

10 Cannes

A French international festival

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The festival is an apolitical no-man's land, a microcosm of how the world would be if people could have direct contacts and speak the same language.
(Jean Cocteau)

As an idealistic project for conflict resolution, it is said that the Cannes Film Festival is part of the public sphere, as Jean Cocteau asserted in 1954. The quotation remained on the front cover of the festival statutes until the mid 1980s. Yet the history of the festival does not entirely fit in with this idealistic framework – neither at the time of its inception nor later. Instead, the Cannes festival is exemplary of the way in which film and the arts more generally are entangled with political and economic interests in addition to representing an arena for debating the meaning and scope of cultural values within national and international frameworks. Furthermore, these debates during a film festival constitute a good example of affective modes of communication, both aesthetic and emotional, in the cultural public sphere (McGuigan 2005).

From the very outset, the Cannes Film Festival was an official event and financed by state subsidies. Struggles for supremacy characterized the beginnings of the festival: which city would host it? Where would the money come from? What was it to stand for in comparison with other festivals such as Venice? How was it to be organized in a way to foreground French interests without vexing other participants, especially the United States? The festival faced many challenges, and its foundation was the result of a subtle and patient diplomatic tightrope act. In the context of the Cold War especially, Cannes was used as a framework for informal confidence-building meetings between representatives from both sides of the Iron Curtain or, at least, from both Superpowers, the USSR and the USA.

Over time, diplomatic and state priorities gave way to cultural and economic considerations. In the late 1950s and early 1960s new forms of film-making emerged, chiefly the *Nouvelle Vague* and the 'cinéma d'auteur', and these came to compete with more traditional film styles that enjoyed greater state support and were more likely to pass the official screening. Both the shifting identity inherent in the concept of a festival and the celebration of an art form that defines itself through movement and the contraction of space and time imbued

the Cannes Film Festival with a dynamism of its own. At the same time the festival was subjected to external influences such as socio-political changes and shifts in the perception of what cinema was intended to be and to do.

Jean Cocteau's ideal, as quoted above, may never be fully reached. Yet, over time, the festival has created a space for new generations of film directors from all over the world, and this has imparted to it a cosmopolitan atmosphere. Internationalism and multiculturalism coexist in Cannes. They centre on the 'cinéma d'auteur', enabling movie productions to be screened that would have difficulties reaching an audience otherwise. The two pillars of the festival, the official selection and the parallel sections, illustrate this coexistence. The first pillar, the official selection, guarantees that stars will show up on the red carpet and provides the glamorous side of Cannes with its international reputation as a major official event. The parallel sections, on the other hand, facilitate the advent of new generations of film-makers from all over the world and give the public the opportunity to discover films from different countries. This second pillar guarantees intercultural dialogue, as it is the window to other film industries and hence other cultural arenas.

The main question is that of legitimacy between tradition and innovation. This very balance will be at the centre of the present analysis on a journey through the history of the Cannes Film Festival. The four stations of this journey will illustrate the importance of this festival for the cultural public sphere: first the role played by France in the map of world cinema, then the shift from films perceived as cultural objects to films regarded as having cultural value, after that the consequences of the unrest of 1968 and finally Cannes Film Festival's present role as a stage for world cinemas.

Putting France on the map of world cinema

The Cannes Film Festival was founded in reaction to the *Mostra*, the Venice Film Festival, which had come under Fascist control in the late 1930s. In Venice, cinema was added to the Biennale in 1932 and was the target of political intrigue from the very beginning. In 1937 Mussolini interfered to ensure that the pacifist film by Jean Renoir, *The Big Illusion*, would not receive an award. A year later, in September 1938, Hitler and Mussolini respectively overruled the jury's decisions in favour of an Italian film produced under the supervision of Mussolini's son, and Leni Riefenstahl's *Fest der Völker*, dealing with the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. These events deeply shocked American, British and French officials, and it was on the train journey back to Paris that the representative of the French government, Philippe Erlanger (1903–1987), started to think about creating an alternative festival (Erlanger 1974).¹ Erlanger, a well-known French historian, had just been put in charge of the French Agency for Artistic Activity (AFAA), the aim of which was to promote French cultural interests at home and abroad.

Identifying a suitable location for the new international festival was the next step. The promotion of Cannes as the venue for this international event is

linked to middle-class and aristocratic tourism (Milliet-Mondon 1986; Monsigny and Meeks 2007). The city of Biarritz was Cannes's most serious competitor to host the festival. A kind of bidding took place between the two cities, and Cannes won when it offered important subsidies and free accommodation to all foreign journalists and stars – and the casino to stage the event.

