reject and invent your own. In that case they belong in Column 1 of Chart 3 (page 207). For now I suggest that you circle them with a question mark.

5) Directions that give us an image.

For example, the feather which escapes Forrest's fingers and floats up into the air during the opening credits of "Forrest Gump." This image was described in the original script, and even if it had never ended up in the completed movie, it would have been circled as an image of the script, and a potential clue to the themes of the movie. It should also be listed in Column 6 of Chart 2.

6) Directions that describe an emotional event.

That is, an event with plot consequences (e.g., "He searches through the pile of clothes until he finds a gun"; "They kiss.") These need to be left in, after you cross out any descriptive words (e.g., "He searches *desperately* through the pile..."). You should translate any psychologizing explanations ("He cannot look away") into emotional events ("He does not look away"). Once you have edited and translated the description into an *event*, highlight it. Make sure you are not confusing essential information about the emotional events of the script with optional stage business; optional stage business may be highlighted but should have a question mark next to it. An important reason for crossing out superfluous stage directions and questioning optional ones is so that you can locate and highlight the necessary ones — the ones that tell you an emotional event which is not revealed by any dialogue.

After you do this, you'll be left with very sparse, circled or highlighted stage directions, and some question marks. The circled images, facts, and objects will have been entered on the proper charts. Highlighted material will contain clues to the physical and emotional life of the characters.

Below is the opening scene from the play "When You Comin' Back, Red Ryder?" by Mark Medoff. Before you read on, you might want to look at the scene and do your own circling and crossing out.

ANGEL

Good mornin', Stephen.

(Stephen does not look at her, but glances at the clock and makes a strained sucking sound through his teeth — a habit he has throughout — and flips the newspaper back up to his face. Unperturbed, Angel proceeds behind the counter.)

I'm sorry I'm late. My mom and me, our daily fight was a little off schedule today.

(Stephen loudly shuffles the paper, sucks his teeth.)

I said I'm sorry, Stephen. God. I'm only six minutes late.

STEPHEN

Only six minutes, huh? I got six minutes to just hang around this joint when my shift's up, right? This is really the kinda dump I'm gonna hang around in my spare time, ain't it?

ANGEL

Stephen, that's a paper cup you got your coffee in.

(Stephen is entrenched behind his newspaper.)

STEPHEN

Clark can afford it, believe me.

ANGEL

That's not the point, Stephen.

STEPHEN

Oh no? You're gonna tell me the point though, right? Hold it, lemme get a pencil.

ANGEL

The point is that if you're drinkin' your coffee here, you're supposed to use a glass cup, and if it's to go, you're supposed to get charged fifteen instead of ten and ya get one of those five cent paper cups to take it with you. That's the point, Stephen.

STEPHEN

Yeah, well I'm takin' it with me, so where's the problem?

(Stephen has taken the last cigarette from a pack, slipped the coupon into his shirt pocket and crumpled the pack. He basketball shoots it across the service area.)

ANGEL

Stephen.

(She retrieves the pack and begins her morning routine: filling salt and pepper shakers, the sugar dispensers, setting out place mats, and cleaning up the mess Stephen evidently leaves for her each morning. Stephen reaches over and underneath the counter and pulls up a half empty carton of Raleighs and slides out a fresh pack. He returns the carton and slaps the new pack down on the counter.)

What're ya gonna get with your cigarette coupons, Stephen?

(Stephen reads his paper, smokes, sips his coffee.)

Stephen?

(Stephen lowers the newspaper.)

STEPHEN

How many times I gotta tell ya to don't call me Stephen.

ANGEL

I don't like callin' ya Red. It's stupid — callin somebody with brown hair Red.

STEPHEN

It's my name, ain't it? I don't like Stephen. I like Red. When I was a kid I had red hair.

ANGEL

But ya don't now. Now ya got brown hair.

STEPHEN

(exasperated)

But then I did, and then's when counts.

ANGEL

Who says then's when counts?

STEPHEN

The person that's doin' the countin'! Namely yours truly! I don't call you Caroline or Madge, do I?

ANGEL

Because those aren't my name. My name's Angel, so —

STEPHEN

Yeah, well ya don't look like no angel to me.

ANGEL

I can't help that, Stephen. At least I was named my name at birth. Nobody asked me if I minded bein' named Angel, but at least —

STEPHEN

You could change it, couldn't ya?

ANGEL
What for? To what?

STEPHEN
(Thinking a moment, setting her up)
To Mabel.

ANGEL
How come Mabel?

STEPHEN
Yeah...Mabel.

ANGEL
How come? You like Mabel?

STEPHEN
I hate Mabel.
(Stephen stares at her, sucks his teeth.)

ANGEL
Look, Stephen, if you're in such a big hurry to get outta here, how come you're just sittin' around cleaning your teeth?

STEPHEN
Hey, look, I'll be gone in a minute. I mean if it's too much to ask if I have a cigarette and a cup a coffee in peace, for chrissake, just say so. A person's supposed to unwind for two minutes a day, in case you ain't read the latest medical report. If it's too much to ask to just lemme sit here in peace for two minutes, then say so. I wouldn't wanna take up a stool somebody was waitin' for or anything.
(looking around him.)

Christ, will ya look at the waitin' line to get on this stool.

ANGEL
(pause)
Did you notice what's playin' at the films?

STEPHEN
Buncha crap, whudduya think?

ANGEL
(pause)
I saw ya circle somethin' in the gift book the other mornin'.

STEPHEN
What gift book?

ANGEL
The Raleigh coupon gift book.

STEPHEN
Hey — com'ere.
(Angel advances close to him. He snatches the pencil from behind her ear and draws a circle on the newspaper.)
There. Now I just drew a circle on the newspaper. That mean I'm gonna get me that car?

ANGEL
Come on, Stephen, tell me. What're ya gonna get?

STEPHEN
Christ, whudduyou care what I'm gonna get?

