

SCMS ORAL HISTORIES: INTERVIEW WITH JANET STAIGER

Charles Acland: I'm here today with Janet Staiger who is the William P. Hobby Centennial Professorship in Communication in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin and past president of SCMS, and we are going to talk about the history of the field.

(Recording part 2. Introduction by Charles Acland: Hi I am Charles Acland of Concordia University, Montreal, and it's my honour today to be conducting an interview for the SCMS Oral History Project with Janet Staiger. She is the William P. Hobby Centennial Professor in Communication at the University of Texas at Austin and she is a past president of what was SCS at that time.)

Janet Staiger: Ok, all right, we are going to talk about the history of the field. As you said, I'm Janet Staiger, I'm now William P. Hobby Centennial Professor Emeritus – luckily I am emeritus - at the University of Texas at Austin, which means I still get to supervise students and go to faculty meetings and talk but I don't end up voting, which is probably good for everybody. You've asked me to talk about the history of the field as I experienced it, which is perhaps atypical but maybe is very normal for the generation that I am part of. In the 1960's I was in college, and between 68 and 69 I did a master's degree on Literature at Purdue University. This was in the middle of massive protests about the war, general cultural change and so forth. My husband and I - he wasn't my husband then, I actually met him the day after we were both arrested at a demonstration. So when I finished my literature degree I was pretty dissatisfied with literature studies but I was offered a temporary position at my former university where I did my undergraduate work teaching literature, which I did for 3 years, between 1969 and 1972. Because of my generation and my politically left leanings - my father was a union person – I was very interested in what we called then relevance, literary relevance. And so I remember teaching poetry classes where I would teach the poetry of the Beatles, and Donovan, and Leonard Cohen and all of the said people, but I was dissatisfied with the memorization of bibliography and so forth. By then I was married and we went back to Purdue where my husband was finishing his PhD and I worked in a foreign language department as administrative systems to pay the bills. I was really, it was extremely fortuitous, it was an accident, but it was a literature department that had multiple people teaching film, Jim Franklin in German Studies, **Marc Walther (4:56)** in French, particularly two people who are really critic to the history of my career was, is, Herb Eagle, who was teaching Russian and cinema, and Ben Lawton who was teaching Italian Cinema. Herb was one of the people who was translating Jakobson, Roman Jakobson, so I was reading Check structuralism as a consequence of hanging around with those people. They were my age as well, It was their first job, they were assistant professors and I was looking, not surprisingly, foreign films. Herb was a formalist, I was reading Shklovsky, Tynyanov, and Tomashevsky, and Eichenbaum... the whole crew. We were quite excited about it. Ben and Herb and this other people decided to have conferences on film at Purdue University, in 1976 and 1977. We brought in numerous scholars to do papers in film. Then Ben and I created two anthologies out of the papers each year, and there we

published the first work of Rick Altman on “Syntagmatic and Semantic Theories of Genre” (“A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre”), we published Tom Schatz on his application of Levi Strauss to genre studies, and Rick’s critique of Tom’s work. We published Dennis Giles early work on porn, which I actually think is a brilliant essay on pornography.

So, Peter was finishing his PhD and getting a job and I just figured I’d follow him to... I knew I wanted to go back and get a PhD because I knew I could do it. And at that point I felt that film studies was exciting, there was not a massive amount of literature behind it, they were young people, my social interests could be dealt with in that field, unlike literature and at the time I had to decide or decided between – I was lucky! – I was admitted both to Iowa and to Madison, and I read what Dudley Andrew had to write about Eisenstein and David Bordwell had to read about Eisenstein and felt intellectually much more akin to Bordwell’s work not surprisingly, although I really enjoyed Dudley so much, but between the two of them Bordwell’s sync up with me.

C.A: One of your first publications was a review of a book of Dudley, right?

J.S: Yes, I had read Bazin, and yes one of my first publications was a book review. We all start with book reviews; and then I decided to stop doing book reviews, I very seldom do book reviews. I figured there are better ways to get people angry at me for what I have to say.

C.A: Because It sounds as an unusual position...

J.S: It was.

