

Cannes' Best Screenplay Award:  
A Study on the Social Construction of  
Meaning and Value

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## **Abstract**

### **Cannes' Best Screenplay Awards: A Study on the Social Construction of Meaning and Value**

In studying Cannes' Best Screenplay award my aim was to better understand the prestige and the meaning making processes that surround the Festival de Cannes. To conduct this research on how awards perform the cultural identity of film festivals, I applied Pierre Bourdieu's theories on capital, culture, art and distinction (1984, 1993, 1996, and more) together with reception studies and film festival theories. Accordingly, the festival's prestige is regarded as socially sustained and giving out several awards strengthens and organises its "collective network" (Marijke De Valck 2007). Simultaneously, reinforcing Cannes' prestige and its identity values secures the position and influence of those same social agents in the economies, cultures and geopolitics of cinema. In my research I examine a set period, from 2006 to 2014, in order to connect the tensions that cut through the Festival de Cannes back to wider frames of reference and back to concrete contexts which are relevant to our understanding of how and why certain films win awards while others are overlooked. Given that film festivals attach symbolic capital (Pierre Bourdieu 1979) and contribute to the construction of films as cultural products (Janet Harbord 2002), this study provides increased knowledge of the broader ramifications that film festival awards have for industrial and cultural dimensions of filmmaking.

The Festival de Cannes can be seen as *a network constructed brand* that generates symbolic capital and reifies meaning making possibilities (adding to the works of Julian Stringer 2003a, Liz Czach 2004, Thomas Elsasser 2005, Rosalind Galt 2010, Cindy Wong 2011, Dorota Ostrowska 2016, and others). In this light, Cannes' Best Screenplay Award serves to reinforce certain cinema values that the Festival de Cannes brand is associated with: diversity, reflecting the world we live in and, paradoxically, also authorship.

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## Introduction

### Getting Started on a Research Project on Cannes' Best Screenplay Award

The public image of the Festival de Cannes may be that of “a celebration of cinema” but it is *much more than that*.<sup>1</sup> All festivals showcase some sort of cultural manifestation, be it theatre, music, gastronomy or films, but they also have social, economic and even political impact and support within and beyond their alleged purpose. For those and other reasons film festivals have become a most attractive topic in “millennial” film studies and film festival studies is now a fructiferous field. Film festival research may have started with André Bazin’s commentary on the Festival de Cannes as a “religious order” (back in 1955), and, to an extent, in assuming that the Festival de Cannes *has prestige* without engaging in a query about why, on *what grounds* and for *whose interests* we are maintaining a mythical approach. While there are undeniable historical reasons for this, there is yet much to be said about the social construction of prestige surrounding contemporary Cannes and its awards; particularly about the value that secondary awards such as the Best Screenplay Award have and where they “get” it from. Following current perspectives on film festivals, awards are not merely the high point of a cinema celebration, since the festival phenomena entails artistic, economic and political complexities within and beyond cinema; and it is from this standpoint that I study how Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award acquires meaning in contemporary cinema cultures, and for whose interests.

The academic interest in film festival research is fairly recent but has grown rapidly and extensively. In 1994 Bill Nichols claimed that film festivals are fundamental to understanding film form, and his claim was supplemented with Janet Hardbord’s 2002 argument that they are also

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<sup>1</sup> I have chosen to leave the festival’s original name because it is widely used internationally.

key to understanding film products. Simultaneously, Daniel Dayan took a different approach, putting emphasis on how a festival is configured (2000[2013]). By that time, Julian Stringer (2001 and 2003a) was observing the idiosyncrasies of the film festival event as well as further analysing their gatekeeping function, and Kenneth Turan (2002) put forth a wide angle explanation of the international film festival circuit. Later, Peter Biskind (2004) added dimension to the topic with a detailed explanation on how a film festival, a film company and “film style” had emerged together at Cannes. Meanwhile, the relationships between film festivals, film form and film economies became central in the study of national cinemas and world cinemas, being addressed by Liz Czach (2004), Thomas Elsaesser (2005), Shohini Chadhuri (2005), and Daniel Steinhart (2006), to name a few initiators. Film Festivals became, of course, also important in the study of transnational cinema dynamics, with works such as those of Lucy Mazdon (2006 and 2007), Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (2006) Lúcia Nagib (2006) and Stephanie Dennison (2006). Then, since the appearance of Marijke De Valck’s 2007 seminal book on film festivals, the field has done nothing but grow and mature as a multidisciplinary field within and beyond film studies. This fact can be assessed by reviewing any of the available Film Festival Research Annotated Bibliographies (De Valck and Loist 2008 to 2015, in *filmfestivalresearch.org*) or the titles in the collections of the Film Festival Year Book (Iordanova and Rhyne eds., 2009, Iordanova and Cheung 2010 and 2011, Iordanova and Torchin 2012, Iordanova and Marlow-Man 2013, Iordanova and Van de Peer 2014) and Framing Film Festivals (Dovey 2015, Stevens 2016, Richards 2017 and Robinson and Berry 2017). It is common academic knowledge today that festivals and awards serve many different purposes which are only sometimes overtly stated, or even only sometimes rationalized by participants. It has also been widely agreed that the theories of Pierre Bourdieu are of major relevance to understanding cultural mediation (Smith Maguire and Matthews 2014), prestige (English 2005, Mezas et al. 2013) and film festivals (De Valck 2014a, 2014b, and 2016 also perceptible in Peranson [2008] 2009 and

Dayan [2000] 2013). Therefore, my research draws on current film festival scholarship and the theories of Bourdieu to problematise the apparent disinterested celebratory nature of film festivals and their awards, contributing to our understanding of how that image is built, and for whose benefit.

The Festival de Cannes gathers media, industry and audience attention from “all over the world” and the winner of its most important award, the Palme d’Or, attains distinction and exposure at many sites, but is this true for all Cannes’ awards? Each year, the jury of the festival chooses the award-winning films by watching the twenty or so films that have previously been shortlisted for The Competition by the Festival de Cannes’s artistic director, Thierry Frémaux, and his team. The Competition’s films gather most of the critics’ attention and aim for the best international distribution deals; in short, these are the films that one tends to associate with the Festival de Cannes. The Competition is resolved in the Awarding ceremony; its awards are the Palme d’Or, the Jury Prize, the Best Director Prize, the awards for Leading Actor and Actress, the Best Screenplay award, the award for Best Short Film and the Camera d’Or award for the best full-length film by a new director. While the Palme d’Or is clearly the most important Festival de Cannes’ award (to an extent it is the most coveted award of all film festivals), I would like to draw attention to the fact that it is one in a palmarès composed of several awards where each receives a different name. In my research I question the construction of prestige around the Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award to better understand the role that it plays for the festival, for the award-winning films, for the people who meet at this festival and for those who trade with its films or comment upon them in present days. Therefore this research should have impact on our understanding of contemporary meaning construction around festivals, awards and award-winning films.

In my framework chapter I present most of the conflicting interests and synergies that, according to current scholarship, make up a film

festival, so that we do not think that a screenplay award-winning film is plainly the film which has “the best screenplay” each year. As much as all festivals (of film or any other kind) can be considered significant regarding their cultural manifestation and in terms of social construction, the Festival de Cannes, with all its glitter and artistic claims, attracts and fills the eye like no other. This festival occupies a central position in cinema cultures and film festival scholarship, and yet there is insufficient research in film studies addressing the social construction of its well-established prestige, in as much as its impact has been widely addressed (as will be detailed in my framework). Since festivals, and certainly Cannes, contain innumerable practices and discourses, framing and focus are fundamental to their study. I have chosen to study an award because awards *seem to represent* a festival’s ultimate sign of prestige; moreover, given that several tensions intertwine when a film is chosen to the detriment of another, studying an award is a good approach to understanding how festivals are configured. Simultaneously, I focused on the award named “screenplay award” because it could, potentially, bring into conflict the director-equals-author premise, which is well known to be central in author cinema and art cinema discourses (from the 1950s’ articles of André Bazin, in Bazin 1967, and Andrew Sarris’ notes in 1962, to Caughie [1981] 2013, Corrigan 1991, Neale 2002, Warton and Grant 2005, Bordwell and Thompson 2010, Galt and Schoonover 2010, to name but a few). However, the complexities and layers of significance that make Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award a fascinating object of study must be carefully addressed and I can only introduce them here, so they continue to be developed in my research’s framework and case studies.

At the time of the festival all commerce in the city of Cannes engages itself with the festival; from the internet café in the corner to the Majestic Hotel, if nothing more, they all hang that year’s poster. There are several official shops where one can buy objects with the Palme d’Or stamp, from mugs to towels, and these objects are also sold in stationers



or news-stands. Thousands of people walk up and down the Croisette or along any other of the packed streets with their festival badges visible. The city itself, its streets, stations, and facades are covered with images from past celebrations of the festival, as well as with adverts from the partnership brands, such as Chopard or Renault. What I am bringing to the fore is that the Festival de Cannes appropriates anything that happens in the city for two weeks, and vice versa, anything that one does in the city can benefit from the value associated with the Festival de Cannes. The festival is a provider of unity for innumerable events, people and products, due to which, it is to the interest of many people, inside and outside the film industry, that the Festival de Cannes acquires as much symbolic capital as possible so that these events, products and people are no longer discrete but covered by the Festival de Cannes' umbrella. However, it also has to maintain its identity, and, given that the festival is surrounded by a chaotic number of attempts to appropriate it, I find particularly interesting how the Festival de Cannes manages to maintain a sense of identity, and the role that awards play in those dynamics.

Cannes is the most popular international film festival in the world and it hosts the most attended international film market. Each year the festival gathers the attention of much international media. In 2014 *four thousand journalists* were registered for the Festival de Cannes, out of which more than one half were not French, representing up to ninety-six countries. These were reporting for two hundred and sixty-three different TV teams, one hundred and thirty-seven radio stations, more than one thousand five hundred printed, multimedia and web press outlets, and more than two hundred media agencies. They reported on entertainment news as well as cinema and cultural programmes, reviews and magazines, that is, Cannes is more than films. However, it has around forty films in the Official Selection which includes The Competition and the Un Certain Regard sections, while another forty or so films are also presented under the Festival de Cannes' umbrella in sections such as

Director's Fortnight or La Semaine de la Critique. There are even more side track showcases at Cannes, and, at the Cannes Market about *one thousand films* are registered each year. Moreover, in 2014 *thirty-one thousand professionals* were accredited for the market, of which thirteen thousand were French, the rest coming from all over the world (mostly Europeans and little more than three thousand from the US). Yes, I wanted the numbers to be confusing in order to convey the idea of the multitudes that configure the Festival de Cannes and its preeminent position in the realms of media, cinema and culture. Nevertheless, numbers do not speak for themselves, so while the Festival de Cannes is, strictly speaking, the biggest festival in the world, my research choice was mostly based on qualitative criteria, given that it is also “the festival that other festivals look up to” (Wong 2011: 22). Therefore, I study the Festival de Cannes because other festivals may look up to its vast mosaic of guests (in front and behind the cameras), its ceremonies, and/or its awarding decisions.

On the basis that Cannes is not only a cinema competition but also a network of agents (De Valck 2007: 2055); I use Bourdieu's theories on the social construction of prestige ([1984] 2010, [1996] 2012 and his social theories in general) to question whether the meaning of Cannes' screenplay awards is constructed by that network, how and for whose benefit. I have framed my thesis considering that Cannes' participants - from directors to stars, from producers to film critics (albeit not equally) - “perform” at the festival and in doing so they construct meaning (Dayan [2000] 2013 following Bourdieu 1977, also in De Valck 2007, Corless and Drake 2007, Iordanova and Cheung 2010, and others). The aim of my thesis is to partially embrace the complexity of the Festival de Cannes' network and the many performative practices and discourses of its constituent social agents. In order to frame such an ambitious purpose I am studying the meaning and value of the Best Screenplay Award from 2006 to 2014; moreover, as I will explain later, I am only studying the

practices and discourses of certain Cannes' social agents.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the categories created when a film festival puts together its selection of films can relate to other categories and labels, such as a national cinema, documentaries, author or horror films; accordingly, film festivals do not simply get films, filmmakers and audiences together, they categorise the films, filmmakers and audiences that participate in them. Plus, those categories can travel attached to people or films beyond the limits of the festival. For instance, the Festival de Cannes is widely regarded as having the agency to turn a filmmaker into a film author and the agency to determine national cinema canons. Therefore, major film festivals:

Provide places in which multiple agents negotiate local, national, and supranational relations of culture, power, and identity. Ultimately, they are crucial centres for the development of film knowledge and film practices: festivals and the people who create and re-create them thus shape what films we as audiences and scholars will see, which films we respect or neglect, and, often, *how we read such cinematic works* (Wong 2011: 1, my emphasis)

According to Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong, film festivals serve many different purposes, and film selection is only one of them. Reviewing film festival theories, I have come to believe that Wong's definition gives, in its complexity, a rather accurate image of the role of film festivals in film knowledge and practices, in as much as it does not fully address their impact outside cinema cultures. The previous quote begins with an explanation of film festivals as a place/event, followed by their network construction, and it ends pointing out that they transcend their own event nature. I consider that this quote summarises many of the ideas of film festival scholarship, as much as not all of them (I review the state of the field in my framework chapter). I would add that not only do film festivals provide spaces for the negotiation of identities and categories, but that

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<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu mostly uses the term "agent" in his works but I sometime refer to them as social agents or field agents in order to avoid confusion with cinema sales agents.

they also have to use these negotiations in order to reinforce *their own identity*, and their own categorising agency. Film festivals have to make sense, have an identity, as events, as cultural institutions and as cultural mediators to sustain or reinforce their cultural, economic and politic *agency*. Thence, a film festival's institution is in charge of providing a powerful identity to the festival, and I am going to question to what extent the people that create and re-create a festival like Cannes are equally interested in sustaining and reinforcing the festival's identity. In conclusion, on the basis that the meaning and the value of a major film festival is not only constructed through cinema and it does not only have impact on cinema cultures, I have investigated how the different agents that meet at and around Cannes enact the meaning and value of the festival and its awards.

