

# Film Festival Networks

## The New Topographies of Cinema in Europe

from: Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*, Amsterdam 2005

### Markers of Provenance, Strategies of Access

In the previous chapter, I argued that the “national” in European cinema has become a second-order concept (“post-national”), in that it is now generally mediated through the legislative and economic measures taken by the European Union to stimulate the audiovisual industries and promote their role in the preservation of its heritage and patrimony. In the films themselves, references to the nation, the region and the local have also become second-order realities, whenever they function as self-advertisements for (the memorializable parts of) the past, for lifestyle choices or for (tourist) locations. Films made in



AMELIE

Europe (and indeed in other smaller, film-producing nations) tend to display the markers of their provenance quite self-consciously. The emphasis on region, neighborhoods and the local in recent successes such as *THE FULL MONTY*, *BILLY ELLIOT*, *WOMEN ON THE VERGE OF A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN*, *CINEMA PARADISO*, *GOODBYE LENIN*, *AMÉLIE*), provides access-point for the international and global cinema markets, which includes the national audience, thoroughly internationalized through the films on offer in cineplexes and videotheques. The films’ atten-

tion to recognizable geographical places and stereotypical historical periods thus begin to echo Hollywood’s ability to produce “open” texts that speak to a diversity of publics, while broadly adhering to the format of classical narrative.<sup>1</sup>

Two further genres could be called post-national, but for opposite reasons. One are films that appeal to a broad audience, but whose references are not to place or region, nor to the national past. They locate themselves in the hermetic media space of recycled genre formulas from 1960s commercial cinema and 1970s television, spoofed and satirized by television personalities who are

popular with domestic audiences but difficult to export across the national or language borders: the French TAXI films or LES VISITEURS would be examples, paralleled in Germany and Austria by the “Bully” Herbig films (DER SCHUH DES MANITU, UNSER TRAUMSCHIFF). The other post-national tendency would be the *cinéma du look*, adopting the style norms of design and fashion. Different from classical art cinema in that it breaks with the conventions of realism, this cinema is not embarrassed by its affinities to high concept advertising (J. Beneix’ DIVA, Tom Tykwer’s RUN LOLA RUN), nor does it shun accusations of pornography (films like Patrice Chereau’s INTIMACY, the work of Catherine Breillat, Michael Winterbottom’s NINE SONGS). Style and subject matter ensure that the films travel more easily across national boundaries, and by appealing to universalized Eurochic values of erotic sophistication, adult emotion and sexual passion, they even have a chance to enter the American market.

But there is another way of transcending the national for European films, while at the same time reinstating it as a second-order category, and thus becoming post-national: the international film festival. With respect to Europe, the festival circuit, I want to claim, has become the key force and power grid in the film business, with wide-reaching consequences for the respective functioning of the other elements (authorship, production, exhibition, cultural prestige and recognition) pertaining to the cinema and to film culture. If, as will be argued in the subsequent chapter, television since the 1960s has largely taken over from cinema the task of “gathering” the nation, addressing, as well as representing it, the question broached in this chapter is how the festival circuit, in its turn, holds some of these manifestations of post-national cinema together, giving them a European dimension, at the same time as it makes them enter into global symbolic economies, potentially re-writing many of the usual markers of identity. As such, the film festival circuit presents both a theoretical challenge and a historical “missing link” in our understanding of European cinema, not just since 1945, but since the demise of the historical avant-garde in the 1930s. On the theoretical plane, the answer may well lie not with the traditional concepts of film studies, but in some version of modern system theory. On offer are the auto-poetic feedback loops as proposed by Niklas Luhmann, Manuel Castells’ theory of the “space of flows”, the “actor-network-theory” of Bruno Latour, or the theories of complex adaptive systems, centered on “emergence”, “attractors” and “self-organization.”<sup>2</sup> However, here I shall mainly concentrate on the history of the phenomenon and examine in passing some of its systemic properties.

Festivals have always been recognized as integral to European cinema, but they have rarely been analyzed as crucial also for the generation of the very categories that here concern me: the author, national cinema, opposition to (or “face to face with”) Hollywood. Characterized by geographical-spatial exten-

sions (the sites and cities hosting such film festivals) and particular temporal extensions (the sequential programming of the world's major festivals to cover the calendar year across the whole twelve-month annual cycle), the international film festival must be seen as a network (with nodes, flows and exchanges) if its importance is to be grasped. Could this network and its spatio-temporal circuits be the motor that keeps European cinema at once stable and dynamic, perpetually crisis-prone and yet surviving, frustratingly hard to understand for the historian and so self-evident for the cinephile?

## International Film Festivals

The annual international film festival is a very European institution. It was invented in Europe just before the Second World War, but it came to cultural fruition, economic stature, and political maturity in the 1940s and 1950s. Since then, the names of Venice, Cannes, Berlin, Rotterdam, Locarno, Karlovy Vary, Oberhausen and San Sebastian have spelled the roll call of regular watering holes for the world's film lovers, critics and journalists, as well as being the marketplaces for producers, directors, distributors, television acquisition heads, and studio bosses.

The locations themselves have to be read symptomatically in relation to their history, politics and ideology, that is, in their typically European contexts of temporal layers and geographical sedimentation. Many of the best-known venues are sited in cities that compete with each other for cultural tourism and seasonal events. In evidence are old spas that have lost their aristocratic clientele, and now host a film festival usually just before or after the high tourist season: Venice, Cannes, Locarno, Karlovy Vary, and San Sebastian are the obvious off-season on-festival sites. Other festival cities are indicative of more explicitly political considerations, such as the Berlin Film Festival. It was a creation of the Cold War, and planned as a deliberate showcase for Hollywood glamour and Western show business, meant to provoke East Berlin and to needle the Soviet Union. The documentary festival in Leipzig was the GDR's counter-move, featuring films from Eastern Europe, Cuba and Latin America. It tried to consolidate the "socialist" film front in the anti-fascist/anti-imperialist struggle, while selectively inviting left-wing filmmakers from Western countries as token comrades. Outside Europe, similar kinds of analyses could be made: Pusan, the main film festival in South Korea, was also the result of a "political" gesture in that it began by copying the very successful International Hong Kong film festival, and then subsequently played a major role in reviving Korean filmmaking as a national cinema. Yet for many Western visitors, put off by

the sheer size of the Hong Kong festival, Pusan also became the portal for a first contact with the other “new” Asian cinemas in the 1990s. The Toronto festival, too, was a smartly calculated move to consolidate a “national” beachhead that could brave the cultural barbarians south of the border, while rallying Canada’s divided Francophone and Anglophone filmmaking communities around a common enemy, Hollywood. Other European festivals are located in industrial cities, some of whom over years, have been trying to repurpose and re-invent themselves as cultural centers: such is the case of the short film festival in Oberhausen which brought film culture to a mining and heavy industry region, while the International Film Festival Rotterdam has greatly contributed to changing this city’s image, too: from being identified mainly with its giant container port and a harbor that brings ashore goods from China and Asia while servicing Europe in the past as the point of embarkation for hopeful New World emigrants, Rotterdam has become a center of media, cinema and architecture. It now is an equally important hub and node for other, more immaterial aspect of the experience economy, building bridges between Asian cinema and European audiences, a specialty of the Rotterdam festival for nearly two decades.

