Never the less, it is also true that any form of art, whether it is a book, a poem, a painting could be looked at as a representative of the author's ~~fantasy~~ life. It is a fantasy made conscious and in that sense the particular kind of fantasy the film represents the most seems to be dreams; they seem to be very easily perceived relationships between them.

FITZ GERALD: You spoke of your father as a psychoanalyst. Did he have any role in the creation, in the background of Seven Per Cent Solution with the relationship of Freud and the rest of them.

MEYER: Yes, inevitable one. It was because I was the son of a psychoanalyst. I suppose that I first grew up and noticed, as I read the Sherlock Holmes story, that who does this man remind me of? What does Holmes, in methodology, seem to resemble so much. For a long time I couldn't put my finger on it until somebody said to me, they said "oh your father is a shrink, is he? Is he a Freudian?" I didn't know. So I went home and said to him "Are you a Freudian?" where upon he developed a funny hysteria and threw me out of the house. He said, "well, that is kind of a dumb question because it is no more possible to discuss the history of psychoanalysis without beginning with Freud, then you can discuss the history and discovery of America without beginning with Columbus.

But supposedly nothing has happened since Columbus or since nothing happened since Freud be very rigid and very doctrine. Indeed, when a patient comes to see me I listen to what he says, I listen to how he says it, I listen to what he doesn't say, I look at how he's dressed, or how he is told to dress. I am in a world searching for clues from him, delivered wittingly or otherwise as to what the problem is. I said that this sounds like detective work. He said it is in a way and then bells began to go off and the genesis of the book was that I finished at the age of 23 rereading the Sherlock Holmes stories and marveled at really how enchanting they are. How charming and how ingenious and how familiar. I felt the same sense of frustration at the end of sixty stories that they were over. I said, "my gosh" I wish there were more and yet all the other ones stink, all those imitations. I could never watch the Basil Rathbone Movie, I couldn't get through. And the other pastiches and with some sense of hubris, I thought well I, I must be able to do better than this. And damn it if they don't remind me of pop somehow. And did Arthur Konindoyle ever know anything of the life and writings of Sigmond Freud? Interesting question and I checked out the dates and I found out that Freud died in 1939 and Doyle in 1930 both in London. That looked kind of interesting then I discovered that Freud was very heavily involved with cocaine. Sherlock Holmes cocaine addict. Freud's first article on cocaine was published by, in conjunction with two other writers--Krenigstein and Kurler, ~~two~~ eye doctors. There was a publication about the use of cocaine as anesthetic during eye surgery. Arthur Konindoyle was an ophthalmologist who had been to Vienna for six months to study ophthalmology. Some of the tumblers are falling into place, the circuitry is lighting up, Sherlock Holmes meets Sigmond Freud!! AH and the rest is history.

RUBIN: This leads to a good question, natural question. You talk about film as a dream, very interesting topic, you talk about the kind of historical research. How much research and how much fantasy goes into your work?

MEYER: This is a very interesting question, in my opinion question because a lot of people think that you do a

tremendous amount of research and then they can't dare leave it out. James Michner I don't think could leave any research out. I once was speaking in Detroit at a book luncheon and I was trying to tell people why they should buy the West End Horror I think and I said that this book was lighter than a James Michner novel, it was easier to carry, you could prop it up on your chest at night without worrying about caving in your lungs, and I said the one thing it does not contain is as much research as a James Michner novel. According to the Food and Drug Act I am bound to tell you that it does not have as much of however recent research has proved that too much research leads to white mice. Uh... the trick about doing research to me is analogous to painting scenery. You have to paint the scenery that's going to be seen. And whatever happens out in the wings you don't care about. And there is some kind of art and I'm not sure what it is, but I know that I've got it. It's one of the things I do like about my writing is that I know what's relevant when I read it. I say oh, I've got to work this in and I know what there's no room for, I'll leave that out. I'm not compelled. It's a delicate line to walk, to decide how much stuff is required and at a certain point, you don't want to know any more. And that's very tricky. There was a study Henry James was being told some story by somebody, some real incident and he said hey wait a minute don't tell me more I don't want to know what really happened. And in writing Black Orchid, which is a novel about a man who stole a rubber seeds from the Brazilian community of Manash,