As much as film festivals can be approached from many different perspectives, my research on Cannes' Best Screenplay Award focuses on the creation of meaning and value. Certainly awards are supposed to attach prestige to films - but where does this prestige come from? On the basis that the consumption of film texts is mediated (Klinger 1994, Harbord 2002, Mittell 2004, Gray 2010, and others) and relying on Bourdieu's taste and distinction ideas ([1984] 2010 and [1996]2012) I will propose that major film festivals can be read as brands. Film festivals like Cannes have the agency to mediate consumption, mainly through selection and value adding, which is similar to what brands do (Klein 2009). In this light, I consider that film festivals are part of the market as exhibition platforms and cultural mediators (De Valck 2007) but I question whether they are also associated to certain identity values, which surpass any given product/film but become attached to it. That a film can be *branded* by a festival is an apparently simple idea that has many complex implications; I address these complexities in my framework and throughout my case studies. In this light, when a festival selects a film it categorises the film but it is important to notice that in doing this the film festival is also performing the identity of the festival, so it may not always

be clear in what direction meaning and prestige are transferred. In my research I investigate the role of awards, specifically Cannes' Best Screenplay Award, within those dynamics.

## **History of the Festival de Cannes**

Film festivals emerged in Europe around the Second World War, first in Venice and then as a response in Cannes. Although the festival presents itself as aiming to promote cinema worldwide it has already been argued that the Festival de Cannes was (at least initially) created to “defend the interests of French cinema” (Latil 2005: 52, also De Valck 2007) and that it has contributed to the emergence of transnational ‘French’ circulations of cinema (Mazdon 2007 and Schwartz V. R. 2007). According to Loredana Latil the Festival de Cannes was created because the French cultural representatives and the French film industry found it outrageous that Leni Riefenstahl's film *Olympia* (1938) and an Italian propaganda documentary had won at Venice 1938, instead of Renoir's *The Human Beast* (1938); so they abandoned that festival, together with the UK and the US, and set to create a new one: “a festival of the free world” (2005: 14). It follows from that anecdote that Cannes was not created just because the promoters wanted to celebrate cinema but to oppose Venice's fascist film festival. This serves to illustrate the first notion that we should bear in mind when studying film festivals: that all of them, from big to small, are cut through with ideology and politics. The Festival de Cannes emerged from a French initiative but it received, from the start, the support of the UK and the US film industries and governmental bodies, so it rapidly acquired an international dimension. However, some of the invited countries chose not to participate in its first function due to the extreme tensions arising from the international geopolitics of 1939; moreover, awards were not even given out because the festival was interrupted (ibid.: 28). It was not until 1946 that the Festival de Cannes started as a yearly event. In as much as its first stated aim, as early as 1939, was to “develop the art of cinema in all its forms” (ibid.: 43) it was

also from the start an international (but not global) meeting of “grand bourgeoisie” (Latil 2005, Mazdon 2007, Schwartz 2007).

Certainly, from 1946 to 1950 the Festival de Cannes was used to make a clear anti-war statement by the Allies and it served to represent French grandeur at a time when cinema gained importance as the most visible cultural representative of nations. Those were also the years of the creation of major international institutions and the signing of big scale international agreements such as the United Nations, the Blum-Byrnes or the French-Italian 1946 co-production agreement. These agreements had a direct impact on the films selected for Cannes, given that back then films were sent by national film boards following quotas. In 1948 the International Federation of Film Festivals was created, to an extent to “protect/or better control” the interests of the film industries (or certain film industries) in the festival arena, and to regulate the festival phenomena which was already growing rapidly (for instance with the establishment of different festival categories, with Cannes receiving an A category). As it had been from inception, during the Cold War the Festival de Cannes remained one of the many playing fields for tense international diplomacy, because the different ideologies fought for impact and influence and cinema was considered as an important ideological vehicle. Between 1946 and 1957 neither China nor the DDR were invited, because these countries had no diplomatic relationship with France. In the meantime, the struggles regarding the quotas of the countries of the Eastern Bloc, as well as the contents of their films, were a constant source of conflict. The Russian National Cinema Board refused to participate until 1951 because they found that the quota of films they had been assigned was unfair, and that the rules were favouring US participation. They also withdrew from the festival in 1952 and 1953, because they judged that censorship was being applied in the showcasing and awarding of films; and they made an ostentatious return (with a reception featuring 120 kilograms of caviar) after Stalin’s death. That year they received five awards in different sections.

Through the early years of the Cold War the festival was quite openly a playing field of international conflicts between the West and the Eastern Bloc, with the organisation readapting the rules and reshaping the festival 'on the go'. In 1957 a new clause was introduced preventing film boards from sending to the festival films that could "offend national sensibilities" (Latil 2005: 80-81).

In the meantime, Brigitte Bardot was emerging as a French-Hollywood star with her bikinis at Cannes, embodying (in Bourdieuan terms 1977) what Vanessa R. Schwartz calls "Cosmopolitan French Cinema" (2007) and Lucy Mazdon "Transnational 'French' Cinema" (2007). We will see that today the Festival de Cannes is still cut through with political and economic tensions which greatly influence its identity; while, efforts are often concentrated in drawing public attention towards the beauty of stars or the "political" engagement of photographed performances (let us think, for instance, of Julia Robert's barefoot "protest" at Cannes 2016). This take on the Festival de Cannes, between upfront and concealed power struggles and meaning-making processes, is one of the tensions that this research has addressed; with the aim of contributing to academic debates on the autonomy and dominance of major film festivals in current cinema cultures (a 2003 and 2003b, Iordanova 2009, Rhyne 2009, Cousins 2009, De Valck 2012, and several others which I refer to and explain in my framework).

However, tensions within the film industries have also shaped the Festival de Cannes from the start. From its earlier years, festival guests have always been high society members, stars, starlets and many "behind the scenes" film industries professionals. The festivals served to network and do business way before the Film Market was officially created. For instance in 1955, the year that the Palme d'Or was created, there were 509 producers, 372 exhibitors, 223 distributors, 170 film directors and technicians and 86 national film board delegates (Latil 2005: 137). In the years 1953 to 1954 Jean Cocteau designed the Palme d'Or object more or less as we know it now, and he was the president of

the jury twice. He was a firm defender of the festival's independence in the face of political struggles and against the growth of the festival's economic impact and loss of autonomy (as visible in the 1954 video "Jean Cocteau et Luis Buñuel à Propos du Jury du Festival de Cannes", in *fesques.ina.fr*). However, the market opened in 1959, bringing to a climax a decade of splendor for the festival, but to an extent also marking the dominance of "humanist films" (Ostrowska 2016:18-21) instead of surrealist, avant garde or modernist cinema. In as much as it may seem like I am making a rather personal judgment with the previous statement, the idea is introduced by Buñuel and Cocteau in the aforementioned video. Moreover, the Festival de Cannes was still largely accused of libertinism by industry and governmental representatives and its jury members often had to make stands defending their choices. For example, in 1960 the film *La Dolce Vita* (Fellini) was accused of being pornographic but it won the Palme d'Or; in fact, the novelist Georges Simenon threatened to abandon his jury position if Fellini's film did not win. Curiously enough, this led to Jean-Luc Godard denouncing the excessive importance of writers, rather than film people, at Cannes; this shifted, forever, the composition of the jury, and to an extent the composition of the Cannes' network, making it much more film people oriented (Latil 2005: 141).

Criticism against the direction that the Festival de Cannes was taking emerged again around the time of the 1960s on various grounds. Firstly, with the veto exerted by the French state in 1958, on Claude Chabrol's film *Handsome Serge* (1958). Second, the increased importance of film critics and the Nouvelle Vague, according to whom the most interesting films were screened outside The Competition, leading to the creation of the Semaine de la Critique in 1962, and a new cinema, which Ostrowska refers to as "critic's films", gaining importance (2016:21-24). But still the tensions exploded in May 1968 as François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and Claude Berri led the boycott of festival screenings. The initiative was widely supported with the withdrawal of



films from The Competition and the withdrawal of juries. In May 19<sup>th</sup> 1968 the festival as such was suspended by its then director Robert Favre Le Bret. Instead, left wing political meetings were held where the role of cinema and the role of the festival in the reconfiguration of society were debated. Some propositions were passed on from those meetings to the organisation, from the rejection of the premiere's etiquette garment rules, and the establishment of the Director's Fortnight, to the abolishment of fees to access the screenings (Latil 2005: 236-244). These last two points were implemented, and it is still free to access screenings today, although access is regulated by the festival's institution. According to Ostrowska this, as well as the emergence of important new directors and a new filmmaking style in the US, led to the emergence of "director's films", which dominated the festival until 1980 (2016: 25-27).

Another major turn in the history of Cannes was when in 1972 the ascription of national quotas was abolished and the selection of films would, from that year onwards, depend only on the "quality" of the submitted films. This served to reduce (at least nominally) the influence of political bodies on film selection and to increase the agency of the institution. However, we should be careful not to take for granted the autonomy of the Festival de Cannes on that basis (as I will thoroughly review in my framework). In 1980 the Cannes Film Market was officially integrated within the festival, and in 1983 the new Palais was inaugurated. This new site was not considered as "romantic" as the old Casino, but it fitted thousands of people in its multitude of theatres. The Palais also hosts the main Film Market area in its basement; it accommodates press conferences; contains a big and highly technological press room; several press corners; and also hosts photo calls and cocktails in its many terraces. Simultaneously, film festivals were increasing their relationships with film funds and their impact on the configuration of European and World cinemas (Benghazi and Nénert 1995, Nagib 2006, Ostrowska 2010 and 2014, Ross 2011, Wong 2011). Meanwhile, improved relationships with the Eastern Bloc were easing the flow of their cinematic production, and several new waves and major film

directors from that geographical (and political) area gained presence at the Festival de Cannes (Falicov 2010). In those same years, power was also shifting significantly in Hollywood (Latil 2005: 252-264), so the whole cinema landscape seemed to be changing. At Cannes this led to the dominance of what Ostrowska has called the “Cannes’ film” (2016: 27-29), and in general it has led to what film festival scholars claim to be the establishment of a particular type of film aimed for the festival circuit, especially Cannes, and a particular network of film business and film talent around film festivals (Stringer 2003a, Elsaesser 2005, De Valck 2007, Wong 2011, Falicov 2016).

So, although my approach is not historical, it is important to bear in mind that it is not only at present times that this festival has been constructed at the crossing of many cultural, economic and political interests, struggling for balance between the ever shifting dynamics of cinema cultures and business and the need to create an identity for itself. This is a matter of much complexity that I address in my framework chapter and throughout my case studies, since it is one of the aims of the current research to disentangle how the festival and its network actually perform that equilibrium, as well as when and how it becomes endangered.

Even though I study only one award it is important to understand that the Festival de Cannes is configured by hundreds of rites and/or events. Each year the Festival de Cannes starts when the members of the jury arrive and they are interviewed by Cannes TV, in partnership with Canal Plus France. On day one they also give their first jury's press conference in the conference room, one of the “ritual” centres in the Palais. All the filmmakers and cast whose films make the Official Selection also give press conferences there, behind a line of microphones and in front, of course, of a Cannes’ poster designed so that close ups of the stars will contain the festival's logo. As much as there are thousands of journalists at the Festival de Cannes, they are organised hierarchically and only some badges allow access to this room. Moreover, as much as the festival claims to defend freedom there are limits to this, and both

filmmakers and press members can become *persona non grata* if their behaviour is found inappropriate (as happened, for instance, with the director Lars von Trier in 2011).<sup>3</sup> Accidents like this may secure the interest of the festival (as reviewed in Harbord 2016) but they also signal that maintaining the identity of the festival is a major concern for the institution (from Dayan [2000] 2013). Current discussions on this are reviewed in my framework and my research contributes to the discussion of how and why the institution is concerned with what participants say or do at the festival through an understanding of the social construction of prestige at Cannes. Back to the festival's rites in day one, the festival's first staged screening is a film Out of Competition with a major red steps parade. This film is often (but not always) a major production with big transnational stars involved; in 2014 it was Olivier Dayan's *Grace*, starring Nicole Kidman; the previous year it was Baz Lurman's *The Great Gatsby*, starring Leonardo Di Caprio. That year, Frémaux is said to have chosen *The Great Gatsby* because the studio had promised a great parade and a great after party, which indeed took place. As a matter of fact, all of the films that are premiered at the Official Selection (and many screened outside it) organise a party, which, like any other party or event, becomes part of the festival, even when the members of the festival's institution are merely guests at those parties. That is, Cannes' guests are invited to contribute to the value and the visibility of the festival, and they do so. Since the Opening Film is usually released internationally right after its Cannes' world premiere we must bear these relationships into account in order to understand who gives meaning and value to the Festival de Cannes and why (adding to the works of Stringer 20001 and 2003a, Corless and Drake 2007, Toubiana 2011, Jurgen 2014, Frémaux

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<sup>3</sup> That year the Danish director was declared *persona non grata* for his comments on the Nazis; at the same time the festival declared that it welcomed freedom of speech of all artists. Later, his competing film received an award for the Best Actress. The whole issue serves to illustrate how the festival defines freedom of speech within limits. In 2014, when presenting his next film at the Berlin Film Festival Lars von Trier wore a t-shirt with the Cannes Festival stamp and the "persona non grata" tag, using that platform to criticise Cannes' definition of freedom of speech.

2017). It appears like the first evening, basically just like most of the festival, is constructed via complex synergies and my research wants to contribute to our understanding of those (adding to the works of Beauchamp and Henri 1992 and Stringer 2003a).

Following a similar line it could be said that each year the festival actually starts building up when the president of the jury of The Competition is announced to the international press, at some point in February in press conference (afterwards the other members of the different juries will be announced as they are confirmed). The next cornerstone moment in the building up of each yearly event is the announcement of the films in The Competition, also via an international press conference. I understand that such staging already signals the importance of the “highly institutionalised” press (Verboord 2014) for the Festival de Cannes; equally, the new festival has not yet started and we can already see some of the strategies at play: it is already relying on ceremonies, staging, hierarchies and visibility. On that basis my research will further investigate all of those strategies as they emerge in the social construction of prestige around a Cannes’ award and some award-winning films.

To better introduce how the festival configures and organises its imagined community (Iordanova and Cheung 2010 using Benedict Anderson’s 1991 concept) and the importance that this seems to have regarding Cannes’ prestige, I am now going to analyse an excerpt from the Opening Ceremony of the 2014 Festival de Cannes (from a live generated video which is available in *festival-cannes.com/eng* but I watched live in one of the many Cannes’ theatres that broadcast the ceremony on the day). Without engaging in a deep analysis, I am using it to explain how and why my research on the social construction of Cannes’ contemporary prestige is significant. The Opening Ceremony is staged in the main theatre of the Palais which seats two thousand three hundred people; it is an *invitation only* event and evening dress is required. Guests walk through the red steps in hierarchical order,

finishing with the official jury and the cast and director of the opening film. These guests are welcomed at the door of the Palais by Thierry Frémaux, making it explicit that it is a well organised social event with a host and selected guests. Once in the Palais the master of ceremonies, who is an important (and bilingual) actor or actress, gives a twenty minute speech where the jury, the films and *the meaning of the festival* are introduced.