ANGEL
God, Stephen, I'm not the FBI or somebody. What are you so upset about? Just tell me what you're gonna get.

STEPHEN
(mumbling irascibly.)
Back pack.

ANGEL
What?

STEPHEN
Whuddya, got home fries in your ears?

ANGEL
Just that I didn't hear what you said is all.

STEPHEN
Back. Pack.

ANGEL
Who's gettin' a back pack?

STEPHEN
The guy down the enda the counter. Chingado the Chicano. He's hitchin' to Guatamala.

ANGEL
You're gettin' a back pack? How come?

STEPHEN
Whuddo people usually get a back pack for?

ANGEL
Ya gonna go campin'.

STEPHEN
No I ain't gonna go campin'. I'm gonna go gettin' the hell outta this lousy little town is where I'm gonna go campin'.

ANGEL
When? I mean...when?

STEPHEN
When? Just as soon as I get somethin' taken care of.

ANGEL
When will that be?

STEPHEN
When will that be? When I get it taken care of — when d'ya think? Lemme have a donut.

ANGEL
(getting him a donut)
Where ya gonna go?

STEPHEN
Where am I gonna go? I'm gonna go hitchin' that way (pointing left) or I'm gonna go hitchin' that way (pointing right) and when I get to some place that don't still smella Turdville here I'm gonna get me a decent job and I'm gonna make me some bread.
(He picks up the donut and bites into it.)

ANGEL
Rye or whole wheat, Stephen?

STEPHEN
This is some donut. I think they glued the crumbs together with Elmer's.

ANGEL
Rye or whole wheat, Stephen?

STEPHEN
(with his mouth full)
Believe me, that ain't funny.

ANGEL
Don't talk with your mouth full.

STEPHEN
Christ, my coffee's cold. How d'ya like that?
(He looks at her. She pours him a fresh cup of coffee in a mug. She sets it down by him. He looks at it a minute, then pours the coffee from the mug into his paper cup.)
I told ya, I'm leavin' in less'n two minutes.

ANGEL
That's right, I forgot.

STEPHEN
Yeah, yeah.

ANGEL
You better let your hair grow and get some different clothes if you're gonna hitch somewhere, Stephen. You're outta style.

Nobody's gonna pick up a boy dressed like you with his hair like yours. And with a tattoo on his arm that says "Born Dead." People wear tattoos now that say "Love" and "Peace," Stephen, not "Born Dead."

STEPHEN
Love and peace my Aunt Fanny's butt! And who says I want them to pick me, for chrissake? You think I'm dyin' for a case a the clap, or what? I got a coupla hundred truck drivers come through here in the middle of the night that said they'd all gimme a ride anytime anywhere they was goin'. You think I'm gonna lower myself to ride with those other morons — you're outta your mind.

ANGEL
Two hundred truck drivers? Uh-uh, I'm sorry, I have to call you on that one, Stephen. If it wasn't for Lyle's station and his motel, Lyle'd be our only customer.

STEPHEN
You know, right? Cause you're here all night while I'm home sacked out on my rear, so you know how many truck drivers still stop in here, now ain't that right?

ANGEL
In the three weeks since the bypass opened, Stephen, you know exactly how many customers you had in the nights? You wanna know exactly how many, Stephen?

STEPHEN
No Christ, I don't wanna know how many. I wanna have two minutes of peace to read my damn newspaper — if that's not askin' too much! Is that askin' too much? If it is, just say the word and I'll get the hell outta here and go to the goddamn cemetery or somewhere.

Now here is what I would do:

On the first two pages I would circle "newspaper," "cigarette" and "coupon" as personal objects of Stephen's. Since they are also mentioned in the dialogue they are mandatory personal objects for him. In fact they could be circled in the dialogue rather than the stage directions. You may notice that the author didn't write a stage direction "He is drinking coffee out of a paper cup." There is no need for it, because the information is in the dialogue. In order to create a script that was easy and pleasurable to *read*, the author made decisions to leave out a stage direction about the coffee cup and put in the stage directions regarding the newspaper and cigarettes. In order to *adapt* the script to the stage or screen, we need to cannibalize the stage directions for clues, not read them for instructions. So I am crossing out the rest of the stage directions referring to Angel's entrance and Stephen's reaction to it.

Soon the writer mentions some objects (salt and pepper shakers, sugar dispensers, place mats, cleaning supplies) which are potential personal objects for Angel. We might have inferred them anyway, since they are not unusual to a diner. They are not referred to in the dialogue, so they are not mandatory. I'm crossing them out but highlighting, with a question mark, some stage business involving Angel's work-related activities and Stephen discarding his empty cigarette pack for a fresh one. I am tempted to cross these instructions out, because I like to find my own blocking and business in rehearsal, but,

to be conservative, I'll highlight this idea with a question mark, to try in rehearsal. On the other hand, the directions "Stephen reads his paper, smokes, sips his coffee" and "Stephen lowers the newspaper" I'm going to cross out. They seem to indicate inner life.

Right after the "I hate Mabel" line, I'll highlight "sucks his teeth" with a question mark, since it provokes Angel's next line, "...how come you're just sittin' around here cleaning your teeth?" Although he doesn't really have to be sucking his teeth; if he were using a toothpick that would also justify the line. I would want to make sure in rehearsal that the actor playing Stephen can suck his teeth credibly before committing to the teeth-sucking business. (If a star is playing the role, there probably won't have been an audition in which to find this out.) At this point, I'll go back to the beginning and highlight "sucks his teeth" there too.

About halfway through, "He snatches the pencil from behind her ear." I would probably highlight that with a question mark. This bit of stage business may have been written by the author but is just as likely to have been taken from the first production of the play. Whether it was thought up by the author or the first director of the piece, you are free to steal it, but you are also free to come up with a different bit of business of your own. As the director, I'm not sure I'd use it, but I might want to at least try it (among other ideas) in rehearsal. All other neighboring stage directions ("exasperated," "mumbling irascibly," etc.) are results, so I cross them out.