The American film industry was hugely overrepresented at the first Cannes Film festival in 1939. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) rented a large transatlantic liner to ship stars such as Tyrone Power, Gary Cooper, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. George Raft, Paul Muni, Norma Shearer and Mae West across the Atlantic. Ten American productions were scheduled for screening, reflecting great variety: fantasy represented by *The Wizard of Oz* but also a western, dramas, comedies and adventure and historical films. France had a selection of eleven films, mostly from the poetic realism movement but also showing the wealth of the country: France as an 'Empire' with its colonies in *L'homme du Niger*, a film on Corsica, *L'Ame de la Corse*, and a film on the city of Rouen, a symbol of French national history. The Soviet Union was equally well represented with eight films, mostly adulating the working class and Lenin but also introducing new cinematographic techniques, since they included the only film of the festival in colour. But most of these films could not be screened. On 31 August 1939 *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was shown during a sumptuous reception, and on the very next day Germany invaded Poland. On 3 September France and Great Britain declared war on Germany and the festival was cancelled midway through.

Following the end of the war the provisional French government urged resuming the festival as early as possible despite the fact that the country was facing many other urgent problems. One of the goals was to relaunch Cannes before the *Mostra* could blossom once more. Erlanger managed to win over Robert Favre Le Bret (1905–1987), as the organizer of the festival. Even though Le Bret had no link to the world of cinema, he had very good connections in different ministries and this was thought useful at the time in view of general financial restrictions. Moreover, Le Bret had previously managed the prestigious Paris Opera House and thus was attuned to cultural diplomacy (Monsigny and Meeks 2007: 40).

The festival was relaunched in the name of peaceful competition. In his editorial to the special issue of the journal *Le Film Français*, dedicated to the first Cannes festival after the end of the war in 1946 and entitled '*Le festival de la liberté*', Maurice Bessy (1910–1993) wrote:

International conferences, which have been taking place around the world for a few months, are still affected by the echoes of war. These conferences, which will decide on peace, are still discussing the outcomes of conflicts. And now it turns out that the first of these meetings really to be considered peaceful is taking place under the auspices of cinema ... Under the emblem of tolerance, of elegance without surrogate and under an indulgent sun, all those who like unblinkered talent and work in dignity

will prove to the world that joy and happiness are positive forces, active ones, indeed the essential foundations of invention and creation. There is no total liberty for nations, nor moral health, unless they communicate intensively with their friends. It is by knowing one another that we learn to love one another.

(Bessy 1946: 1)

This sense that the festival was intended to support peace and improve understanding among nations is also reflected in the statutes of the festival, printed in the same issue. The statutes' second article indicates that '[the] objective [of the festival] is to encourage the development of cinematographic art in all of its forms and to create among all film-producing countries a spirit of cooperation.'

Diplomacy was, however, not the sole driving force behind the festival. Next to the expected boost to tourism on the French Riviera, the festival was considered an important occasion for reinvigorating the war-torn French film industry in view of the growing economic and cultural hegemony of American film. This was especially the case after the 'Blum-Byrnes Agreement'² on the cancellation of the French debt to the United States after the Second World War. The agreement, which was signed in May 1946, had three main points: cancellation of French debt to the United States, a new loan with advantageous conditions and a requirement for the screening of American films – unlimited access to all movie theatres for 9 weeks out of 13 in each quarter (Gimello-Mesplomb 2006; Le Forestier 2004). During the war American companies had produced about 2,000 films, and the US government was correspondingly keen to secure their distribution in Europe.

Against this backdrop the Cannes Film Festival appeared a suitable channel for promoting American movies as well as French films. In June 1946 the French government set up a commission for previewing and selecting French films for the Cannes Film Festival. This was the predecessor to the National Centre for Cinema (*Centre National de la Cinématographie, CNC*), established in October of the same year. As Dubosclard has shown, 'although the French Government never referred to the cinema as a political tool prior to 1915, and despite the limited finances that it allocated to this domain, the filmic medium soon offered diplomacy a vast field for experimentation' (Dubosclard 2004: 57). The history of the two first events, in 1939 and 1946, exemplifies how international relations played a major role in the Cannes Film Festival.

During the post-war years both Cannes and Venice endeavoured to position themselves as the more cosmopolitan event. When the Cannes Film Festival was opened in 1946, just five days after the *Mostra*, the organizers made an important point of using flags from all the 19 countries that had sent films, to demonstrate the international nature of the festival. This was also highlighted in the newsreels of the time. The urban space was transformed to present Cannes as the capital of world cinema.