In 2014 the master of ceremonies was Lambert Wilson and I have transcribed long excerpts of his speech because it is such a direct narrative of the festival's identity and social foundations that it needs almost no analysis to illustrate the most obvious dynamics at play at the Festival de Cannes.

Good evening ladies and gentleman [repeated in several languages] welcome to the 67<sup>th</sup> international Cannes Film Festival. Dear English speaking friends, a recent international survey has confirmed that the French are considered to be the most pretentious, arrogant, and rude people in the world. Happily, and rather surprisingly the French agree. We think we live in the most beautiful country in the world and therefore that everybody should speak our language so *French it will be tonight* (my emphasis).

His political linguistic claim is interrupted by ovations, which illustrates that it is widely shared not only by the institution but by important members of the Cannes' network. This opens up questions regarding the purpose of the festival, which may be not just to boost or develop the film industry worldwide, but also to position French culture around the world; studying Cannes' awarding decisions over a number of years we can better understand how these tensions are negotiated at the heart of the festival. He continues, in French (translated simultaneously in the online video): "How moving, what a privilege to be here with you, in front of such a prestigious public. No doubt the most prestigious public I have ever addressed". So the host appraises the event and its guests using the terms privilege and prestige, highlighting the social construction of

prestige at Cannes and addressing it in terms of reciprocity. He continues saying that Cannes is: “the most photographed showcase on earth and, as for this evening, the whole world will study the details down to its toenails, admire sculptured bodies and envy tailor-made suits....hours, days, weeks, months of hard work, if not torture, finally, to come in front of the cameras of the whole world”. He points out the media attention and the glamour: nothing about films so far. Therefore, in as much as I am interested in cinema cultures it must be noted that the fashion industries are also present at Cannes (and welcomed by the institution, as we can see).

Next he refers to the hierarchies at play within the Cannes’ network: “on that last row...where a young man or a young woman has just sat down, and they are dreaming of joining the great psychotic family of cinema. At this very moment they are formulating the wish... maybe in a couple of years they will be here”. This issue has proven of major importance in the study of the screenplay award, given that it has clearly emerged as secondary in a hierarchy of awards, and still it is an award that allows winners and contestants to “sit there”. After speaking of the dream of becoming, he addresses great historical members of that “family” and the loss of a “member”: Luchino, Federico, Roberto, Vittorio, Maurice, Igmar, Orson, Akira, Miquel Angelo, take good care of Alain Resnais”. In doing this he is reinforcing Cannes’ prestige on the basis of its history and he claims that the Palme d’Or has always been like “a huge tree which covered those who passed underneath with gold .... We walk the red carpet in their kindly shadows; our films are based on everything that they have taught us”. This is an emotional moment followed by silence and applause. The passed away directors he names had all received a Palme d’Or and it appears like bringing them together reinforces the prestige of those directors as well as that of the festival. What this signals, once more, is the intertwined relationships on which the festival rests and the relations of mutual recognition that sustain it. Considering that an award is, in principle, a sign of recognition, my

research should help us understand some of those relationships, albeit not historically.

Next Wilson talks of cinema's meaning and purpose as art, an idea that will be of major importance in this thesis:

We must remember our mission here today: that cinema, art in general, the memories of humanity must never disappear. And, to conclude, I'd like to share with you the words of Robert Doisneau who said: what we ask of cinema is what love and life refuse us, mysteries and miracles. Over to miracles!

This is followed by a great ovation, signalling a general agreement - moreover, a collaborative effort in giving worth to those words which define cinema as "art" and "miracles". My study of Cannes' practices and discourses around an award contributes to our understanding of the meanings that "art" and "miracles" have for this festival and its network following the theories of Pierre Bourdieu.

Wilson then introduces the members of the jury, but before calling out the president of the jury, Jane Champion, the pianist and composer Michael Nyman plays the tune of *The Piano* (1993) live: "Ladies and gentlemen, we introduce the president of the jury of the 67<sup>th</sup> celebration of the Festival de Cannes, the director, writer, producer and Palme d'Or winner: Jane Champion!" Her prestige is reinforced by the ceremonial use of language and the mise-en-scène of her entrance. Again, this is stressed by the fact that she had previously won at Cannes. She enters amidst another ovation; and Jane Champion speaks, now in English.

I feel very emotional because I owe a really big debt to this festival, I've had a career that would not be possible without Cannes... I think it is exciting because it is thoughtful and it is daring. It selects films from all over the world; irrespective of the budget or stars, and it really celebrates authorship, and films with a unique vision, with their own personal voice. I think it also really appreciates the brave and the original, and sometimes, even women filmmakers.

After saying this she giggles. With her words she makes us think of the values that Cannes wants to be associated, which I disentangle in my thesis. Then she says something that does not seem quite true in reference to budgets, and/or stars. She giggles when mentioning women because she is the only one to have won a Palme d'Or and also the only one to have presided a jury.

When the host of ceremonies takes over again he continues speaking in French.

And now, my dear president of the jury, if you will forgive me I have one last thing to do. A few years ago, in Paris something wonderful happened to me: I spent an entire evening dancing with Nicole Kidman. To this day I still don't know if it was dream or if it was reality, and I guess there is only one way to find out, which is *to live the dream again* (my emphasis).

He walks down to the stalls to meet Nicole Kidman and they dance. They are enacting, once more, the network construction of Cannes and the importance of stars, and this could be interpreted as somehow contradicting Jane Champion's previous claim regarding stars. In my research I thoroughly analyse contradictions, or only apparent contradictions, of this kind regarding awarding decisions and, in general, surrounding the festival between 2006 and 2014. Finally, Alfonso Cuarón and Chiara Mastroianni enter the stage and announce in several languages, of which French is certainly the last one: "It is my honour to declare the 67<sup>th</sup> celebration of the Cannes international film festival open". These words always close the opening ceremony as "performative acts of speech".<sup>4</sup> That is, in using those specific and repeated words the statement is given *ritual* value, as if the festival could not start without those words (something similar was at play in the aforementioned presentation of the president of the jury). In my

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<sup>4</sup> A performative act of speech is one, like a promise or a declaration of independence, which just by the voicing of the exact ritualised words *performs* a change in the state of things. Each performative act of speech follows a pattern that is fixed, and needs to be repeated word for word in order to have validity.



framework I address how festival scholars have been studying festival rituals and in my thesis I explore the role that some rituals may have in giving meaning to this festival, its films and its awards.

A close reading of this Opening Ceremony speech serves to illustrate two of the questions that stimulated my research: whether the festival gives value to its participants, the reverse or both simultaneously and to what extent does Cannes surpass its film selection, premiere and competition? Cannes serves to increase the visibility of a particular kind of cinema and certain films, but it also plays an important role for the stars that attend it, the film directors that are legitimised by it, and for French culture. Thence, on the basis of this complex conception of the Festival de Cannes I investigated the meaning and value of one award to contribute to our understanding of the strategies and interests at play *at* and *around* Cannes.

### **Screenplay awards and cinema authorship**

While all the previous analysis should serve to understand why I have studied a Festival de Cannes' award and how my research may contribute to better understand the role of this festival in current cinema cultures, there are good reasons to focus on the meaning and value of the Best Screenplay Award, mostly related to the idea of authorship in film. To begin with, in 2012 the Affiliation of Writers Guild and the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe published research on the visibility of screenwriters at film festivals. This report was commissioned by screenwriters and, thus, unsurprisingly, it claimed that film festivals should pay more attention to screenwriters because "these festivals are vital to our business and writers need to see and be seen" (Gail Renard in John 2012: 2). The report mainly investigates the tensions between screenwriters' authorship and directors' authorship as it is negotiated at film festivals. Yet, while screenwriters want their visibility increased, film festivals claim not to invite screenwriters as a result of budget constraints

because when attendance “boils down to one person only it does boil down to the director... the world has kind of agreed upon the director to be the author of a film” (Hamburg Film Festival director, in John 2012: 12). However, the matter appears to be much more complicated; primarily, because it cannot be reduced to budget constraints. For instance, in the same report, one screenwriter explains that:

I once wrote a film that won a prize for the best script at a festival in Belgium, but they *forgot* to ask me over. The director took the prize and *didn't mention* in his speech that it was not his script (Mickey de Jong in John 2012: 12, my emphasis)

Certainly the director could have mentioned the screenwriter, even if budget constraints had made it impossible for him to attend the festival, or if the festival had “forgotten” to ask him over. Since this sort of neglect is not uncommon in the context studied (and that is why screenwriters demand more visibility) we should not assume that it is meaningless. In my research I bring to question the extent to which the neglect of screenwriters at festivals like Cannes is intentional and what ends it could serve. Basically, I have chosen to study Cannes' Best Screenplay Award because reviewing film festivals and screenwriting theory I have found that neither the role of the screenplay nor the role of the screenwriter at film festivals have been analysed by academia, even though practitioners have shown interest in the matter.

As already explained, The Competition films are defined by the festival as “author cinema with a wide audience appeal”, and this is significant at many levels. Not all international film festivals define their films equally. This definition is not used in the websites of the festivals in Berlin, Venice or Toronto; it is a quality attached to The Competition films at Cannes. For example, on the Busan International Film Festival website one can read that they define the Festival de Cannes “as the birthplace of author cinema” (in *biff.kr/eng*). What I found remarkable when defining my research project was that while the Festival de Cannes appears to use and to give a meaning to the cinema category “author

cinema" which has traditionally been related to cinema directors, this festival still gives out a screenplay award. From this perspective my thesis wants to contribute to an understanding of the meaning of a screenplay award in an author cinema competition. The aforementioned report proposes that the implementation of screenplay awards would increase the participation of screenwriters at film festivals. But we cannot be certain that giving out screenplay awards will work in that direction.

In this light, it is significant that the Best Screenplay Award appeared in 1949 and it has remained. Jean-Luc Godard criticized the importance of writers, instead of "the professionals in this profession" in the early 50s (Latil 2005:1948),<sup>5</sup> and we have just seen that the Festival de Cannes more or less re-adapted itself to fit the demand of Nouvelle Vague's film critics and film directors leaning towards "director's films", but this award was not withdrawn. This becomes even more interesting when we consider that since 1953 "the categories of the awards were no longer mentioned [unlike at the Oscars, for instance], which provided total freedom to the juries" (ibid.: 153) and yet the screenplay award remained as such. One can see here, of course, the opportunity for a most interesting historical research project but, as I have just explained, I found it more important to address the role that this award plays in contemporary Cannes.

However, before actually studying it between 2006 and 2014, I am going to bring to the fore a couple of historical facts regarding this award. The Best Screenplay Award has been interrupted several times in the history of Cannes for three, four or five years, in 1959, in 1953, in 1969, and in 1985 for eight years; there are also some isolated years in which it was not given out. In as much as it has remained active since 1996, the previous interruptions could signal that the meaning and value of this

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<sup>5</sup> The text is in French and the quote is my translation. This does not apply to other secondary sources, like Bourdieu's texts, which I have approached in their English versions. However, the primary sources originally printed in a language other than English have been translated by me; as there are many in my thesis I have chosen not to include "my trans" inline in the text each and every time, but I have provided an explanatory footnote at the beginning of each case study.

award has never been really clear. As to whether it may serve to increase the visibility of non-directing writers or the collaborative nature of cinema, it is important to bear in mind that out of the twenty five screenplay awards that the Festival de Cannes bestowed between 1949 and 2005 (before my research period), ten were not written by the film's director, but the rest were either written solely by the director or in collaboration. There appears to be no increasing or decreasing pattern in that period. On the other hand, since 2006 only two out of the twelve screenplay award-winning films (two films received the award in 2017) were not written (solely or in collaboration) by the film's director; we can, thence, observe a decline in the visibility of non-directing screenwriters in the last decade, in direct opposition with the recent academic increase of interest in screenplay authorship (which is more or less a millennial phenomenon as we will see later). It is also remarkable that there was not a single non-directing screenwriter in The Competition juries between 2006 and 2017; plus, only two among the two hundred and twenty jury members listed in all the different competitive sections. As much as I do not rely on numbers for the arguments in my thesis, these numbers do however appear significant when one considers that there have also been three novelists and one clothes designer in The Competition juries during these years. One could argue that, for instance, film editors or cinematographers also have very little representation at Cannes. But the festival gives out no award for cinematography or editing, yet it has been giving out a screenplay award since five years before the Palme d'Or was even invented!

The screenwriters' report at hand also claims that film festivals' training initiatives could be another window for them at festivals, but, as with awards, this could be a mere assumption. At Cannes, the Atelier is a side competition for film projects that have almost completed their financing but directors may receive the award. This is significant as it is film projects that compete and the decision is based on their financing profile, their screenplays and their attached talent, but it is still an award

for directors. In this light, The Atelier boils down the author of a film to its director, and certainly it is basically director-writers who win the award. The same tension appears again regarding the Cannes' Residence, which is a film training programme which "provides continuous follow-up during the writing of *the director's scripts*" (in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). Although these programmes aim to help in the development and financing of films (not the production or the shooting), they are only addressed to film directors. Therefore, the film development activities cultivated by Cannes' Cinefondation, which wants to act as "a springboard for creation" (Cannes webpage: consulted 2013), only considers the *creation* of writer-directors. My research started on the basis of those reoccurring tensions, since they led me to question why Cannes gives out a screenplay award, and the extent to which this award integrates or interrupts the director-author premise.

Cannes seems, clearly, to be inclined towards a notion of authors as "total filmmakers"; as if building on Jerry Lewis' notion that "when you make a film yourself, write it, produce it, direct it, perhaps star in it; a piece of your heart enters the emulsion" (1971: 23). Whether it is because a piece of the author's heart enters the emulsion, or for many of the other possible reasons that I will point out throughout my thesis, what seems certain is that Cannes prefers writer-directors. Since my thesis should help readers understand how the Festival de Cannes defines and uses "author cinema", and how a screenplay award functions in this specific context, it contributes to debates on cinema authorship. Nevertheless, I am not re-examining theories of author cinema (although I certainly address the issue throughout my thesis); what I do is bring to question whether giving out a screenplay award necessarily points towards the collaborative nature of cinema in every context through a detailed study of how the director-author idea is sustained, reinforced or challenged by a screenplay award. Consequently, my research also contributes to a more neutral (in that it has not been commissioned by a screenwriters' guild) understanding of the visibility of screenwriters at film

festivals by studying the phenomenon in contemporary Cannes.

