

**Dudley Andrew**

Thrust into this direct spotlight, I immediately squint and then turn quickly inward...letting that light pass into dim corridors of reflection, where it illuminates more than forty years of memory, as far back as 1970 when I first applied for membership in the Society for Cinema Studies...and was rejected. In those days one had to present credentials. Mine were judged insufficient, my future inauspicious. I consoled myself when later that year I won the McGraw Hill film scholarship given out at the U FVA, a rival organization. But it was SCS I needed to belong to and so I waited till all that it took to join was the payment of dues, \$25, if I'm not mistaken. With the price now \$160, the lifetime membership that I'm getting tonight is a real gift.

This is my 18<sup>th</sup> twenty-minute SCMS presentation. Scanning the bottom end of my CV, I note that my first talk was given at the 1977 Northwestern conference, when all sessions were plenary. I spoke about "Identification," surely responding to Metz' *Imaginary Signifier* and Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," both freshly published. I gave their ideas a twist, one that Metz heard about since the following year in Milwaukee, at an after-conference party I will always remember, Metz, who was dancing rather wildly, yelled out across the room: "There's Mr. Phenomenology!" I was proud to have been recognized, even if mis-cast. True, in 1985 I spoke about Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology at the NYU SCS, a paper whose promise I have yet to exploit. It had ideas, that paper. Other SCS papers, pulled out of the computer at the last minute, tasted raw, since they were still uncooked : at Montreal in 1988, for example, I just wanted to be on the program.

By the end of the 90s I thought of leaving the fold, or at least of abandoning the annual conferences, since in the heat of Cultural Studies and the onslaught of Media, it seemed that SCS was trading film interpretation, aesthetics, and theory for what I feared was some sort of soft sociology. But I stayed on, writing about this organization in a PMLA article in 2000. And I kept up with these conferences largely because of my move to Yale. I decided I had better show up just to reassure whoever was gossiping that nothing had gone wrong at Iowa-- a fabulous program with top doctoral students, and that everyone should be on the lookout for the graduate program we were launching at Yale. So I went to Washington in 2001, figuring my conference

time would be spent talking up Iowa and Yale, whereas in fact, once I looked at the program, I took in as many panels as one could; there were so many good ones. There and in subsequent years I picked up loads of information for my World cinema course by attending the Asian panels where doctoral students and newly minted assistant professors let fly their discoveries and enthusiasm; and I got early indications of new forms of continental theory from young disciples of Agamben, Rancière and Badiou. Washington might be my favorite conference, at least until London. I watched Natasha Durovicova and Kathleen Newman announce their World Cinema project in Washington and then follow through on it in London, making believers out of a number of colleagues who joined up to contribute to their award winning anthology. I geared up for my own presentations thinking that, if anywhere, this was the place to make a difference. In London especially I was excited to display some of the new Bazin material I had collected that has shown how much more there is to him than anyone had recognized. These were significant and joyous events, all the more because I had anticipated them being obligatory and tedious.

Tonight, though, I remember the most anxious conference, the Chicago SCMS four years ago, when everyone had Miriam Hansen on their mind. We were so relieved to see her standing and speaking... grateful that she hadn't lost any of her incisiveness, and deeply grateful that for decades she had lent her powerful mind to topics we care about. Miriam is on our minds at this conference too, the first one sadly she cannot consider attending. It is certainly she whose lifetime career was genuinely distinguished. I remember meeting her on my first trip to Yale in 1982, and being rather intimidated by her bold questions and her erudition. Then we bonded in several long discussions during the 1989 SCS in Iowa City. She loved the intimacy of that conference, appreciated that the reception was held at our beloved local bookstore, appreciated even more that the executive committee dinner at our house was prepared by Stevie, my wife. She was the most gracious guest; so of course she was invited back. In the mid-90s, in our kitchen again, she sprang on me her "Classic Cinema as Vernacular Modernism" idea. We argued immediately over the troubling conjunction of "classical and Modern"; I'm not the only one whose largest notions about cinema had to be rethought (even if reaffirmed) in light of Miriam's tenacious idea, one she refined and exemplified year after year. I miss her tonight but she will continue to hover as a conscience, demanding that I—and we-- look more widely, more deeply, and look otherwise.

With that injunction on in mind, I want to revisit several concepts that characterize my career, if not my achievement. They don't really amount to so much, these few ideas I cannot shake. I resuscitate them to let you glimpse four decades worth of a certain kind of cinema studies that you may find edifying or be glad to put out of the way. Still, repeating these concepts to the kind of people who make up this group—SCMS--has been my mission, as well as my pleasure.