Soon government officials realized that coming to an arrangement with Venice would be a better policy than completely ignoring the Italian festival, which had turned out to be a success as soon as it was relaunched in the summer of 1946. Many internal reports confirm the impression that the French first tried to eliminate the *Mostra*. An inter-ministerial committee held arduous negotiations with the Italians, but the French were hindered by the fact that both the USA and the USSR supported Venice.

The French committee, faced with precise suggestions from Italy, realized that it was not really possible, in the future, to make the Venice Festival simply disappear, and that it was better to take advantage of the circumstances to reach an agreement that, following the terms of 1946, would prevent an unfortunate rivalry in the future and the existence of a germ of discord on the cultural level between both countries.³

Venice was not the only festival with which Cannes maintained a rivalry. The late 1940s saw several other film festivals being created, following the recognition that film was not only a successful and growing industry but also a medium that could be used to influence public opinion. Examples include the Brussels Festival and the Locarno Festival and later that of Berlin (launched in 1951).

This 'threat' of international competition helped Cannes consolidate its economic basis through state subsidies in the early 1950s. Later on, when the huge impact of the festival on tourism became apparent, an arrangement was made with the local authorities to increase their share in the budget. This led to a fixed quota system for the first half of the 1950s with 72 per cent of the budget coming from the state, 16.5 per cent from the City of Cannes and 11.5 per cent from the regional council. This did not even change significantly later; in the 1990s the French state continued to support the Cannes Film Festival with subsidies, the latter making up 87.4 per cent of the budget in 1992.

From cultural fact to cultural value

The invention of cinema took place amidst the most heated nationalist discourses in Europe, and soon cinema became another arena in the race for national prestige. First, cinema was established as an industry and a way of generating national prosperity. Then its aesthetic and artistic dimensions came to be acknowledged. Only then did it also become obvious that films could serve the purposes of political propaganda. That is why, in the context of the First World War, France started to consider films as strategic tools in the game of international diplomacy.

In this process the contribution of cinema reviews and critics was crucial. Not only did they legitimize the artistic dimension of films; they also granted them the status of forming part of national cultural heritage.⁴ Two good examples are Ricciotto Canudo (1879–1923), an Italian intellectual who lived in France, and George Dureau, editor in chief of the review *Ciné-Journal*. In 1911

Canudo published a book entitled *La naissance d'un sixième art – essai sur le cinématographe*, which equated the actual birth of the sixth art form with the advent of the cinema. Canudo considered that art in general and cinema in particular could only flourish within national contexts. In 1913 Canudo went on to found the review *Montjoie!*, which defined itself as the 'mouthpiece of French artistic imperialism', linking nationalist ideas to aesthetic innovation (Blumenkranz-Onimus 1971). Georges Dureau also gave depth to this idea of a national art of the cinema in an article entitled 'Let us give a national soul to films' (published on 12 April 1913).

Instead of delineating the productions of directors by generalizing them, leave them entirely their individual or national character that makes them remarkable. Frenchmen, make films that – like the violin of patriotic romance – have the soul of France. [...] The theatrical film will be a national one or it will not be anything [...] because we are still far away from the time dreamed of by philosophers when all peoples will have the same soul.

(Gauthier 2004: 60)

According to Gauthier, at the time it was taken for granted that film directors would contextualize their films within their own national culture:

So if, as always, the thoughts of a poet bear his nationality, if the harmony and melody confirm the musician's race, film must logically have the nationality of the light that illuminated the sites captured by the lens which it stands in awe of.

(Gauthier 2004: 63)

The idea of a *national cinema* expressing distinct *cultural values* was welcomed by politicians. This was explained by Paul Verneyras (1898–1996), a major supporter of the festival and a member of the French Christian Democratic Party (*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*) in the following way.

It is in fact desirable that we let cinema fulfil its task of entertainment, which is usually pleasant and which we also hope to be healthy and optimistic. We should also try as much as possible to attribute cultural value to films. [...] Undoubtedly, a certain number of viewers seek artistic pleasure in cinema. But the vast majority, about 90 per cent, is interested above all in the story. Our forefathers were acquainted with troubadours and nocturnal revels; then theatre and the instalment novel came along. Now we have cinema, which is incomparably more powerful. In it, the majority of today's youth finds its literature; it is where they gather their experiences of life.

(Authors' emphasis)⁵

Thus, the Cannes Film Festival became the guardian of those film genres extolling the intimate relationship between directors and their films, trying to

enhance the critical and artistic sensibilities of viewers and, on this basis, enabling the depiction of national characteristics in an authentic way. Things would change in the 1950s with the emergence of the *Nouvelle Vague*.