The tendency for formerly industrial cities to try and re-launch themselves as capitals of culture is, of course, a much broader trend. It exceeds the phenomenon of film festivals and the continent of Europe. But precisely because of the forces at work all over the developed world to renew inner cities and to infuse new life into the urban fabric (often neglected over the previous half century, or victim of the private motor car, the suburbs and centralized planning), the strategic importance of cultural events in general, and of film festivals in particular for city-branding can scarcely be overestimated. At least two distinct developments overlap and intersect to re-valorize location and emplacement (the “neighborhood” factor) in urban culture. Firstly, there is the phenomenon of “cultural clustering.” Following Jane Jacobs’ studies of neighborhoods and Sharon Zukin’s work on the interplay of cultural and economic factors around New York’s loft culture in the 1980s, economists, urban planners and ethnographers of the contemporary city have begun to look at the “locally specific appreciation of the changing interaction between culture (place) and commerce (market) in today’s mixed economy of leisure, culture and creativity”.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence, companies in the information, high-tech and knowledge industries, now seek “culture-rich environments” for their operational bases, in order to attract the skilled workers and retain the discriminating staff they need to stay competitive and innovative.<sup>4</sup> To keep these companies and their employees, cities feature their perceived location advantages (housing, transport, amenities, infrastructure) by extending them into a total city-concept, in which locality and neighborhood play a special role. Secondly (and not without a certain tension with this idea of the local) the most economically attractive part of the

population are not the ethnic clusters of traditional urban neighborhoods, but the yuppies, dinkies, empty nesters, bobos and their likes. Their collective leverage is such that key service industries rely on their purchasing power, leading to something known as the "Bridget Jones economy".<sup>5</sup> To cater for this new economic class, municipal or metropolitan authorities try to endow their city with the sense of being a site of permanent, ongoing events. Complementing the architecturally articulated urban space with a temporal dimension, the built city turns thus into, and is doubled by, the "programmed" – or programmable – city. In this endeavor, major temporary exhibitions and annual festivals are a key ingredient in structuring the seasonal succession of city events across the calendar year. Among different kinds of temporary events and festivals, a special role accrues to the international film festival, at once relatively cost effective, attracting both the local population and visitors from outside, and helping develop an infrastructure of sociability as well as facilities appreciated by the so-called "creative class" that function all the year round.<sup>6</sup> Small wonder then, that the number of festivals has exponentially increased in recent years. There are now more film festivals in Europe alone than there are days in the year. No longer just major capitals, off-season spas or refurbished industrial towns are in the running. Often medium-sized cities, verging on the nondescript, decide to host a film festival in order to boost their tourist attractions or stake a claim as a regional cultural hub (e.g., Brunswick in Germany, Bradford in Britain).<sup>7</sup>

These two components, the cultural clustering of the Bridget Jones economy, and a determination to consider the urban space as programmable and cyclical, provide salient elements for understanding the sheer quantity of film festivals. They do not explain the network effects that international film festivals now realize for the global media markets. Here, the quantity produces consequences that are at first glance contradictory: host cities compete with each other regarding attractiveness of the location, convenience for international access and exclusivity of the films they are able to present. The festivals also compete over the most desirable dates in the annual calendar. But at another level, they complement each other along the same axes. Competition raises standards, and adds value to the films presented. Competition invites comparison, with the result that festivals resemble each other more and more in their internal organization, while seeking to differentiate themselves in their external self-presentation and the premium they place on their (themed) programming. They also need to make sure they follow each other in a pre-established sequence, which allows their international clients – producers, filmmakers, journalists – to travel comfortably from one A festival to the next.<sup>8</sup>

Optimizing its respective local advantages, each festival thus contributes to the global network effect, offsetting the negative consequences of competition (over the finite number of films and timing) with the positive effects of familiar

format and recognition value, while giving innovative programmers the opportunity to set trends, or to come up with concepts taken over by others. From the perspective of the films (or rather, their makers) these properties of festivals constitute essential elements in the grid of expectations: films are now made for festivals, in the way that Hollywood during the studio era made its films for the exclusivity release dates of first run picture palaces. Considered as a global network, the festival circuit constitutes the exhibition dates of most independent films in the first-run venues of the world market, where they can gather the cultural capital and critical prowess necessary to subsequently enter the national or local exhibition markets on the strength of their accumulated festival successes. No poster of an independent film can do without the logo of one of the world's prime festivals, as prominently displayed as Hollywood productions carry their studio logo.

Film festivals thus make up a network with nodes and nerve endings, there is capillary action and osmosis between the various layers of the network, and while a strict ranking system exists, for instance between A and B festivals, policed by an international federation (FIAPF), the system as a whole is highly porous and perforated. There is movement and contact between regional and international ones, between specialized/themed ones and open-entry ones; the European festivals communicate with North American festivals, as well as Asian and Australian ones. Some festivals are "outsourced", such as the one in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, largely organized and financed from Paris and Brussels, but which functions as the prime space for defining, endorsing and displaying what counts as legitimate African cinema, Anglophone as well as Francophone.<sup>9</sup> Other festivals are festivals of festivals ("bests of the fests"), such as the London Film Festival that brings to the city's filmgoers the pick of the annual festival favorites, but attracts fewer journalists and international visitors.<sup>10</sup>

So tightly woven has this web become, so spontaneously organized are the interactions between the various "network actors," that in its totality the film festival circuit provides the structures and interchanges permitting both chance and routine to operate. Taken together and in sequence, festivals form a cluster of consecutive international venues, to which films, directors, producers, promoters and press, in varying degrees of density and intensity, migrate, like flocks of birds or a shoal of fish. And not unlike these natural swarm phenomena (closely studied by theorists of complex adaptive systems), the manner in which information travels, signals are exchanged, opinion hardens and, consensus is reached at these festivals appears at once to be thrillingly unpredictable and yet to follow highly programmed protocols. The criteria governing selection, presentation, news coverage and awards, for instance, may seem arbitrary and opaque, but patterns are quickly perceived. It suffices to take half a dozen

catalogues from different festivals, read the description of the films, or the speeches that go with the prizes, and do a semantic analysis: no more than a dozen or so words make up the evaluative and classificatory vocabulary needed to categorize the vast majority of festival films. This informal lexical stability complements the ever-increasing organizational similarity between festival, and both counteract the temporary nature and variable locations of festivals.

As one of the baselines that allow one to reconstruct the dynamics that today govern the production, distribution and reception of independent films, the festival circuits hold the keys to all forms of cinema not bound into the global Hollywood network. But one can go further: the festival circuit is also a crucial interface with Hollywood itself, because taken together, the festivals constitute (like Hollywood) a global platform, but one which (unlike Hollywood) is at one and the same time a "marketplace" (though perhaps more like bazaar than a stock exchange), a cultural showcase (comparable to music or theatre festivals), a "competitive venue" (like the Olympic Games), and a world body (an ad-hoc United Nations, a parliament of national cinemas, or cinematic NGO's, considering some of the various festivals' political agendas). In other words, festivals cluster a combination of economic, cultural, political, artistic and personality-based factors, which communicate with and irrigate each other in a unique kind of arena. It explains why this originally European phenomenon has globalized itself, and in the process has created not only a self-sustaining, highly self-referential world for the art cinema, the independent cinema and the documentary film, but a sort of "alternative" to the Hollywood studio system in its post-Fordist phase. It first and foremost sets the terms for distribution, marketing and exhibition, yet to an increasing extent it regulates production as well, determined as this is in the non-Hollywood sector by the global outlets it can find, rather than by the single domestic market of its "country of origin". Seeing how they compete for and are dependent on a regular annual supply of interesting, innovative or otherwise noteworthy films, it is no wonder that the more prestigious among the world's festivals increasingly offer competitive production funds, development money as prizes, or organize a "talent campus" (Berlin), in order to bind new creative potential to a particular festival's brand image. It means that certain films are now being made to measure and made to order, i.e., their completion date, their opening venue, their financing is closely tied in with a particular festival's (or festival circuit's) schedules and many filmmakers internalize and target such a possibility for their work. Hence the somewhat cynical reference to the genre of the "festival film", which names a genuine phenomenon but also obscures the advantages that the creation of such a relatively stable horizon of expectations brings. It ensures visibility and a window of attention for films that can neither command the promotional budgets

of Hollywood films nor rely on a sufficiently large internal market (such as India) to find its audience or recoup its investment.<sup>11</sup>