I am not trying to question who is, or should be considered, the “author” of a film;<sup>6</sup> what I want to achieve is a better understanding of some of the screenwriter-author tensions that are present at Cannes. As much as it may seem that debating the author status of screenwriters is a theoretical conundrum, it has a significant impact beyond theory. To begin with, authorship determines the rights of screenwriters to sign screenplays, the rights of other team members to modify screenplays and the implementation of lifelong author fees. Consequently, it is no surprise that screenwriters and screenwriting scholars pay much attention to the issue, and that there are many academic essays which touch on the screenwriter's authorship status. For instance, in 2014 at the Screenwriting Research Network conference, Temenuga Trifonova defended the authorship of screenwriters on the basis that there was a screenwriting style that could be inferred from screenplay-texts and attached to each screenwriter-author. At the same conference, Ian MacDonald, the prestigious screenwriting scholar, presented an analysis of screenwriters' creative processes, which included their subjectivity and “genius”, to support the notion that they are authors. That is, both critics were advocating that the screenwriter should be considered as an author, and providing textual grounds for this. On different levels, many other UK screenwriting scholars defend the idea that screenwriters should be considered authors, and they mostly focus on the dynamics involved in the making of films.<sup>7</sup> However, there is a tendency in screenwriting studies to neglect that authors are also, if not mostly, constructed when films become products (since Foucault 1977, and in Klinger 1996, Staiger 1992, Caughie [1981] 2013 and many other

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<sup>6</sup> However some considerations on the matter emerge throughout my thesis, and the meaning and use of this term in my thesis is clarified in my methodology chapter, where I briefly review works from John Caughie, Janet Staiger, Dudley Andrew, Ed Branigan and others.

<sup>7</sup> There are many studies focusing on this matter in the screenwriting bibliography of this thesis; the issue has been tackled by scholars such as Bridget Conor, Nathaniel Kohn, Yannis Tzioumakis and Howard Rodman, beyond the ones already introduced. The issue itself and some relevant authors are reviewed in my methodology chapter.

reception studies and film authorship academics).<sup>8</sup> Thus, I propose that it is important to understand *why* or *how* film festival cultures and awards give meaning, or deny meaning, to screenwriting-authorship. The fact that at Cannes screenplay awards are given on the basis of watching finished films, and no reading of screenplays (or screen ideas) is involved, could indicate why non-directing screenwriters are basically neglected and/or it could be a clue to why the meaning of this award appears so unclear, but the matter needs careful disentangling.<sup>9</sup>

## Chapter summary

In sum, I defend the significance of my research on the basis of the intricate network dynamics that sustain Cannes, as well as on the basis of the complex relationship between screenwriters and this festival. Therefore, my case studies selection has been determined by my conception of the festival and the meaning-making processes which surround it, so it is not just a series of contiguous cases. As I explain in detail in my framework chapter my research was structured around three slightly different but complementary approaches. My research started analysing the tensions that cut through the festival's event and how these tensions contribute to the particular meaning that the Cannes' Best Screenplay Award has each year. I analysed the discussions that were being elaborated at the time (and place) of the festival in 2014 and 2013, not only about the award winners, nor even just about the competing films, but the issues that appeared to be prominent in each of these two

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<sup>8</sup> I develop ideas surrounding theories of film authorship in my methodology chapter. Nevertheless in my thesis I am not concerned with the ontology of terms such as author, but with the uses that different agents make of terms and the functions that certain terms fulfil from a discourse analysis perspective; and that is why I advance that meanings of the terms screenwriting and screenplay are also constructed in the marketing and reception of films. I develop Janet Harbord's idea of *films as products* and on the role that film festivals and/or exhibition sites have in the process of making films as products (2002: 39, and other pages). I explain this when framing my thesis within film festival studies.

<sup>9</sup> An assumption which I had from the fact that jury members have to evaluate many films in ten days, and attend parties and press conferences; but which I, nonetheless, tested by calling the festival's organisation and asking them (in June 2012).

years' events. With these case studies I question whether the context of the Festival de Cannes' event influences awarding decisions or the meaning that awards acquire. First, in chapter 2 I study the 2013 celebration of the Festival de Cannes and I contend that it was marked by the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations. The objective of TTIP is to reach a free trade agreement between the European Union and the US which, back then, could or could not include, the audio-visual industry (right after the festival it was decided that, for the time being, it would not). I consider that one should read the composition of the jury and the composition of the *palmarès* bearing in mind that simultaneously the European audio-visual industries were pledging not to be included in these new free trade agreements with the US, and I argue that the 2013 Festival de Cannes became a relevant *agora* for those debates as well as a platform of prestige from which to defend the interest of those European industries.

Regarding my chapter 3 study, it must first be introduced that the Festival de Cannes hosts a most important film market where films and film projects are bought, sold and assembled. In this market, sales agencies and/or producers often introduce their new film project with a production brochure (which is similar to a press kit, but for a film in development).<sup>10</sup> Before engaging with my case studies I reviewed some of the production brochures held by the most important sales agencies in The Competition and I observed that such brochures hardly ever included the career track of the screenwriter(s), often not even including their names.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, those brochures may include a version of the

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<sup>10</sup> While there are hundreds of sales agencies dealing with film projects of every size and objective, if we think of the number of sales agencies handling The Competition films, only a handful handle projects aimed for future film selections for The Competition (as will be seen in my framework and initially posited by Peranson [2008] 2009).

<sup>11</sup> I carefully analysed the leaflets that Celluloid Dreams took to Cannes in 2012 (Celluloid Dreams website consulted January 2013) because Celluloid is one of the five major sales agencies at Cannes (Peranson [2008] 2009: 30) and I also reviewed some other sites from this list finding the same tensions once and again. The issues of who is the author of a film at Cannes and who is constructing this idea is one that keeps reappearing throughout my thesis, but I do not study it from an academic point of view, it is just part of Cannes' discourses, as in this case, it is part of Cannes' sales agencies



screenplay and not a note on/from screenwriters. Therefore it appeared as though at the market there is not much hype being built around screenwriters, even though there is hype around screenplays. Later on, when actually attending the 2013 Festival de Cannes, I investigated the relationship between the festival and the film market and the extent to which the screenplay award played any special role in those. In my case study I will argue that screenplay awarding decisions are made, to a great extent, in relation to certain identity values that the festival wants to be associated with, such as authorship or commitment to freedom and the realities of the world. Moreover, it seems like, to an extent, the term screenplay channels the festival's encouragement of such values as a message to the film industry engaged with, and at, the festival. As much as the Festival de Cannes claims to be "an apolitical no man's land" (in *festival-cannes.com/eng*), this is problematised in those two case studies on the basis of its adherence to, or dependency on, French and European cinema institutions as well as on certain cinema industry businesses.

The second section of my research, featured in chapters 4 and 5, deals with the promotional discourses that surround films when they arrive at Cannes, and those which are generated as they navigate the festival. In my second pair of case studies I investigate sales agents, the festival's institution, filmmakers, cast and film critics, and their intertwined discourses. I follow three screenplay award-winning films as they are introduced to, and received by, the Cannes' juries and institutionalised press. Then, I analyse how winners receive their awards, and finally how the press promotes and receives these same films beyond the festival, once they have become Cannes' screenplay award-winning films. My question was whether the ideas which accompany a film in entering the festival result in it winning this award, and/or if those ideas about the film change when it receives a Cannes' Best Screenplay Award. That is, I study whether films that arrive at Cannes surrounded by a particular set

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discourses.

of ideas are more likely to win the Best Screenplay Award (for instance, if they are promoted by their sales agents, producers or filmmakers in terms of “well written films”). I also explore the reverse notion, whether films which win screenplay awards at Cannes get to be promoted and/or received as being remarkable in terms of their screenwriting. In chapter 4 I investigate a Belgian film, *Lorna’s Silence* (Dardenne brothers 2007), and its “somewhat national reception” (for various reasons which I explain in the chapter I take this film to be French and Belgian).<sup>12</sup> I will argue that the film was introduced at Cannes already emphasizing its screenplay values, and it navigated the festival, and was subsequently released commercially, on more or less the same grounds. In chapter 5, I analyse two films, a Korean film, *Poetry* (Lee Chang Dong 2010), and a Chinese film, *Spring Fever* (Lou Yee 2009), to better understand how films from “distant territories” arrive at Cannes and how the French press receives them. However, according to the other study, the promotion and the reception that surrounded each film did not pay particular attention to their screenwriting - neither before, nor after, this award. Consequently, I will contend that when a film does not arrive at Cannes with the aura of having a particularly remarkable screenplay, the best screenplay award does not change this.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, we can conclude neither that films considered to have great screenplays win this award, nor that the Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award determines how award-winning films are read.

The two final cases studies, in chapters 6 and 7, are purely an analysis of the press reception of two screenplay award-winning films. First, I analyse the reception of the award in the film’s country of origin; secondly, I consider the international press reception of another

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<sup>12</sup> This film is a France – Belgium co-production, but it has Belgian locations, and the team and most of the cast are also Belgian. Nevertheless, as I explain in the chapter, I take both territories together in my case study.

<sup>13</sup> I am not using this term with any of its academic connotations (for instance Harbord’s *aura* 2002) but as it is used in common language; however, it will be seen in my case studies that more or less what I mean by aura is the promotional discourses that precede the film.

award-winning film. Chapter 6 investigates a Spanish film, *Volver* (Pedro Almodóvar, winner of this award in 2006) and the Spanish press reception of the award. I analysed how the Spanish press received the award for *Volver* because Pedro Almodóvar had long been a well-established film director in Spain and internationally, before winning that award. Plus, this film premiered in Spain some months before going to Cannes, and it was an overwhelming success from the start. I wanted to understand what value the screenplay award has in the eyes of the press when it is bestowed to a national star-author and/or a national film success. I advance that the most interesting proposition of the chapter is that receiving the Best Screenplay award at the Festival de Cannes became a loss in the eyes of the Spanish press. What this signals is that the value attached to a film can be greater than the value attached to a Cannes' award, reversing my initial expectations. Chapter 7 considers the international press reception of the Romanian film *Beyond the Hills* (Christian Mungiu, winner in 2012). In my final case study I deal with the international critical reception of two films by Christian Mungiu. He had won a Palme d'Or some years before receiving the Best Screenplay Award, and I wanted to understand the differences between those two Cannes' awards in the eyes of the international press. This chapter will mainly contribute to our understanding of how the Cannes' network contributes to the hierarchy of Cannes' awards, reifying the different worth of each film at an international level. Both chapters provide an insight into how Cannes' Best Screenplay Award is assigned value and meaning by the press, reinforcing the idea that while it has no intrinsic value it tends to be surrounded by repeated themes, and that it is *in the repetition* of Cannes' dispositions and shared notions of taste that the award acquires meaning. Moreover, this pair of cases, in particular, brings to question whether the screenplay award is a sign of prestige or if prestige depends entirely on the work of a whole system of consecration which includes highly institutionalised film criticism at an international level.

To sum up, my research investigated Cannes prestige and meaning making processes through the theories of Pierre Bourdieu via a study focused on the contemporary Best Screenplay Award. I rely on Bourdieu's fields, capital, habitus and a series of other terms and dynamics from film festival research and reception studies to address the question: *what is the meaning and value of the Cannes' Best Screenplay Award?*

## **Chapter 1. Framework and methodology**

### **Understanding the Festival de Cannes: from Field Dynamics to Transportable Dispositions**

Film festival studies is currently a most prolific subfield of film studies; prolific and heterogeneous, just like film festivals. Current scholarship addresses questions about festivals from many different and complementary perspectives, locating film festivals between art and commerce, national and transnational cinemas, auteurs and film industries, production and promotion practices, events and agents, and so forth. Consequently, it is agreed that film festivals are multilayered phenomena and film festival studies a multidisciplinary field. The range of perspectives is such that some have even brought to question whether the Festival de Cannes qualifies as a festival at all (curator Neil Young cited by Iordanova, 2011: 250) on the basis that it excludes the public (similar ideas appear in Mazdon 2007, Evans 2007, Iordanova 2010, De Valck 2012 and De Valck 2016), while for many film festival scholars it is the festival that others emulate (McGill, 2011: 284, also De Valck 2007, Wong 2010, even Elssaesser 2005).

In any case, whether it be to criticise, or to use it as a reference point, festival scholars debating the majority of film festival issues point to Cannes. We will surely find references to the Festival de Cannes if we investigate film festivals' touristic and local significance (Mazdon 2006, Iordanova 2010, Harbord [2009] 2013), their gatekeeping function (Harbord 2002, Stringer 2003a, Ostrowska 2010, Ruoff 2012), their tastemaking impact (Wong 2010, Dovey 2010, Falicov 2012, De Valck 2016), their role as a node in the cinema industries (Iordanova 2015, Jungen 2014, Chan 2011, Ross 2011), their agency in the establishment of critical and academic canons and movements (Czach 2004, Elssaesser 2005, Chadhuri 2005, Mezas et al. 2011), or their geopolitical relevance beyond cinema (De Valck 2007, Evans 2007, Archibald and Miller 2011, Iordanova 2011). So, for better or worse, within academic circles the Festival de Cannes is a signpost. However, while there is

extensive research on the impact that Cannes has in current cinema cultures, the question of *how* the Best Screenplay Award operates remains widely unexplored. Moreover, there is little research investigating *why* awards have such impact, or for whose benefit. My research aims to contribute to current debates on the role of film festivals and where their significance comes from, through the study of how one particular award acquired meaning and value in different years.

I have divided current film festival theory between approaches to film festivals as events, versus perspectives on how film festivals regulate film cultures outside the time and place boundary of the event. By doing so I do not assume that this twofold perspective on film festivals' theory is a reality regarding the Festival de Cannes; that is I am not proposing that we may separate the "reality" of events and the meaning-making agency of this festival, for, as scholars have pointed out, Cannes is "a circus with an infinite numbers of fringes" (Touran 2002: 14) all feeding into each other (Mazdon 2006, Coreless and Drake 2007, De Valck 2007). This twofold perspective is, nonetheless, a helpful frame to use when approaching the complexities of film festival phenomena and film festival theory. Since both the "object of study" and the academic field are rooted in a wide array of intersecting vectors, any divide becomes simultaneously necessary and oversimplifying. Therefore, I consider event theories and gatekeeping theories on film festivals separately only as an initial approach, to then problematise them together. Put simply, at first glance, the Festival de Cannes is a ten day *event* which takes place every year in mid-May, bringing together film professionals, film critics, and other visitors from around the world within the city of Cannes. Seen from a different angle, the Festival de Cannes operates as an *agent* in cinema cultures that organise film distribution, film reception and even film production. That is, it would be difficult to explain why so many people have an interest in participating in the event if we neglected the fact that it confers prestige, as much as it would be difficult to understand where the agency to confer prestige comes from if we neglected the appeal of the event.