A time of turmoil and new beginnings

The expression *Nouvelle Vague* first appeared when the editor in chief of *L'Express*, Françoise Giroud, announced a major survey concerning the generation aged between 18 and 30 on 23 August 1957.

The results were published in the issues [of *L'Express*] from 3 October to 12 December 1957. The front cover of the first issue showed a young girl with the caption 'La Nouvelle Vague is coming!' followed by a quotation from Péguy: 'We are the centre and the heart. The axis goes through us. It is from our watch that time will have to be read.' This quotation stresses the importance that the eldest attach to the new generation. Thus, '*Nouvelle Vague*' designated a sociological reality, and this was the way it would be first applied in relation to the cinema.

(Frodon 1995: 142)

Hence, the term *Nouvelle Vague* came to refer to all new trends in French society in the late 1950s. In film it was soon associated with a young generation of directors linked to the new journal *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*. *Les Cahiers* were founded on 1 April 1951 in the spirit of *La Revue du Cinéma*, published between 1928 and 1949. Famous film directors such as Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette, Claude Chabrol and others wrote their first film criticism there, even before they started to make their own movies (Deforseau 2007).

André Bazin was the spiritual father of this new generation of film critics, who would soon be referred to as 'Young Turks'.⁶ Bazin considered culture as a way of emancipating people, and assumed that if high-quality films were well explained to a broad public this public would become more demanding and discriminating. Bazin basically focused on films and the stories they told. Truffaut and the like-minded Jean-Luc Godard and Claude Chabrol took these ideas one stage further and developed the approach of the '*cinéma d'auteurs*'. The principles of this 'author-driven cinema' were summarized by John Hess in 1974 as follows.

[T]he most important determinant of an auteur was not so much the director's ability to express his personality, as usually has been claimed, but rather his desire and ability to express a certain world view. An auteur was a film director who expressed an optimistic image of human potentialities within an utterly corrupt society. By reaching out both emotionally and spiritually to other human beings and/or to God, one could transcend the isolation imposed on one by a corrupt world. Thus the characters in

the movies of auteur directors are larger-than-life figures who rise above the ordinary.

(Hess 1974: 20)

In addition, the '*politique des auteurs*', a mode of film criticism, was developed. This aimed at putting directors and their films at the focus of critics' attention instead, of using the approach of relating directors to film genres. Films became the road map for comprehending a specific director's work. According to this approach, understanding directors implied establishing an intimate relationship with their biographies and origins. Only this enabled an understanding of their oeuvre and the means they used to depict certain worldviews.

This new generation of critics and film directors applied these new theories to their own films, as they wanted to emphasize the opposition between the '*cinéma d'auteurs*' – films as art – and commercial productions – films as entertainment – and explore the possibilities provided by film to express meaning. In this sense 1959 is often presented as the year of birth of *La Nouvelle Vague*. Three films presented in Cannes in 1959 were considered the starting points of the movement: *Orfeu Negro* by Marcel Camus, *les Quatre Cents Coups* by François Truffaut and *Hiroshima mon amour* by Alain Resnais.

As it was considered the showcase of world cinema, the Cannes Film Festival was avidly scrutinized by film critics. In this light the articles by François Truffaut (1932–1984), who wrote for many different journals and newspapers, are particularly interesting.⁷ In 1954 Truffaut wrote the first of his articles (Truffaut 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958) on the Cannes Film Festival in the weekly *Arts*, entitled 'Where does French cinema stand? The Cannes Festival gives occasion for an assessment'. According to Truffaut (1954), of the about 100 films produced in France every year, 'only ten follow[ed] artistic intentions' and, in a sense, bore cultural value. He criticized the fact that these films were not short-listed in Cannes, adding: 'we would expect a cinema festival to be both a kind of economic barometer of the profession and, at the same time, a selection of the best films. Actually, this ideal has not been even remotely reached ...'

The following year, under the pseudonym of Robert Lachenay, Truffaut went further, stating that 'Festivals are film fairs and nothing else' and making fun of the prizes awarded: 'just as there is the Goncourt [France's best-known literature prize] psychology, there is the Oscar psychology, and also a festival psychology' (cited by Baecque and Toubiana 1996 and Cahoreau 1989). Although Truffaut thought better of Venice than Cannes, in 1955 he criticized the former, too, writing that 'the 10 or 12 excellent films [screened in Venice] were lost in the heap of about 30 others, which were pretty lousy'. According to Truffaut (1955), festivals oscillated between the necessity to screen only the best films, on the one hand, and, on the other, the need to discover foreign filmmaking in order to promote mutual understanding between nations. Given this, 'a festival will only make sense when the notion of selection has been reconsidered and ... official persons no longer have the power to throw films out of the competition'.