C.A:...you are an administrative assistant and yet you swept into... You are not a graduate student yet, I mean...

J.S: Correct.

C.A: ...you had an MA but it is still in-between periods, between your MA and your PhD. I mean it really sounds fortuitous, but it really does sound as a unique environment, in which to have that spark for a transition from one area to the next.

J.S: Yes, as I said it was probably atypical but everybody probably at this point doesn’t have a typical story because there were so few film studies departments. It was so young as a field, you know? I always look back and figure I was really lucky because I could read the literature as it came out, unlike people nowadays have to go back and read, of course 30-40 years is nothing if you talk to a literature or historian about the literature they have to read, but it was all coming out and I was reading it as it came out, which it was very lucky, very fortuitous.

So, I went to Madison. It was also the time when Milwaukee was having its conferences and I was able to see there Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Comolli, Stephen Heath and some of the late seventies debates about pleasure, which leads to the cultural studies change, although I’m seeing it through the psychoanalytical point of

view and the French marxist point of view there. So, I did the PhD, I was really fortunate because again I was very young – I’m actually literally several months older than David Bordwell – but David, and Kristin, and I were able to do the research on the Classical Hollywood Cinema together. One of my early classes, Doug Gomery was teaching at Madison for a semester, and I did my paper on Tom Ince in that class, and he said “well you need to go to the Society” - I’m almost slipping here - “of Cinema Studies, you have to give that paper.” So, I went to my first SCS – it took me a while to get the SCMS - SCS conference in 1979. And I think Vivian Sobchack, a couple or years earlier than me, but you know if you go back many of those people are still thankfully with us, but it was a very small conference. That paper was co-winner of the SCS writing award, and then it got published, so I really consider the Ince paper published in *Cinema Journal* as a first real publication.

C.A.: Yes, that’s good. Maybe you can say a little bit about the transition to your first jobs and first teaching experiences. I mean, you had some experience teaching literature, but as you said you were interested in the literature of relevance, dealing with the media world, present conditions, political conditions and so on, how did that translate when you started teaching film courses?

J.S: Well I taught one class of what will be film style at Madison when I was a grad student. I only was literary in Madison two years; the next two years when I did my doctoral research and wrote it I was back in Cleveland where my husband was working for NASA. That class was just an intro to film analysis, it was something Bordwell taught and I was able to step in and teach it for a semester. I had a lot of experience teaching prior to going to my PhD work. Not only had I spend 3 years teaching as an adjunct instructor of literature, but when I was an undergrad at the University where I did my undergrad work I had taught Remedial English for two years. So, I actually was teaching since I was a junior in college. And I also did speech as a second mayor, so I did debate, extemporaneous speech...so, I had a lot of experience teaching. In that classic intro to film media class, teaching the sort of things you’ll see in Film Art. The first job I had after I finished my PhD - I thought I would go back to Cleveland, but there were no jobs in the Cleveland area per se, Cassetti had the job at Case Western, Dennis Giles was teaching at Cleveland State. So, there wasn’t really a teaching opportunity, but Vance Kepley was at Delaware and he was brought back to Madison for a year visiting position so he talked to Bordwell and Bordwell said I should go do the one year job at Delaware while Vance was gone. You know, one year didn’t seem like a big thing to do, so I went there and then Vance got the job at Madison, which opened up, so I did a second year at Delaware and then I applied to teach at NYU where I taught for 4 years and then I went down to Texas. The first teaching at Delaware was Intro to Film Style, Film Analysis, (...? 15:19) classic, sound, diegetic, non-diegetic sound, off, on-Screen sound, framing, wide-screen issues, mise-en-scène, you know the standard terms, a basic course in Film History, the world in fifteen weeks.

C.A: Right. Where there any special topic courses? More specific, more geared towards...just thinking of where your research goes around that period, weather its

historiographic work, or reception, or even genre. Was that moving its way into the teaching at that point?