On the basis of those complexities it becomes difficult to choose a *method* with which to approach Cannes and its Best Screenplay Award. However, Marijke De Valck has already put film festival scholars on guard against simplifications, since “what are needed instead are frames that can be utilized to expose the different mechanisms operating within and through festivals” (2016: 1). Precisely because my object of study is the meaning and value of a Cannes’ award, a mixed “within and through” approach seems particularly useful. On the one hand, awarding ceremonies are the highest point in the “ritual” (a most recurrent word that had already appeared in Bazin 1955) while, on the other hand, awards objectify the merit of laureated films and professionals. Accordingly, I am going to review film festival theory, first, regarding what has been said about the event nature of festivals and the social construction of such events, from within; next, understanding the gatekeeping, tastemaking and film production dynamics that cut through them, and, finally, of course, I will bring both perspectives together.

While it has been said that “film festivals present a complex object of study that is difficult to pin down, leaving researchers with slippery terminology and a shifting discursive field” (Burgess and Kredell, 2016: 166), we will see that the same is true when one considers film festival theories. And yet there is a general agreement that the theories of Pierre Bourdieu are a major help for the festival researcher. Bourdieu was a French sociologist whose research on *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) and *The Rules Of Art* (1996) have become seminal in understanding how cultural industries, the production of knowledge and cultural mediation practices operate. In relation to film festival studies, his work becomes unavoidable since his theories and concepts emerge once and again, openly or implicitly. From the early 1955 publication by André Bazin titled “The Festival Viewed as a Religious Order” to Marijke De Valck’s “What is a Film Festival? How to Study Festivals and Why Should you” in late 2017, Bourdieu as a theoretical touchstone has become as unavoidable in film festival research as making references to the Festival de Cannes. Therefore, I am mainly using his terms and

concepts to pin down the terms and discourses of both film festival theories and the Festival de Cannes.

When I started my research I was soon convinced that I wanted to investigate the role that the screenplay award plays for Cannes because, as I have already introduced and will thoroughly develop, film festivals are constantly re-negotiating their terms and identities through and within apparent contradictions; and this award condenses some noticeable ones. I am going to very briefly recapitulate the most evident ones to better explain how I have approached my research and the contributions it aims to make. First, this award is not given on the basis of any form of screenplay object (Nelmes 2010), scripting process (Maras 2009) or screen idea document (MacDonald 2004) preceding the film; therefore, to an extent, even though it is called a screenplay award, it is still *a film* award. Second, it is hardly ever given to the screenwriter if he (there have been no shes) is not also the director, and on the rare occasions that this has happened the screenwriter was not at the awards ceremony to receive it. Consequently, this award may not bring to the fore screenwriters' authorship (Kohn 1999, Nelmes 2010) even though, according to its name, one might think it would. And last, but not least, despite the name it bears the award is not given to "the best", because awarding rules at this festival do not allow a Palme d'Or winner to receive any other award (thus, even if the Palme d'Or award-winning film was *thought to have the best screenplay* it could not receive this award, unlike, for example, the Oscars, where awarding decisions are – nominally – independent from one another). In consequence, this object of study emerges as a great representative of the difficulties, the slippery terminology and shifting discourses that need to be addressed by the film festival researcher to better understand the "mechanisms" of festivals.

In as much as one must take festivals' self-definition "with a pinch of salt" I agree with Dina Iordanova that it is also important to analyse how film festivals narrate themselves (2013: 11). Hence, it is necessary to bring film festival theory and Cannes' institutional statements together to study how the Festival de Cannes' Best Screenplay Award operates and



in whose interests. As complex as film festivals are, it is of no help to reduce film festivals' fluidity and contingency to random meaningfulness phenomena, and that is why they are an interesting, yet difficult, arena in the study of film and culture. That is, of course, film festival participants and commentators are reckoned to bear some intentionality and film festivals' outcomes can be analysed and interpreted. Hence, it is generally agreed and/or assumed that "there are three key questions at the heart of any festival's mission: What are the stakes and investments behind organizing a film festival? What is the goal of the festival's film selection? Who is the festival's core audience?" (Burgess and Kredell 2016: 187); but we must understand that these questions also relate to the event/gatekeeper approach. In this light, film festival academics try to understand the extent to which stakeholders are invested in the festival's event or their projection outside those events. The same applies to film selection: is it aimed to put together a meaningful showcase or to reify cinema tastes? And, certainly also in relation to film festival audiences: are they at the event or outside?

Either comparing several festivals or focusing on one in particular, film festival scholars have been addressing these three questions, as well as the interrelations between them. That is, from many complementary perspectives, the aim "to render the viewing context and their role less transparent" (Nichols 1994: 16) has remained stable since Bill Nichols more or less initiated academic interest in film festivals in 1994, and that is, of course, the purpose of my research. From, how do film festivals construct or contest national cinemas (Nichols 1994, Czach 2004, Chadhuri 2005, Ross 2011, Falicov 2012, Dunin-Wasowicz 2015, to name but a few), to the reification of taste and meaning possibilities (Harbord 2002, Galt 2004, Chan 2011, Rastegar 2016), to the geopolitics at stake in the configuration of the old and new film festival circuits (Beauchamp 1992, Touran 2002, Elssaesser 2005, De Valck 2007 and 2013, Wong 2010, Iordanova 2011, Loist 2016, and others), or even to the question of how do film festivals construct imagined and not so imagined communities (Bazin 1955, Dayan 2000, Ethis 2001, Coreless

and Drake 2007, Iordanova and Cheung 2010, Stuart 2016, among others), academic questions can be framed in the gathering plus showing nature of festivals. Following this basic but necessary agreement on the grounding principles of film festivals and film festival theory, my research question could be conceptualised as: what are the stakes and investments behind giving out a screenplay award at Cannes? What are the goals of selecting certain films and not others for this award? How does this award address the festival's audiences? And I consider it necessary to understand the festival's twofold nature as an event and as a filtering and organising agent of cinema cultures, to set the grounds for an investigation which attempts to provide some answers to those questions, analysing what is said and done at and around the Festival de Cannes. For a number of reason that I am about to explain, in order to do so I mostly rely on Bourdieu's "thinking tools", which are "a unique set of conceptual terms to be employed in the course of analysis and discussion of findings" (Grenfell 2008: 2), but not on classic sociological methods such as polls or interviews (for a purely sociological study on Cannes see Ethis et al. 2001).

### **The event: between cacophony and harmony**

While the Cannes' film industry guests and speakers generally refer to it as a cinema celebration, for the past fifteen years numerous film festival scholars have problematised this, showing "a series of diverse, sometimes competing, sometimes cooperating public spheres" (Stringer 2001: 138) and a series of diverse, sometimes choreographed, sometimes "accidental" happenings (from Harbord [2009] 2013 and 2016). In this section I am basically framing the problem of whether we should "take harmony for granted" (Dayan 2013: 47), or not, at this festival; since my research on the screenplay award can make a good contribution to these debates.

The words of Thierry Frémaux, director of the Festival de Cannes since 2001, on the official web page seem to be a good introduction to the issues of collaboration versus competition and harmony versus

cacophony at Cannes:

Cannes belongs to each and every one of us who, year after year, from wherever we are and in our own individual way, contribute towards creating it step by step. It is only by constantly analysing the Festival, adapting its function and encouraging debate about it that we will continue to make it the very best it can be (in *festival-cannes.com/eng*).

On the one hand, the director of the festival is avowing the collaborative nature of Cannes since, according to his words, the festival needs each and every one of its participants. On the other hand, however, he is also acknowledging the existence of debates and tensions. While this would be true regarding most, if not all, film festivals it seems particularly interesting regarding Cannes since it is an event that gathers multitudes.

The appeal of the event is such that one can even find “gatecrashing guides” (McGrath 2011), guides for first time visitors (Huynh and Oldfield, 2012) and even guides for first time screenwriter visitors (Took, 2016). In 2002 Daniel Dayan conducted ethnographic research on the social construction of Sundance and he proposed that participant’s interests and their voices were so diverse that “silencing the cacophony was a full time job” for that festival’s institution (2013: 47). While both Frémaux and Dayan agree, in that the festival has to incorporate a variety of voices, they disagree on the positive or negative understanding of that tension. For the festival’s director, debate is encouraged and it *enriches* the festival, while, for Dayan, the institution aims to *silence* the cacophony. Following Dayan, this statement from the festival’s director should already be considered as a strategy aiming to silence the *unavoidable* cacophony which results from having a wide array of participants. My study on how Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award acquires meaning will help us understand to what extent debate is encouraged or silenced at and around Cannes. In this light, focusing on the Best Screenplay Award should be very telling as it is an award surrounded from the start by contradictions. However, before moving on to the study of particular

cases there is a lot more about this matter to be taken into account.

In his research Dayan speaks of a cacophony because he argues that the Sundance world is configured by people who “perform”, “answering questions of self-definition” in relation to competing groups (ibid.: 45); he goes on to say that “judgement passed on to films, stresses membership in specific communities” (ibid.: 51). But the Festival de Cannes seems to put great effort in conveying the opposite idea, stressing membership in relation to a wide Cannes’ community. This is not to say that groups never confront each other, nor that the festival denies that fact, but the director gives a whole different meaning to debates. For instance, in the *Festival de Cannes 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* book, an official publication, the writer (unacknowledged, as if it were the institution itself writing) explains that on the festival’s red carpet in 1993, “all photographers placed their cameras on the ground when Isabelle Adjani climbed the red steps, thereby protesting against the actress’ *lack of cooperation*” (110, my emphasis). That year Isabelle Adjani had criticised press photographers and she had refused to have her pictures taken before the red steps, in a clear attempt to separate official events and photocalls from paparazzi photography. This anecdote - where a film star is confronted by her need to cooperate with press photographers - was not silenced but highlighted by the institution in a promotional book edited by the festival. Therefore it is important to understand to what extent festivals are constructed due to the cooperation among different groups or, as Dayan said, whether these groups mostly confront each other at film festivals. My research, comparing the practices and discourses of different groups of agents, aims to contribute to this debate.

What is important about the Adjani anecdote is that her demand was not heard. And then, of course, the festival has continued its long tradition of relying strongly on photojournalism, official or otherwise, to sustain the aura of the event. Vanessa R. Schwartz relates paparazzi photography to the emergence of the French New Wave and therefore to

the contemporary significance of the Festival de Cannes (2000 and 2010) and Lucy Mazdon to the importance of France in the making of cosmopolitan film (2007), so it seems obvious that one cannot draw a thick line separating significant and insignificant meaning-making practices at Cannes. Not only do they take good care of their photography archives, which certainly include many images from outside photo calls and the red steps (some accessible online and others well kept at the French Centre National de la Cinematographie), but they also publish and aid the publication of Cannes' photography books such as Serge Toubiana's 2003 collection of Traverso's photographers' images. Plus, the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book, although containing some text, is more than anything a photographic album where posed and "unprepared" images of stars mix; giving the festival that glamorous yet fresh aura to which both Vanessa R. Schwartz and Lucy Mazdon have attributed so much importance. The meaning that such tensions have in order to frame my research is that festival practices are complex and intertwined and one cannot claim that some confer prestige while others do not.

According to the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book, the climbing of the red steps is based on cooperation and serves multiple purposes: "quite separate from its most notable function, that of proclaiming and showcasing an event that affects an institution, the ceremony is always intended, much like a religious ceremony, from which it draws its model, to create order within ambiguity, and in particular to construct a hierarchical order" (100). As if following Bazin (1955) the institution reflects on the symbolic significance of Cannes' events/staging to organise hierarchies. While Dayan focused on the struggles between competing groups, both the festival and Bazin already propose a solution to that conflict: hierarchies. The matter of whether groups compete or collaborate at Cannes is of major importance to understanding the festival, and addressing it through analysis of the screenplay has the potential to be very enlightening since it is a secondary award *in a hierarchy of awards*.

Dayan uses, as we have seen, the term *perform*, and he does so to

convey that festival participants are simultaneously acting independently and following the *modelled scripts* of the group they belong to (Dayan 2013: 45). Performance refers to behavioural rules which are not written but learnt and reproduced by each new attendee. His notions of self-definition, group-belonging, and performance somewhat match Bourdieu's concepts of *field* and *habitus*. According to David Swartz, for Bourdieu contemporary societies are based on a series of "relatively autonomous but structurally homologous fields" which "mediate the relationship between social structure and cultural *practice*" (Swartz, 1997: 9). That is, what Dayan calls performance is similar to what is here defined as practice, the mediated actions, responses or relationships among social agents, in this case, film festival participants and commentators.

Therefore, in aiming for self-definition, the practices of social agents are mediated by group-belonging interests and struggles among groups; but this could lead to a cacophony that the festival tries to silence or to a debate that enriches it. In any case Bourdieu's fields are not only composed of agents but also by requirements. Such Bourdieuan (following De Valck's 2014 and 2016 spelling) requirements are not defined and imposed onto agents but inhabited and recreated by them; they are the sort of "natural" assumptions about what one should do and say in order to confirm group-belonging, and one's field position (Bourdieu 1977 and 1996, and most of his work, also in Grenfell 2008 and in Swartz, 1997). This is generally addressed as the "feel for the game" as it combines both the rules of the game and the interiorised set of strategies and abilities of each player. I want to propose an overlapping between this notion and Dayan's performance idea and I will mostly use the latter term because it eases the reading of the text. However, field position, field, and subfield are better notions than membership and group-belonging, primarily, because they include the notion of hierarchy, but also for several other complexities which we are about to review. In any case my thesis aims to contribute to our

understanding of the social construction of Cannes, similar to Dayan's study of Sundance, but it is not a thoroughly sociological research project, since for that we already have Emmanuelle Ethis et al.'s *Aux Marches du Palais: Le Festival de Cannes Sous le Regard des Sciences Sociales* (2001).

In 2016 De Valck recommended the use of the concept of field because it "frames festivals as being rooted outside the mainstream commercial movie industries— driven as they are by box-office receipts— and consequently explains how film festivals have incorporated artistic norms and principles of evaluation as their main model"(100). Nevertheless, while I use the concept of field following De Valck, I am not so certain about the idea that the Festival de Cannes has incorporated artistic norms because it is not driven by box-office receipts. I think we must consider the possibility that precisely because it is at least partially driven by box-office receipts the Festival de Cannes has incorporated artistic norms and principles, therefore, in micro-economy terms, we must question whether the Festival de Cannes has *specialised*.