um the way the novel began or was originally was a screenplay was somebody said have you ever heard of the city of Manaus. M-a-n-a-u-s. in Brazil. I said never. I said here's a city, a thousand miles up the Amazon the river itself twelve times the size of the Mississippi, longer than the Nile. Has the most beautiful opera house in the world-this city. Has, was the first city in the world to be totally lit by electricity. Had mass transit before Boston, had the highest rate of inflation in the world, the prostitutes had diamonds in their teeth. I said strictly my kind of town. I said but how come I never heard of it? Grew it proposing today a movie about Manaus. I said how come I never heard of this place. And they said oh well you see the whole economy was based on rubber, it was the only place in the world rubber came from, they charged \$3.00 a pound for rubber, and some guy got away with the rubber seeds and they planted them in Salon, and Malasia and became the great British rubber plantations and they produced rubber for 9 cents a pound, that was the end of Manaus. I said, that's the story!! That's it!! They said don't you want to know? I said NO! I said, that's it, don't confuse me. We now have Jason and Media and if we could only arrange them fleeing down a river, she could cut up her brother in little pieces and throw him to the Piranha, you got a winner. So, you know, I did enough research to flush it out, but I wouldn't want to be confused, you know, by reality and that's why that book starts out with that Italian phrase.

_____ If it isn't the truth, it ought to be.

and it makes a good story.

FITZ GERALD: I really liked that book, I liked your hero, Kincaid too, he was a remarkable man.

MEYER: Somebody said who do you want to play him and I said Clark Gable. But he's . . . you gonna let that stop you?

RUBIN: Another aspect of your fantasy life is that it seems heavily set in the Victorian period. Why is that? How does that happen?

MEYER: There can be no redemption without sin, that was what Resputin told the emporess. I'm fascinated by the Victorians because I like the language, I like English and they spoke English and it was very beautiful. I like Elizabethan English even better but nobody else understands it, so I don't have many Elizabethan fantasies and people said "time after time," if you had a machine where would you go, you want to go to the ^{Victorians} Elizabethans and I say no, I'd like to attend a play in the Globe Theatre and then go for a Kool-aid at the Mermaid afterwards and then listen to those guys talk, that would be my idea of a good time. So I would love to write Elizabethan English even more than I would Victorian English, I did, I wrote a play in Elizabethan, a play about Alexander the great which was loosely stolen from Henry the fifth. But what the small borrows, the great man steals, I'm aspiring. But I like the Victorian language, I love Charles Dickens, love to read that stuff, Anthony Trollop - I'm nuts about Trollop, H. Writer Haggard, Robert Lewis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle. It seems to me that the novel was very beautiful than, you can't get, very few contemporary novels that I get stoked on.

FITZ GERALD: Well you took on disguise, the disguise of Doctor Watson, tell me what made you take on that disguise.

MEYER: Well, I took this on in the two Sherlock Holmes books.

I don't write all my novels under the name "Doctor Watson". It's interesting how many people thought Doctor ~~of~~ Watson was real. I had some British biographical company, British!, no less, send a letter to my publisher say they were collecting information on the characters, can you tell us about this Doctor Watson, is he married, how many children does he have? In the Sherlock Holmes stories I chose the name Watson for two reasons. One, in the original Colin Doyle stories there supposed to be narrated by not by Doyle or an anonymous third person narrator but by Holmes' friend, Watson. Therefore if I am writing an imitation Holmes' story, it seemed only appropriate to sign it Watson. The other point was that I felt that it was kind of nerdy to write somebody else's style, somebody else's characters and say "By Nicholas Meyer". I didn't invent Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson. I didn't invent the grammar and the syntax, ~~the style~~ that I was attempting to replicate in these stories, I cannot look upon myself as an originator -- to sign your name, it seemed a little, as we say in Japanese, a little hootspa. And I decided that the Watson thing was a nice middle ground and I could say, "edited by Nicholas Meyer and sort of preserve the fiction of the imitation at the same time not take credit where I didn't feel I was quite entitled.

FITZ GERALD: In his review of your latest movie, "Time after Time", Martha Schlesinger pointed out that you have some social commentary about 1979, especially in relationship to television. For example, One ~~xxx~~ of your characters turns on the television, it's Jack the Ripper and shows that this is a more violent age than any other.