When we get to the donut business, I'm going to highlight the word "donut," but I'm definitely going to cross out "getting him a donut," "He picks up the donut and bites into it," and "with his mouth full." Why? They are redundant; the clues to these activities are already in the dialogue. They are therefore mandatory. But I want to take them *off the page*, so I allow a donut to enter the scene almost like another character. In rehearsal we will work out the ways that this new character changes the relationship of the characters already there.

I'm going to highlight the business of her pouring the coffee into a mug, and him pouring it back into his paper cup. Some activity is needed to justify his line, "I told ya, I'm leavin' in less'n two minutes." Also I like it. I definitely want to try this idea in rehearsal. *But I am not married to it.* If it should happen not to work, I'll find something else.

Now the only stage directions left should be either circled or highlighted; the circled ones have also been entered on one of the charts. Even though I have crossed out everything I haven't circled or highlighted, this does not mean that the writer should not have put it in. There are writers whose stage directions are insightful and useful, and the ones in this scene are not bad. But there are also terrific writers who write with minimal stage directions: Chekhov, Pinter, Horton Foote. Shakespearean texts have zero directions, except for the odd "Exeunt"; in Shakespeare's plays all physical movement and business must be inferred and deduced from the dialogue. At the other end of the spectrum there are great writers who lay on the unplayable stage directions with a trowel — Eugene O'Neill, for one.

It's okay for writers to put such directions in for the convenience of the producers. In fact, producers usually judge the writing by the stage directions as much as by the dialogue. So remember that the best-written, most evocative stage directions use verbs, facts, images, events, and physical tasks instead of adjectives and explanations whenever possible (for example, "She takes off her glasses and rubs her eyes," instead of "tiredly"). But once a script has a green light and has been turned over to the director and designers and actors, the writer must send his characters out into the world the way a parent sends out the children when they turn eighteen. You must trust that they have learned good values; you have to believe that you have done all you can.

The important thing for directors is to recognize the necessary stage directions (emotional events, personal objects and thematic images) and either cross out or question everything else. Even the

directions I am suggesting that you as directors leave in are not necessarily useful to actors. Many, many actors routinely cross out *all* stage directions, to give themselves freedom to create their characters' emotional lives from scratch.

During a Skim I may glance at the stage directions. But once I have edited them, I forget about them for a while and turn my attention to the dialogue.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS — CHART I

Reading out loud is a good way to access first impressions. You make friends with the words. You may or may not wish to be alone when you read out loud. Read slowly in full voice. Don't whisper or mumble. Don't rush. Don't try to "be" the characters but don't censor yourself. Don't listen to yourself. Enjoy the words. Feel them in your mouth. Don't read the stage directions (even the ones that you have circled or highlighted).

If you are relaxed and open, there are two benefits you may get from reading out loud. You may get new ideas — or questions. Questions are better yet. In any case, you might want to jot them down briefly, because if you are doing this properly — that is, if you are in the moment — you might not remember them later.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS — CHART I

1 IDEAS/FIRST IMPRESSIONS	2 EVIDENCE FOR YOUR IDEAS	3 PARAPHRASE	4 MYSTERIOUS LINES OR EVENTS	5 THREE POSSIBLE MEANINGS	6 THE FACT OR REALITY BEHIND THE LINE

"OWNING" THE CHARACTERS

The second benefit of reading aloud is that this can begin the process of owning the characters. Just as each actor must "own" his own character, the director must own each of the characters, separately. At this point you have not yet begun figuring out what the words mean. You are allowing them to find breath and voice in your own body. You are beginning to take them off the page.

PARAPHRASING

Then you can start putting their lines into your own words. Does this sound a bit radical? I don't know. This idea is based on a very effective exercise I use in my classes. I ask the student to say the lines of a monologue she has learned. Then I ask her to tell me what is going on in the speech, what she understands about the character from it, starting with the words "This is a character who..." I tell her that her paraphrase can be any length: it can be much longer than the speech or much shorter; it can go far afield; in effect, she can say anything that pops into her head. After this I tell her to do the same thing again — again putting the speech in her own words, allowing her impulses to take her wherever they go — only changing the pronoun from "she" to "I" when she speaks of the character.

The purpose here is *not* rewriting the script, but "owning" the characters and accessing your intuition about them. Ideas often surface that you didn't even know you had.

Let's take one of Stephen's speeches on page 4:

> "Hey, look, I'll be gone in a minute. I mean if it's too much to ask if I have a cigarette and a cup a coffee in peace, for chrissake, just say so. A person's supposed to unwind for two minutes a day, in case you ain't read the latest medical report. If it's too much to ask to just lemme sit here in peace for two minutes, then say so. I

> wouldn't wanna take up a stool somebody was waitin' for or anything. Christ, will ya look at the waitin' line to get on this stool."

I have heard students paraphrase it thus: "This is a guy who overreacts to everything. He's a control freak. No matter what Angel says he has to beat her down and get the last word."

I'm sure you have recognized this as an unplayable judgment on the character; Stephen probably doesn't think of himself as a control freak. When the student takes the next step and changes the pronoun to "I," he experiences a little bit of revelation because he has to say, "I am a control freak. I can't stand it when anyone gets one up on me." Putting it in the first person makes him feel something. Maybe discomfort. Maybe a pang of recognition.

In fact, when he puts it that way, he may realize that there is a little bit of control freak in all of us. Judgments may be accurate, but they are not playable. As long as you own them, as long as you admit that these feelings are ones that we've all had or are capable of, then you're not judging but empathizing. Empathy is the difference between saying "This guy is a control freak — just as I am sometimes (although I may not like it)," rather than "This guy is a control freak — just like all the people I can't stand and who make my life miserable and who are nothing like me."