In fact it was not always pleasurable....In one of the most wrenching moments of the career whose achievement is being honored tonight, I managed to put myself between two eloquent film scholars whose attitudes toward their subject was as opposite as it was passionate. In an upstart and shortlived UCLA journal, *Strategies*, which, perhaps fortunately, is now nearly impossible to track down, Robert Ray composed a lengthy review article in which he set himself against *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* and against David Bordwell's larger project of which he rightly saw this book to be the anchor. I don't know if David responded (even after the review was reprinted in Ray's *How a Film Theory Got Lost*), but I was asked to respond by the editors of *Strategies* and so I embroiled myself in what I still consider a telling methodological, indeed disciplinary battle. I mention this piece of bibliographic trivia because it was far from trivial to me. Bordwell was, and remains, a tremendous figure, whom I caricatured as an imperial commander surveying the field of cinema from a mountain lookout, where he plans and carries out what are effectively knowledge campaigns, as he takes open ground, defends key positions, and in all cases marches ever forward. Thinking of Michel de Certeau, I saw Robert Ray opposing Bordwell's disciplinary *strategies* with his own surrealist *tactics*, by darting between the ranks, or hiding out in the bush to ambush the subject--if not other scholars--through surprise and chance encounters. Ray doesn't mind getting lost in the field of film studies without a compass, for he practices a kind of private discipline on display in the remarkable books that courageously carry out his 'surrealist research': *The Avant-Garde finds Andy Hardy* and *The ABC's of Classic Hollywood*, the latter's title seemingly a retort to the Bordwell, Staiger Thompson volume that appeared almost a quarter century before. One kind of scholarship marches, the other is deviant; Ray leaves the highroad for chance encounters," erring like a knight errant," I wrote.

I am embarrassed at the way I dramatized this opposition, yet it remains important for me since I have felt drawn to both positions: I try to inculcate systematic, responsible and progressive study,

yet I relish and reward my students for appreciating the lightning flashes of insight that electrify the inventive but inimitable essays by Michel Leiris and Breton as well as by Benjamin, Barthes, Peter Wollen... and Robert Ray. Looking for a path between what I called the limitations of the progressive science and the “Limits of Surrealist Delight,” I found that Claude Levi-Strauss had been there well before me.

In the introductory chapter of *Tristes Tropiques* called “How I Became an Anthropologist,” Lévi-Strauss left Europe for the first time, escaping the intellectual cacophony of Paris as he embarked at Marseilles (destination Santos, Brazil) for what he deliberately designated a tracking mission (*une poursuite*). As a budding intellectual caught in a familiar dilemma between “normal science” and its avant-garde alternative, Lévi-Strauss considered his options. He had been schooled in law, social science, and philosophy as taught in the academy, all of which seemed destined and doomed to widen knowledge in a most predictable fashion. And so he flirted with the Surrealists but found them too flighty and unpredictable, too concerned with experience over knowledge. They discovered things through meandering, self-styled knights-errant who bank on the uses of error in a Quixotic search for a more fundamental truth. Proceeding by puns, connotations, and other accidents of language, “errancy” is an acquired method that strays toward its goal. Lévi-Strauss found it inconsequential, its discoveries ultimately just self-discovery; its haphazard flashes of illumination not adding up to anything or taking him anywhere. He didn’t want to aestheticize discovery; he wanted to give discoveries a chance to come to him so that he could then pursue them wherever they might lead.

Geology was his model discipline, because the terrain it encounters is objective. Rocks, remember, serve as the definition of “objective” for Samuel Johnson; he kicked one to refute Bishop Berkeley. Yet rocky terrain requires human historical imagination to make sense of its apparent confusion. In his anthropology, Lévi-Strauss aimed to engage the objective otherness of distinct social groups while making sense of them through a grand conception of humankind. Like him, my (our) individual encounters with specific films matter insofar as they contribute to the larger discoveries of regularities and interconnections that comprise film history and theory. He said that his wide-ranging “pursuit [is] a *very* different thing from just wandering or from the straight-forward exploration of a given area. What seems mere incoherent groping to an uninformed observer is to me the very image of knowledge-in-action with the difficulties it may

encounter and the satisfactions it may hope to enjoy.”

I’ve experienced in film studies a lot of the difficulties Levi-Strauss mentions, but even more the satisfactions, the latter being on my mind tonight. But I don’t want to leave Levi-Strauss quite yet, since his evocation of geology is one of those chance encounters mentioned above.

Tomorrow, here in the book exhibit at the Ritz-Carleton, I’m also celebrating the unveiling of *Opening Bazin* an anthology that kicks off with Thomas Elsaesser’s wonderful overview of Bazin’s pertinence and then is followed by three remarkable pieces about geology and surrealism. I knew Bazin had a penchant for geological metaphors, but not until Ludovic Cortade systematically ploughed through French archives, did we know how crucial it was in his education and thus to his method. Effectively he made sense of the surface of the film world by calculating cinema’s underlying structures. Only a few years younger than Lévi-Strauss, Bazin had learned to track evidence in his own realm, and he did so with superior agility, looking below the appearances of films, when some detail on their surface alerted him. Like a geologist he spotted and relished new specimens—films or rocks, it’s the same for both--using them to imagine the larger story and using that larger story to make those specimens seem even more significant.