MEYER: Nice thing about "Time after Time" was that this story let me say anything I wanted about the world in which we live simply.

by having Wells confronted or through his look of things. You didn't have to rig it. It wouldn't be a sermon without some people who get the general idea in the movie, criticize it for not going far enough. Somebody said that messages were for Western Union. Nevertheless, what greatly appeal to me, was that there is a lot of things about the world in which I live that I can't stand. I suppose chiefly the thing I can't stand is that it's ending. And that bluntly, I don't think we're going to be here to see in the new century. I don't think the human race will be here to see it in. This makes me very mad and very sad. And I'm particularly ~~am~~ sad at the process, which is a kind of h winding down and going backwards. I see people don't know how to read anymore. The literacy scores, every year they publish...for the fifteen straight year literacy has dropped. There is no question in my mind that television is responsible for this, that television is the single, greatest destructive force that civilization has ever had to contend with. And people say there is a lot of good things on it, but that's not the point. The point is that it's in your home. This gaping or unblinking eye take your pick. Which is this gorging stuff and used as a soporific by people automatically, parents plunk the kid down, that will keep them quiet. Compartmentalizing all our emotions into twelve minute increments, after which somebody comes on and rubs underarm deodorant or something and tells you that Miami is five dollars a day less. It's really horrible and other things that I don't like about our society again, we should just have Wells walk through them, whether it's fast foods, restaurants, cars, any kind of noise pollution, anything... well the movie lets you see ourselves from the perspective of a martian, a guy who just walks in and doesn't know what a coke bottle is, a garbage disposal. He says where are your books? He says I don't read

that much any more. I watch T.V. even though I know it's crap.

Fitz Gerald: It's a marvelous ideolist you've made of Wells.

Meyer: But as a young man he was an ideolist, and as an old man he was exactly the opposite. He wanted on his tombstone to say, God damn you all I told you so. And in a sense, the movie explains his transition. He comes back from the future and say I've seen the future and it doesn't work and I've seen the future don't think it works.

RUBIN: IF there is in the movie what you could call, not going to dispute, but some of the things you said, but there is in the movie a happy ending both in the romantic love thing and the Ripper gets thrown into the future.

MEYER: Now that you've destroyed it for people who haven't seen it, yes that's true. I think to a certain extent it is a corrective for a painful reality and I wanted people to have a good time in this film. It's a romance and an adventure story. The primary purpose of art, in my opinion, is to make you feel, not to make you think. It's an emotional, not an intellectual experience, you want to laugh or you want to cry, something like that. The best art is the kind that after you have finished feeling, this is my feeling, after you have finished wiping your eyes or stop laughing, then it sticks to the ribs of your mind in some ways and you walk and think "Gee, that was interesting and then you start to think about what you saw. Then the intellectual response comes afterwards. And in my favorite plays and my favorite books and my favorite movies they all have this effect that after I have been emotionally engaged in something I wind up thinking about it later and "time after Time" was very much designed with that in mind, I was trying in the age of Built and Obesence to make something that would last, something you could go back and look

at. And one of things that occurred to me about most movies, and is why going back and looking at them is a tricky business. Most movies only work on one level, take "Alien", purpose to make you scream. If you see it again, you may scream again, but not as much. If you see it a third time, you start to become aware of the mechanics involved and enjoying it on a very intellectual level, saying "I see how they set you up for this" and so forth. But its not going to yield new levels of meaning. You go to see a comedy ^{like the In Law} or a Night at the Opera, although Night at the Opera is better comedy because it works on more levels, you notice more things. But you go and it makes you laugh and if you see it again, maybe the same jokes will make you laugh again, and maybe you'll laugh a third time cause by stepmother, a wonderful woman forgets every joke I tell her -- a week later I could tell her the same joke and she'll think "funny joke". But basically not, basically its the same, Whereas with "TIME after Time", it was a movie meant to work on five levels: it was supposed to be science-fiction, a thriller, a romance, comedy and a social commentary. And everytime you see the movie, ^{it changes} something ^{else} jumps out at you more. I've spoken to people who have seen it more than once and I've noticed it myself, though it's harder for me, but the movie plays a differnt way everytime you see it. Second time not so funny.

FITZ GERALD: Don't you have any trouble setting up ~~h~~ that movie? How'd it come about? Give us some hisory of it please?

