

Janine M: Hello, my name is Janine Marchessault. I'm a professor in the Department of Cinema and Media Arts at York University. Today is March 17, 2018. We are at the SCMS Conference in Toronto at the beautiful Sheraton. I have the great honor today of interviewing one of the Founders of Canadian Film studies, Seth Feldman. Seth is my colleague at York University. I have taken courses with Seth Feldman. I am involved in an ongoing research project to excavate the lost films of Expo 67, a project which Seth helped to initiate.

Janine M: He is an author, a broadcaster, a film programmer and a professor, as I said, at York University. He graduated from Johns Hopkins University with a degree in History. Before going on to study at SUNY Buffalo and help to manage the legendary Center for Media Studies, which was founded by the great Jerry O'Grady. He wrote the first, or one of the first, doctoral dissertations in English, on the films of Dziga Vertov. While working at the University of Western Ontario, he co-edited with Joyce Nelson, the first book devoted to Canadian cinema, the Canadian Film Reader. He is a founder and a past president of the Film Studies Association of Canada. He's published widely on Canadian Cinema, including *Take Two*, a second anthology on Canadian film. He also published *Allan King*, documentary filmmaker.

Janine M: In addition to all of this activity, helping to found Canadian film studies as a field of study, Seth was also an author and broadcaster of 26 radio documentaries for the Canadian broadcasting corporation, and for the program ideas. He has been a very successful administrator. He as the Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts, and he is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, so he is the most distinguished guest and interlocutor for me.

Janine M: Seth, I want to begin by asking a question about how you go into studying film. Before Graduate school, what was it that attracted you to the cinema?

Seth Feldman: Well, I was thinking about this and I was really ... It was because I was a kid at a time when television was first coming in. We still had neighborhood movie theaters. You could really see the two forms in their classic modes. My first exposure to cinema really was at that neighborhood movie theater. Then, with the movies that were being shown on television, particularly one station in New York, that was the poorest station in New York, so they rented films nobody else wanted. I got to see silent films and British films. The nice thing about it is they'd show one film for five days. This was called *Million Dollar Movie*.

Janine M: Where did you grow up?

Seth Feldman: In New York City, yeah, and you could see these films, and seeing the film twice was an amazing experience, something you couldn't do any other way. This film channel would show us this stuff. There's films on it I haven't seen since, but it was a way of saying there was more to film than just what was in the neighborhood theater.

Seth Feldman: Then when I went to Johns Hopkins, there were no Film courses there, but there was a guy names Richard Macksey who taught a course in popular culture. He, as it turned out, was one of the people who brought structuralism to North America. He was a theorist and a critic, and somebody who was absolutely fluent in all of the arts. He was someone who I can change my whole conception of what to study, of how to study, in popular forms like film. In his class, we read *Signs and Meaning of the Cinema*. That was the real beginning.

Janine M: What year are we in now?

Seth Feldman: Oh, we're in the late 60s, early 70s, yeah. As far as Buffalo went, when I found out that I wasn't going to Vietnam, I was happy, and I had two offers. One from Michigan to go into the American Studies Program, and one from Buffalo, to go into the English Department, and well, I'd never been an English major, what I wanted to do was be in John Barth's writing seminar.

Seth Feldman: My ego got the best of me. I went to Buffalo. There, it was an amazing place at the time because they were building the SUNY System with endless amounts of money. We had fabulous professors, all people who were very well known in their fields, Robert Creeley was teaching Creative Writing at one point. Norman Holland was one of the founders of psychoanalytic film, psychoanalytic literature and criticism, was there, and Jerry O'Grady was there. We'll get into Jerry O'Grady in a moment, but he was somebody who really lured me into, not exactly film because he had a much broader view of the media and popular culture. He thought film schools were a waste of time because film had been absorbed into this larger, McLuhanesque presentation of culture if you want, that people were absorbing. He was the one who really got me into the idea of being an academic, and to being an academic in an expanding field, a field that hadn't defined itself. Film and media were that exactly, in the early 70s when I was at Buffalo.