## A Brief History of European Film Festivals

The global perspective taken here on the festival phenomenon needs to be contextualized by a brief reference to the history of the European film festivals. They were, initially, highly political and nationalistic affairs. The Venice film festival, for instance, as has often been pointed out, was set up as a combination of a charm offensive on the part of the Italian Hotel Association and of a propaganda exercise by Benito Mussolini in 1932. So strong was the pro-fascist bias of Venice by the end of the decade, that the French decided to found a counter-festival:

In those days, the [Venice] festival and its awards were as much about the national prestige of the participating countries as it was about the films. As World War II edged closer, the awards began to noticeably favor the countries of the fascist alliance, particularly Germany and Italy. In 1939, France was tipped to win the festival's top prize with Jean Renoir's *LA GRANDE ILLUSION*. However, the Golden Lion (known back then as the *Coppa Mussolini*) ended up being jointly awarded to a German film called *OLYMPIA* (produced in association with Joseph Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda), and Italy's *LUCIANO SERRA, PILOTA*, made by Mussolini's own son. The French were of course outraged and withdrew from the competition in protest. Both the British and American jury members also resigned to voice their displeasure at the destruction of artistic appreciation by the hand of politics and ideology.<sup>12</sup>

Another festival that owes its existence to political controversy and municipal rows is the Locarno film festival in Switzerland, which took over from Lugano, itself founded as a continuation of Venice during the war years. Locarno started in 1946, just days ahead of the opening of the Cannes festival.<sup>13</sup> The Karlovy Vary festival, too, was started in 1946, as a direct initiative on the part of the newly nationalized Czech film industry to have a showcase for "socialist" film production.

In the post-WWII years, Venice and Cannes came to a more amicable arrangement, joined in 1951 by the Berlin Film Festival, as already indicated, also the result of a political decision.<sup>14</sup> For almost two decades – until 1968 – these three A-festivals divided up the year's cinematographic production, handing out Golden Lions, Golden Palms, and Golden Bears. Typical of this first phase were the national selection committees, in which the film industry representatives occupied important positions, because they decided the nominations. They



chose the films that represented their country at the festivals, much like national committees select the athletes who compete at the Olympic Games.<sup>15</sup> Such political-diplomatic constraints notwithstanding, it was at these festivals, and above all at Cannes, that the great *auteurs* of the European cinema – Rossellini, Bergman, Visconti, Antonioni, Fellini – came to prominence and fame.<sup>16</sup> The same goes for two of the grand exiles of cinema: Luis Bunuel and Orson Welles, both of whom were honored in Cannes after low points in their trans-national careers. The Indian director Satyajit Ray won at Cannes and there garnered fames as an internationally recognized *auteur*. Less well known perhaps is the fact that practically all the European new waves also owed their existence to the film festivals. Cannes in this respect has – ever since the festival of 1959 made stars out of François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard and created the *Nouvelle Vague* – acted as the launching platform. For instance, it was imitated by a group of mostly Munich filmmakers who declared their own New Wave, the Young German Cinema at the short film and documentary festival of Oberhausen in 1962, while the Dogma group deliberately and self-reflexively launched their famous “vow of chastity” manifesto in Cannes in 1995.

By the mid-1960s, the European festival circuit consisted of half a dozen A-festivals (to the ones already named have to be added Moscow/Karlovy Vary and San Sebastian), and any number of B-festivals, mostly located along the Mediterranean, the Adriatic and the French Atlantic coast. The major changes in festival policy came after 1968, with Cannes once more the focal point, when Truffaut and Godard took their protest against the dismissal of Henri Langlois as head of the French Cinemathèque to the 1968 festival edition, effectively forcing it to close. While Paris was in the throes of the May events, Cannes with its foreign visitors was also shut down, and in the years that followed, sweeping changes were made by adding more sections for first-time filmmakers, the directors’ fortnight (*La Quinzaine des réalisateurs*) as well as other showcase sidebars. Other festivals soon followed, and in 1971, for instance, Berlin incorporated a parallel festival, the International Forum of the Young Film.<sup>17</sup> But the crucial change came in 1972, when it was decreed, again at Cannes, that henceforth the festival director had the ultimate responsibility for selecting the official entries, and not the national committees. With this move, immediately followed by the other festivals, Cannes set the template for film festivals the world over, which – as mentioned – have largely synchronized their organizational structures and selection procedures while nonetheless setting different accents to maintain their profile and identity.<sup>18</sup>

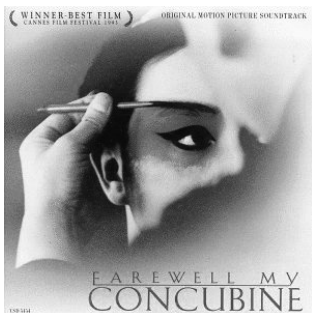
The shift in the selection process from country/nation to festival director also implied changes in the way the European cinema came to be perceived: while the smaller countries were able to come to international attention via the promotion of a new wave (with *auteurs* now representing the nation, instead of the

officials who selected the national entry), the gold standard of the European festivals under the rule of Cannes became the auteur director. But not only for small developing countries or European nations. Thus, for instance, the 1970s was the decade of the young American *auteurs*: Robert Altman, Martin Scorsese, Francis Coppola, along with the Europeans Ridley Scott, Louis Malle, John Borman, and Milos Forman, all of whom also worked with and for Hollywood. Cannes, in this respect presents a paradox: it is, as the most important French cinema event, often prone to extreme anti-Hollywood sentiment and utterances; but it is also the festival that has anointed more American directors for subsequent status gain back in the US than any other venue. The 1980s saw Cannes anoint German directors (Wim Wenders, Werner Herzog, R.W. Fassbinder) and Krzysztof Kieslowski, who won the Golden Palm in 1988, and in the 1990s, Chinese directors (Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige). Throughout the decades, Cannes remained the kingmaker of the festival circuit, and retained the *auteur* as the king pin at the center of the system, while stars, starlets and glamour secured popular attention. "Hollywood on the Riviera" also added the film market, at first unregulated and a venue for the growing pornography industry, but from 1976 onwards *Le Marché du film* became more regulated and has not ceased to grow in importance ever since.<sup>19</sup>

Nonetheless, the 1980s saw a shift in the traditional centers of gravity, with the festivals in Asia (notably Hong Kong), in Australia (Sydney), but above all North America (Sundance, Telluride, Montreal, Toronto) gaining in status, eclipsing some of the European festivals and setting the global trends that are followed by other, smaller festivals but which also influence national circuits of distribution and local exhibition: the art houses and specialized venues. Certainly since the mid-1990s, there have been few films without a festival prize or extensive exposure on the annual festival circuit that could expect to attain either general or even limited release in the cinema. The festivals – with some degrees of difference in their ranking – act collectively as a distribution system not so much for this or that film, from this or that country or director. Festivals effectively select each year which films will fill the few slots that art-house cinemas or the dedicated screens of the multiplexes keep open for the minority interest cinema. These are usually the titles that major distributors of "independent" films such as Miramax (USA), Sony Pictures Classics (US), Castle Communications (UK) or smaller ones such as Sixpack (Austria) or Fortissimo (Netherlands) pick up at the festivals. The Weinstein Brothers, founders of Miramax, with their very close ties to the Sundance Festival, are often seen as a mixed blessing, because they have effectively transformed the interface between art cinema, independent distribution, the multiplexes and mainstream Hollywood: beneficial some would argue, by pumping money and prestige into and

through the system; baleful as others see it, by ruthlessly promoting their own choices and even buying up films to suppress their being shown.<sup>20</sup>