Another paraphrase of the same speech might be: "I'm tired. I don't want to be here, but I don't want to go home either. My life is not very exciting or very much fun; in fact, smoking cigarettes is one of my only pleasures. And now my mother has got it into her head to nag me about my smoking and she won't let me smoke in the house." This is an example. There could be dozens of other ways to paraphrase the speech. Such a paraphrase gives us a possible subtext of the speech. Or maybe an idea for a backstory choice (the idea of the mother forbidding smoking in the house is not anywhere in the script — I made it up). And it lets us inside the character's experience and feelings.

I think directors during their First Read should do some of this paraphrasing; not every line of the script necessarily, but as much as you have time for. Let it be fun — something you *get* to do rather than something you *have* to do. You can take notes: there is a column (Column 3) on Chart 1 for this. You needn't feel that you have to take notes, however; you can let the exercise be an experience, rather than information. If it starts to feel boring that means you're doing it mechanically, so take a break and go on to another script analysis tool. But paraphrasing does get easier and more fun the more you do it.

The purpose of the paraphrasing exercise is to get you out of your head and able to access your intuition. When they do this exercise people often find themselves saying things about the character that they didn't know they thought. The resources of their subconscious minds are being enlisted in the task of script analysis.

The paraphrasing exercise can be used to gently confront an actor with his own prejudgments (resistances) to a character, or to unlock a static interpretation. If you sense a resistance on the part of the actor, you can ask him, "What do you think of this guy? Do you like him?" If he answers with a string of negatives, you can quietly say, "Say the same thing again, only using the pronoun 'I.'"

"IT'S JUST..." AND "I ASSUME"

I make a big fuss with my students about the words "It's just..." I call them the two greatest enemies of an artist. Instead of "It's just a love scene," say "It's a love scene." Instead of "He's just apologizing to his mother," say "He's apologizing to his mother." Do you see what a big difference that is? A good director inspires the actors. "She's just waiting for the doctor's report." "It's just a confrontation between two friends." "He's just being sarcastic to the judge." You can't expect to inspire anyone when you minimize such important events. Our artistic goal is to illuminate human events, not minimize them.

"Obviously" is another red flag for me. "Stephen is obviously not attracted to Angel." Maybe I'm perverse, but as soon as I hear

someone say that something in a script is "obvious" I want to consider its opposite. Nothing in a good script is obvious. Like people, characters are subtle, arbitrary, full of contradictions, and lacking in self-knowledge. Other uninspiring qualifiers are "basically," "potentially," "sort of," etc. Think of yourself as a person who can commit, rather than qualify and hedge all your ideas, and then, when a new idea or information comes in, change your mind.

There are two other words that directors all too frequently use as the sum total of their script analysis: "I assume." "I assume that Angel lives with her mother." Don't assume anything. Investigate. Imagine. Choose.

THE TECHNIQUE OF THREE POSSIBLE

One of the best things that can happen on a First Read is that there will be lines that you don't understand, and that don't fit. An unfortunate tendency in Hollywood today is to rewrite such lines, to make everything fit, without an attempt to find out what they might mean.

Logic can be a serious roadblock to the imagination. In a well-written script (and remember, for the purposes of script analysis, we are considering any script you have decided to direct is a well-written script), such non sequiturs and contradictions — even lines that at first you don't like — can be gold. They can hold the key to some insight you have been resisting; that the key was elusive and the insight hard-won will make its truth all the more powerful.

Anytime you find a line that you don't like or doesn't make sense, I suggest that you make a quick list of three things it might possibly mean. Don't try to find the right answer but, rather, without evaluating your ideas, scribble them down.

Let's take Angel's line, "Who's gettin' a back pack?" Why does she say this (other than to set up the joke of Stephen's next line)? She just asked him what he was getting from the coupon book. Why doesn't she seem to understand that "back pack" is the answer to her question?

Okay, three possible answers. 1) Maybe she has some association with back packs that is so different from her associations with

Stephen that for a moment she can't connect the two. For instance, maybe she has a sister who is a Girl Scout leader and was talking about back packs for her troup yesterday; hearing the term jolts her mind back to that conversation and it takes a moment to allow "back pack" to be part of this conversation. 2) Maybe as soon as she hears the words "back pack" she associates it with Stephen's departure, which perhaps he has spoken of on other occasions. Maybe the image of him leaving is too painful to process quickly. 3) Maybe she engaged in some physical — or mental — activity that requires a lot of concentration. Maybe she is scrubbing the coffee machine. Or perhaps she is totaling the receipts from yesterday or making up the orders for the vendors who will make deliveries today.

Now, I didn't particularly concern myself with making sense but rather with trying to find three ideas that were different from each other. I'm looking for something — anything — to get myself started, so I can feel that I am coming up with ideas — any ideas — rather than listlessly staring at the paper. If I write them down without evaluating them, I may access my deeper resources. What I'm trying to do is not find the right answer, but turn myself on.

I find the "Technique of Three Possible" most useful when I come across hackneyed "movie-sounding" phrases, like "You just don't get it, do you?" or "You're sorry? All you can say is you're sorry?" These are words that people almost never really say in real life but which show up in movies a lot. Such lines require special attention to finding some truth, some subtext, to keep them from sounding clichéd and actorish.

If you open yourself to the idea that any line might have more than one meaning, you won't lose your equilibrium when an actor doesn't relate to something in the script that you have found compelling or beautiful or funny, and you won't panic when the actor interprets it differently. Then, too, you can use the "Technique of Three Possible" with actors who are resisting a line, to get them turned on. When they say, "This doesn't make sense to me," you can ask, "Well, what could it possibly mean?"

10

THE REALITY (FACT) BEHIND THE WORDS

Another way to understand mysterious lines is to look for the fact or event that they refer to. This goes for lines that you like as well as for lines that bother you. Lines that you like can be especially dangerous; you might fall in love with their wit or poetry and forget to look for the reality behind them. (This is one of the pitfalls of performing Shakespeare.) You have to approach such lines not by looking for the most effective way to say them and thus display their beauty, but by looking for the reality behind them.