MEYER: The history of the movie is not very complicated. Two years ago, which would be the summer of 1977, Carl Alexander who was in graduate school at the University of Iowa in the late 60's when I was an undergraduate, where I knew him from. He called me up the summer of 77,

he said I'm writing a novel, which is loosely inspired by the 7% solution. I have seventy-five pages in a outline would you read it and give me a critic. So I read it and I critic it at length and I optioned my rights my movie rights to it. Because I thought that it would make a far more interesting film. It's such a visual idea. And for those people who don't know what the ideas we are talking about will say with dual sim-
ation, that "Time after Time" was ~~about~~ ^{about} the young G.H. Wells who in 1893 builds a time machine with which he plans to investigate the socialist Utopian societies of the future. Unfortunately, Jack the Ripper sur-
rounded by the police, in 1893, uses Wells's time machine to escape to the socialist Utopia. The machine has a homing device which brings it back everytime it leaves unless you know how to stop it, which the Ripper doesn't. So it comes back, and Wells looks at the dial and sees where the Ripper has gone. He has gone to November of 1979. And believing that he has unleashed a maniac on perfect society, and that he alone is responsible for this tragedy Wells goes after him. After the first fifteen minutes of the movie, the balance of the movie takes place where they accidentally wind up which is San Francisco, California 1979. And they played cat and mouse with each other in a sci-fi world in which push button telephones, miniskirts, and airplanes are sci-fi hardware. Telephones that look like Mickey Mouse and the english language are tot-
ally baffling to them. Of course, ~~Wells~~ ^{Weber} feels right at home he becomes the zodiac killer. Wells in persuing him ~~meets~~ the liberated emancipated woman which is the embodiment of all his theories on the subject falls in love with her. And then of course the ripper goes after her. And it will cost you four dollars to find out what happened. Although, if you payed close attention to this interview, you will gather it's not to unhappy.

Rubin: Entertaining.

Meyer: Entertaining, right. Which doesn't have to be a synonym for mindless. So after I optioned the rights to the sixty-five pages, I sat down and wrote my own screenplay, then I took it to my producer, Herb J _____, my partner. And I said you want to produce this, I'm going to direct it, he said sure. Then we went around to studios with a simple yes or no offer, which is the kind they ultimately respond to the most, anything that doesn't cause a lot of decisions. Here is the script, here's the director, there's the producer it will cost you three and half million dollars yes or no. A lot of people said no but Warner Brothers and O'Ryan said yes simultaneously, so they split it.

Rubin: What sort of back ground did you have to go into directing?

Meyer: Well I had never directed anything with a camera, so in that sense I had literally had none. I had however, beginning at the University of Iowa and later on in Summerstock directed plays. In fact, that was always my goal, my conscious goal was to direct plays. So I directed a bunch of plays. And then I had the opportunity of directing a play week on the radio, on WSUI. It was quite fascinating we did Hamlet, Julius Caesar, MacBeth, a version of Alice in Wonderland, and a few originals. I did ~~a few~~ ^{the} adaptations of them. I did "A Mid-Summer Nights Dream" with all the Mendelson Music in. It went on for two and a half hours without a commercial a lot of fun. I don't if anybody listen to it, but I always wanted to put the music together with the words. So that was my experience directing, and I thought that was something I was good at but that was my conviction. That's why I said give me the money. I just had an intuition that I was better at it than writing. A lot of people may have similar intuitions and they may be dead wrong, so it's hard to tell. To know thyself.

Fitzgerald: Did your backers try to tie your hands in any way when you signed up for the film of Time after Time?

Meyer: Well, they wouldn't have called it tying my hands. We're talking about Warners I presume. What they did was they got, I mean they got nervous after having made the deal and even though in terms of today's inflated economy \$4 million which is what the film was finally budgeted at, is not considered a large amount of money when you compare it to, you know, Mike Chimino making Heaven's Gate for \$40 million, you can make 20 pictures for this amount of money. Relatively small yet they still wanted to protect their investment, \$4 million and they kept trying to hedge bets by casting name actors in the roles regardless of whether they would have been appropriate to play the part. The most ludicrous was an attempt to get me to cast Mick Jagger as the ripper, in the movie, it was a lot of pressure brought to bear. Very little pressure with one exception during the shooting, they let me shoot and the next round of real battles came when they saw the movie, which they hated. And, I got a laundry list typed of cuts and changes that they wanted, which fell into four categories, changes that were good ideas, that I was happy to do; changes that I was already planning to do; changes that I couldn't do, because I didn't have the footage; and the 85% category of changes that I wouldn't do. Everything that made the film special and delightful and personal they wanted to grind out. Sometimes they wanted things out in the finished movie that were in the screen-

play that they had undertaken to film. They said, does he have to go down on his knees at the end and cry? We don't expect him to be Clint Eastwood but I said, I said what do you want him to do? I said, they got a knife, the guys got a knife under the girls if he moves for it, she'll get her throat ...what do you suggest? They oh, oh well if you put it that way... I said, you remember fellas, it was in the script. I go uh huh, ok.

