

On a snowy night many years after I gave very much thought any more to film or the Factory, I was walking north on Park Avenue near where Max's Kansas City had once been. It was late, very cold, and except for myself I thought deserted. Then I stopped because suddenly I felt that I couldn't move. I waited and listened to my own breathing.

Then he called to me. "Hello, Ronnie."

His voice was gentle, and very even. He was standing alone in a doorway. Perhaps he was waiting for someone, or more likely a group of people. But at that moment, on that night, he was alone on a wide and dark, deserted street filling up with snow. The man whose careerlong image was that he went nowhere unless in the protected center of a jet-set pack, was leaning quietly against a doorjamb, as alone as he some nights was when I first went to work for him.

With my heart beating rapidly, I took a half dozen steps to my right so that I came up close to him. I looked down rather than stare hard at his face because this time there would be no instructions in his face for some art that had to be made, and made very soon.

Instead, we stood together in silence for several minutes. Then I went on up the street in the snow.

END.

May/2/97

**RIGHT CLEVER:**

**A Letter to Andy on his Diamond Birthday Anniversary**  
(held at BAM, October 2003)

I've got to hand it to you, Andy: an ad illustrator who  
wanted to become a house-  
hold name and did. Better yet, how suddenly you've jet-setted from  
a cottage industry to an institution! Yet only you  
would have understood if you'd caught me thinking, "Since  
Discovery, National Geographic, and Animal Planet believe  
nature has a motive—like, 'I've got to germinate my genes'..."  
that the Pop Sciences equal Dated Dogma and so need  
deconstructing. In you that's hot dogs and mustard on the 4th of July:  
nothing one must justify.

It was the Brillo Boxes. Neatly stacked. No escaping what they  
waste no time but simply say,  
And is that the good reason why you (joined by so many others  
dead by now) leave it to me to say what history isn't? All right,  
I'll concede a "closet"-full of features, the 3-  
minute Portrait Rolls, and the notion that the whole nation—as with Jackie  
in mourning—lives, and perhaps survives, in images. When hid-  
den here in Bangkok between concrete and klongs, my latest late  
morning dreams are as vivid? I want to tell you that back in '92  
when I was living in New

Orleans, the city cinematheque asked me to speak at their  
*Juanita Castro* premiere.

*The Life of Juanita Castro!* I told them I'd not seen that in  
twenty-seven years and would want to screen it privately to know  
if I dared. Well, I did, and thought, "How tall this stands.  
It's still a busy half a century before its time." And, "Why, O Lord  
why, didn't we pull off a score more like this?" But it was more—  
for I recall now why—crucial for you then to tail celebs;  
squander talent; ditch friends, and regress to adolescence. To act quite as  
stone-deaf and dishonest as

more than one theatre, art film, and cultural historian has.

And to dissipate the nights  
with silver-stoned Edie, heiress, her rear guard Swine and parasites.  
She germinated boll weevils. But then again anything that  
cotton-white would. But then I think, "No, no healthy  
way to remember all that now... Celebrate instead - given the army  
of envious detractors-cum-competing-imitators,  
and your power-pitting your own best aides against each other—  
the miracle of Ondine, Mario, Mary, and Marie, the young Bear  
clicking frank snaps, and the care

of Doc Harv in gauging his support to the assault, sitting  
all these decades, smack center—  
with shades—throughout *Juanita*. And Professor Paul's knowing to read  
those scripts when no actor would. The people who didn't suicide."

And this not pabulum, either: the often precise  
and irrefutably, stily-structured de-mythologies which stooped, bent  
down, and managed to slip under the doors you slammed in their face

to make them come out slipshod or not come out at all. -And what  
 an ingrate—an omnivore, you! Still, plundering has precedent: there's old  
 Past Masters were no less bold.

You know, scholars have actually flown 8,000 miles to Thai-  
 land to ask me about you.

Imagine that, Andy. Not what's best for you, is it? Well, not to  
 worry. You pushed the envelope in such diverse directions (toss  
 in ruthlessness and, filmwise, finally selling out)  
 that I always name the wiser working with you who also learned to look:  
 though that means now they've less to look at. Oh, and by the way, right  
 clever of you to celebrate your seventy-fifth birthday  
 on what's really—and I'll be damned if this doesn't keep the faith—  
 at least your seventy-eighth.

**Ronald Tavel**

**Ronald Tavel** was Andy Warhol's Factory-writer from November 1964 to March 1967, a collaboration that included his writing and often directing and acting in fourteen films (four of these will have been screened as part of the BAM Warhol film series). Mr. Tavel subsequently coined the term "The Theatre of the Ridiculous" to identify the themes and styles of his forty produced stage plays. The poem *Right Clever* assumes the format of a long poem which Andy Warhol admired when he first heard Ronald Tavel read it publicly (*The True Story of Billy the Kid*, *Chicago Review*, Vol. 16 No.2, 1964).