For the "Forrest Gump" scene in which Forrest calls the front desk to complain about the noisy Watergate burglars, the director in script analysis (and the actor in performance) must put their concentration not on how funny the scene is going to be but on some reality behind it — for instance, that Forrest is a light sleeper.

MORE READING IDEAS

At some point you might try reading aloud the lines of one character at a time. For this technique, you don't even read silently the words of the other characters or any stage directions, and you don't try to make sense of the scenes. You read all his or her lines one after the other, slowly, in full voice. Something may come to you. Perhaps you may want to read the script with another person. Don't try to act the roles or the scenes. Instead, look at each other as much as possible, switching around roles from scene to scene. Or (this is my favorite) read the whole script aloud to another person. Don't read the character names or any stage directions, even circled or highlighted ones.

Finally, I want to strongly encourage you to reread the script (silently or aloud) as often as you can throughout script analysis, preproduction and rehearsal. Each time pretend it is the first time. Free your mind of the ideas you are coming up with (you have notes so you don't have to remember them), so you can return to the beginner's mind that characterizes the First Read. You may be surprised at the ideas and questions that will come to you.

THE IMMUTABLES: FACTS AND IMAGES: CHART 2

I call the facts and images of the script immutable because they are not subject to interpretation; they are in the script. They are a wonderful place to start for these reasons:

1) You don't have to be creative to come up with them. It's something you can do when you're not "in the mood" and find yourself staring at the page and don't know where to start.

2) They are the skeleton of the script, its infrastructure. You need to know them in order to feel confident that you know and understand the script.

3) They are magic keys into the subworld. Whenever you get stuck creatively you can return to them, ask a few questions, and your creative juices can be renewed.

4) Both are great ways to give direction. The facts of a script are its situation, its imaginative given circumstances — a good jumping-off place for actors. The images are an excellent tool for shaping and deepening performances.

5) They can help you avoid arguments with actors. If an actor brings in an interpretation of the script that does not encompass the facts and images, you can point them out, and they are there in black and white; this is especially useful to keep actors from judging or sentimentalizing characters. You can say, "Yes, but what about the fact that...?" This approach can help keep your egos out of the discussion.

Sometimes an actor brings in an interpretation that is supported by the facts and images, but is different from yours. When this happens you should listen with an open mind to the actor's ideas; they may turn out to be as valid as yours, or they may even be better. If you can tell the difference between this situation and the situation (above) in which the actor's ideas are not supported by the script, you will be much better prepared for discussion and rehearsal.

THE IMMUTABLES: FACTS AND IMAGES: CHART 2

1 FACTS	2 EVIDENCE	3 QUESTIONS	4 DISPUTES CONTRADICTIONS ISSUES	5 RESEARCH A. REREAD SCRIPT B. EXTERNAL C. INTERNAL	6 IMAGES	7 ASSOCIATIONS A FROM STORY B. EXTERNAL C. PERSONAL/ INTERNAL

FACTS AND EVIDENCE

Facts are very powerful for actors — the magic "as if." The actor creates a set of simple circumstances, allows himself to believe them, and then functions as if he were in those circumstances. For the purposes of this exercise we will treat the scene from "When You Comin' Back, Red Ryder?" as if it were a complete script. If we were making this movie, planning a rehearsal of this scene, we would of course examine the full script for facts. Working on one scene as if it is a full script is an exercise to teach you script analysis techniques which in the real world would be applied to a whole script.

Some facts will be clear; others we will deduce. We're not going to insist that the writer spell everything out; instead we'll look for evidence and follow clues. But we're not going to pretend to have any facts that we don't actually have. We're not going to make assumptions, judgments, or jump to conclusions; we're going to stick to facts. This is detective work. In a way we'll use some of the rules of court. For instance, hearsay is not admissible; just because a character says something is true, we won't automatically call it a fact. We will look for circumstantial evidence to back it up.

"Facts" are events that have happened or circumstances that are true before the scene starts — the character's situation. "Events" are things that happen in the scene, but once they have happened they become facts. For instance, Stephen eats a donut; that's an event in this scene. For the scene following this one, "Stephen has had breakfast" would be a fact.

Sometimes students suggest as a fact for this scene, "Angel likes Stephen." That's not a fact. I'm not saying that the role couldn't be played with that *choice*, but anything that has to do with a character's state of mind is not a fact. It is a choice or interpretation.

Often, the first thing students say when I ask them for the facts of this scene is, "Stephen wants to leave." This is not a fact either. Besides describing a state of mind, this statement is contradicted by

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the fact that he keeps sitting there. So it belongs under Column 4, "Disputes, Contradictions, Issues."

Don't forget — characters, like people, don't always tell the truth. They don't always know the truth. They remember things incompletely or inaccurately. They may not admit the truth to themselves, and, of course, sometimes they lie.

A good place to start in establishing some facts in the "Red Ryder" scene is the characters' relationship. I'll propose this statement for our list of facts: *Stephen and Angel work at the same diner.* Sometimes students call me on this one. They say that if they cross out all the stage directions it's not certain that they both work there; it could be that Stephen works there; Angel could be a friend, girlfriend, or even sister picking Stephen up after his shift. Okay, let's back up a step and look at the evidence.

There is early evidence (Column 2) that Stephen works there (his line, "I got six minutes to just hang around this joint when my shift's up, right?"). There also is evidence that she works there too: She knows about the rules of the place (how much to get charged if you drink from a paper cup); she brings him donut and coffee; her line "If it wasn't for Lyle's station and his motel, Lyle'd be our only customer" includes the proprietary "our." On the other hand, if it is a small diner in a small town and she is known as his steady girlfriend, she might be familiar enough with the place to know the rules and to pour a cup of coffee if the waitress was not there, or even to call the place "our" place. The line in which she asks him what is playing at the films could be seen as evidence that they are friends or boyfriend/girlfriend.