Truffaut was also of the opinion that all critics shared his negative views of the Cannes Film Festival, but did not dare to say so in order not to endanger their press accreditation. As if he wanted to prove that Truffaut was right, Favre Le Bret actually excluded him in 1958. Yet that was also the year when Truffaut managed to use the festival to his own advantage by succeeding in attracting funding for his first film. He persuaded his stepfather, Ignace Morgenstern, to buy the Soviet film *The Cranes are Flying* (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1957). When the film was awarded the Golden Palm it became a huge success and Morgenstern was able to fund young Truffaut's project, which became *The 400 Blows* and earned Truffaut the Best Director's Prize at the 1959 Cannes Film Festival (Baecque and Toubiana 1996: 197–201).

In cinema the 1960s were strongly determined by the opposition between the 'cinéma d'auteurs' and commercial movie productions. Cannes was the place where a minority presented its movies, and yet they were still censored by the nation-states that selected the movies for competition in the first place. It was therefore difficult to access a diversified international film selection. Simultaneously, and despite the strong contradictions within it, the French cinema was undergoing important changes.

In 1968, and against the background of the growing social and cultural discontent among the French student population and working class, an attempt was made to oust Henri Langlois (1914–1977) from his post as artistic and technical director of the *Cinémathèque française*, which he had founded some thirty years earlier in 1936, and which nurtured a close relationship with the film directors of the *Nouvelle Vague*. This attempt was spearheaded by André Malraux, another great film aficionado and a major supporter of the French cinema, who was Minister of Cultural Affairs at the time. Malraux was himself an art critic and historian but did not entirely agree with Langlois' deference to the 'cinéma d'auteurs' and was keen to see a change in the directorship of the *Cinémathèque* after thirty years.⁸

The film world was appalled by this coup. Under Truffaut's and Renoir's leadership the *Comité de Défense de la Cinémathèque* was brought to life, and demonstrations were organized as of 14 February, which were generally brutally repressed by the police. Following this pressure, Henri Langlois was finally reinstated on 22 April. The atmosphere of this fierce conflict would still be palpable when the socio-political crisis erupted in May 1968. Hence, the origins of the events that occurred in Cannes during the 21st Festival can be traced back to the broader context of a national crisis but also to an internal crisis in the French film world that had started earlier.

The politically and socially charged atmosphere soon reached the festival, which was scheduled to take place between 10 and 24 May. Opinions as to the identity of the Cannes Film Festival appeared to be as disoriented as those concerning the identity of French society as a whole. For this reason the festival became an arena of conflict. What did it mean? What did it stand for? How was it to be staged?

The student revolt reached the Cannes Film Festival on 13 May, three days after the opening. On 10 May the organizers managed to hold a calm and

peaceful opening ceremony, without referring to the crisis already rocking French universities. But the absence of politicians during the opening gala was the first sign of trouble. 10 May is also famous as the 'night of the barricades' in Paris and notorious for the heavy-handed police treatment of demonstrators. And whilst the capital was the scene of these violent riots, Cannes peacefully welcomed celebrities from all over the world. What is more, the organizers deliberately tried to play down tensions by removing two films about the Vietnam War from the competition.

On 13 May the *Association Française pour la Critique du Cinéma* appealed for solidarity with the student movement and requested all festival participants to interrupt the festival that day and demonstrate in favour of the students and 'cultural liberty' (Thévenin 2008: 41). This was followed on 17 May by a call for a general strike by the students of the *Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques*, who then proceeded to occupy the premises of the CNC and demand an immediate end to the Cannes Film Festival. The movement was supported by the professionals of the movie world. On 18 May a small party of people supporting the students met Robert Favre le Bret in his office to inform him that the festival had been declared closed in Paris. As Robert Favre le Bret refused to declare an official end to the festival, this group of protesters occupied the festival palace and prevented further screenings.

The demonstrators challenged the institution of the Cannes Film Festival, but they also had to face disagreement from their own ranks and from the festivalgoers. The debate first concerned whether the festival had ended or not. Second, if the festival was over, the question remained as to whether movies should be shown or not. By the late afternoon of 18 May the board had decided to close the competition but to continue screenings when the filmmakers agreed to show their films (Thévenin 2008: 16). On 19 May a group led by Truffaut and Godard prevented further screenings from resuming. Eventually, at lunchtime, Robert Favre le Bret declared the official end of the 1968 Cannes Film Festival.