J.S: Well, you know coming out of formalism, and I still love... I mean, I played around with semiotics for a while, I have one essay that is Semiotics and... its in the middle 80s that I...Madison was not training, and I read the *Imaginary Signifier* at Madison because everybody was reading it, but I really kind of moved into Psychoanalytic theory in the middle 80s when I was at NYU. But nothing special, because I was teaching a history class that was historiographically oriented I would ask the students to write or to read several versions of the same historical period and then compare and contrast what was going on. I was always, myself, teaching from a critical left position. So nothing was exactly directed its...

C.A: It was more foundational...

J.S: It was all-foundational, but also kind of critical thinking. The sort of stuff that you do at that point, and there weren't those options at Delaware. At NYU – I'm trying to think back – at NYU, once I got to NYU I did the early cinema class, and I was brought in - sorry the laugh here – I was brought in to teach Film Theory, Classical Film Theory at NYU. Yes, you know...I had a wonderful class with David Bordwell in classical film theory that went up through Metz – we said classical but it got into the 70's and 80's – So I thought Eisenstein, and Bazin, in fact it was the teaching of that which produced the book review on André Bazin by Dudley Andrew, because I did some, I think Bazin is more of a Marxist than Dudley wants to make him out to be, although Dudley knows much more about him and his biography, but there is that on my bio you'll see an essay on in fact on...what is called? ...I can't remember what the title of the essay is, but its an analysis – it's published in *Iris* – but its an attempt to make Bazin more politically left and more historically aware of, than sometimes is done. Also to take away the rather – and I think this has a lot to do with poor translations of Bazin that we have had at least in the seventies, which made Bazin more into a catholic transcendentalist without understanding how Marxist humanism so influenced him, and Merleau-Ponty and all these kind of leftists Marxists were influencing Bazin at the time. So...

C.A: I would like to ask you more about...

J.S: Sorry to rattle along...but at that point I'm mostly working on historical work and revising my dissertation to make it into the classical Hollywood cinema book.

C.A: Right. I'm curious though, I mean, you mention the Marxist humanist strain, and I'm curious whether or not there was much of a conversation about the influence, short of trafficking debates, between the film work you were doing, the historical work and the arrival of British Cultural studies, forms of cultural theory or even other things that were going on in Communications departments or Media Studies departments. I mean, was there a way in which that was...was there a fluidity there or

was it much more that...when you describe the courses that you began with, they really are about a field of film...

J.S: Yes.

C.A: ...and less about – even though there is, clearly, I mean I see there is Althusser, there is all sort of movements, comparable theorists and even the psychoanalytic, but in the work as you are getting the teaching off the ground it sounds as though there is less of a movement between those. Is that right or what was transpiring with the arrival of these different disciplines?

(Brief technical interruption)

J.S: I should say that in graduate school there were some of the PhD students... Madison had a remarkably large intro, excuse me, incoming class in 1977 25 people arrived both for MA and PhD – but a lot of MAs. That was, that was...they were socked, they were unprepared for it in a way and we had several introductory classes there, but some of them were well trained in Marxist theory, and again we are coming right... we're within 10 years of the 60's stuff, 68 and so forth. So those people were very much introducing and interjecting the Marxist critique against the formalist, of which Bordwell remains – I don't think I'm saying anything out of hand here – in his personal life he is politically liberal – not obviously but he is very much politically liberal – but he almost has resisted doing political work because of partially his theoretical agenda but also I think it's a resistance against the people who said "why aren't you doing political work." - It wasn't going to be pushed around - But at that point there was a strong cohort of people, who were interested particularly in the Frankfurt School, (...? 23:13), some of those people. There was a lot of battling between them and the more traditional film form and style people, even when I was in graduate school. As I, when...so we are talking about 81-82, it's not until the middle 80s that, everybody is reading *Screen* all the time, and *Screen* is where a lot of this is happening because the French are still working out of the Metz influence, the Comolli and so forth....and I may really underline, I still think Althusser got a brilliant analysis of how the social-economic operates, a still devoted leftist under a neo- Marxist position from that point. But the cultural strand comes in through *Screen*, and what's been published in *Screen* in the middle-80's, as well as,I've lost my train of thought....Oh! TV. TV is also being introduced through *Screen Education*. So film was an object that only dealt with film, Brecht was there, structuralism, and so forth is there...but the introduction of television in the 80's as well as cultural studies, Birmingham cultural studies, it's only at that point when they start to intervene in the U.S conversation in mayor schools. It shows up, less at NYU – I'm just reading it - the field and then what was going on in conferences. NYU was a very, or is a very particular environment. I was teaching my classes from the perspective of what I was publishing in, but you teach your standard American film history class. I think the first class I ever taught on Cult Movies was not until I got to Texas...I'd had to go back and look. I'll give you an example, when I was in New York, I was teaching – and I taught between 83 and 87 – teaching film theory, early American film history, the silent era, and you teach the history of American