Rubin: But, this isn't discouraging you from making another film, I gather.

Meyer: Well, I, it doesn't discourage, no it doesn't discourage, making the film was the most fun I ever had. The only time it really got hairy was when the front office started to mix in which really in retrospect really wasn't all that much, at the time you know, I did a lot of throwing up wondering if they were going to take the thing away from me if I wouldn't play ball. They, they tend not to take movies away from you unless you're going wildly over budget or else if the film is in some kind of serious, incredible trouble. Because, if they do take the film away from you, then film makers don't want to work at that studio and they are in business to attract gifted people. So, if the word gets out that they took Meyer's film away from him, then score says ----or somebody says I don't want to work there because they, you know, that is a kind of um. That's the atom bomb but they won't use it because it is the atom bomb so it's almost never used. Nevertheless, if you're on the hot seat, you don't have that objectivity

you don't have that perspective, and you can get pretty worried and they will, they'll put a lot of pressure on you. So, the way I got around this memo with this long list of things, I remembered that my father used to describe my grandmother, convincing him that he had a large meal when he hadn't in fact had very much and she would say, you had peééas, and caaarrots. So, I got a piece of paper and stuck it in the typewriter and I wrote a memo baàck, and the first paragraph which was single space was a very long digest of of of double talk and gobbly gook about received on the 16th of October..... the following suggestions have been considered, and are being implemented. And you know with four spaces between a line, I said well we're cutting Peeeas, we're giving you caaarrots and so I listed the three things I was going to change and covered all the paper listing it and then there was another long paragraph on the bottom saying other changes that are being considered... then I sent it back and I said to my producer, I said, now we're not showing the movie again until it's finished, because I don't want this hassle.

Rubin: There's this long history, or at least an image of American writers going to Hollywood and being shafted. I mean Nathaniel Lex and the Day of the Locust comes to mind and a lot of others, Faulkner and others. On the other hand, Marguerite Derieux, the French writer and filme maker wrote an article once, I think it was entitled "The Book

of the Film." I think she made the right out statement that once the novel has been made, has been directed, as of her own film the writer will ne ver go back to doing a novel. I gather you don't feel that way either.

MEYER: I don't think I would never go back to writing a novel, as I said novels--they're fun in a different way . It's a total kind of control, it's a solitary exercise, you don't feel like asking anybody for permission or waiting and being tactful or arguing or reasoning or in any way relating, you just sit there, and do it yourself, probably related to masturbation, you don't need another person. You don't have to look your best either when you write, it's the same thing , you put on your bathrobe and put on the coffee. I don't think that I would necessarily go back on it, as I said, they're each fun.

FITZ GERALD: What do you think were the most important things that prepared you for the present professional career that you are following? Say in education, influence of individuals, experiences, that kind of thing.

MEYER: Well, I had several teachers who had extraordinary influences, I don't know if you realize it, but you were one of them at the University of Iowa, so I was very lucky because somebody said you find somebody in your life who is a teacher and you glom onto them and they have enormous influence and sometimes they are not even aware of the kind of influence. Sometimes they are a teacher in a formal classroom, and sometimes it's just somebody you learn from. And either I'm lucky or:

or feebleminded but I had loads. In high school there was a lady named Madeline Gremay, I don't know where Miss Gremay is. She was very young and she was very beautiful, she was ~~gorgeous~~, she was rather tall, which I am not. I used sit in the back of the class and it was a toss up between salivating or concentrating. She never wore the same clothes day after day, or that kind of thing. She was a brilliant teacher. She was a wonderful, extraordinary teacher and she really exposed me to Shakespeare, which was the largest influence in my life not that I could be like him, but I just get really good ideas about what good art was. Laurence Olivier I consider a teacher because around the time that she was exposing me to Shakespeare in high school I was a Laurence Olivier fan. And he was in this film, Henry the Fifth, I knew it was Shakespeare, but I went and saw it anyway because of him. I was just knocked out, I stayed in the theatre and saw the thing four times in a row. I came up to the hip on Henry the Fifth, Richard the Third and then Hamlet, because it's no good in school to just read the stuff. It isn't about reading, it was meant to be fun, it was meant to go to a show and be entertained by it. And I think Olivier did an incomparable service to many people, to the movies, to Shakespeare. I felt I learned a lot from him. And just to show you just how wonderful life could be, we all know that life can be horrible, it never occurred to me that I would meet this man, let alone he act in anything that I wrote, and ~~read~~^{say} my dialogue. But I finally did meet him when he played Professor Moriarty in the Seven Percent Solution. And I told him about this life long