Seth Feldman: Jerry, just back up a minute and say Jerry O'Grady is this kind of force of nature. He told me once when he was a kid, he went to school and decided he never wanted to leave. This was just such a break from his family life. He ended up going to Oxford to study medieval literature with Tolkien. He wrote, apparently, the definitive dissertation on *Piers Plowman*, which he's never allowed anyone to read because he doesn't feel it's good enough yet. Its just one of his problems. He's got stacks of things that he's written that nobody has seen because he just wants to put one more touch onto them.

Seth Feldman: He then went to, came back to the States and instead of teaching Medieval Literature, went to New York, hung out with Andy Warhol, through whom he met the experimental filmmakers of the time, and thought experimental film was a key to getting into the new perception of then, the 20th Century, and that it was the kind of thing that got us past the Kuhn's idea of the segmented perception, the hot perception of the time. It brought us into a kind of generic, imperious sense of seeing everything and being into everything. His definition of

McLuhan was that McLuhan was writing a history of the senses. He felt that the new media, the stuff that was in Gene Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema*, was an entrée into the senses, and that was its value, and that conventional film was fine. It could go on, he had no objection to that. This was the kind of stuff he was interested in.

Seth Feldman: At Buffalo, he was not only a great teacher, he was also a kind of education impresario. He would bring in all sorts of people at Buffalo. We were ridiculously spoiled. We got to see, if you wanted to, you could see three, four, five films a day. Not all of them were brought in by him, but those student organizations were very into to film, and they had film series. They brought in all kinds of fabulous people. We were ridiculously spoiled. We kind of thought all graduate students got this in their programs, but in fact, he was bringing in Brakhage and Paul Sharits and Tony Conrad, Peter Kubelka, and Hollis Frampton. He had, on permanent as full-time faculty, the Vasulkas, who were pioneers in video arts.

Seth Feldman: In fact, they, if I can digress a little bit, I once asked them, "What's different about video art?" Woody, he says, "Look, up 'til now, you could only deal with things you could see." Then he turned on his little oscilloscope he had, and he said, "With video art, we can film and play with the invisible, the things that, we can make visions directly," which was what they were doing, and they were making fabulous stuff. I went through that program. It was, you could say it was unstructured, but in fact, it was openly structured so that you could sample all of these things.

Janine M: Like a laboratory.

Seth Feldman: Yeah, yeah, and being a full time graduate student just meant going to all of this, all day long. I'd go to the campus at nine in the morning and come home at eleven at night having been to different presentations and classes, and doing my TA stuff. It was really like a job, but it was a great job because your job was to absorb all this stuff.

Janine M: Wow. Now I see the connection to Dziga Vertov. Can you talk a bit about how you're in the midst of this really exciting laboratory with media. This is the Society for Cinema and Media studies, but you can see it right here, ground zero, where media comes, that cinema is not simply this closed text that needs to be studied, but cinema is part of a media, a larger media ecology. Talk about how you were introduced to Dziga Vertov, and how that whole research project developed.

Seth Feldman: Well, we also had this moving guest list of great scholars going through, and Jay Leyda, at one point was there teaching. Annette Michelson would come up all the time. Kubelka taught a course in his archival materials, as well as his avant garde filmmaking, and somewhere along the line, I must have seen men with a movie camera, and became more and more interested in it. Vertov's first writings in English were coming out about that time. I think film commented a

couple of pages of them. The experimental filmmakers knew him very well, and talked about him, and kept referring back to him.

Seth Feldman: I was very much caught up in that, and then the political filmmakers kept talking about him. We had Godard come once, when he was doing the American tour for *Tu Va Bien*. I remember him speaking in this little pre-fab that we used as an extended classroom. The university was half built at the time. He's standing there and getting in huge arguments with the faculty who are Trotsky-ites, and then afterwards, I went up and asked him, I said, "I'm working on Vertov," and "Who do you think I should be reading about Vertov," and he said, "All of lot of shit, just read Vertov." That was my one dialogue [crosstalk 00:13:05].