Towards a French stage for the cinemas of the world

At one level, the consequences of the 1968 crisis on the festival were less severe than feared; the dress codes remained, countries continued to select the movies and the events taking place in the palace and on the red carpet perpetuated the segregation between the glamorous elite and visitors longing to catch a glimpse of the stars. But, on taking a look at the films presented in 1969, especially the ones selected in the competition, it is remarkable to note that socio-political issues had finally and definitively entered the festival through the films it presented.

The year before, Jean-Luc Godard had complained about the dearth of films depicting the plight of workers and students, noting that '[t]here is not one film showing the problems of workers or students such as they are today, there is

not a single one. Were it made by Forman, me, Polanski or François, there is none' (INA 1968). One year later, film directors with movies presenting contemporary issues were granted centre stage. *If* by Lindsay Anderson was awarded the *Grand prix international du festival*. This film tells the story of a rebellion in a British public school and reflects the ideas of counterculture and antiauthoritarian movements. Dennis Hopper was awarded the *Prix de la première oeuvre* for *Easy Rider*, a movie depicting the atmosphere of the late 1960s with sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll.

Many films with social and political dimensions shown in 1969 were not in the regular competition but in a new section called 'Directors' Fortnight' (*Quinzaine des Réalisateurs*). This section was completely organized by an association of French directors (mostly from the *Nouvelle Vague*) with the title 'Société des Réalisateurs de Films'. Twenty-two nationalities were represented, exemplifying many different political issues: the Frenchman Louis Malle showed a kaleidoscope of stunning shots from Calcutta; Walter Lima presented a pessimistic science-fiction film about his country, *Brasil Ano 2000*, whereas *Barravento*, by his compatriot Glauber Rocha, was to be considered as the manifesto of Third World cinema; Evald Schorm, known as 'the conscience of the Czech New Wave', had trouble with the Czech police after showing his film *Five Girls Around the Neck*; Ed Emshwiller presented his first underground feature film with two dancers and other couples discussing their relationships and lives in a candid display of self-revelation. From its very first year on, the 'Quinzaine' was a success in democratizing the festival and opening it up to a wider range of directors.

In other words, 1968 had three major impacts. First, it allowed the world of the cinema to be defined as a sphere where socio-political and cultural issues could be staged. Second, it legitimized the international character of the Cannes Film Festival as an arena for New Waves from all over the world; a home was now guaranteed for new generations of filmmakers. Finally, what had already begun in the late 1950s was confirmed at the end of the 1960s: the move from diplomatic and governmental issues towards a greater focus on the cinema world itself, its heterogeneity in styles and origins. Indeed, the shift from 'inter-nationalism' to multiculturalism started to occur after 1968 and led progressively to the suppression of national censorships of the film selections. Cannes was no more the stage of the world of cinemas, but welcomed the cinemas of world.

The 'Directors' Fortnight' was, of course, the most important consequence of the 1968 revolution for the Cannes Festival, but as early as 1962 another section had been created to free the festival from political pressure, namely the 'Critics' Week', designed to showcase first and second feature films. From the outset it was organized by the Association of French Film Critics, independently of the official festival, although it was clear that it should take place in Cannes at the same time. The programme of the first event was clearly more exempt from political and diplomatic pressure than the official festival: of the ten films selected, *Strangers in the City* (Rick Carrier) depicted the life of a

Puerto Rican family in a Manhattan slum and *Adieu Philipine* (Jacques Rozier) dealt with a young man's departure to Algeria. Even if the word Algeria was not mentioned, everyone could see the film as a manifesto against the French Army in this 'war without a name'. In 1968 the programme of 'Critics' Week' offered no fewer than seven of the twelve films selected on different aspects of revolution.

In conjunction with the general socio-political and cultural developments, the arrival of Gilles Jacob at the head of the festival in the mid 1950s heralded a new era. This had in great part to do with the fact that Gilles Jacob was a cinema aficionado, unlike both Maurice Bessy and Robert Favre Le Bret before him. His attention was therefore focused on promoting film as an art form, besides maintaining the glamour associated with the festival and playing the diplomatic game. The latter was still important, but not as paramount as it had been during the first years.⁹

Jacob initiated a new official section of the festival entitled 'A Certain Look' (*Un certain regard*) for promoting films that were less commercial but more artistic or innovative. Films selected for the 'Regard' could use this in their advertising material and posters – just as those of the official selection could use 'en compétition'. Thus, as of the late 1960s there were three equally prestigious programme components: the official selection, the 'Un certain regard' and the Director's Week. This latter section gained much prominence thanks to its director, Pierre-Henri Deleau, who ran it from its beginning in 1969 until 1998. This rise in prominence partly explains the launch of 'Regard' by Gilles Jacob.