Together with the winners of Cannes, Venice, Berlin, the Miramax titles thus constitute the season's mini-hits (or "indie blockbuster"), and they often do so, on a global scale, for a world public.<sup>21</sup> For just as one finds the same Hollywood movies showing in cinemas all over the world, chances are that the same five or six art cinema hits will also be featured internationally (titles like *TALK TO HER*, *LOST IN TRANSLATION*, *ELEPHANT*, *THE FAST RUNNER*, *NOBODY KNOWS*) as if there is, with respect to cinema, only one single global market left, with merely the difference in scale and audience distinguishing the blockbuster from the auteur film or "indie" movie. The latest medium budget European film will, along with the latest Wong Kar-wai draw – after due exposure at Venice, Cannes,



FAREWELL My CONCUBINE

Toronto or Pusan – "their" spectators, while in the same multiplex, but for a different screen, audiences will queue to see a Pixar animation film, produced by Disney (who also own Miramax), do battle with the latest *HARRY POTTER* or *LORD OF THE RINGS* over who leads the box office on their respective first release weekend. This co-presence confirms that the opposition between Hollywood and the art cinema needs to be mapped differently, with the festival network a key intermediary and interface for both sides. The category "independent" cinema says little about how such films are produced and financed, but acts as the ante-chamber of re-classification and exchange, as well as the placeholder for filmmakers

not yet confirmed as *auteurs*. At the same time, the festivals are the markets where European television companies sell their co-productions and acquire their quota of auteur films, usually broadcast under the rubric of "world cinema" or "new (country/continent) wave".

## How Do Festivals Work

Given the degree of standardization in the overall feel of film festivals, and the organizational patterns that regulate how films enter this network, it is tempting to ask what general rules govern the system as a whole. Can one, for instance, understand the film festival circuit by comparing it to the mega art exhibitions that now tour the world's major museums? Or does it behave more like a very specialized UPS postal service? Are festivals the logical extension of

the artisanal model of filmmaking practiced in Europe since the 1960s, so rudimentary that it obliged filmmakers to organize their own distribution and exhibition circuits? And if so, have festivals “matured” to a point where they fulfill this function, and begin to constitute a viable alternative to Hollywood, encompassing all the traditional parts of the film business – production, distribution and exhibition, while not sacrificing the advantages of the “European” model, with control over the work retained by the film’s author? As I have tried to argue, the answer to the latter question is: yes and no. Yes, to the extent that there are some remarkable points of contact and comparison between the increasingly globalized and interlocking “European” model of the festival circuit and the “Hollywood” model of world-wide marketing and distribution. No, insofar as the differences in economic scale and media visibility, not to mention the secondary markets, keep the Hollywood entertainment conglomerates in an entirely different category. Yet the mere idea of the festival circuit as a global network possibly paralleling Hollywood obliges us to think of the traditional categories of European author cinema in different ways. For instance, if films are now to some extent “commissioned” for festivals, then power/control has shifted from the film director to the festival director, in ways analogous to the control certain star curators (rather than collectors) have acquired over visual artists and exhibition venues. Yet the situation is also comparable to the way marketing and exhibition have always determined production in Hollywood, and real power is wielded by the distributors. A delicate but a-symmetrical interdependence is evolving that represents a new kind of social power exerted by intermediaries (festival directors, curators, deal-makers), with implications for how we come to understand what are called the “creative industries”.

As Hollywood has changed, so the festival circuit has changed. If at first glance, the logic of transformation of the two system has little in common and obeys different laws, the festival circuit shows parallels to the studio system in its post-Fordist figuration, where outsourcing of certain skills and services, one-off projects rather than studio-based annual production quotas, high profile, “sponsored” cultural events besides stars-and-spectacle glamour form a particular set of interactions. While differing in scale from the studios (now mainly concentrating on distribution and deal-making), the festivals do resemble them, insofar as here, too, different elements are networked with each other. Many of the world’s filmmakers are “independents” in the sense that they often act as small-scale and one-off producers who have access to the “markets” primarily and sometimes solely through festivals. Beyond showing homologies at the level of distribution or in the area of theatrical exhibition, there are potentially other points of comparison between the festival system and the studio system (branding, the logo, the personality cults), which should make it even more difficult to speak of them in terms of a radical antagonism, however much this

discourse still prevails in the press and among many film festivals' self-representation. On the other hand, to abandon the direct antagonism Europe-Hollywood does not mean to ignore differences, and instead, it allows one to put forward an argument for the structuring, actively interventionist role of festivals. Further points of comparison with respect to production will be dealt with in the final chapter on "World cinema", while the differences I want to highlight here focus on three sets of indicators – festivals as event, distinction and value addition, programming and agenda setting – that determine how festivals "work" and how they might be seen to reconfigure European cinema in the context of international art cinema, and also world cinema.

### **Festival as Event**

What is a (film) festival? As annual gatherings, for the purpose of reflection and renewal, film festivals partake in the general function of festivals. Festivals are the moments of self-celebration of a community: they may inaugurate the New Year, honor a successful harvest, mark the end of fasting, or observe the return of a special date. Festivals require an occasion, a place and the physical presence of large numbers of people. The same is true of film festivals. Yet in their iterative aspect, their many covert and overt hierarchies and special codes, film festivals are also comparable to rituals and ceremonies. Given their occasional levels of excess – one thinks of the topless starlets of Cannes in the 1960s and 70s, the partying, the consumption of alcohol, and often the sheer number of films – they even have something of the unruliness of the carnival about them. In anthropology, what distinguishes festivals from ceremonies and rituals is, among other things, the relative/respective role of the spectators. The audience is more active if one thinks of film festivals as a carnival, more passive when one compares them to ceremonies. The exclusivity of certain film festivals aligns them closer to rituals, where the initiated are amongst themselves, and barriers cordon off the crowd: at the core, there is a performative act (if only of being seen – walking up the red carpet in Cannes, for instance) or the act of handing out the awards. Some film festivals include fans and encourage the presence of the public, others are for professionals only, and almost all of them follow elaborate and often arcane accreditation rules.

Daniel Dayan, a media scholar, was one of the first to look at film festivals from an anthropologist's perspective. In "In Quest of a Festival" he reported on the 1997 Sundance Film Festival, founded by Robert Redford in 1991 and held annually in the Utah resort of Park City. What interested Dayan were two inter-related questions: how did different groups of spectators become an audience, and what was the inner dynamics of short temporary communities, such as they form at a film festival, in contrast to kinship groups' behavior at birthdays, reli-

gious holidays or funerals? Having previously studied large-scale media events, such as royal weddings, Olympic Games and the televising of the Watergate affair, Dayan assumed that film festivals were collective performances which either followed pre-established 'scripts' or evolved in such a way that everyone intuitively adjusted to the role they were expected to play. He soon realized that film festivals tolerated a much higher degree of divergence of scripts, that even at a relatively small festival, there were many more layers co-existing in parallel, or even contradicted each other, and finally, that film festivals are defined not so much by the films they show, but by the print they produce, which has the double function of performative self-confirmation and reflexive self-definition, creating "verbal architectures" that mold the event's sense of its own significance and sustain its self-importance.<sup>22</sup>

A slightly different perspective arises if one thinks of the film festival as an "event", and defines event with Jacques Derrida as a "disjunctive singularity" that can neither be explained nor predicted by the normative logic of its social context, because its occurrence necessarily changes that very context.<sup>23</sup> This highlights and confirms, even more than Dayan, the recursive self-reference, by which a festival (re-)produces the place in which it occurs. Meaning can only emerge in the space between the iterative and the irruption – the twin poles of a festival's consistency as event, which explains the obsession with new-ness: empty signifier of the compromise struck at any festival between the same and the different, the expected and the expected surprise. The self-generating and self-reflexive dimension is what is generally meant by the "buzz" of a festival, fuelled by rumor, gossip and word-of-mouth, because only a part of the verbal architecture Dayan refers to finds its way into print. The hierarchized accreditation systems, regulated at most film festivals via badges with different color schemes, ensure another architecture: that of privileged access and zones of exclusion, more reminiscent of airports with security areas than either churches for ceremonies or marketplaces and trade fairs. Since varying degrees of access also means that participants are unevenly irrigated with information, the restrictions further contribute to the buzz. They create a permanent anxiety about missing something important by being out of the loop, which in turn encourages face to face exchanges with strangers. The "fragile equilibrium" of which Dayan speaks, as well the dispersive energy he notes is thus no accident, but part of a festival's very fabric. It allows dedicated cinéphiles to share the space with hard-boiled deal-makers, blasé critics to engage with anxious first-film directors, and the buying and selling of films to pass for the celebration of the seventh art.