Janine M: Was that translated though, was Vertov's work translated at that point?

Seth Feldman: Yeah, it was translated in bits and pieces. It started in *Film Comment*, it came out in *Film Culture*, and the *Film Culture Reader*. It's really the Vertov pieces that everyone quotes today, which is a very small part of Vertov. The stuff he writes, even late in his career, takes a very odd and interesting twists.

Janine M: Could you talk a bit about how you got access to source materials, archival materials? What was that like? You had studied Russian for a few years.

Seth Feldman: Yeah, I had two years of university Russian, which gave me just enough to be able to read with a dictionary. When I was in Russia, I really didn't have enough to be very conversational. I had kind of tourist phrases. The thing that allowed me to go to archives is getting an American Film Institute scholarship. They had just started those. I don't know how I got it, but I got it. I applied for it and I got it. There were like five of them for the United States. That gave me \$3,000, which let me live in Europe for six months. I just went around different archives. I started in London. I went to France and Austria, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Sweden. The Swedish film archive was really interesting because Sweden was one of the only countries to recognize the Soviet Union from the beginning.

Seth Feldman: They had a lot of early Soviet film material. They had a reel of stuff that they'd put on to 16 for study purposes, but it was just chopped up with no titles on it. Jay Leyda told me he suspected this was Vertov's first news reel series. He went, he got, this is Jay Leyda, he walked into the Soviet Documentary Archives, and the Russians, the Soviets were very smart. They banned stuff, but they never threw it away because you never know how history is going to change, and then they let almost no foreigners into this documentary archive at that time. He went in, and not only went in, he got the catalog. He came back and he got the catalog of the early Vertov news reels that they had, which described him in great detail, in order, you know, this item is about, this item is about, number three, this item is about, this item is about.

Seth Feldman: I got that from Jay, and then I used that on the material I saw in Sweden to kind of reconstruct Vertov's first news reel series. Then I got to see stuff that wasn't

yet in circulation in the States, and was able to talk about that in my dissertation as well. It was, David Bordwell told me my contribution to cinema studies was to make Vertov's other work accessible. If that's true, that's a great contribution because the man had a career. His career has a real arc to it. The beginning and the work, you can see patterns through all of the work, even the very late stuff, which is kind of enforced Stalinism, but you can see what he's doing. I think it gave a more holistic approach to Vertov than people who were just looking at *Man With a Movie Camera*.

Janine M: I was just reading something, a piece that was recently translated by Vertov. I was amazed at the emphasis on people making their own films, putting films, cameras in the hands of the people. In the 21st century, with the rise of Internet, DIY cultures, etc., this seems particularly prescient.

Seth Feldman: Yeah, he was talking about a kind of revolutionary YouTube, and everybody would have access to the means of production. They'd make, they'd shoot films, they'd scout. In *Kino-Glaz*, he kind of fantasizes this by enrolling the Russian Boy Scouts, the Pioneers, to go out and spy on different subject matters, people selling in the black market, or other things interesting happening in their community. Taking these films, or getting someone to make these films, that helped and then the films eventually, he thought, would be collectively edited and circulated. You would have a whole culture, this country that was determined by, not just the shooting, but the editing of these films. I think this is what Godard really liked about Vertov, if you want. He was making the Dziga Vertov group films, are essentially, or you'd like to have thought, that they were collectively made.

Janine M: People talk about Vertov's emphasis on machine vision, but I think there is also a sense of people's individual visions and perceptions, and experiences, so it's not just this cold machine vision that he was emphasizing. I want to just, on that point, kind of pivot into your move over to Canada, and then your, really it's not just involvement in Canadian film because Canadian film studies actually really was in a very nascent form when you came, and you are one of the pioneers, who really helped to build the infrastructure both through your programming, by founding something like the Film Studies Association of Canada, through your work in broadcasting, through your publishing, etc. Can you talk about this shift, moving from Dziga Vertov's, your work, your research on Dziga Vertov, over into coming to Canada and Canadian film studies, Canadian film production?