The stronger evidence that she does work there is her final line, "In the three weeks since the by-pass opened, Stephen, you know exactly how many customers you had in the nights? You wanna know exactly how many, Stephen?" The way I understand this line is by looking for the event behind it. First of all I recall what I know about small diners (I used to work in one). At the end of each shift, the order tickets were collected and put in numerical order and stacked

neatly so that the next morning the manager could go through them and compare them to the cash register totals. Angel's shift (if we end up proving that Angel does work there) follows Stephen's. So if she does work there, she is in a position, each morning, to count Stephen's tickets; maybe it's even her job to do so. Unpacking the fact behind this line (also called "justifying" the line), and finding that it jells with earlier evidence pointing to the likelihood that she does work there, confirms that deduction.

Proposed fact: Angel is late for her shift.

Perhaps we can accept this hearsay of Angel's because Stephen doesn't contradict it. I think we can be sure that she is no more than six minutes late; if it was more than six minutes, it seems likely that Stephen would comment (Whadya mean, six? It's eight minutes!). Some questions (Column 3) arise in my mind: Has she ever been late before? Is it habitual? Is this the first time?

Maybe she's not actually late. When I was waitressing, the other waitresses used to habitually arrive a half hour early for their shift; if they arrived exactly on time, they considered themselves late, as did the waitresses they were relieving! If I were directing this scene I might want to suggest this little adjustment to the actress, to give her another layer. (See Column 6 of Chart 3, "Imaginative Choices," page 207.)

My idea for this adjustment arose from information I happen to have because of my experience waitressing in a diner. If you are unfamiliar with the customs and traditions of diner employees, you might need to do some Research (Column 5b).

Proposed fact: Angel has a daily relationship with her mother.

The line "My mom and me, our daily fight was a little off schedule today" is strong evidence, although not actual proof, that they live together (they could live separately but speak on the phone every morning). Her calling it a "daily fight" does not actually mean they fight every day, but it might *feel* like it's every day. Her mother, if asked, might claim that she and her daughter never fight!

Is this a fact? *"Stephen doesn't want Angel to call him Stephen."* No. All we can say as a fact is that there has been at least one conversation between the two of them on the subject of his name. Even though he says, "How many times I gotta tell ya...," it still may have been only once; for some people, twice is too many times to discuss certain subjects.

We can't even include as a fact that Stephen was called "Red" as a kid. Even if he claimed it was true, we wouldn't be able to accept it as fact. Interestingly, when we reread the scene carefully (script research, Column 5a), we find he doesn't actually say that. What he says is that when he was a kid he had red hair. Of course we can't be sure that this is true either. There is no evidence for it since now his hair is brown, as even he admits. All we can say as a fact is that he *says* that he had red hair as a kid, and that on at least one occasion previous to this scene he has made a request that Angel call him "Red."

Another way of putting this would be to list it as an "issue" under Column 4. His name is an issue between them. Other issues might be her lateness, if we make the choice that it is habitual; or the rules of the diner, e.g., the paper cup rule.

Actually, as soon as I wrote that, I considered its opposite: maybe the paper cup is not a standing issue between them. Maybe it's the first time this particular issue has come up. Maybe he always uses the prohibited paper cup, but usually she indulges his lapses; today she doesn't. Or maybe he usually uses the ceramic cup and this morning has decided to make this little rebellion. I'm not trying to talk you into any of these ideas. The point is that they are *ideas — choices* — not facts. (At first glance they seem like weaker choices, but you never know. Sometimes an apparently less plausible choice can give a performance a mystery, an edge. It might be something you could whisper to the actor in between takes to freshen things up.)

QUESTIONS

Questions are perhaps the most important product of script analysis, even though you are not going to rewrite the script so all

questions are answered. Make a big list of them. If a character says, "Why are you shouting?" instead of assuming that the second character is shouting, ask questions: Is the other guy shouting? Or does the first guy have a low threshold? Could it be that what actually bothers him is the content of what the second guy said?

To me an important question of the scene is raised by Stephen's line "...as soon as I get something taken care of." Characters can lie, so he might be bullshitting — there might be nothing he has to take care of. He might have no reason except his own immobility for staying in this town instead of leaving. But I don't want to stop my script analysis here, because this thinking is likely to lead me into generalities and judgment about Stephen.

What is the thing he has to take care of? It may be that as soon as the thing he is referring to gets "taken care of" there will be another thing to take care of, but even so, it is something specific. With whom does he live? Does he live with his parents? Could there be abuse or alcoholism in the family? Is it possible that he has to fix his mother's life before he can leave?

If you find yourself jumping to a conclusion, I want you to put it in the form of a question. If, for instance, you find yourself saying, "Obviously this has happened many times before," turn it right around and ask, "Has this happened before?" That's always a good question in any case. One question you should always ask is, "What in this scene *is* happening for the first time?"

Anytime there is more than one possible explanation for something, it is not a fact. It may seem bewildering at first to open up so many possibilities. You may feel, "I thought I knew what I was doing and now I have nothing to hang onto." There are two purposes to this seemingly chaotic approach. One is to bring our story imaginations to life. Allowing ourselves to "daydream" around the facts of the script gives us the opportunity to let the material tell us what it is about. The other purpose is to prepare ourselves to make choices. In order to make choices, you need a field from which to choose; otherwise, it's not a choice, it's an assumption. As you get used to this

technique you will find it cleaner, and more liberating than psychologizing, explaining, or gossiping about the characters.

I often hear directors describe characters in terms of what they are not. "Stephen is not a good employee." "Angel probably doesn't have boyfriends." As soon as I hear statements like that, I turn them into questions: Is Stephen good at his job? Does Angel have boyfriends? If Stephen is not good at his job, what is he good at? If he is not interested in his work, what is he interested in? What sexual experience has Angel had? (A good question to ask about any character.)