## Distinction and Value-Addition

But this “rhizomatic” view probably paints too vibrant a picture of anarchic self-organization. Many invisible hands steer and administer the chaos of a festival, making sure there is flow *and* interruption, and making visible yet another architecture: that articulated by the programming of the films in competition and built upon across the festival’s different sections, special events, showcase attractions and sidebars.<sup>24</sup> Cannes, besides the sections “In Competition” (for the Palme d’Or), “Out of Competition” (special invitation), “Un Certain regard” (world cinema), “Cannes classics” and “Cinéfondation” (short and medium length films from film schools) also know the “Quinzaine des réalisateurs” and the “Semaine internationale de la critique”. Venice offers similar categories: “Official Selection”, “Out of Competition”, “Horizons” (world cinema), “International Critics’ Week”, “Venice Days”, “Corto Cortissimo” (short films). Berlin has “Competition”, “Panorama”, “Forum”, “Perspective German Cinema”, “Retrospective/ Homage”, “Showcase”, “Berlinale Special”, “Short Films”, “Children’s Cinema.” The effects of such a proliferation of sections are to accelerate the overall dynamics, but these extensions of choice do not happen without contradictions. Over the years, festivals, as we saw, were either forced by protests to add these new categories (Cannes, Venice during the 1970s), or they did so, in order to take account of the quantitative increase in independently produced films, as well as the swelling numbers of special interest groups wanting to be represented at film festivals. The rebels of Cannes were accommodated; counter-festivals, such as the Forum in Berlin, were incorporated; and emerging film nations were carefully nurtured, as in Rotterdam, which from its inception in the 1972 began specializing in New Asian cinemas.<sup>25</sup>

In the process, one of the key functions of the international festival becomes evident, namely to categorize, classify, sort and sift the world’s annual film-production. The challenge lies in doing so not by weeding out and de-classifying, or of letting the box-office do its brutal work, but rather by supporting, selecting, celebrating and rewarding – in short, by adding value and cultural capital at the top, while acting more as a gentle gate-keeper than a bouncer at the bottom. A festival’s professed commitment to artistic excellence and nothing else positively demands a reading in terms of Pierre Bourdieu’s analysis of the social mechanisms behind taste and distinction.<sup>26</sup> By broadening the palette of competitive and non-competitive sections festivals are not only democratizing access. New power-structures are introduced and other differentials operate: for instance, delegating the selection for certain sections to critics or to other bodies inevitably creates new forms of inclusion and exclusion, and above all new kinds of hierarchies, hidden perhaps to the spectators, but keenly felt by producers and makers:

If critical capital is accrued from being selected for a prestigious festival, further distinctions are determined through the film's placement within the festival structure. In the case of the non-competitive Toronto festival, the Opening Night Gala slot is often considered one of the prime slots of the festival, and programs such as Galas, Special Presentations, and Masters are eagerly sought by distributors, producers, and filmmakers for the positioning of their films. In this hierarchy, regionally defined programs such as Planet Africa and Perspective Canada are often perceived as ghettos for under-performing work.<sup>27</sup>

There is only so much cultural capital to go round even at a festival, but as we have seen, accumulating it, in the form of prizes, press-coverage or other windows of attention is a matter of life and death for a film. A film comes to a festival, in order to be catapulted beyond the festival. It wants to enter into distribution, critical discourse and the various exhibition outlets. They alone assure its maker of going on to produce another film, be it on the strength of the box office (rarely) or by attracting (national-governmental, international television co-production) subsidy. Films use the festival circuit as the muscle that pumps it through the larger system.<sup>28</sup>

However, value addition operates also as another form of self-reference. As Bourdieu might have put it: All the players at a festival are caught up in the "illusio" of the game. They have to believe it is worth playing and attend to it with seriousness. In so doing, they sustain it.<sup>29</sup> With every prize it confers, a festival also confirms its own importance, which in turn increases the symbolic value of the prize. Cannes, for instance, is not only aware of the seal of excellence that its *Palme d'Or* bestows on a film thus distinguished. It also carefully controls the use of its logo in image and print, down to typeface, angle, color coding and the number of leaves in its palm branch oval.<sup>30</sup> To vary the metaphor yet again: a festival is an apparatus that breathes oxygen into an individual film and the reputation of its director as potential auteur, but at the same time it breathes oxygen into the system of festivals as a whole, keeping the network buoyant and afloat. Film festivals act as multipliers and amplifiers on several levels: first, they provide a privileged public, the press, as arbiters and taste-makers. An ad-hoc stock exchange of reputations is set up, efficiently distributing information with a very short feedback delay. Secondly, with festivals that are open to the general public, such as Berlin and Rotterdam, Locarno or San Sebastian, audiences, whether tourists or locals, act as a control group for testing the films according to very diverse sets of parameters, ranging from cinephile expertise to sensual stimulation for a couple's night out and equally important for a film's eventual identity in the public's mind. Festival visitors, while perhaps not representative of general audiences, are valuable for the gathering of this sort of data, beyond boosting or deflating artistic egos when per-



forming before a "live" audience. Festivals act as classic sites for the evaluation of information, taking snapshot opinion polls and yielding a market research instrument.

Yet because festival audiences are not necessarily representative of the general public, their volatility and collective enthusiasm can also make the unexpected happen. As Chicago film guru Roger Ebert once pointed out, "You can go to Toronto with a film nobody has heard of and you can leave with a success on your hands."<sup>31</sup> The same is true of Rotterdam, which carefully polls its spectators after each screening and publishes an "audience's choice" chart throughout the festival. The results often differ markedly from that of the critics and jurors. Festivals, finally have a crucial role of value addition for films from their own national production, notably in countries whose output does not always meet the international standards. With special sections, such as the "Perspective German Film" in Berlin, or the "Dutch Treats" at Rotterdam, festivals provide ambassadorial or extra-territorial showcases for domestic filmmakers' work. Offered to the gaze of the international press and visitors, whose response in turn can be fed back into the national public debate, in order to shape the perception a specific country has of its national cinema and standing "abroad," such films travel without leaving home. Finally, festivals act as multipliers in relation to each other: most B-festivals have films that are invited or scheduled because they have been to other festivals: the well-known tautology of "famous for being famous" applies here too, creating its own kind of amplification effect.