Seth Feldman: There's so much that happened, it was almost an accident that I came to Canada. I had come to Canada as a tourist many times before, from the time I was a child. I'd been to Expo at this point. What happened was that I applied for a lot of jobs in Canada and the States. One of the interview invitations I got was from Brock, and I went up and talked to Maurice Yacowar for the day.

Janine M: Brock University.

Seth Feldman: Brock University in St. Catharines, yeah, because it was close to Buffalo and I went up and back in the day. I didn't get that job, but when I was at the MLA Conference that year, which is ... I don't know what it is now, but it was the great meat market for everybody, and anything that had to do with languages and film, and I bumped into Barry Grant, and he said he had been interviewed at the University of Western Ontario, but he didn't think it was a good fit for him because he was really beginning his interest in popular culture, and I said, "Well, I just interviewed at a place that's very interested in popular culture," and he then went to interview at Brock, and I went to interview at Western, and we both got the jobs, so that's how I came to Canada.

Seth Feldman: When I got the job at Western, I really had to look at a map to see where London, Ontario was.

Janine M: This is in an English Department?

Seth Feldman: In an English Department, but it was a great English Department. When I was back at Buffalo, Jerry once said to me that going down the corridor at Buffalo in the English Department was like being in a Yankees' locker room, I mean there were all these great names in English literature criticism, and it was same thing at Western, because they had really hired some superb people. Jamie Reaney was writing plays back then. They had a guy who was the world authority on Milton, and people from all over the world were coming to sit at his feet and listen to him talk about Milton. Everybody was kind of like that.

Seth Feldman: The guy who was teaching Joyce was doing the collected facsimiles of James Joyce's manuscripts, this multi-volume thing, and he was editing that, so it was a great department, and it was also a demanding department. There were people who didn't get tenure. It was a really kind of a very hard slog at the beginning. You had to be very, not very careful, you had to be very industrious.

Janine M: You were hired to teach film courses, but was it specifically Canadian film?

Seth Feldman: No, as fate would have it, having spent a lot of time at Buffalo doing experimental cinema, I was, the first course I was given was Hollywood, a Hollywood cinema course, which was the department's cash cow.

Janine M: What year are we now?

Seth Feldman: Now we're 1975, 76.

Janine M: Okay.

Seth Feldman: I had to spend weeks, just reading about Hawkes and Von Sternberg, and Griffith, and the basics of Hollywood auteurist cinema, which is the way it was taught then. It wasn't bad. It was fun to teach. It was about a year later that I approached the department with the idea of teaching Canadian cinema because

it was a good time. A couple of things were happening. The Canadian government had put in a feature filmmaking fund for the first time, and they started giving out money. I believe it was in 1967, so it had been going on for seven or eight year, so films were being made, and there was a little body of work that you could refer back to, and of course there was the whole bulk of work in the National Film Board, which was still, at that point, I mean it was not only just a National, but it tried to be a regional distributor as well, and the Film Board offices in different places, like London, Ontario, would go out and drum up screenings, and be people who not only sold the films, but who talked about the subjects as well. This was a hold over from the original Film Board.

Seth Feldman: You had those two sources, and I convinced the department you could teach a course out of it, but they were very skeptical that we could give students the required reading because there were articles, it was good writing, but it was scattered and hard to find, and in journals that weren't in the library, and things like that. It was really that, that gave me the idea to do a film anthology. I think I talked to Joe Medjuck about it at one of the meetings of the Ontario Film Studies Association, and he knew a guy named Peter Martin, who had a press and was a publisher, so we had a meeting. I think it was Joe's idea, or Peter Martin's to bring Joyce Nelson there, and so they gave the job to Joyce Nelson and I, of putting together this anthology.