silent film, but I was resisting the classic leftist assumption that D.W Griffiths and that kind of “pure woman” ideology was all that was at stake in what was operating in those films. Because it doesn’t work from a leftist analysis of what culture is about or what capitalism is about...Capitalism wants to make money, and money is made on sex, etc., etc., so it’s there that actually when I was teaching that early cinema class, particularly at the graduate level, I was formulating the ideas that produced *Bad Women*, which is 95, so I’m working through the ideas, but the publication are later.

C.A.: Right, and that would include the interpreting film and reception as well?

J.S: Yes, the very first piece I did, that was a real reception piece, was published in 85 in *Wide Angle* on the reception of *Foolish Wives*, which you know again it was the silent era, which was what I was teaching. And I’m really glad, both David and I were talking, we had a disclaimer a paragraph in the *Classical Hollywood Cinema*, we are dealing with the production we are not dealing with the reception of movies, so don’t expect that. In fact we said it would take another book just as long as you talk about the reception. David proceeds to create what becomes his book of fiction, narrative cinema, where he lays out the practices of art cinema and classical Hollywood cinema. He hypothesizes the educated well-knowing spectator who is cooperative. I always call it the cooperative and knowledgeable spectator. Well, if I had actually gotten my work made a little faster, I would have done something akin to what David did but by then I was being influenced by the cultural studies people and so I started to ask what are, because of my political bent I was interested in what were women doing, what are political leftists is doing, what are conservatives doing when they read something like a film like *Foolish Wives*, and so when I end up writing *Foolish Wives*, which is 1985 - which then becomes a chapter in *Interpreting Films* in 92 - is already trying to deal with the historicization of groups of people and their interpreting behaviours. So just keep in mind that, you know, *Screen* was really important in terms of the debates that were going on in the United States.

C.A.: Are there other journals that it might be interesting for people to know about? I mean, I think *Wide Angle*...

J.S: I was about to say *Wide Angle*.

C.A.: ...which seems to me one that might not be the first stop for people today to acknowledge its influence, but maybe you would like to say a few words about that or other journals?

J.S: Well the conferences at Ohio University that Peter Lehman put together, which were going on from the late 70s, became the under-sources for the interest around *Wide Angle*. You know, I had to go back and look at that journal a little bit more to refresh myself but it was pretty diverse. I might probably talk about the *Velvet Light Trap*, which from 1972 at Madison, before I was there, was done by a kind of a cooperative group of people, some of whom are still teaching and unfortunately recently Suzanne Dalton passed away and she was one of the founders, and it was

active particularly in resurrecting historical work and dealing with genres and studios and studio styles and so forth, I think it was influential to develop a (?....30:50) of people who were excited about it. I was just talking to Julia Lesage outside, and *Jump Cut* was really important. *Camera Obscura*, goes back to the late 70s because of its feminist and psychoanalytical trend and translations of work by Bellour kept us very informed about what the French psychoanalytic school was thinking. Those were the ones I would say were the key ones besides *Screen*. We had read the *Cahiers*... I read the *Cahiers* mostly through translations rather than directly. *Screen* was very good about keeping up with *Cahiers*.

C.A: People when they are writing new material, these are the journals that they were thinking off at the time right?this is where people are looking to...