Another component of the festival that gained prominence with time was the 'out of competition' screenings of, mainly, new Hollywood releases that did not qualify for the official selection but that nevertheless sought to use Cannes as a platform for gaining publicity. Last but not least, Jacob introduced the 'Golden Camera' award (*Camera d'Or*), which was awarded to the best first film by a director in any section of the festival.¹⁰

Recently the festival has launched a new section in order to highlight its role in the development of film as an art form and, more precisely, to promote the emergence of new talents. Headed by Georges Goldenstern, *Cinéfondation* consists of three main parts. The first part, introduced in 1998, is linked to the screening of short films during the festival as part of the official selection. The 'Résidence', created two years later, assists six film directors from around the world to live and work in Paris for almost five months, all in a common flat, so that they can write the script of their first or second films and interact with one another. Since 2004 there has also been the 'Atelier' (the studio): 15 projects are selected, each with the script and also at least 20 per cent of the budget already completed. The film directors in charge of the selected projects meet professionals in Cannes during the festival and 'Cinéfondation' helps them to complete their budgets.

Commitment to cinema and critical reflection related to film and society have a long tradition in Cannes, even if other festivals such as that of Berlin are

better known in this respect. This is, among other things, also evidenced by conferences organized occasionally within the framework of the festival. In 1977, when Roberto Rossellini accepted chairmanship of the jury, it was only on condition that he could hold a workshop on the 'social and economic commitment of cinema'.¹¹ In 1989 debates on democracy took centre stage. A symposium entitled 'Cinema and Liberty' was held to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution, attracting over a hundred directors from all over the world.

The French Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, often employed the festival as a vehicle for announcing key elements of his policies, so it gradually grew to assume a European dimension. In his press conference in Cannes on the relations between Europe and cinema on 17 May 1985, Lang declared:

In my view, these are the goals to be achieved and the conditions to be fulfilled to safeguard the future of European cinema. It cannot happen without a national endeavour on the part of every country, without forgetting egotism, without the participation of the creative themselves, who can do a lot to enhance public awareness, by the political representatives of the cultural and economic issues at stake. They also have to take responsibility for this future, making their experiences, their aspirations, joint issues; is not the 38th Cannes Festival, a crossroads and meeting point, the ideal place for these exchanges and the pursuit of this common idea?¹²

In the year 2000 the establishment of a 20-million-Franc funding programme was announced to promote Franco-German co-productions. On this occasion, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin commented that the future of French cinema was increasingly that of European cinema.¹³

Conclusion

Cannes is everything that defines cinema: glamour and strictness, stupidity and gravity, sexual and cerebral, excessive and sophisticated, art and business, the ridiculous and the sublime. A strongly discriminatory elitism and at the same time the ability to change, to embrace the new trends in cinema. Competitive and very open.

(Todd McCarthy, film director and critic,
on the website of the City of Cannes)

Unlike the Berlin Film Festival, which is an open space attended by all strata of the population, Cannes stands for something that is comparable with an international conference of experts and government officials. Cannes is a closed circle, which only highly select people have the right to join, at least for the official selection. Cannes is ruled by strict dress codes and etiquette, and Cannes' paramount task is to assess films.

Recognized by all major stakeholders as the premier international film festival in the world, Cannes's influence on the world of film is a major one, and for this reason some people might now be on the lookout for 'Cannes-proof' films. But what are the specific characteristics of a 'Cannes-proof' film? Does it rely on its unpredictability and taking up diverse topics in a profoundly creative and innovative way? Or does the audience expect a certain film format, which is then produced as a result? Does Cannes then contribute to a certain fossilization of the art of the cinema, not only in form, but also in content? Does it present a 'discriminatory elitism', not only in the way the festival is organized, but also by excluding films that are not in keeping with the identity of the festival?

When the value of films came to the forefront of criticism, mainly started by the *Nouvelle Vague*, it became necessary to introduce a sense of modernity, whilst preserving a certain tradition. This implied a paradox in the *raison d'être* of the festival. This balance between tradition and innovation/modernity could be achieved thanks to the highlights described previously. May 1968 especially helped to reform the structures of the festival. From then on, the official selection could represent the festival tradition of prestige and the parallel sections (the 'Quinzaine' and 'Critics' Week' even more so) stood for openness and the promotion of new generations. The next major step in this direction was taken in 1972, when the selection of films was handed over from national selection committees to a group of experts and specialists directly linked to Cannes. This move enhanced the legitimacy of the festival, as it now became a stage for films selected by cinema experts/lovers/critics for their inherent artistic and cultural value and removed from the bias of national concerns. This change in the selection mode also made the festival more political, since it could now be used more freely to express criticism.