Seth Feldman: It was an interesting job because we knew where these articles were. We tried, we had to find these people to get their permissions, and they were all over the country, and in the States by then. We kept getting leads on other people who wrote about Canadian film, and found their articles. We had articles that were going back to the 1930s. We put the anthology together.

Janine M: Quebec as well?

Seth Feldman: Yeah, we had a Quebec section, and we put it together and at one point Peter Martin said, "Look, you can do it one of two way. We can make it look good and use a larger a font, or we can cram in all this stuff you want to cram in and use a tiny font," and we said, "Oh, use the tiny font," because we thought who knows when the next anthology's going to be, which is why the book is next to impossible to read for a while, but it does have that stuff. It still is an archival source, I think.

Janine M: Where were the film departments at that point? You're in an English department, teaching Canadian film, putting together the first anthology of writing about Canadian film. Where were the film departments? There's Queens, there was York, Concordia, I think maybe.

Seth Feldman: Yeah, U of T had this strange program where they got everybody, one person really, from each of the language departments, who had been interested in film, and they brought them together under the auspices of Ennis College, and were teaching film courses. I'm not sure how much was going on in Quebec. I know

there were production programs, but they tended to be production programs with one or two people, and you know, people who had sort of made films on their own, and would have a small class and use small gauge film equipment or video equipment to teach other people how to do this.

Seth Feldman: There really wasn't much you could do in any of these programs. They certainly weren't graduate programs, beyond the single course in Canadian film, and so it was really people like Peter Morris, who had been in the archive, run the Canadian Film Archive, and the Canadian Film Institute, who knew all these films, and had written, began writing about these films, and Peter Harcourt, who knew all the people, who started bringing this idea of teaching Canadian film studies together.

Janine M: You moved to York, maybe we can kind of talk about your move. Out of an English department, because film classes in English departments have a particular kind of character, and they're often the most popular courses, but they're often the kind of least respected courses in the department. That was my experience anyways, but then you pivot over to York University, a new film program, that combines theory and practice, and was committed to praxis, was committed to thinking about the intersection of theory and practice. There you must have met Peter Morris.

Seth Feldman: Yeah.

Janine M: Robin Wood, very different approaches to, you know Peter Morris being the archivist, and historian, Robin Wood, of course being Robin Wood, having established film criticism, and having a particular view of what film criticism should be doing. Maybe talk about your engagement with those characters.

Seth Feldman: With people who were there then?

Janine M: Yes.

Seth Feldman: Well Peter didn't come until a few years after I was there. He was at Queens for a long time, and at one point his partner, Louise Dompierre, got the job at the Power Plant, as a curator of the arts at the Power Plant. He told me this at some meeting, and I hit upon the idea of asking the Chair if we could hire this guy, and so we had a meeting about it, and I'd said, "This guy knows Canadian film. He does all this stuff. He's written on Canadian film. He'd be great for us. He translated a French encyclopedia of film. He really would be good for us," and one of the guys at the meeting who came out of production said, "Okay, maybe we should hire him, but why then do we need you?"

Janine M: You're actually quite different.

Seth Feldman: Yeah, yeah, but we did hire him and he was terrific. I mean he just, he just had this endless curious mind. He wanted to explore new things. He got interested

in Luis Bunuel one year, and everybody thinks of as one of the founders of Canadian film studies. He's taught this course on Bunuel, I think for three or four years, and he was really, really into Bunuel, and found things about Bunuel that other people hadn't used. It was a graduate seminar, so he was really one of the great people at York.

Seth Feldman: I tell you though, what really changed when I was at York was your generation coming in, in the 90s, and the early aughts, who just brought in a whole new energy. I mean we went from a department that was basically known as a film making department, with a few people who were into scholarship, and there was always one person teaching screenwriting, but it wasn't a big deal, to a very big department with really top people, and with really well-known filmmakers in the community, and people who had done a lot and published a lot in studies. That was the really exciting experience at York, the last 25 years I was there.