J.S: Let me say, I went to a very powerful PhD program called Communication Arts but it was really Film Studies. Simultaneously the literature field is developing and *Film Quarterly*, *Film and Literature* journal is very important, *Film Criticism* - I am currently on the board of *Film Criticism* - is operating in more of the literature field that has always remained more interpretive and more literary-minded. As I said the reason I was attracted to film studies was because of the opportunity to invest my concern about social issues in that field in ways that was not easy in literature. When cultural studies finally hits literature, and feminism and queer theory finally hit literature, it's a good 5 to 10 years after film studies is really living with it daily. What I'm talking is about the core; I mean, I hate to say the progressive wing of film studies.

C.A: Let me ask you a few things about the mechanics of teaching...

J.S: Yes, can I say that I'm also talking about this from an US perspective, and I want to say this is very US angle. I understand you are interviewing Thomas Elsaesser who will certainly be able to provide what was going on in the European dynamics which is co-adjacent. Film studies wasn't just in the US, in effect we were really looking to France and to England for a lot of our theory.

C.A: I just want to ask you a bit about the teaching materials, availability and the mechanics of how one constructed a syllabus and I guess I'm also thinking about the availability, of materials and how that worked. Because when you were first teaching it would have been just about the cost of videotape or laserdiscs, so where the materials an issue of debate? Did the increase, ease and cheapness, the way some of the aesthetic and experiential differences...I'm just curious, how did that figure in the...?

J.S: Well, I'm trying to think of the kind of... I imagine and I'm trying to remember back to the first teaching at Delaware and the 80's teaching vs. later. I never really was terribly constrained by the fact I could not find a movie in 16mm. The first work I always had was 16mm films at Delaware and there was something of a private library Delaware already had. Specially, Delaware had a really great avant-garde library, which was wonderful. I did teach a class on Experimental cinema, because that was

another love of mine because of the political angle of experimental cinema, you know what they were attempting to do. The film library rental operation was pretty healthy at the time in the early 80's and then when I got to NYU I didn't even worry about it. We had... Ann Harris worked in the department and I didn't even have to worry about it. And they had wonderful screening options. So, it wasn't until I hit Texas in 87 where we were moving to video and then eventually laser and DVD. Texas had a history like Madison, a film co-op, a film society. Texas itself had a long-standing program called Cinema Texas, with screenings every week, which were related to the classes so there were 16mm projection of movies in big auditoriums. You may not know but Rick Linklater started a film society about 1985, there was just always a culture down there of that, but it did become cheaper and easier in the late 80's to move to VHS and DVD and ultimately, although I hated to lose the celluloid... I remember seeing the first film I ever saw in, there was a night (..? 37:30) I mean anyone...it's just glorious. Moving to DVD and VHS bothered me but ultimately because of the deterioration of the prints and the wonderful quality, where you actually see an early film the way closer to what people would have seen instead of these awful, awful, muddy stuff that we had. It reconciled me to the change in the format, in the material presentation. And, you know, you've got a problem anyway in a classroom screening for 40 students, you not going always to be in a big auditorium because of classroom issues. So, I think the technological change I personally have a sense of nostalgia for the film, but in other hand I'd rather have people seeing it in the correct aspect ration, without all of the mud and with the right color.

C.A: I'm curious. This might be... I want to ask you to sort of pin point something on the spot but I'm wondering, are there particular debates that you remember as being especially significant to either the operations of the growth or the expansion of SCS at the time? And, same question but having to do with the development and changes in the curriculum? So starting with SCS, was there something that tended to be talked about more than other things? About a challenge that was important to confront in order to grow and make the society a more long lasting society? Was there anything you can remember from your first days or the first decades or so of attending the conference?

J.S: So, the first conference I went to was 1979, and I've missed only 2 or 3 over the years. Back in the day we were lucky, there was only 1 or 2 panels at the same time, so you could have big debates. The biggest debate I remember was when Gaylyn Studlar took on some of the Laura Mulvey theory about masochism and there was a big conversation about that, but that is an extremely narrow internal issue. It didn't affect SCMS and certainly it didn't affect teaching at all, that I know, other than people starting to try to negotiate and nuance the psychoanalytic feminist point of view. I, early, between 83 or 4, became secretary treasurer of SCMS – you might read I don't remember, you can look it up – I was secretary and treasurer because the society was very small, there was only about 300 people. I remember having students help literally packing envelopes and licking them and taking them down to the SOHO post office, in zip code order in order to mail them out, that's old technology. So, when I

became president and elected president, which was in the late...I can't remember the date I was president, 92...94 or something like that.