### **Programming and Agenda Setting**

Festival directors, their artistic deputies and section programmers have to be political animals. They know about their power, but also about the fact that this power depends on a mutual act of faith: a festival director is king (queen) or pope only as long as the press believes in his/her infallibility, which is to say, a festival director is only too aware of how readily the press holds him personally responsible for the quality of the annual selection and even for the prize-giving juries, should their decisions fail to find favor. The complexity of a festival's politicization can be measured by the adamant insistence that the sole criterion applied is that of quality and artistic excellence: "For the rest [our aim is] always to place film at the centre of our acts. Generally, to take nothing into account other than the art of film and the pre-eminence of artistic talent."<sup>32</sup>

But film festivals are not like the Olympic Games, where the best may win according to agreed and measurable standards of achievement. Since 1972, when countries ceased to select their own films like delegates to the United Nations, taste rules like the Sun King's "L'état c'est moi" (while disavowing the

Zeitgeist and fashion as his chief ministers of state). A festival director is deemed to have a vision – of what's what and who's who in world cinema, as well as a mission – for his/her country, city, and the festival itself. Each of his/her annual "editions" usually stands under a motto, which itself has to be a formula for a balancing act of competing agendas and thus has to be as attractively tautological as possible. The "pre-eminence of talent" then becomes the code word for taste-making and agenda-setting, and thus for (pre-)positioning one's own festival within the network, and among its patrons. These comprise the regular roster of star directors along with talents to be discovered. It also has to include the tastes of those that can most effectively give exposure to these talents: distributors, potential producers, journalists. When one is in the business of making new authors, then one author is a "discovery", two are the auspicious signs that announce a "new wave", and three new authors from the same country amount to a "new national cinema".<sup>33</sup> Festivals then nurture these directors over their second (often disappointing) film, in the hope that the third will once again be a success, which then justifies the auteur's status, definitively confirmed by a retrospective. Such a long-term commitment to building up a particular auteur is typical of smaller festivals such as Rotterdam, Locarno, the "Viennale" or Toronto, preferably but not necessarily with a local/national connection. As Atom Egoyan, Canada's best-known independent director acknowledges: "While it may sound perverse, we benefit from not having a strong internal market. We don't compete with each other over box office share, gigantic fees or star treatment, because it's simply not an issue. This is both a blessing and a curse. As artists, it means that our survival is not set by public taste, but by the opinion of our peers—festival programmers (the most influential is actually called Piers!), art council juries, and even Telefilm."<sup>34</sup>

Art for art's sake suspends these prosaic considerations of cultural politics and national prestige, at the same time as it makes them possible. By re-introducing chance, the fortuitous encounter, the word-of-mouth hot tip, the "surprise winner", appealing to the aesthetic is also a way of neutralizing all the agendas that interested parties are keen to bring to the festival director's attention. The critic Ruby Rich, after serving on many a festival jury, once complained about what she called the "worship of taste" in the international festival discourse.<sup>35</sup> But this is to underestimate the ritual, religious and quasi-magical elements necessary to make a festival into an "event". It requires an atmosphere where an almost Eucharistic transubstantiation can take place; a Spirit has to hover that can canonize a masterpiece or consecrate an auteur, which is why the notions of "quality" or "talent" have to be impervious to rational criteria or secondary elaborations. As Huub Bals, the first director of the Rotterdam Film Festival used to announce defiantly: "you watch films with your belly."<sup>36</sup> Put differently,

ineffability and the taste tautology are the twin guardians of a festival's claim to embody an essential, but annually renewable mystery.

Self-affirmation is thus one of the aspects a successful festival director has to keep on the festival's agenda. Yet as any programmer would rightly argue, a film festival has to be sensitive to quite different agendas as well, and be able to promote them, discreetly but efficiently. Yet the very existence of these agendas also breaks with any notion that a festival is a neutral mapping, a disinterested cartography of the world's cinema production and the different nations' film culture. Overt or hidden agendas remind us first of all of the history of festivals. Most film festivals, as we saw, began as counter-festivals, with a real or imagined opponent: Cannes had Venice, Berlin had the Communist East, Moscow and Karlovy-Vary the Capitalist West. All have Hollywood, and (since the 1970s) the commercial film industry, as both their "significant other" and their "bad object". The ritualized appeals are to originality, daring, experiment, diversity, defiance, critique, opposition – terms that imply as their negative foil the established order, the status quo, censorship, oppression, a world divided into "them" and "us". The boom in new film festivals, lest we forget, started in the 1970s. Many of the creative as well as critical impulses that drove festivals to devote themselves to non-commercial films, to the avant-garde and to independent filmmaking are owed to the post-'68 counter-culture of political protest and militant activism.<sup>37</sup> Rotterdam, the Forum of the Young International Film, the Pesaro Festival, Telluride and many others were founded and run by people with political ideals and usually quite ecumenical cinematic tastes.

Thus while public discourses and prize-giving speeches may continue to reflect a commitment to art for art's sake, there are other voices and issues, also pointing beyond the historical moment of protest and rebellion. Film festivals have since the 1970s been extremely successful in becoming the platform for other causes, for minorities and pressure groups, for women's cinema, receptive to gay and queer cinema agendas, to ecological movements, underwriting political protest, thematizing cinema and drugs, or paying tribute to anti-imperialist struggles and partisan politics.<sup>38</sup> Even Cannes, the fortress of the art of film and the kingdom of the auteur, has not remained unaffected. When Michael Moore in 2004 was awarded the Golden Palm for *FAHRENHEIT 9/11*, probably his weakest film, it would take the jury chair (fellow American) Quentin Tarantino all the blue-eyed boyish charm and ingénue guilelessness he could muster to reassure the festival audience that the decision had been by no means politically motivated and that the jury was in fact honoring a great work of cinema art.

Moore's triumph at Cannes confirmed a point already made by Daniel Dayan about Sundance: "Behind an auteur stands a constituency." Dayan alluded to the following that some directors have at festivals, like pop stars have their fans at a rock concert. But the point is a more general one. The emphasis on the

author as the nominal currency of the film festival economy has proven a very useful shield behind which both the festival and its audiences have been able to negotiate different priorities and values. Film festivals thus have in effect created one of the most interesting public spheres available in the cultural field today: more lively and dynamic than the gallery-art and museum world, more articulate and militant than the pop music, rock concert and DJ-world, more international than the theatre, performance and dance world, more political and engaged than the world of literature or the academy. Needless to say, film festivals are more fun than party-political rallies, and at times they can attract public attention to issues that even NGOs find it hard to concentrate minds on. This has been the case in recent years especially with gender and family issues, women's rights, the AIDS crisis or civil wars. The fact that festivals are programmed events, rather than fixed rituals, together with their annual, recurring nature means that they can be responsive and quick in picking up topical issues, and put together a special thematic focus with half a dozen film titles, which may include putting together a retrospective. It sometimes takes no more than the coincidence of two films on a similar topic – the Rwanda genocide, for instance – for a festival, in this case Berlin 2005, to declare itself to be directing the spotlight on the issue, and thus to focus valuable journalists' attention not only on the films (whose artistic qualities sharply divided the critics), but create air-time and make column-space for the topic, the region, the country, the moral, political or human interest issue.

### **Time and Location Advantage in the New Experience Economy**

To sum up some of our findings on how the festival circuit seems to work: Each film festival, if we follow Dayan, consists of a number of cooperating and conflicting groups of players, forming together a dense latticework of human relations, temporally coexisting in the same time-space capsule. They are held together not by the films they watch, but by the self-validating activities they engage in, among which the production of prose struck Dayan most forcibly. My own interpretation – via Derrida and Bourdieu – also stressed the recursive, performative and self-referential dimension, but I associated the various tautologies that result mainly with the processes of value addition: films and festivals mutually confirm each other by conferring value on each other. But film festivals also create a unique kind of audience. Mutually self-confirming and self-celebrating as well, a festival audience has both a very ancient role (associated with the self-celebration of the community at harvest time or the arrival of

spring) and a modern – dare I say, utopian - mission (to be the forum where “the people” perform their sovereignty). To both aspects, self-celebration and self-performing, could apply Niklas Luhmann’s model of auto-poiesis, that is, the tendency of a system to set up close-circuit feedback loops with which it is stabilized internally, while also protecting itself from the surrounding environment.