Janine M: Yeah, what I always appreciated about York, and I did my, I had come from Concordia, where there was a real commitment to studying media, and to comparative media studies, so a very McLuhanesque, for sure, but York also had that commitment to comparative media studies, but York was established by Marxists, so there was also a kind of Marxist political framework, and I think a real commitment to documentary cinema, which is also your area. I took Canadian cinema with you as a graduate student, and then years later I had the great honor of being hired into the film department again, and we started to develop a research project. It was one that I was sort of working on some of the films of Expo 67, but really working on *Labyrinth*, the film by Colin Low and Roman Kroitor, filmmakers out of the Unit B, at the National Film Board of Canada, which Unit B is an area that you have really contributed to a great deal, but then you started to develop this Expo 67 Research Project, excavating the lost films of Expo, and maybe some of the best films that Canadian film makers have ever made. Could you talk about that program?

Seth Feldman: Yeah, well that project, I mean it just came out of the fact that I was teaching the Canadian film course to undergraduates for years, and year, and years. Every time we got to Expo 67, the only thing you could show them was the film that Film Board had made out of the multi-screen films shown in the Third Chamber, yeah, *Into the Labyrinth*. I just thought that given the Film Board's interest at that time in new technologies, and they were talking about 3-D, and they were talking about computer technologies at the Film Board, I thought maybe I could get them to do reconstructions that would show how these films were actually presented, and to preserve what elements there were of these films, and to see what could be re-created of them. I kind of cold called the Film Board, and they invited me down there. I spoke to some people, and they all thought it was a good idea, particularly the people who were children of the people who had made the original films, but they didn't have any money for it.

Seth Feldman: Then, I just drew up this grant proposal for SSHRC, and they liked the idea.

Janine M: SSHRC ...

Seth Feldman: SSHRC is Social Sciences, Humanities, Research Council of Canada, which is universally known as SSHRC, and they went for it, and then you and Monica, and Amy, Monika Gagnon, and Aimee Mitchell, and the people who came along to work on that, did a stellar job, and it was sort of the, you know, Monika got a second grant, and continued that into doing the book and the reconstructions of two, at last count, of the films, and then we got the people who invented IMAX to do a program of the early IMAX films. IMAX had been close to experimental film before Hollywood got its hands on it. They did some incredible stuff.

Seth Feldman: I did a paper on the only dark IMAX film, I mean really pessimistic, bloody, IMAX film that Donald Brittain did for Expo in Osaka in 1970.

Janine M: The first IMAX film.

Seth Feldman: The first IMAX film, yeah. The first true IMAX film, and he, it was called, *Tiger Child*, and it was, it got its name because part one of the images was a thalidomide baby trying to swim, and they called this, in the production, they got to call this image the tiger child, and so they thought the entire film should be about, should be titled that. It was shown in a loop at Osaka, and eventually they had to put a sign outside saying, "This is not an ordinary film. This is an experimental film. Please have patience with it," because they got a lot of complaints from people that they didn't know what was going on.

Seth Feldman: The idea of just trying to document this strange thing that had happened with institutionalized, experimental film in Canada, and with Expo in particular, just really took off, and I think the thing we did the most, that was most valuable, and you did much more of it than I did, was collecting the archive. We have, at York now, just an irreplaceable archive.

Janine M: Jerry O'Grady also had documented all of the multi-screen presentations at Expo, so had a huge archive of 35 millimeter slides, which we were able to use in our research, but one of the things that has always impressed me about you, Seth, is your commitment as a public intellectual to bringing film studies and the discourses of film into the public realm, and even with the Expo 67 Research Project, in my mind it was, we will collect the archive, and in your mind, we will reconstruct these elements of the archive for public presentation so that the public can understand, and maybe even experience a little bit of the wonder that was Expo 67.

Janine M: In this day and age, we call that knowledge mobilization, right? It is about sharing knowledge with a broader public, outside of the academy. This has always been, obviously it goes back to your work at the Media Center in Buffalo, working with artists who are experimenting with these technologies in public spaces, with larger publics, but I wonder if you could talk about your work as a broadcaster, because that's also hugely unique to you, is that you have created

these 26 radio documentaries for our public broadcaster. I'm wondering if you could talk about that in relationship to your more traditional scholarship in Canadian film.