C.A: Since 1991 to 1993

J.S: It was the president, yes.

C.A: It was president that's right, and it seems like SCS's conference program committee from 1984 to 85, and then again 89.

J.S: Well, in 84-85 my dear chair of the department Brian Winston volunteered NYU as the host place, so I got to or I as an assistant professor got –because I was associated with the society – got to organize it, put it all together on the newly renovated building where they had just finished painting a week earlier. People would tell you about that, they used to call it the postmodern conference. That was lots of fun. But at that point, I'm thinking back, there were several issues. One of the issues was SCS' relationship with the AFI. The AFI had continually left...people felt the AFI had continually left the Academy down. I actually would have to go through my records to remember some of the issues, but they would seem to be supportive and then they would cut budgets on some of the projects that academics felt were important and I can't remember. I remember we had a very major confrontation at one of our conferences in the late 80s over whether SCS should be in a comparative agreement with AFI to publish books as a joint series, which we did not do because people felt AFI, there was a lot of history of... and I wasn't involved with it, I'm talking about how other people felt that the AFI was not a solid partner. That affects the curriculum only in a secondary sort of way but it also suggests that there was a strong political activism about what SCS would do, they really wanted to remain solid citizens in terms of political issues. I can't remember boycotting places to have conferences, but I remember over the years SCS/SCMS has decided not to have conferences in places that have policies that we felt were not politically correct. When I was president one of the big issues had to do with the caucuses, which were just beginning, so the issue was how to have increase diversity in the Society - it was a very, very white society. I was only the second woman president of SCMS, Vivian was the first. So you can tell how it had been a very white male, but then the academy was a male white one. I remember trying to negotiate and deal with finding the places for the caucuses in the Society, weather they were going to have guaranteed seats on the board of directors, which didn't ultimately, you know the numbers would not have worked out by any means. That did have, I think, implications for the curriculum because people were very aware of the necessity of broadening the films that needed to be looked at. That you couldn't just look at Hollywood movies, you needed to look at wider or at more films by African American directors, Latinos, why we were or not including those works, the works of women and so forth in the curriculum. Virginia Wright Wexman asked me to write a piece, which turned into an essay idea about political canons in 85 or 86, kind of a critique of the white curriculum, if that existed...So SCMS...I mean and I had met her through *Cinema Journal*, which was SCMS. So SCMS I won't say it was militant but there were things that were happening there that made a difference. I remember

when I was president I was told by an older member of the Society that the Society had nothing to do with the issues around movements for African and African-American equally and so forth, that we were an academic institution and we were not to get involved in politics. It surprises you?

C.A: Yes, well...I mean on the one hand no, but on the other hand is such a contrast from the description of one of the things that initially attracted you to the field. And I think you speak for a lot of people when you say that there is a sense that there is an opening here for certain kinds of political scholarship that might not be as welcome as elsewhere, and then right in...

J.S: Well, of course there was a battle. I was a young generation and I would probably not really count as the first, there was a slightly older generation that were wonderful scholars and politically left in their own ways. You look at someone like Jay Leyda and the work he did and what he negotiated and so forth. But we were the first real academics, where we had our jobs in the academy.

C.A: Yes, that's right, so...

J.S: So the people I'm talking about here might be archivists or others who were also aligned with the Society or slightly older generations.

C.A: I wonder if maybe you might want to say a few words about the state of the field now. I mean having seen, if we can just use SCS as one marker, having seen it go from one panel to two panels at a time to 18 or +20 now. Is there other impressions that you would like to convey about that shift and about what it means?