Apart from the coexistence of the official and parallel sections, another warranty of the balance between tradition and modernity is the presence of highly committed film experts in the management of the festival. The current president of the festival, Gilles Jacob, is a person able to challenge cinema and the festival and always on the watch for new forms of cinema art. The same is true of Thierry Frémaux, the festival's general delegate. The organizers feel a real commitment to cinema. Yet critics like Antoine de Baecque still express the fear that Cannes encourages a format that some directors or producers try to copy in order to win a prize. The festival has constantly to be on the brink to avoid losing its ability for self-reflection and innovation.

For the 2009 event the Cannes Film Festival endeavoured to shape its image as much as possible by adapting to digital technologies and by giving broader accessibility to the films presented; a 3D animated film was shown at the opening ceremony and the first five minutes of a few selected films were available online. At the same time, traditions and rituals can be seen as responses to specific needs. After all, the glamorous dimension of the festival also contributes to another major aspect of cinema: it is not only about reflecting socio-political and contemporary issues. It is also about magic, dreams and escaping

from reality for a little while, using aesthetics and emotion as means of affective communication in the cultural public sphere.

Finally, Cannes has a threefold reputation to uphold. First, with support from the national level it is a channel for promoting democratic values and a worldwide stage for dialogue and cultural exchange, and this is an important element for France's cultural diplomacy. Second, in order to remain in the leading position, it has to seek and find new directors and new film genres and be open to new technologies, thus acquiring the right to judge and give an impression of new trends in cinema. Third, it has to foster its established image and celebrate its achievements, making it into an arena where previous young generations can continue to grow and return again in the course of time to present their subsequent oeuvre.

Ultimately, even if the Cannes Film Festival manages to unite an important diversity of aspects and even if it derives its energy from a history shaped by major challenges, it is one of many events, larger and smaller festivals, that all contribute to pluralism and diversity in the world of cinema. Cannes has certainly left its mark on the map of film festivals all over the world, not least as an example to follow or one to question. This makes it into a fixed point in the cultural public sphere, a guarantee for the constant progression of the art of cinema.

Notes

- 1 Erlanger was of the opinion that a new festival was necessary not only because the *Mostra* had come under Mussolini's influence but also because Salzburg was gradually being brought under Nazi control.
- 2 The agreement was so called in honour of the persons who led the negotiations: Leon Blum and Jean Monnet on the French side, and James F. Byrnes on the American side.
- 3 All the translations from the French are the authors'. This quotation is taken from the Archive of the Cannes Festival, stored at the Cinémathèque in Paris (*Bibliothèque du film*), here FIFA14B4 (FIFAxxByy refers to documents from file XX, box YY in the archives of the Administration of the *Festival international du film*).
- 4 *Le Fascinateur*, the first cinema journal, established in 1903, and other reviews were the first arenas in which film criticism emerged and evolved. These reviews targeted professionals in the film industry and were intended to contribute to its prosperity.
- 5 FIFA93B13 pp. 6 and 7.
- 6 This is a reference to the Young Turk Revolution that restored the constitution in Turkey in 1908. The initiators of that revolution defined themselves as progressive and modernist.
- 7 The Truffaut archives are also located at the *Bibliothèque du film*.
- 8 It should be added that Langlois' contract was due to come to an end that year.
- 9 The very arduous negotiations with the Soviets held by Jacob in Moscow in February 1977 illustrate this important aspect of his work (Jacob 2009).
- 10 This programme was in part conceptualized to counteract the 'Critics' Week', which had selected the best second film by a director since 1962.

- 11 Jacob devoted a whole chapter of his autobiography to this workshop and insinuated that Rossellini's death a few months later might have been precipitated by his huge involvement in this venture (Jacob 2009: Ch. 24). A film has been made on the workshop, *Le colloque de Cannes*, by Jacques Grandclaude (1977).
- 12 Archives nationales, Fonds CNS, 20050582, article 197.
- 13 Report to the French National Assembly. Roland Blum, *Rapport d'information n° 3197*, recorded at the Record Office of the National Assembly, 26 June 2001, on the strengths and weaknesses of French cinema on the international market, 60 and 62.

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