Seth Feldman: Well, for a lot of my time as an undergraduate, I thought I was going to go into journalism, and so I wrote for the student paper, and I was in the ... We had a student radio station, which didn't have an antenna, which was a good place to learn because you had no pressure on you. Nobody was listening. Then, when I was at Buffalo, we had a terrific radio station, which was an NPR affiliate, and Terry Gross got started there, who Americans will know certainly as one of the stars of radio in the United States. She's done 42 worth of interviews by now, and I did a show on that with Barry Grant and another guy there, named Mark Chutero on film. Every week we just put together a show on film, and the films that we were seeing, and we would talk about them. We were kind of a popular reviewers because we were aiming at the films that other people could see.

Seth Feldman: Then, when I was at Western, Western had four film courses, including my Canadian course, which they rotated, and after a few years it wasn't going anywhere, and the department wasn't warming to the idea of either a graduate program or a film department, so I just was looking for other things to do, and I saw an ad in the paper that *Ideas*, at that point, was going to experiment with getting academics and training them to make radio shows.

Janine M: *Ideas*, of course, was ...

Seth Feldman: *Ideas*, yeah, is one of the stellar programs on CBC radio, has been around now since, I think it had its 50th anniversary party a couple of years back, and it's a one hour documentary radio program that's done five days a week on all sorts of topics. They invite freelancers to propose these topics, and they have full-time staff as well, who develop these things. I went down and I talked to them. The woman who was executive producer then was Geraldine Sherman, and she brought along her assistant, Bernie Lucht, who was to become the executive producer for the next 25 years, and the more I talked to them, the more interested I became.

Seth Feldman: They coached me in putting together a proposal, which was then rejected, but they said, "Put it in next year," and I did, and the first one I made was on documentary film because that's what I knew, and we did a three part, three one hour programs called, *Styles of Truth*, which was about different approaches to documentary. The nice thing about it, of course, was when you said, if you could look up people who knew about these things, and you said you were from the CBC, it was an entrée, and I got to talk to ... That's how I met a lot of the people in the documentary film field.

Seth Feldman: I particularly remember Brian Winston. It was the first time I'd met Brian. We divided it into classic documentary, cinema vérité, and docu-drama. Brian sort of came on in each program and told you why this particular mode was

nonsense, in a very articulate, information filled way. This was what I did for the rest of *Ideas*, because you could take any subject, and you could meet these fabulous people who knew a lot about it, who's names you knew, and interview them, and then you had this huge job of editing down the tapes. I doubt I ever had anything less than a 10 to 1 ratio when I started to edit this. I had hours and hours of stuff for each program. You learned to pick out sort of the salient facts presented in a memorable way, and then you had to write to that, to do the bridges between the interview excerpts.

Seth Feldman: That was another cut of education because it sort of taught me how to say things in the most direct way, and the way that was most understandable. The usual dialogue between me and the producer, when I was writing the script would be ... She's say, "What does this mean," and I'd tell her, and then she'd say, "Well just say that." We must have done that a thousand times as we were writing these scripts. It was a terrific experience, and of course in terms of dissemination of knowledge, I mean when I started they had about 100,000 people a week listening, and by the time I was done with it, they had a quarter-million a week listening, or more. I don't think I was the reason for that, but it just grew incredibly. It just says something about Canada, that you can get a quarter million people, or if it was a third of a million people would be 1% of the population, who will spend an hour listening to a radio documentary every night, or at least once a week, so that was the kind of ticket to dissemination.

Janine M: Did you work with what was called the Festival of Festivals, now it's known as TIFF, because I seem to remember you being a very important player, but also you were a media personality. You would kind of engage with the programming.