J.S: Well, it's exciting. It's nice, I certainly see masses and strands of what attracted me to the field. Another reason I went into film studies and not literature, was because film had such a major impact. Film and television and social media, such an impact that has the potential, I think, if not change people's minds to provide community and reinforcement amongst people who feel the same things, which you may need for a political agenda. You need to have the feeling that there are those who are like you. Literature does not have the impact that film and television have in terms of a mass conversation with the potential for political affiliation. I have more trouble talking about political effect. I think people tend to avoid...the literature shows people tends to avoid things that they disagree with. But I think the building of community is really important and that that's one of the potential effects of movies. What's good about SCMS that you can see in the papers is the continuation of the investigation of representations, of reception and so forth. That means large numbers of people are doing work with it. I do have to say I feel we are in what Kuhn might have called "the state of normal science." I haven't seen much breaks through in the last 10 years, we are taking the same methods, and making the same analysis, we are doing as Bordwell called it symptomatic criticism, which is valuable but who is surprised if there is a homophobic subtext in certain kinds of.... So we are seeing more and more texts investigated and not seeing theoretical breakthroughs, or I am missing them. I am

very excited by the work that I have an affinity to, which is the work on affect and the mobilization of political affect in the critiques of neoliberalism, but that is just, not just, that is the continuation of the work that I was starting with, is just where the theory has been going. You know? I remember how excited people were when Mulvey's essay came out, that was a radical intervention, even the *Imaginary Signifier*, which I think people don't recognize the value, what it really did, which was to talk about the brilliance of the pleasure of our own ego making meaning. Those were really important breakthroughs. Mulvey's piece amongst other things was picked up in other fields besides film, art history uses it and so forth. Deleuze has been someone important at times, but at times I'm not sure where Deluzian theory is getting us to, but it's been important. It's also that in Humanities as a whole there is not anything propelling conversations, in any of the humanities, literature and so forth, which I try to keep up with. So it's fine, we are in a state of normal science.

C.A: What will you attribute it to?

J.S: Again, no real good theoretical breakthrough. I'm not sure... sometimes when you get a really good paradigm that explains a lot of stuff... it's like Newtonian physics you know? (Laughs) So you just move along.

C.A: I ask because some would say, well it's partly a feature of the fact that the brother and the more expensive the sets of questions the less likely a particular intervention will reverberate, will resonate, across all those different projects. But others might say that it might have to do with the effects of professionalization. There is more and more there is a sense of a set path of what one must do in order to, I mean, those are just some...

J.S: Both of those are good. I mean, I'm in for Grand Theory. I'm not into middle level theory (Laughs.) Anyway, I'm excited by Grand Theory. You have to be careful with what you are actually explaining and then you have to take it further down to the middle level. But it is professionalization and actually I have an incredible concern about the direction of higher education and about the way it is potentially limiting risk, eliminating risk by young professionals who are worried about getting tenure. Trying to reproduce in ways....

C.A: Recognizable literature...

J.S: recognizable literature yes.... I do believe in peer review, I am excited about new ways of conveying intellectual materials in podcasts and in online journals but I believe in peer review. I think that people who spend their time writing very short blogs, that is a really good, but to get a long essay written as well because you are dealing with an environment that is getting increasingly interested in quantitative productivity. So, you know, it's a consequence of an economic recession, of an extremely - at least in the United States and well worldwide; of a conservatism. I would hope that the young people will enjoy teaching because I'm not sure the rest of the academy is quite as much fun as it used to be. You can have really good colleagues,

and teaching is a wonderful profession, it is really exciting. I did make a promise to myself, which I don't think I ever violated, which was that I was never going to publish something that I didn't really want to say, that I wasn't going to publish just to publish. And I think that's...I hope other people can keep that promise to themselves because it just seems to be that publishing in in order to get tenure is just not the right way. Unfortunately it also will produce non-risky conversations, it will reproduce what looks officially correct.

C.A: I think that is a fantastic place to end unless there is anything...

J.S: No, I said more than I thought I would. I hope I didn't say anything somebody would see that would (Laughs)

C.A: I don't think so...

J.S: Yes, I don't think so.

C.A: I hope that the ending, on a note of the challenges, that I think they are structural but they are also questions of political conviction and integrity that it certainly echoes some of the situations that you were describing.

J.S: Yes. I was lucky!