However, there may also be other ways of reading the organized chaos which is a film festival. A certain degree of dysfunctionality is probably a festival’s saving grace, preserving the anarchic element not merely because so many festivals originated in the counter-culture. Just as the big information technology corporations challenge the hackers to attack them, in order to find out where their own weak spots are, festivals accommodate the intransigent artists alongside the film industry suits, in order for the system to self-correct. And as sociologists keep arguing, the urban post-industrial economy needs the bobos (bourgeois bohemians), the Bridget Jones’ and the ‘creative class’ to be the demanding and fussy consumers they are, in order to maintain competitive levels of innovation and flexibility. What these experience-hungry eco systems are to the contemporary city, the hard-core cinéphiles, avant-gardists and auteurs are to the festival economy: the salt in the soup, the leaven in the dough.

But innovation (or “the new”) at a festival is itself something of an empty signifier, covering the gap between repetition and interruption, system and “incident”. It becomes the name for the more insubstantial, invisible processes by which a festival’s real grand prize, namely “attention” is awarded: gossip, scandal, talk, topicality, peer discussion, writing. These processes of agenda setting borrow their clichés and categories from popular culture or the tabloid press. They are paralleled by other agenda setting routines: those promoting particular causes via the festival programs “pre-cooking” topical issues in their different sections, specials and retrospectives. Hot topics can also emerge bottom up, via participants using the unique combination of place, occasion and physical presence to generate momentum. A third form of agenda setting is the one embedded in the temporal structure of the festival itself and generated by the journalists covering the festival for a broad public. Each year a festival acquires its characteristic themes from the press (or rather, from the competing information flows issuing from the festival press office, the film industry PR personnel and the professional journalists). Together they mediate, mold and mulch the salient topics throughout the week, until by the end of it the flow has hardened into an opinion or become baked into a verdict. Films for instance, initially tend to be reported on in descriptive terms, but halfway through, favorites are being touted, winners predicted, and by closing night everyone seems to know whether the right or wrong film(s) were given the prizes, and whether it was a good or bad vintage year for the festival (-director). There are, of course, losers as well as

winners, and to track a winner that turns out to be a loser can be more instructive than the usual festival (fairytale) story of how the underdog became the winner. The Hollywood studios, for instance, are extremely wary which films they send to the big festivals. Some have found out that while winning a European festival prize adds little to the box office draw of a major star vehicle – in contrast to an Oscar (nomination) – bad reviews or a rubbishing at such a festival can do real and lasting damage to a mainstream film.

If a film festival is thus a fairly complex network at the micro-level, it forms another network with all the other festivals at the macro-level. Here the agenda setting has to carry from one festival to the next across their temporal succession, and once more, print becomes the main source of mediation. It might be interesting to track the leading discourses of the cinematic year, and to see whether they are inaugurated in Berlin (mid-Feb) or really acquires their contours and currency only in May (“Springtime in Cannes”), to be carried to Locarno (July) and over into Venice (early September), thence to be taken up by Toronto (late September), London (October/November), Sundance (mid-January) and Rotterdam (January/February). As indicated, these moveable fests and caravans of film cans tend to identify as must-see films (and valorize accordingly) only half a dozen show-case art-house films annually – in recent years with more titles from Asian countries, Latin America or Iran than from Europe – whose fate (or function?) it is to shadow the big blockbusters rather than to present a radical alternative.

For such an analysis one could invoke Manuel Castells’ theories of the space of flows and the timeless time, because the *temporal islands*, *discursive architectures* and *programmed geographies* which are the modern festivals, do not respond too well to traditional metaphors of the kind I have just used.<sup>39</sup> Film festivals are on the one hand typically postmodern phenomena, in their auto-reflexive and self-referential dimensions, but also quite rich in mythic resonance with their performative tautologies. On the other hand, they are clearly a product also of globalization and the post-Fordist phase of the so-called creative industries and experience economies, where festivals seek to realize the time and location advantages we also know from tourism and the heritage industry, but now for other purposes. These purposes have yet to be more clearly defined. For the European cinema, they are particularly uncertain, and likely to be regarded with skepticism if not cynicism, if we insist on keeping the first-order values of art, auteur, and national cinema intact as our guiding principles. However, as I hinted at above, we could also consider the European film festival circuit as special kinds of public spheres, where mediatization and politicization for once have entered into a quite felicitous alliance. We could call film festivals the symbolic agoras of a new democracy – repositories and virtual archives of the revolutions that have failed to take place in Europe over the past 50-60

years, but whose possibilities and potential they keep alive merely by the constituencies – Hardt/Negri would call them the multitudes<sup>40</sup> – they are able to gather together each time, each year, in each place. In this sense, film festivals are indeed the opposite of Hollywood, even as they outwardly and in some of their structures appear more and more like Hollywood. On the festival circuit, Europe and Hollywood no longer confront each other face to face, but within and across the *mise-en-abyme* mirrors of all the film cultures that now make up “world cinema”.

## Notes

1. For a definition of classical narrative, see David Bordwell, *Narration and the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 156-204.
2. These were some of the possibilities explored in our Cinema Europe study group, 2004-2005. My appreciation to Marijke de Valck, Malte Hagener, Floris Paalman, Ria Thanouli, Gerwin van der Pol, Martijn de Waal, Ward Rennen, Tarja Laine and Melis Behlil for their presentations.
3. Hans Mommaas, “Cultural Clusters and the Post-industrial City: Towards the Re-mapping of Urban Cultural Policy,” *Urban Studies*, vol. 41 no. 3 (March 2004), 507-532.
4. The “culture-rich environment” can also be pristine nature, as it is for many of the high-tech companies that in the 1990s sought out Northern California or Oregon for their headquarters: recreation and outdoor sports are firmly part of culture for the “creative class” (Richard Florida). In Europe, culture usually is a combination of an urban environment rich in historical reference: natural and architectural beauty, offering diverse intellectual and artistic resources (universities, museums), as well as entertainment venues and quality shopping.
5. “Helen Fielding (author of *Bridget Jones’ Diary*), has drawn someone much more human and recognisable than the elegant and wealthy young New York singles in the TV shows *Friends* and *Sex and the City*. Yet all three portray the people who now dominate and shape the rich world’s city life, not just in New York and London, but increasingly in Tokyo, Stockholm, Paris and Santiago: well-educated, single professionals in their 20s and 30s. Moralists fret about them; marketing folk court them; urban developers want to lure them. They are the main consumers and producers of the creative economy that revolves around advertising, publishing, entertainment and media. More than any other social group, they have time, money and a passion for spending on whatever is fashionable, frivolous and fun.” *The Economist*, 20 December, 2001.
6. The creative class is a term made popular by Richard Florida: “a fast-growing, highly educated, and well-paid segment of the workforce on whose efforts corporate profits and economic growth increasingly depend. Members of the creative class do a wide variety of work in a wide variety of industries – from technology to entertainment, journalism to finance, high-end manufacturing to the arts. They do