De Valck argues, in thinking about fields and film festivals, that:

[T]he festival-as-exhibition-site differs from commercial theaters first in its appreciation for artistic achievement; films are not screened as part of a business undertaking, but because they are considered important or worthy to be shown. In other words, festival screenings typically serve a cultural purpose, not an economic one... So, although money is increasingly involved, festival exhibition remains predominantly tied to *autonomous* modes of organization: films are screened for cultural reasons, and their exhibition does not generate (a significant) profit. (De Valck 2014: 104, my emphasis)

I emphasise the word autonomous because it is used in De Valck's quote following Bourdieu's considerations on the dependencies and autonomy of different fields (which I am now reviewing). De Valck's idea, I propose,

may not be accurate when one is thinking about the Festival de Cannes, at least in the period I study from 2014 back to 2006. De Valck uses field autonomy because according to her “when applying a Bourdieuan framework to the world of art cinema, one can argue that it belongs to the autonomous pole of the field of cultural production- displaying a high level of symbolic capital (e.g. prestige) and a low level of economic capital” (2014: 41). But Bourdieu proposed, back in 1997, that “this vision of art (which is losing ground today as fields of cultural production lose their autonomy) was invented gradually, with the idea of the pure artist having no other objective than art itself, indifferent to the sanctions of the market” (ibid.: 110).

Accordingly, there is a Bourdieuan take on the matter which could be more adequate than De Valck’s in relation to a specific research project on the Festival de Cannes:

The producers [of cultural goods] *led by the logic of competition* with other producers and by the specific interests linked to their position in the field of production... produce *distinct products* which meet the different cultural interests which the consumers owe to their class conditions and *position*, thereby offering them a real possibility of being satisfied (1984: 228, my emphasis).

Following the logic of De Valck’s aforementioned quote, the festival is interested in artistic achievement to serve a cultural purpose, therefore she separates the interests of the agents in the field of film festivals (and its subfields, such as film production or film criticism) from economic interest. But Bourdieu’s quote brings *both interests together*. Bourdieu’s claim is that precisely because the field of production of cultural goods is *one field* (composed of many subfields and not a series of fully independent ones) its different members have to know their different positions. For instance, Christian Jurgen explains that “Hollywood has both supported the festival - especially in its early years - and been troubled by it, in particular by the ways in which Cannes indicates the limits of the reach of American filmmaking’s money and power” (2014: backcover); therefore he brings the two spheres together. In his book he



gives a detailed historical and contemporary account of their relationship rendering claims on Cannes' autonomy very problematic. Cari Beauchamp and Henri Behar (1992), Lucy Mazdon (2000), and Julian Stringer (2003b) have also problematised the relationships between Hollywood's money and power and that of the Festival de Cannes, bringing them together and, to an extent, consequently denying any possibility that the Festival de Cannes is purely or solely interested in artistic merit (but not denying the possibility that the festival is interested in artistic merit). From those perspectives the Festival de Cannes' institution and attendees should know where they stand in relation to the Hollywood majors, and potentially also other film production and film circulation contexts, and vice versa. It would be from that knowledge of their respective positions that each produces and circulates distinct products, guided by their need to satisfy different consumers (an idea already introduced in Harbord 2002 and Elssaesser 2005) or, as all of the explain, to defend geopolitical interests; again put simply, Cannes has specialised but its autonomy should not be taken for granted.

Whether film professionals gathered around the Cannes Festival can be said to constitute an independent field from other forms of production and circulation of cinema, or if they occupy a particular position within a broader field of film production and circulation is no easy question to answer. My research on how the Cannes' Best Screenplay Award acquires meaning and value will contribute to the discussion, because I investigate the practices and statements of field agents and the extent to which their interests on art and culture can be considered autonomous from economic (or political) interests. Since different Cannes' award-winning films are easily seen to have very different box office responses (see IMDB box-office data) the autonomy of the festival from economic purposes or from "other" film production fields needs to be questioned. This does not deny the distinctiveness of those products nor the interest of the festival and its participants and commentators in artistic achievement.

The autonomy of a field is defined by the fact that

the more it fulfils its own logic as a field, the more it tends to suspend or reverse the dominant principle of hierarchization [political and economic profit]; but also that, whatever its degree of independence, it continues to be affected by the laws of the field which encompasses it, those of economic and political profit (Bourdieu 1993: 39)

That is, even to analyse the festival as an event (before opening questions about the festival's gatekeeping function) one must already interrogate to what extent groups and agents meeting at the event conform to an autonomous field, in order to understand their practices. Moreover, since it is evident that there are multiple groups of agents and voices within a festival we also have to take into careful consideration the limits of fields.

I do not intend to provide straightforward answers since I am mostly following Bourdieu's methods and he states that:

The boundary of the field is a stake of struggles, and the social scientist's task is not to draw a dividing line between the agents involved in it (...) but to describe a state (long-lasting or temporary) of these struggles and therefore of the frontier delimiting the territory held by the competing agents (1993: 42-43)

In consequence, this research interrogates, first, the different tensions among producers of cultural goods, from film reviews to films, which take place *at the festival*. It should be kept in mind that no easy answer regarding the field configuration of this festival will be reached. Even the festival's official claims acknowledge the complexities that may arise if one tries to define the limits of the field in which it is embedded. On the one hand they claim that Cannes has "remained faithful to its founding *purpose*: to draw the attention and raise the profile of films with the aim of contributing towards the development of cinema, *boosting the film industry* worldwide and *celebrating cinema* at an international level", but they continue admitting that "the Festival de Cannes is, no offence to

cinephiles, also a permanent *fashion parade*" (*Festival de Cannes 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*: 114). Therefore even the institution explains that *the event* brings together cinema and fashion (to name but a few), so it is not only driven by cinema's artistic achievement. While I started this discussion on the autonomy of the festival, trying to locate the limits between cinema's cultural and economic interests, I have to finish it by acknowledging that the Festival de Cannes' event expands well beyond the film industry, so any claim on the autonomy of Cannes on the basis of artistic merit is difficult to defend.

For instance Emmanuelle Ethis, Jean Louis Fabiani and Damien Malinas explain that attending a festival like Cannes mobilises not only cultural and artistic experiences but also the construction of the identity of attendees, so it is not only with the fuel of artistic merit that the engine works (2001). Also Mazdon reflected in 2006 and 2007 on the festival's meaning as a historical tourist site. Therefore, according to her, the space adds meanings to this festival and has historically fuelled its engine:

the local/national/global interface which lies at the heart of the film festival also relates to Cannes's location. Moreover, just as the festival is part of a circuit which relies upon international *competition and cooperation*, so Cannes as 'destination', certainly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was part of a network of 'tourist sites' frequented by wealthy Europeans and North Americans (2007: 16, my emphasis)

From Bazin's early remark on the intentionally narrow entrance to the old Palais ([1955] 2009: 14) to Chris Berry's remark that "The San Francisco Frameline International LGBTQ Film Festival is argued as having a carnivalesque effect in the Castro District" (2016: 217) a lot has been written on how the choice of space affects the meanings that festivals acquire.

There is also extensive study on how film festivals boost a city and serve to generate local tourist incomes (Stringer 2001; Anderson and

Getz 2008; Stuart 2016). However, these topographical and local revenue dimensions do not seem to be of much profit for a study of the meaning and value of one award, other than in terms of Mazdon's idea that the glamour of the festival derives from the historical glamour of the site. However, there are some interesting themes being repeated in these quotes. For Bazin the festival's site connects it to an organised ritual, while Berry associated the other festival with a carnival; while these are comments on two different events, we need not assume that the carnivalesque is not present at Cannes. From McGrath's gatecrashing guide (2011) to Touran's circus, where "anywhere you turn you see something you can't quite believe you're seeing" (2002: 14), to Cicciolina mounting the red steps naked in 1988, the carnivalesque at Cannes is clear. What is more important is that, for Mazdon, choosing the small city of Cannes already worked in two opposite and yet complementary directions: that of the historically exclusive and "very French" Côte d'Azur destination, and that of the transnational tourism-network. We will see later in this review, and throughout the thesis, the many implications of the national/global dimension of the Festival de Cannes (more than its local dimension). In her quote Mazdon seems to agree that the combination of competition and cooperation does not result in a cacophony but in a synergy of meanings where one adds to the other. In any case I now want to highlight that film festival academics repeatedly address the idea of competition-cooperation when considering film festivals from almost any perspective. In this light, my research on the Cannes' Best Screenplay Award should contribute to understanding how apparently opposing tensions are dealt with around Cannes' awards.

We find similar opposing principles being negotiated regarding how time configures a festival's event. Janet Harbord writes that a film festival "affords a singularity to the experience: to see a film here and now will be unlike any other time of viewing" (Harbord [2009] 2013: 132). We have already seen one of the most obvious strategies that the festival uses to *acquire* singularity: the red steps ceremony. However we must bear in

mind that the singularity of the festival experience may also afford singularity beyond the festival's events. For instance, the *Festival de Cannes 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* book claims that cinema stars at the red carpet “perform live the role that will contribute to their legend... this role will, by the ritual power of its context, consecrate some and enthrone others” (93), thus agreeing, first, with the importance of ‘liveness’ regarding the singularity of the festival's events; and, second, associating the live event to a meaning-making rite. This quote signals that singularity is to be found both in the “here and now”, and in the meaning which is created and afforded by such liveness. Accordingly, in my thesis I ask the question: how is singularity afforded to festival awards by the events of the festival, and also to what extent do awards consecrate and enthrone people and films?

In sum, I study the relations of reciprocity which make singularity appear and grow at the event and beyond. One could easily think that an awards ceremony is a strategy which enables the event to raise its singularity. But equally, these awards could be said to attach the singularity of the festival experience to films. The anniversary book explains this process in relation to the red steps staircase. According to this book the theatrical space-time nature of the red steps makes climbing them a rite which “manages to effect tangible transformations in the symbolic and imaginary system of the cinema” (95). I investigate the possible transformations in the symbolic and imaginary system of cinema effected by Cannes' Best Screenplay Award and the extent to which these feed from the singularity of the festival experience. Just like the red steps are staged as “a live event”, and this adds to their power to consecrate film stars beyond the event, the whole festival has an iconic and glamourised event nature that may add to the effect of a Cannes' award.

More importantly, as we have seen, the festival could be simultaneously a rite and a carnival, an idea that has not remained unexplored in film festival theories. According to Harbord “as annual events, film festivals are productive of a sense of cyclical calendar time

sustained through rites that transform events into structures. Conversely, as structures that contain happenings that are singular and unrepeatable” (2016: 70). Thus, she points out that the yearly repetition of a film festival at fixed dates evokes the idea of feasts and she moves on to explore how, nevertheless, the role of happenings make them unrepeatable, and, to an extent worthy of our “here and now” attention. Since it is easy to agree that the Festival de Cannes, just like any other festival, “gathers together the time of the film and the time of viewing. In so doing, it re-institutionalizes the collective attention of film viewing, and re-centers the time of projection as a *live event*” (Harbord 2016: 80), what is interesting is her claim that festivals are structures that necessarily contain unexpected happenings.

Without addressing the issue of how this changes the symbolic system of cinema beyond the event, a matter of major importance in my thesis, we find, once more, two competing yet cooperating meaning-making possibilities. As Harbord explains, a film festival is repeated every year, but it also changes every year, therefore, the festival is simultaneously choreographed and/or predictable, as well as subject to contingency and accidents (let us remember the Adjani anecdote on the red steps). While the red steps premieres and the awards would in general signal the former, the innumerable parties, meetings, interviews, film reviews, café conversations and paparazzi photos, would account for the latter. Once more, it is important to find “frames that can be utilized to expose the different mechanisms” through which they feed into one another (from De Valck’s quote framing the current literature review), such as in a rite versus carnival frame, or a cacophony versus harmony frame. This predictable-unpredictable tension is, according to Harbord, fundamental to understand the nature of film festivals ([2009] 2011 and 2016), and in my research I will question if it is also a relevant tension when one studies film festival awards.

Harbord uses the example of Lars Von Trier being banned at Cannes 2011 to explain the importance of accidents in drawing public attention to

the festival. According to her the accidental is so important and inseparable from the film festival that, to an extent, it is not “accidental” anymore, because it is precisely what gives meaning to the festival, providing uniqueness to the experience (2016: 77). Significantly enough, that same year, even though the film director had been withdrawn from the festival, the actress Kirsten Dunst received an award for her role in Von Trier’s competing film *Melancholia* (2011). In this light, should we read the meaning of this award as simply reflecting that “her performance was the best among the contestants”? To what extent do awarding decisions result from the event’s contingencies? What meaning does each award and each awarding decision acquire regarding such contingencies? May we understand the awarding decision as a defence of the film, and to an extent even the filmmaker, as the jury reacts against Cannes’ “censorship”? Should we better understand that jury members were somehow compensating for an institutional over-correction in giving out this award? Or, quite to the contrary, should emphasis be put on the fact that the film did not receive any other award, for instance a Palme d’Or or a Jury Award, or an award for the directing or screenplay (both the work of Lars Von Trier), and therefore the jury adhered to the correction? If those questions are relevant, then so is my thesis, as I address tensions of this sort in my case studies.

As much as I have not investigated Kirsten Dunst’s 2011 Cannes’ Best Actress Award I propose that through studying tensions of that kind we can better understand awarding decisions. In this light it is important to remark that James F. English has a chapter in his book on the economy of prestige dedicated to the role of scandals as a currency regarding awards (2005: 187-197). That is, if we agree, following Janet Harbord, that accidents and contingencies are not “truly” unexpected at film festivals and that they do not challenge or suspend the meaning of film festivals but, to the contrary, accidents and scandals are fundamental meaning-making processes; then we would probably have to agree that the same is true for the festivals only apparent cacophony of voices. Accordingly debates, conflicting forces and intertwined

interests would not lead to a cacophony but to an assemblage of melodies never silenced but orchestrated by the film festival institution (problematizing Dayan's understanding of Sundance's social construction).

As much as the Festival de Cannes is a huge event gathering many professionals from "different fields", such as film production, film criticism, gossip and fashion journalism, members of the fashion industry, and so on, it is still an invitation-only event. One can certainly travel to the city of Cannes at the time of the festival, and since the festival is taking place everywhere in the city one could feel part of it, even without having a festival pass or watching films. Nonetheless, unlike many other festivals which are open to the public and sell tickets for their screenings (such as Venice, Berlin or San Sebastian), Cannes' tickets are not sold. "In the case of Cannes, the screenings themselves are not open to the public, thus reserving the films for an 'elite' audience of journalists, critics and professionals, and *reinforcing the attempt to bestow and create cultural capital*" (Mazdon, 2007: 17, my emphasis). Therefore, to what extent can we talk of an "elite audience" of Cannes' guests or several different "elite" members of autonomous and often competing groups; and, more importantly, we must question whether such differences are contained by a structure that actually welcomes accidents and debate, rather than silencing them.