Seth Feldman: Well, through Peter Morris, who knew Wayne Clarkson very well, I sort of met Wayne almost at the beginning of the Festival of Festivals. I remember Peter and I went to his office and our objective was to get them to schedule it so it didn't fall out in the first week of classes, and of course we failed because year in, year out the Festival is run during the first week of our classes.

Seth Feldman: I did my second book with them. They did a Canadian retrospective and they wanted me to do another anthology, so we did *Take 2*, and then ...

Janine M: Were you involved in programming that with Piers Handling?

Seth Feldman: Piers did most of it, I think, most of the actual programming. We talked about it from time to time, but I think Piers did the real work on that, and then I did the program on Allan King. I did program that in, whatever that was, 2002, 2003, and wrote the book, *Allan King Filmmaker*, to go with it.

Janine M: That's fascinating. I mean you can really see how you have helped lay the foundations for a Canadian film culture, but also a kind of popular discourse around film, in the media, and it's a sort of regular event now that films are reviewed on the radio, but also of course on television. You were one of the first

people that learned to speak in a very accessible way about cinema, but not in a reductive way, not in a simply, "This is a good film, this is a bad film," and I think that is one of the things that has made TIFF so successful is that there is actually an audience that has been educated over a period of time in film culture, and has a kind of basic vocabulary about how to think about cinema.

Janine M: One of the things that TIFF, as a festival is dealing with, as all festivals are dealing with, as all film schools are dealing with, is the changing landscape of film and media studies. The rise of games and so what is the future of our field? What is the future of cinema and media studies?

Seth Feldman: You know, I'm much more sanguine about the changes. Of course change always threatens somebody, and change is sometimes difficult, but at least through the course of my career, the accessibility to materials that came first through video, and then through DVD, where you didn't, you'd rent a 16 millimeter print and show that in class, and have to send it back the next morning. You could keep something, and you could show it. You could even assign your students to see it, or see some unrelated work. At York we have one of the great film libraries, which is now almost entirely DVD, and it was, almost from the beginning, students could sit down at a console and watch a film. They didn't have to read about it. They could watch the film. They did have to read about it, but they could watch the film they were going to read about.

Seth Feldman: I think that is going to continue. This idea of accessibility, this idea of finding older materials, digitizing them, repairing them, creating ever more complete versions with the auxiliary material that goes with them is, I think is enormously important, and useful to people studying film, but I think, as you also said, the idea of film, the discipline itself expanding to, really what cinema means, which is the study of the moving image, and the moving images that happen in video games, and the moving images that happen on television.

Seth Feldman: At this conference here, there are wonderful papers on what we would have never thought of was part of cinema, when I began anyway. I went to a presentation yesterday about the moving images used in shooting galleries around the turn of the 20th Century, and this is part of cinema. It's part of the way in which, to get back to what Jerry was always studying, the way in which the moving image, the mechanically reproduced moving image has changed our sensory perception of the world. I think more and more of that is going to be recognized, and the idea that came up with what I think is the most successful historical project in the last 50 years, which is the study of early cinema, which is this idea that you have a kind of latitudinal study. You don't only study the film, you study the world around the film, and drama and literature of the time, and the news of the time, how people were thinking in the particular place they saw it. You might study a film as it was seen by one audience, in one place.

Seth Feldman: I think that is enormously valuable as a concept. I'd like to go to a conference that instead of talking about, I don't know, dogs in silent cinema, talked about

the year 1903, and just did it broadly and people did papers on the theater, and people did papers on policing in New York City. Getting that notion that because cinema is a sensory experience, it naturally connects with the sensory experiences you have in the rest of your life. People defending films against charges of pornography would always say, "It isn't a one to one relationship. You don't go out and see a pornographic film and do terrible things," because it's just part of your life, it's part of everything else going on. I think that's correct, and the film integrates into the milieu you're in. It's like a fish in a fish tank, and so I think that recognition is making its way through film studies as well.

Janine M: Great, well thank you very much for speaking to me today.

Seth Feldman: Oh well, thank you for having me.