This is the field of film studies I entered in 1970, under the seductive influence of both Levi-Strauss and Bazin. And in the main, this is how I still see our work and pleasure. Even before I encountered its analogue in geology, I was proclaiming (repetitively, I know,) that films exist as recorded blocks of reality that the imagination plays with in one way or another and to one effect or another. Whether shot on celluloid or DV, whether projected in a multiplex, a screening room, or emanating from a monitor in a museum or at home, a film gives evidence of the resistance of the real to the imagination, while at the same time it explores the real through the imagination. This is as true for neorealism as for science fiction, for documentaries as for Hollywood features, and it includes experimental, amateur, industrial and educational films which exhibit different ratios of imagination to the real, producing a spectrum of effects and serving a variety of social functions. Film are our field’s primary data.

You should be starting to squirm. “He’s taking the pulpit,” you’ll say, “telling us his version of what cinema is.” It’s not my fault; I’ve been summoned here tonight. Besides, for years it was said that I obscured my views, slinking in the shadows of the theorists and the films I admired.

“Where do you stand?” I was asked repeatedly in the 1980s and 90s after *Concepts in Film Theory* and *Film in the Aura of Art*. I thought I had made that plain at the ends of both books ... I stand for the conversation between self and film, a conversation that flows into the social discourse of film studies. That’s why I need SCMS, for here I find a discourse that changes the films we talk about and that changes us as we interact with them and with each other through them.

We talk about films, because, like nothing else I know, they, and the cinema *in toto*, make us ill at ease and unstable. We go out to the movies and project ourselves elsewhere, not quite sure who we will be when we return. Cinema puts identity at risk, and happily so. It troubles the self we are born with, inviting us to escape the particular situation into which we were cast. That’s why I gravitated toward foreign films even though I grew up near Hollywood. That’s definitely why I press my students to take up, even if provisionally, topics that are distant from what they know and particularly what they feel close to. “Don’t replicate yourself in your projects,” I warn. “Protect yourself from the security and complacency of identity, even if your identity is under siege.”

But it’s time to be honest: how far afield did I travel? Should I feel virtuous in having taken up French film and image theory when this was smack in the middle of the literature and philosophy I was reading in high school and college? And what about my turn toward West African culture? Not only could this be seen as a French tributary, my daughter was there in the Peace Corps. Because of her I felt an affiliation with Mali, learned about it, visited it several times, cheer on its films. As for Japan, my brother is a professor there. Evidently my filiations have not been so disinterested as I let on. Last month I realized that I was born the very month that Bazin’s “Ontology of the Photographic Image” appeared in print. Talk about the alignment of the stars!

And even if I boast of having traveled beyond my safe zone to encounter and champion certain very foreign films and ideas, it has been a rather simple, even commonplace thing for an American white male to put his identity on hold. This kind of spiritual displacement has primarily aesthetic value for me; displacement is quite another thing for, say, an illegal immigrant.

Yet, I believe in displacement all the same. “Jetlag,” I’ve taken to calling the displacement

inherent in cinema. And jetlag is literally what I feel standing before you now: uncomfortable, self-conscious, and hyper-alert. Let's just say that I'm "beside myself"...and beside oneself is exactly where the cinema positions every spectator, as it submits them to another time and place while they remain in a time and place of their own. The vibration of this *décalage* expands both the film and those who watch it; you can sense that expansion as the film reverberates over time in the volume of one's consciousness, and then as these reflections bounce around in the classroom, on email, in discussions and publications. The destiny of each film is at stake in such conversations, as the film grows into what we help make it be. And our identities too are at stake. To paraphrase the famous Mallarmé quote Bazin so loved, "we change only to become ourselves."

This, by the way, is also my theory of adaptation. It's not that a text has no identity; rather, its identity is not fixed. And adaptations, even poor ones, change the "original" only in itself. That's why I conclude *What Cinema Is!* on adaptation: what seems at first merely an engineering problem—jiggering novels into motion pictures-- becomes genuinely metaphysical if you think about it. For the Kleist novella will never be the same after Eric Rohmer's *Die Marquise von O.*, a film that is now part of that novella's destiny if not identity. The same can be said of cinema as a whole. Television, media, new media, and post media do not dissolve the cinema; they change it, but they do so only in itself...for cinema has not yet been invented.

We in "SCS" have had the privilege of bringing cinema into itself, inventing it, year after year, until it became something more, "SCMS," an adaptation, I would call it, not a hybrid. I'm quite ecstatic (that is, I'm beside myself) to be recognized for having contributed to this morphology for four decades. And I accept this award with gusto, even though I have often doubted my abilities as well as the significance of my contributions. My confidence comes from two qualities I have never doubted: intuition and persistence. I have chosen right whenever it counted: I chose Mizoguchi and Bazin at first sight and have stuck with them.... to my advantage. I have chosen exceptional graduate students whose work has helped my own flourish. I have been immersed in supportive societies that have fueled my obsessions and made them feel significant....in Iowa City for three decades, in New Haven for one...and in the Society for Cinema and Media Studies throughout. I plan to continue "to adapt," and to contribute, conference after conference, to what we are becoming and will become. It's more

than a career. Thank you.

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