- not consciously think of themselves as a class. Yet they share a common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference, and merit." Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Perseus, 2002), 7.
7. "An old joke: two mountaineers fight their way up a steep slope. The air is getting thinner, they finally reach a half-deserted mountain village. One says to the other: 'You know what's missing in this place?' – 'No idea,' says the other'. 'It's obvious', retorts his companion, 'a film festival!'" Hans Georg Rodek, "Noch ein Festival", *Die Welt*, 6 April 2005.
  8. In 1978 the Berlin Film Festival moved from August to February, in order to be ahead of, rather than following Cannes. This move was dictated by the pressure to "bag" more premieres as well as to cater for the timetable of such important visitors as festival and art house programmers. As Gerald Peary points out: "Berlin is where the annual hunt begins. Each February, film-festival programmers from all over the world start their cat-and-mouse games with one another [...]. The hunt continues at other festivals – San Francisco, Locarno, Montreal, Telluride, Toronto, take your choice – with a *de rigueur* stop in May at Cannes." Gerald Peary, "Season of the Hunt," in: *American Film*, Vol. XVI nr.10 (November/December 1991), 20.
  9. Manthia Diawara, "New York and Ougadougou: The Homes of African Cinema," *Sight & Sound* (November 1993), 24-25.
  10. For an astute analysis of the different functions that such a festival of festivals can fulfil, especially between the industry and the art cinema world, see Julian Stringer, "Raiding the Archive: Film Festivals and the Revival of Classic Hollywood", in P. Grainge (ed.), *Memory and Popular Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 2003), 81-96.
  11. The prototypical example of the festival film is Steven Soderberg's *Sex Lies and Videotapes* (1989) whose rise to fame became every aspiring filmmaker's dream story. Made on a modest budget with a handful of (then) unknown actors, it won the *Palme d'Or* at Cannes as best film, plus best actor award for James Spader, then went on to garner prizes at dozens more festivals, was picked up by Miramax which gave it a very clever advertising campaign, and ended making some \$ 60m at the box office for a \$ 9m investment. It is still a hot favourite on the DVD lists.
  12. Benjamin Craig, 'History of the Cannes Film Festival', <<http://www.cannesguide.com/basics/>> accessed 10 March 2005.
  13. "Au debut, dans l'immediat après-guerre, Locarno, petit cité touristique, toute auréolé de sa notoriété politique et socio-culturelle s'offre en quelque sorte un mini-Venise, ouvrant une "vitrine" cinématographique principalent axée sur le voisinage immediat, l'Italie; et bientôt sur le monde. [...] Tres vite Locarno devient un lieu de réunion, de rencontre et de spectacle privilegé ou public et professionnels peuvent decouvrir les films les plus importants du moment, dans un cadre à la fois professionnel et festif." <<http://www.locarnofestival.ch>>.
  14. Heide Fehrenbach, "Mass Culture and Cold-War Politics: The Berlin Film Festival in the 1950s", in H.F., *Cinema in Democratizing Germany: Reconstructing National Identity after Hitler* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 234-238.
  15. "In the early days, festival films were selected by each country, rather than the festival itself, with the given number of films from any one nation being proportionate to its cinematic output. Consequently, the festival was more of a film forum than a competitive event and the organizers tried very hard to ensure that every film pre-



- sented went home with some kind of award." <<http://www.cannesguide.com/basics/>>.
16. Rossellini's *Rome Open City* won the *Palme d'Or* in 1946. Cannes discovered not only Rossellini as an international auteur but inaugurated neo-realism as the key film-movement of the post-war era.
  17. For a history of the Forum, see *Zwischen Barrikade und Elfenbeinturm: Zur Geschichte des unabhängigen Kinos: 30 Jahre Internationales Forum des Jungen Films*. Herausgegeben von den Freunden der Deutschen Kinemathek, Berlin, 2000.
  18. A fuller account of the history, dynamics and specific organizational profiles of Venice, Cannes, Berlin, and Rotterdam is given in Marijke de Valck, *European Film Festivals* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Amsterdam, forthcoming 2005), which breaks new ground in offering a theoretical model for understanding the festival phenomenon. One of the first critical looks at film festivals within the globalization debate is Julian Stringer, "Global Cities and International Film Festival Economy," in *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (eds.) (London: Blackwell, 2001), 134-44.
  19. Cari Beauchamp and Henri Béhar, *Hollywood on the Riviera: The Inside Story of the Cannes Film Festival* (New York: William Morrow, 1992).
  20. This is the argument of Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Movie Wars: How Hollywood and the Media Conspire to Limit What Films We Can See* (New York: A Capella, 2000).
  21. Alisa Perren, "Sex, Lies and Marketing. Miramax and the Development of the Quality Indie Blockbuster", *Film Quarterly*, 55, 2 (Winter 2001-2002) 30-39.
  22. Daniel Dayan, "In Quest of a Festival (Sundance Film Festival)", *National Forum* (September 22, 1997).
  23. Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context", in *Margins of Philosophy*, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 307-330.
  24. See Patricia Thomson, "Clutterbusters: Programmers at Five Leading Festivals Expound on Heady Process of Selecting Films," *Variety*, 18 August, 2003, 47.
  25. Rotterdam is also the festival that can be said to have been the one most directly inspired by the post-1968 cultural revolution, since its founder, Hubert Bals, was a lover of avant-garde and independent films, and a keen follower of events at Cannes and Berlin in the preceding years. For a detailed history and analysis of the Rotterdam Film Festival, see Marijke de Valck, "Drowning in Popcorn" in M. de Valck, M. Hagener (eds.) *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005).
  26. See, for instance Bourdieu's famous dictum "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier". Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), iv.
  27. Liz Czach, "Film Festivals, Programming, and the Building of a National Cinema," *The Moving Image* vol 4, no 1, (Spring 2004), 76-88.
  28. Festivals increasingly act also as interface and membrane. A successful film and filmmaker at a festival find that doors open towards the commercial system, which now recruits among "indies". In Europe it is Cannes, in the US, Sundance that are the turnstiles taking directors into the industry. A typical trajectory, or rather an ideal trajectory for a European filmmaker is: finish film school with a final film that gets a prize at a festival in Europe, is invited to Toronto, or better Sundance, where Miramax takes an option and the majors show interest.

29. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Chicago Workshop" in Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant (eds.) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (London: Polity Press, 1992), cited by Mary Eagleton, "Pierre Bourdieu", *The Literary Encyclopedia* <<http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=501>>
30. The official web site of the Cannes Film Festival has eight pages of instruction about proper and prohibited uses of its logo. See rubric "Graphic Chart" at <http://www.festival-cannes.fr/index.php?langue=6002>
31. Roger Ebert, interviewed by Kendon Polak, *Inside Entertainment*, September 2003, 55.
32. Editorial by the Director of the 58th Cannes Film Festival, Gilles Jacob, on the official website. <http://www.festival-cannes.fr/organisation/index.php?langue=6002>
33. A recent example of this phenomenon would be the "New Iranian Cinema", for most festival-goers made up of the names of Daryoush Mehrjooi, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Abbas Kiarostami and Makhmalbaf's daughter Samira. Bill Nichols has written a perceptive study of the agenda setting and meaning-making around the festival circuit which shaped these directors' work into a new national cinema. Bill Nichols, "Discovering Form, Inferring Meaning: New Cinemas and the Film Festival Circuit", *Film Quarterly*, vol 47/3, 1994, 16-27.
34. Atom Egoyan, foreword to Katherine Monk, *Weird Sex and Snowshoes And Other Canadian Film Phenomena* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2002), 2. Egoyan is referring to Piers Handling, the director of the Toronto International Film Festival.
35. B.Ruby Rich, "Taste, Fashion and Service: The Ideology of Film Curating", lecture given at "Terms of Address: A Symposium on the Pedagogy and Politics of Film and Video Programming and Curating", March 7-8, 2003, University of Toronto (Canada).
36. Jan Heijs and Frans Westra, *Que le Tigre danse. Huub Bals, een biografie* (Amsterdam: Otto Cramwinckel, 1996), 216.
37. See Jean-Luc Godard's notorious call "We, too, should provoke two or three Vietnams ...", cited elsewhere in this volume.
38. This applies even more to specialised or themed festivals: "Queer festivals help define what gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trans-gendered cinema is; a festival such as "Views from the Avant-Garde" comments on the state of experimental cinema. The programming decisions amount to an argument about what defines that field, genre, or national cinema." Liz Czach, "Film Festivals, Programming, and the Building of a National Cinema," *The Moving Image* vol 4, no 1, (Spring 2004), 76-88.
39. Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 442-45.
40. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 60-74.