Sometimes I hear people say about characters, "She doesn't have much of a sense of humor," or "He isn't very smart." A character who is what society calls "slow" is not trying to be slow, so an actor who tries to show us intellectual slowness is condescending to the character and playing a result (society's judgment of him). What such a person (character) is usually doing (his objective) is *to struggle to keep up*. An actor should never *show* us that a character is "slow," but always involve himself with how the character copes with the cards fate has dealt him.

In any case, *everybody is smart about something*. There are certain questions which you should ask about every character. What is this person smart about? What does this character find funny? Where is his pain? How does he play? In what way is he an artist? What does he most fear? What profession has he chosen or does he aspire to? Whom does he look up to? What is the biggest thing that has ever happened to him? How is the character different at the end of the story (or scene) from the beginning?

You may occasionally come across a character who has no playful side. This would be very rare, a very bold choice. Most of the time an important way to bring a character to life is to look for a serious character's sense of humor, and for the serious side of comic characters.

Always ask, what is the character *not* saying? Whenever a character breaks off a speech or is cut off by another person, you need

to ask yourself, what was she going to say? The longer and more thoroughly you work on a script, the more such questions will crop up, which is good. The things that bother you can bring the most creativity, like the grain of sand that becomes a pearl by irritating the oyster. Sometimes when I do this kind of work with writer-directors, and start opening them to the subworld of the story they wrote themselves, instead of congratulating themselves on their good writing, they want to rewrite the script, putting in the subtext! Don't do it! Don't fix! Don't bury! Instead, question, daydream, spin stories. You will enrich the script with layers of association and understanding. And don't forget, the best way to direct actors is by asking questions.

RESEARCH

Questions lead to Research:

Script research - Sometimes a question will be answered, and a fact gleaned, from rereading the script. Or a new question will be generated. When we notice, on a reread, that Stephen does not actually claim to have been called "Red" when he was a kid, the question arises, "When did he start having the notion of being called 'Red'?"

External research - Always find out the meaning of a word or idea you don't understand. I happen to be old enough to remember Raleigh cigarette coupons, but if I didn't know what they were, I'd have to do research. Anything you don't understand you should research. If you don't know where to start, try the dictionary.

Internal research - By this I mean internal to *you* — your experiences, observations, and understandings. Connect your script analysis preparation to *what you know about life*. For example, when you are looking for facts, questions, and choices around the issue of Stephen's name, you should think about your own childhood. Did you have a nickname? Did you wish for one? Was there a hero or storybook character that you identified with and wished you'd been named after? Did you have a friend with a cool nickname?

This is the work that novice filmmakers most frequently neglect to do. But it is the work that must be done if you want to make movies of any insight or originality. How can you ask actors for personal investment unless you make a personal investment yourself? If you approach all your preproduction homework technically, that's the product you will have — a movie technically proficient, without soul.

Two movie-making giants, Federico Fellini and Ingmar Bergman, often made movies that were frankly autobiographical. But Akira Kurosawa, William Wyler, John Huston, John Cassavetes also made every one of their movies personal without necessarily choosing autobiographical scripts.

It always shocks me when people critique Cassavetes solely on the basis of his filmmaking *style*. What to me stands out about his work is that first, his films are always *about* something, and second, he allows *no emotional distance* between the audience and, notably, the main character in "Woman Under the Influence." The prodigious gifts of actor Gena Rowlands make this possible, but the raw intimacy of the performance could not have been realized filmically without the personal identification and commitment of the director.

I am giving you this simple script analysis tool of *internal research* into the facts and images of the script to help you begin making this connection, even if the script seems to have no personal reverberation for you.

IMAGES AND ASSOCIATIONS

The other immutable information from the script is its images. The next script analysis tool is a way to unpack the treasures folded in the images. It's a kind of free association exercise. Your associations come from your own memory and experiences, your observations, your imagination, and from research. These associations stir up and create a soup of unconscious material, and weave a texture of life around the characters and their situation.

There are two kinds of images that concern us in script analysis: the writer's thematic images and each character's personal images. These are different from the "actor's personal images" or substitutions which I discussed in the Actors' Choices chapter.

First I'll identify images from the "Red Ryder" scene, listing the images separately for each character. Angel talks about the "schedule" of her "daily fight" with her mother, and about Stephen's "cigarette coupons"; she uses the word "stupid"; she mentions Stephen's nickname "Red" and her own name, "Angel." She talks about Stephen "cleaning your teeth," the "films," the Raleigh coupon "gift book," "the FBI," and "camping." She talks about tattoos: ones that are "out of style," as well as "tattoos that say Love and Peace." She mentions "Lyle," "customers," and the "bypass."

Stephen uses these images: "dump," "Clark," "pencil," "problem," "counts," "Mabel," "medical report," "stool," "crap," "newspaper," "car," "back pack," "home fries in your ears," "Chingado the Chicano," "donut," "hitchhiking," "Turdville," "Elmer's glue," "cold coffee," "my Aunt Fanny's butt," "the clap," "coupla hundred truck drivers," "morons," "sacked out on my rear," "cemetery," and "Born Dead."

The free association technique goes something like the riff I did with the image "rain" in the section on Images from the Actors' Choice chapter. We float around on the image, jotting down whatever pops into our heads in response to it, ranging as freely and widely as possible, without censoring ourselves, not worrying about whether anything we come up with is actually useful. Maybe a tiny amount of what we come up with, say ten percent, will be useful. In order to do a meaningful script analysis, you need to *spend time* on it.

Okay. Let's start with the "schedule" of Angel's "daily fight" with her "mom." "Daily fight schedule" makes me think of daily flight schedule, airplanes, airports, two-seater planes, big jets, air traffic control. "Fight schedule" also makes me think of heavyweight title bouts, Muhammed Ali, George Forman, Mike Tyson (rape, prison, Barbara Walters), and fight gyms; I have never been in a fight gym

but I imagine them as dark, with low ceilings, cement walls, noises of punching bags, grunts, sounds of flesh being struck by boxing gloves. Then I think about fights without hitting, verbal fights, family fights. Now we're getting closer. Why did I have to go through "air traffic control" and "fight gyms," which were clearly off the mark of anything useful for this scene, before I got to "family fights," which is apparently what Angel is talking about?