thing and he asked for a copy of the book. I knew just what to write. I said, "To Laurence Olivier, whose art has taught me so much about life." Because that's the way I felt. Then at the University of Iowa, I couldn't get away from influences that were really important. There was yourself, there was a teacher named Howard Stein, a very interesting man, a crucial teacher of mine and I will always describe which way these teachers were important in a minute. And a man named, Pater Arnot, who is now the head of the theatre department at Tuft's. I remember having the same feeling I believe I mentioned to you off camera, coming out of classes doing smarter than when I went in. And I think that what teaching did for me, or what school did for me in that sense was, I was doing things right by a kind of intuitive process, but not knowing what made them right and since I'm not a genius and I'm not Shakespeare, I needed some codification, some method of systemizing thought and I needed to learn rules. You know what Trasinsky said, Trasinsky went to the University of Texas and said, "First you must learn all the rules so you can break them. And if you believe that art is not haphazard and not happen-stance, the deliberate contrivance, that maybe isn't appear contrived, but never the less is. Then it helps to know the rules so that you break them with some purpose in mind as opposed to just trampling through all the bushes in the garden cause you don't know where the path is. And I think that what my background was that it gave me systems of thought that helped me understand what I was doing and why it would be likely for me to work or why it wouldn't be likely for me work.

RUBIN: I would like to ask, we were talking about analysis before and off camera you were talking about the role analysis played in your own creativity, and the fact that your father is a psychcoanalysist and I guess he wasn't your analyst, would you say something about this.

MEYER: I think that what I was saying that interested you before was that a lot of creative people, they don't want to get psychoanalyzed because if I found out what makes me tick I won't be a creative person anymore. This is one of the oldest wives' tales and bugger-boos about analysts. Analysis doesn't work for many people anyway. And the hole thing about ⁶being cured ought to be put in quotation marks in any cases. But what is presupposes which is as well as cleared up now, which I intend to do definitively is that there is no link established between neurosis and creativity. Neurosis is a word that everyone uses but nobody knows what it means. Neurosis means an obsolete fear. There is no link between creativity and obsolete fears. There may be a relationship, there may be like man and the ape be descendent from a common ancestor, this so called missing link, but they have gone their separate ways and the proff of this is that you look at a lot of artists, by which I mean poets, painters, writers, musicians, their sanest thing about them is their art. They totally get it together when they sit down at the piano or come to the easle, it makes perfect sense, they see the human condition and are able to replieate it or echo it in the most crystalized term. It's only in their private lives that they're a complete mess. So whya do you think is

"cured" when they go into psychoanalysis not something that is already functioning but areas that are not functioning and the only good that could possibly come out of, in addition to making them happier in private life is the notion that suddenly areas in which their neuroses would not let them explore creatively, the barriers are down and you could expand to other places. That is certainly true in my writings. I went into analysis because I saw myself repeating the same compulsive fantasy material and are unable to diverge, to divest into other unexplored areas which for some reason was blocked to me and I wanted to knock down some of those walls and I knocked down a lot of them.

RUBIN: I wanted to ask you something. We know what you think of the twentieth century in Seven Percent Solution; who do you think come on better, Freud or Holmes? Which system of thought?

Meyer: I think they are so closely related. The ultimate point is that the spinal, the skeletal structure of the book is that Freud cures Holmes of his Cocaine addiction. In return, Holmes introduces Freud to those methods of deductive reasoning that puts his feet on the path to what becomes psychoanalysis. I think that Freud puts Freudian theory and Holmsian deduction are related. I think there is also a third thing to look for. It is not in the book at all. Stanislovsky could have been in the novel for the same reason.

FITZ GERALD: I hate to interrupt but we are out of time. I want to thank you for being a guest on the Writers Forum today. And thank you Stan for being the alternate interviewer.