I will re-address this matter when reviewing my use of reception studies, but these questions follow Bourdieu's theories, in that

the symbolic work of constitution or consecration that is necessary to create *a unified group*... is all the more likely to succeed if the social agents on which it is exerted are more inclined, because of their proximity in the space of social positions and also because of the dispositions and interests associated with those positions (Bourdieu 1977: 33)

According to Bourdieu, if social agents share a rather close social position, such as for instance being part of the elite audiences of Cannes' guests, they may share dispositions and interests. Moreover, the closer



they are the less effort the institution would have to put into creating a unified group (less effort to silence the apparent cacophony of voices). My research aims to contribute to this debate by studying the voices heard around a number of screenplay award winning films during and after the festival.

### **Is the Festival de Cannes no longer a festival?**

I am using Chris Berry's 2009 article titled "When is a Festival no Longer a Festival?" to draw attention in this section to the importance of the festival in cinema cultures outside the festival event. Many major film festivals, and particularly Cannes, have been said to have an impact on film promotion, distribution and reception beyond the event, so that "many films are made with the explicit aim of being 'discovered' at a festival. This is a process that, in turn, creates and consolidates aesthetic trends that other filmmakers attempt to emulate" (Chan 2011: 249). In this light the film festival is no longer a celebration, nor a showcase or a competition of cinema, but an agent deciding what films are made and how. In this section I analyse how film festival scholars have addressed festivals as gatekeepers (Stringer 2003a), as tastemakers (De Valck 2016, Galt and Schoonover 2004) and as "soft power" agents (Ostrowska 2016: 29) in the production of cinema; moreover, even how some film festival scholars have claimed that film festivals exert a "not so soft" power in the production of cinema (Chan 2011, Ross 2011, Dovey 2015).

Once more we will see that film festival academics make extensive use of Bourdieu's notions, overtly or implied, when they analyse the role of film festivals in film cultures (Harbord 2002) and film practices (Wong 2010). We will see the relations that exist between gatekeeping, tastemaking and Bourdieu's notions of "distinction", "taste" and "capital"; which are inseparable, anyway, from the already introduced notions of "field" and "field agent". It emerges from current scholarship that, first, film selection defines first the identity of a festival, but then since major

film festivals, and Cannes in particular, receive international media and academic attention they have meaning beyond the event proper, therefore festivals have an impact on how film categories are defined. This occurs primarily because festivals are selective and receive media attention and in this section I review how academics have been addressing this and related issues. In studying the Festival de Cannes beyond the event the questions posed are: to what extent does this festival categorise films and /or people? When it does, how does it perform this categorisation? Who intervenes in these processes? In whose interest is this work performed? Answering such questions is of major importance to a research project on the screenplay award because awards are, potentially, highpoints in the categorisation of films. In sum, in this section I am addressing film festivals' role in the creation, the circulation and the *objectification* of cultural capital, where the term "objectification" serves to signal both becoming an object and becoming objective.

Taken together, film festivals have been addressed as a circuit (Stringer 2003a), a network (De Valck 2007) and, lately, as a rhizome (Lloist 2016) because they are seen, closely or distantly, to be connected to each other. In terms of rhizomes, Cannes is closely connected to, for instance, Venice and Berlin (and A category film festivals in general). In this light, as Bourdieu stated: "the field of cultural production is the site of struggles in which what is at stake is... the power to consecrate producers or products" (1993:42), and the Festival de Cannes definitely holds great power to consecrate. But the power to consecrate is not immutable, it needs to be defended. On the one hand the Festival de Cannes, holding more power to consecrate than other film festivals, should have more power to select what people or products to consecrate. But it has to sustain its power in a site of struggle so while any film festival director would agree that each film festival has to put together "films that make sense as a program" (Laura Henneman, festival director, in Gann 2012: 20), one such sense could be to sustain

the festival's power to consecrate. In this light maybe they have to select films that contribute to securing their position. Obviously, there are film festivals with small budgets which have to make a programme out of the films they receive, or manage to obtain; whereas other film festivals have talent scouts and can close deals for films in the making and/or build long term relationships with film talent and film executives. Plus, festivals' selections also have to accommodate the dates of completion of films, which means that they cannot select a film which has not been finished on time: therefore, some films may not make it to Cannes but to another instead. Further, even if sales agent, producers and/or film directors want to go to Cannes, film financing and debt entail their own pressures. There are many complexities leading to a film being selected. These tensions and complexities make the Festival de Cannes a most interesting object of study; my thesis will contribute to the discussion through an understanding of awards and awarding decisions regarding the Festival de Cannes' power to consecrate.

Regarding film festivals' power to select and to consecrate films, Mark Peranson proposed a divide between film festivals according to them being either audience oriented or business oriented (Peranson [2008] 2009: 194). He proposes that the first term refers to film festivals whose promotional appeal and impact is restricted to those who attend them as events. Therefore, film executives may charge fees to those festivals for the screening of their films. On the contrary, in the case of business oriented film festivals, executives compete to have their films selected and screened. While differentiating film festivals in terms of their business impact is of major importance in understanding their power to consecrate and how they put together films, I do not fully agree with Peranson's choice of terms. I propose that business oriented film festivals are also *highly audience oriented*. To begin with, the Festival de Cannes defines The Competition as a selection of "author films with a wide audience appeal", thus it would be extremely difficult to argue that they do not have audiences at their core; and yet it is the number one

business-oriented festival.

However, since Cannes does not sell tickets for its screenings the audience appeal that it claims for its films is to be found elsewhere, outside the event proper. This idea leads us back to the feast versus rite understanding of festival events. As a feast a film festival is a community gathering with impact mostly on the event's audiences. But a rite is understood to change the state of things (such as a rite of passage). The problem with Peranson's terminology is, of course, that audiences are very important for the businesses of cinema, so "business" festivals, such as Cannes, could easily want to direct the attention of audiences towards certain films.

Still, let us approach the Festival de Cannes on the basis of Peranson's film festivals' distinction and his claim that business oriented film festivals have more power to select because sales agents want their films to premiere at the biggest possible film festival, and Cannes tops the list (ibid.: 197). Consequently, it may appear that Cannes can "cherry pick" their films precisely because it is the number one film festival; however, there are certain complexities emerging from the idea that rite-embodying film festivals have an impact on the symbolic system of cinema, and even on the economies and the geopolitics of cinema. Since Cannes is not just a celebration of cinema (as the website claims), but a business oriented film festival and an important rite of passage for cinema people and films, it could, in principle, act under certain pressures. According to Peranson, there are "basically five sales agencies" at Cannes handling films for The Competition: The Wild Bunch, Fortissimo, Celluloid Dreams, Films Distribution, Pyramide and Bavaria-Film (ibid.: 197). While a review of recent films in The Competition shows a few more names (Summit Entertainment, Hanway Films, Pathé,...) the number remains small. Therefore few agencies handle virtually all the films in The Competition year after year; more importantly, the festival relies on their "offer" of films to put together a programme each year. Therefore, they must have built complex and long

standing relationships which are of major importance for the festival and for those sales agencies.

Similarly, according to De Valck “film festivals are fragile networks that will readily fall apart when the interconnections – the collective network - that secure the stability of the network are disrupted” (2007: 33). As De Valck’s network approach to film festivals signals that each and every film festival is constituted by all the agents which meet at it or give it meaning, then a disruption in this internal or constituent network would endanger its stability. From this perspective, the Festival de Cannes could fall apart if the interconnections among its many guests and/or participants were disrupted, because the festival depends on the collective network. If we agree that Cannes depends on its collective network, then, when it comes to putting together a programme, the network must be taken into consideration. Since the network of Cannes’ participants is extensive and it includes powerful agents in the fields of film production and film criticism, my question is: does it hold greater power to select its films because it is the number one film festival, or the exact opposite?

One must wonder about the extent to which this festival does not hold so much power to select, precisely because it involves many, very important, film people, companies and interests, as well as many, very important, media people. Nevertheless, even if Cannes’ power to select may be more constrained than one would think at first, this does not deny the fact that the Cannes Festival holds “some/much” power to select films. Furthermore, in any case the festival *still makes sense of their selection*: “every year in May, Cannes gives a sort of snapshot ... of what constitutes the art of cinema”(Frémaux in [festival-cannes.com/eng](http://festival-cannes.com/eng)). Therefore Cannes’ “automatically” gives meaning to its films as “art cinema” (regardless of how much or less power to select those films they may have). We have to question, then, to what extent is it precisely *because* it is the number one business festival that it is so strongly audience oriented. Plus, would that mean increased or decreased power

to select? That is, we must question Cannes' autonomy when defining what constitutes the "most photogenic" selection of "art cinema" on the basis of its importance as a business film festival. My research will contribute to the discussion through an understanding of the role that cinema business people behind the Best Screenplay Award-winning films have in making sense of those films. It will also contribute to disentangle how screenplay award-winning films become consecrated as "art cinema".

What we find directly or indirectly exposed is that many film festival scholars have been investigating how, in Bourdieu's terms, the constitution of institutionalised mechanisms makes it possible for a single agent to be entrusted with the totality of the power which actually emanates from a group, and to exert this power via a delegate authority (Bourdieu, 1977: 194). What we are dealing with in this section is whether the festival's art director and his team are autonomous or to what extent they are *delegate* agents of the network that sustains the Festival de Cannes. In this light, following Bourdieu's previous quote and theories, the festival's power to consecrate would emanate from the group that sustains it. On the one hand we have seen Peranson's claim regarding the potential influence of a handful of sales agencies on this festival. On the other hand, we should also bear in mind that Thomas Elsaesser argued that "a film festival director is only too aware of how easily the press holds him *responsible* for the selection of films" (2005: 97), in order to question *why* does the press hold the festival responsible for their selection? Could this mean that the festival is not autonomous in selecting films because they act under pressure from the press as well? Then we must also question if the press holds any relation to Cannes' place in the festival rhizome and with its power to consecrate; that is, to what extent does Cannes' prestige depend on the press? In sum my research will complicate current studies on the relationships that sustain film festivals (Rhyne 2013, Fischer 2013) and film festival awards (Mezias et al. 2011), questioning whether the Festival de Cannes acts as

a delegate agent of a network that includes the press. Cannes is certainly pinioned between the press and powerful industry agents, and this must lead us to question to what extent it serves them or it is used by them as a delegate authority. In studying how Best Screenplay Award winning films acquire prestige, this research contributes to disentangle those tensions; moreover, in studying how awarding decisions are evaluated by the press we will better understand Cannes' power to consecrate and where this power resides.

These tensions need particularly careful study because Cannes' statements can be misleading. For instance, it is a most repeated idea, reinforced each year by jury members and by institutional representatives, that awarding decisions rely *solely* on the personal taste of the juries; and yet they also make claims, as we have seen, to the ritual organisation and the consecrating power of the festival's selection, awards and/or red steps ceremony (from the *60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* book). According to Bourdieu, "for a ritual to function and operate it must first of all present itself and be perceived as legitimate, with stereotyped symbols" and up to here there would emerge no tension or conflict, but the quote continues explaining how these are "stereotyped symbols serving precisely to show that *the agent does not act in his own name* and on his own authority, *but in his capacity as a delegate*" (Bourdieu, 1991: 115, my emphasis). On the one hand, awards are claimed to result solely from the juries' autonomous and subjective decisions, on the other hand they are attached to stereotyped symbols and ceremonies that serve to sustain the legitimacy of such awards and the authority behind them, where the juries are mere delegates of that authority. We will see, of course, the possibility that *taste*, as used and defined by Bourdieu (1984), brings together their individual preferences and their delegated authority. My research will contribute to better understand how taste operates regarding contemporary screenplay awards.

Bourdieu, in his seminal book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), claims that taste, even if perceived to be individual, is never really autonomous. Individual preferences depend on

the economic and cultural contexts of the places where people are educated. Accordingly, jury members' preference for one film over another would not be autonomous as they are social subjects and therefore "subject" to their contexts; for instance, the context of being at Cannes as a jury member could be a determinant factor in decision making (consciously or unconsciously). Moreover, while certain preferences "grow" in the individual, the individual is also an agent who makes his/her preferences explicit through choices: "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make" (1984: xxix). Therefore, this drives us back to Dayan's notions of identity, group belonging and performances, wherein taste and distinction are simultaneously embedded in individuals and reinforced by the choices they make in order to classify themselves.

Individual choices result from taste, but they also distinguish the individual making them; that is, in the choices a person makes he/she is stating and reinforcing his/her belonging in a particular group. Moreover, through taste and choices individuals not only claim their own particular position within those groups, they also reinforce the importance of their group as a whole within wider sites of social struggle. This would explicate a certain affinity of taste around the Cannes' guests, since they could be acting as delegates of their groups, simultaneously reinforcing their own positions and interested in reinforcing the importance of the group as a whole. For instance, in this light a jury member or a film critic, in evaluating films, may be reinforcing his or her respective positions and they may want to distinguish themselves from one another through their choices. However, they may also be invested in a shared interest to distinguish themselves from those who do not have the "good taste" to appreciate Cannes' "art cinema". Moreover, as they would both be acting as members of the Cannes' constituent network they could also share interests in generating cultural capital for the Festival de Cannes to distinguish this festival and/or this cinema from other types of cinema or other festivals.



This is not an innocent take on taste, since taste is “one of the most vital stakes in the struggles fought in the field of the dominant class and the field of cultural production” (Bourdieu, 1984: 3). Accordingly, when making choices, judgements or evaluations, Cannes’ programmers, juries and all its other guests and commentators could be using taste to reinforce the dominant position of the festival in the field of cultural production, as much as they could be using it for their individual struggles for legitimacy and cultural capital. If we recall Mazdon’s words regarding the “Cannes’ elite guests” taste, this could be reinforcing a *dominant class* around Cannes and its dominant position even beyond the festival’s events. Hence, in my thesis I question, through a detailed analysis of a number of Best Screenplay Award-winning films, to what extent distinction and domination is performed at Cannes, how it is performed, and for whose interest.