I don't know. I was not censoring myself. I gave my imagination its head; I let it lead me, instead of me trying to lead it. Imagination, by its nature, resists the injunction to be "useful." If I command my imagination to go only to useful areas, it probably won't do anything; it will sit there like a stick. This is what happens when directors sit staring at the page, unable to get started on their script analysis homework.

Back to Angel. To call it a "daily fight" which usually follows a "schedule" makes me think of routine bickering or nagging, perhaps persistently on the same subjects. I have seen affectionate relationships that include bickering or heckling. I have also seen families whose every interaction communicates antipathy and neglect. Which kind is Angel's situation? What do they fight about? Maybe Angel likes to iron her uniform in the morning and her mother thinks the ironing should be done the night before. (When I was a teenager my father and I once had a fight on this very subject.) Maybe Angel serves the toast unbuttered, an act perceived by her mother as brainless, or even as a gesture of disrespect and rejection. Or maybe Mom insists on smoking at the breakfast table and extinguishing her cigarettes in her coffee cup, to the disgust of Angel, who doesn't smoke.

How much do these fights hurt? Here I'll do some "internal research." My own fights with my parents, no matter how infrequent or trivial, always hurt me deeply. At first glance, that experience seems not at all like that of Angel, who seems to trivialize the fight by referring to its "daily schedule." But what if she only pretends to make light of her situation? What if her pain and loneliness go very deep?

The image and association exercise calls attention to what a character talks about rather than what he says about it or claims to feel about it. The theory here is that things people talk about are a good indicator of what is really on their minds, what is important to them, their interests and needs — in other words, what is causing them to do the things they do. It's a peek into the character's emotional storage banks. It gives us questions and ideas that may lead to choices.

It also brings us into the experience that these characters might be having while they say these words. In life people change subjects, make Freudian slips, and forget what they were saying, often without any reason that they are conscious of. Rather, the association they make is *sub*conscious. Angel mentions "tattoos that say Love and Peace." Is this an appealing or an unappealing image to her? How does she feel about the hippies? Does she have dreams of going to San Francisco with flowers in her hair?

When I look at the list I made earlier of Stephen's images, if I free-associate and don't censor myself, a few things jump out. Four of his images have associations with excrement: dump, stool, crap, Turdville, not to mention "my Aunt Fanny's butt" and "sacked out on my rear." Two images of death: his tattoo "Born Dead" and "cemetery." (I am calling "Born Dead" his image even though Angel mentions it because he is the one who wears the tattoo; and since she does mention it, I deduce that it is visible.)

Doesn't this say something about him? Do you see how it is more powerful to invoke his excrement images than to say he has contempt for the town he lives in? Could his two death images mean that someone he cares about has died? Or that ideas of suicide are in his emotional storage banks? This is where my uncensored imagination may pay off. Maybe the "air traffic control" riff off Angel's "daily fight schedule" led nowhere, but linking, via free association, Stephen's death and excrement images may actually end up being useful.

He mentions "the clap" in connection with hitchhiking. Or is the connection with the "tattoos that say Love and Peace"? Does this

mean that he believes he can contract a sexually transmitted disease from a car seat? Or that he has sexual fantasies about riding with a carful of hippies? He mentions "medical report" — is anyone in his family ill? "Chingado the Chicano" — is this a racially derogatory epithet? Could it have some other meaning or association? How much Spanish does Stephen know? Does he have Mexican-American friends?

What about the images of the title? When we look at the title, we are looking for thematic images, rather than the characters' personal images, as we have been doing. "Red Ryder" sounds western but has no specific associations for me. However, my husband told me (my external research) that he remembered Red Ryder as a very famous comic book cowboy hero of his youth. Could "heroism" turn out to be a theme of the script? Without the full script we won't be able to make this determination. We can make a note that external research to learn more about the comic book hero Red Ryder is going to be needed.

We can also investigate (internal research) our own associations with heroism. It was a thrilling moment for me, watching the 1996 Academy Awards, when a childhood hero of mine, Miep Gies, was introduced to the audience by the filmmaker accepting his award for the documentary "Anne Frank Remembered." Even though my notions of what constitutes heroism may differ from Stephen's or Angel's — or the author's — I allow my associations with heroism to jumpstart my connection to the script and its characters.

The image and association exercise can even have practical applications. "Tattoos that say Love and Peace" gives us a pretty good idea that the script is set in the early seventies. "Donut" conjures up for me associations around the stale diner donuts I have encountered in my life: the Plexiglas donut display case, which rocks slightly when you open it, the glaze from a glazed donut smeared against the inside of the Plexiglas, the sugar stuck to my fingers when I pick one up; sugar donuts, jelly donuts, chocolate donuts, crullers; the different sensations of breaking open a stale, dry sugar donut as compared to a fresh jelly donut; dunking, my Uncle Andy, who used to

love to dunk, the controversy over whether or not dunking was polite. This donut riff could give me some ideas for *activities* for the actors to try in rehearsal.

While you are thinking about images, you might take note of the people, places, and things the characters talk about that are not present: Angel's mother, Clark, Lyle, and truck drivers; the freeway bypass, the back pack Stephen has ordered from the Raleigh coupon book, the coupon book itself. The actors will need to have substitutions, either personal or imaginative, for all these off-camera people and things. If you make a note of them now, when you get to casting you can remember to notice whether the actors, when they speak these words, are talking about something real, or merely saying lines.

Once we know the script's skeleton — its facts and images — we can generate some ideas for choices to flesh out the skeleton. This is also our opportunity to translate ideas into playable direction. The most important thing to remember when looking at possible choices is that we are looking at what might be going on under the lines. Watch for choices that are too "on-the-nose," that come too "dead-on" the surface meaning of the lines. To become more adept at using opposites, consider choices that at first you think are wrong.