Still it is important to understand why I am problematising Cannes’ power to consecrate, something which film festival scholarship has a long tradition of relating to the process of how world cinemas are configured. The Festival de Cannes possesses, or has been granted, the agency to define which films or filmmakers constitute a national cinema, as well as what styles, and what national cinemas are important for *the art of cinema*, a matter which many scholars find problematic (Stringer 2003a, Czach 2004, Elsaesser 2005, Chadhuri 2005, Mazdon 2007, Iordanova 2009, Dovey 2010, Chan 2011, Ross 2011, Stevens 2016, Berry 2016). Going back to Bourdieu, these propositions mean that the artistic field is not autonomous at Cannes, because it has impact on the economy and geopolitics of cinema. Without wanting to imply that I can separate economy from politics at Cannes, or in the film industries, I am going to concentrate now on the reflections that academics have made on the geopolitical impact of distinction regarding national cinemas. Stringer reflects on the phenomenon of festival films, and he quotes Lindsey Jang’s tactics for would-be festival busters: get fictional, get exotic, get sexy, get violent, get a trend going, get a new film language, get political (Stringer 2003a: 177). Elsaesser equally identifies a

unifying force in the world cinema map configured by film festivals when he argues that Wong Kar-Wai, Pedro Almodóvar, or Lars Von Trier can be seen to have more in common among themselves than with their national cinemas, and that they have acquired their value competing at film festivals (2005: 6), referring mostly to Cannes.<sup>14</sup> Chadhuri denounces the “imposition” of an Antonioni-like filmmaking style in the upheaval of Iranian cinema in the festival circuit, again mostly at Cannes, in the early years of the 2000s (2005: 80). And Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong claims that “China (Taiwan, Hong Kong), Iran, Romania, Israel, and Palestine have been recognized as voices through film festivals” (2016: 89). As Czach puts it, international film festivals, and Cannes in particular, have the agency to “both reinforce and contest national canons” (2004: 78), which has an impact on names and styles. But more importantly Felicia Chan demands that we “explore that ‘cultural matrix’ established between the festival economy, film aesthetics and national imaginaries” to understand this phenomenon (2011: 260, where she used the term cultural matrix drawing from Stringer 2001).

While this is easy to understand when it comes to canons of films or filmmakers it becomes more complex when we think of styles. According to Lindiwe Dovey when she asked the Egyptian film director El-Tahri “where this ‘African diaspora language’ has been created she immediately responded: ‘At film festivals!’” (2010: 7). Similarly Chris Berry claims that “the film festival has always been imagined as a translation machine – a window on the world translating ‘foreign’ cultures into ‘our’ culture” (2016: 12). That is, film festivals such as Cannes do not simply put films and filmmakers on the map, they exert power on how these filmmakers should make their films, imposing a diasporic or a translated language. Furthermore, “the matter gets more complicated when it comes to national cinema waves “ (De Valck 2012: 28). In the web page, in the leaflets and very often in the interviews and the reviews

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<sup>14</sup> He uses the terms author and transnational in that argument, but I have omitted them because I reflect on both terms later in this chapter and they would have complicated the argument here.

of films, the films are tagged with a flag and a nationality implying that such films are not only “author cinema with a wide audience appeal” but also represent a Romanian, Iranian, or Chinese national cinema and often these are addressed as “a national new wave”. While the “author cinema” could point towards the creation or promotion of a transnational category, the second would work in the opposite direction since identifying “a national cinema is first of all to specify coherence and a unity” (in Croft 1998: 53) around national origin, and yet there could be something intrinsically transnational in the use of the term “new wave”, even if applied to phenomena which are distinctly national in origin and focus. Once again we find two opposed and yet complementary forces sustaining the Festival de Cannes’ meaning making processes.

The coherence and unity of a national cinema gets to be specified in close (and bi-directional) relation to the canonical films, filmmakers or the style of that national cinema. Thus, a dilemma may emerge if “the concept of national cinema is being used prescriptively rather than descriptively, citing what national cinema should be” (Croft 1998: 53) rather than merely choosing what “best” represents it. On the basis of being selected for Cannes, prestige is attached to films, filmmakers, and/or filmmaking styles so that “a national cinema” or a “national cinema wave” may move, following Stephen Crofts’ idea, from a descriptive term to a prescriptive one. In this light, Cannes and its network of stakeholders could be prescribing how a national cinema *should be*. If that were so, the field of cultural production would cease to be autonomous in that it has political impact, since it brings to the fore centre-periphery tensions and position struggles. I will review later how this move from description to prescription works on a much more direct level: that of funding and financing films. However, it need not be assumed that the direct impact of funds is more determinant than the power to generate coherence and unity through taste and distinction. It is important to point out that the Festival de Cannes and its constituent subfields and field players, mainly through the use of taste and distinction, which is according to Bourdieu ‘*never a dis-interested use*’ (1977: 177-178), influence the geopolitics of

cinema. As much as funds are interesting, my research investigates an award, therefore I focus on the potentially prescriptive impact of taste and distinction. I will be questioning why and how national cinema labels are used, when selection and awarding decisions are, allegedly, based on *the art of cinema*, regardless of a film's nationality. This will add to the aforementioned debates, primarily through Stringer and Chan's "cultural matrix perspective".

It follows from the previous argument that Cannes' avowed aim "of contributing towards the development of cinema, boosting the film industry worldwide and celebrating cinema at an *international* level" (from the festival's website) may not be quite as merry as it pretends. Once more, it is illuminating to compare what scholars say to how the festival narrates itself. In this case, for instance, Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden state that national cinemas are associated with "a certain anxiety of authenticity" that "underlies the notion of culturally 'correct' filmmaking which assumes a heightened representational access by ethnic and cultural insiders to a stable and cultural distinct reality" (2006: 4). Accordingly, Cannes may need to use national cinema labels to present itself as an inter-national arena because "the national" points towards "the authentic".<sup>15</sup> The notions of authenticity and/or ethnic authenticity and their importance in art go *far beyond* this thesis' scope, but they are important "assumptions" when it comes to making meaning of national/inter-national/ transnational cinema, and thence of the Festival de Cannes. First, without being an insider, Cannes is still defining what constitutes culturally correct/authentic filmmaking, if nothing else, because it gatekeeps representational access through selection and awards. This is nothing new, as scholars have already argued that because of film festivals "certain aesthetic dispositions regarding cinema are continuously confirmed, and thus filmmakers are predisposed to produce films in certain traditions" (De Valck 2016: 110).

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<sup>15</sup> I prefer the term inter-national in how it stresses "the national" (following Dennison S. 2006 and Timfonova 2002) but I only use it in very specific instances as it complicates the reading.

The emphasis must be put on the use of the term disposition, which De Valck and I prefer, to the term prescription because disposition is a Bourdieuan term that talks of a series of “natural aptitudes” (1986: 243) rather than rules.

The problem of direct funding has also been described by world cinema and film festival academics, and we find a carefully developed example in Tamara Falicov’s analysis (2016). Falicov develops a case study on the European funding of Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s work, including his Palme d’Or award winning film. According to Falicov

the Hubert Bals Fund (International Film Festival Rotterdam), World Cinema Fund (Berlin International Film Festival), plus the French Film Institute’s (Centre Nationale de la Cinématographie) Fonds Sud (now called Aide Aux Cinémas du Monde or World Cinema Support) which recognized Weerasethakul’s potential to make an award-winning film in supporting the production of the film simultaneously acted as ‘endorsements of quality’ (2016: 209, similarly in Steinhart 2006 and Ross 2011)

Indeed, this may have facilitated his later win. But in the same book De Valck reflects on the Westernised cinema education and Western career track of Weerasethakul. She explains that this filmmaker, who tends to be tightly associated in his stories and his filmmaking style to his Thai origins, received, however, cinema education in the US (2016: 110), thus putting more emphasis, again, on dispositions. In sum, both critics explain that his films are read as “authentic” on the basis that he is a cultural insider and yet he gained representational access through his education and recognition in the West. In my research I investigate similar tensions in a number of screenplay award-winning films. Further research seems to be necessary regarding the imposition of canons and aesthetic preferences, which results not just from funding initiatives, but also from a system of consecration which has in the Festival de Cannes, and possibly in its awards, one of its highest points; but the Festival still sustains its own “worldwide legitimacy” (a questionable claim anyway) on

the basis of promoting national and/or ethnic authenticity.

What academics are questioning is whether Cannes, rather than celebrating cinema at an *inter-national* level, is bringing together a series of discrete national cinemas with a common transnational style; and if this may serve to reinforce the domination of a particular class (not in the sense of social classes but in the sense of dominant players in the fields of cultural production and mediation) (Clifford 1992, Shohat and Stam 1994, Iordanova 2001, Nagib 2006). Since it has been agreed that the “key to transnationalism is the recognition of the decline of national sovereignty as a regulatory force in global coexistence” (Ezra and Rowden 2006: 1). Transnational interests and/or aesthetics would signal that the “dominant classes” or the “elites” (in Bourdieu and Mazdon’s terms respectively) are not located within the scale of the nation.

To the extent that we may claim that the Festival de Cannes is a transnational cinema event, in terms of interests and/or in aesthetic terms, and that representational access is regulated by the Festival de Cannes, we may be implying a certain decline of national sovereignty regarding cinema. I do not intend to give an answer to a question this ambitious and complex in my review nor in my thesis. To begin with, the matter is extremely complicated, even in theoretical terms, as Natasha Durovicová and Katheleen E. Newman explain. On the one hand “current scholarship on the transnational scale of cinematic circulation now *takes for granted a geopolitical decentring* of the discipline” because “borders are now seen to have been always permeable, societies always hybrid, and international film history to have been key to the processes of globalization” (Newman in Durovicová and Newman, 2009: 4, my emphasis, also Dennison S. 2006). But on the other hand, they also claim that trans-nationalism “acknowledges *the persistent agency of the state*, in a varying but fundamentally legitimizing relationship to the scale of ‘the nation’. [... And a]t the same time, the prefix “trans-” implies relations of unevenness” (Durovicová in Durovicová and Newman, 2009: x). My thesis does not aim to make a theoretical contribution to these

debates. But I consider that my study on the Cannes' Best Screenplay Award may help us better understand the geopolitical influences and impact of Cannes' awarding decisions and add to those debates, because both national and transnational forces seem to hold this festival together.

In conclusion, in order to conduct my research, I mostly rely on Mette Hjort's take on transnationalism as "it would be helpful in my view to use 'transnational' as a scalar concept allowing for the recognition of strong or weak forms of transnationality", given that the term sets "a referential scope so broad as to encompass phenomena that are surely more interesting for their differences than their similarities" (2000:13). Therefore, I study both differences and similarities and strong and weak forms of transnationalism that may appear around Cannes, as well as strong and weak forms of cinema nationalism. That is, in studying the autonomy of the Festival de Cannes' awarding decisions, I investigate Cannes' "typology of transnationalisms" (ibid.: 15) and the extent to which awarding decisions are influenced by national and transnational cinema interests.

I do not expect to find one fixed model but an ongoing negotiation among these forces, that will result in different types of cinema transnationalisms and different types of cinema nationalisms being strategically sustained at Cannes. For instance, the fact that they make a strong claim in defending the use of the French language in the festival's events could be serving a nationalistic agenda, while The Competition also brings together films and film professionals from many different places in the world and this could, at first sight, bring into question any French nationalistic agenda. Also, the festival attaches prestige and gives visibility to films and film professionals from many different nations who are specifically invited – often – because of their particular nationalities and ethnicities, making local, national and transnational identities another tension at work in the design of the festival. Moreover, these film professionals may not be willing to renounce their

ethnographic attachment to the “authentic” in favour of the festival’s Frenchness, because “their principal modes of marketing or product differentiation are by nation of production, with different national labels serving a sub-generic function” (Croft 1998: 39). Competing at Cannes they would be, nonetheless, interested in legitimising Cannes’ power to consecrate; that is, they still delegate on a French authority to define the authentic in their national cinemas, and by doing so they sustain that authority. Thus, it becomes necessary to study for each award-winning film what type of transnationalism (whether weak or strong and based on similarities or differences) is operating, how, why, and for whose interest.

Additionally, the festival does something else: it provides films with a marketing strategy and a mode of product differentiation other than their sub-generic nationality; namely, their “author signature”. So it is fundamental to understand auteur cinema theories to frame a research project on Cannes, and even more important for a study of the screenplay award, since I already explained in my thesis’ introduction that by virtue of the name it bears, this award could potentially weaken the author-director premise which, to a great extent, sustains this festival. Yet, since my methodology is primarily based on the works of Bourdieu I must also take into consideration his reflections on *the author*, which may well explain, for a start, why the author is so celebrated at Cannes. In order to understand the role of authors in the field(s) of cultural production one needs to first understand Bourdieu’s capital(s), which is also of major importance to unpack the significance of the term prestige in this thesis.

According to Bourdieu, capital can be economic, which is self explanatory, but also symbolic and/or cultural. Cultural capital is best understood as a form of symbolic capital because both are defined as depending on, or emerging from, social appreciation. Symbolic capital (and its sub-type cultural capital) exercises power, without the need for physical or economic exchanges, because symbolic capital emerges directly and solely from the socially sustained perception and



acknowledgement that this form of capital exists. In particular, cultural capital yields a “profit in distinction, proportionate to the rarity of the means required ... and a profit in legitimacy, the profit par excellence, which consists in the fact of feeling justified” (Bourdieu 1984: 225). Therefore, cultural capital lies in the recognition of distinction, rarity and legitimacy exerted by social agents; without the shared perception it would cease to exist. Moreover, the social agents, on whose recognition the whole existence of this form of capital relies, are themselves already embedded with such distinction, rarity or legitimacy; and it *is only those agents* that can confer cultural capital onto new products or new group members. We have already introduced how distinction and legitimacy work, so let’s concentrate on rarity and how it connects to the Festival de Cannes’ author cinema.

Bourdieu explains that for the author “the only legitimate accumulation consists in making a name for oneself, a known, recognised name, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects (with a trademark or signature)” (1993: 75). In this light, Cannes’ authors possess known recognised signatures which can consecrate objects (films), attaching cultural capital to those objects. More importantly, their signature gives them a mode of product differentiation and/or a new sub-generic category. The Competition’s claim to showcase author cinema means that they only select films bearing the cultural capital of having been signed by authors. Since it has been claimed that authors are the undisputed stars of film festivals (Wong 2011: 8) and this is even more prominent at the Festival de Cannes (as I explained in my thesis’ introduction), then this mode of product differentiation (bearing author signatures), could surpass that of national cinemas at Cannes. We have seen that this is what many world cinema scholars defend when they criticise Cannes. No matter where they “seem” to come from, these filmmakers may have more in common among themselves than in relation to their respective national cinemas because they adhere to a diasporic or translated film language. That is,

directors of film festivals may claim that their role is to “reveal what markets hide” (Marco Müller, director of the Venice Festival, in Cousins 2009: 169) but in showcasing author cinema they may enter a contradiction, given that an author is someone who has accumulated cultural capital and cultural capital emanates, as we have seen, from social recognition, thus they cannot be hidden and awaiting to be revealed, at least not those in the prestigious Cannes’ Competition section. My research contributes to these debates by assessing the role of national and authorial functions regarding a number of Best Screenplay Award winning films.

This idea emerges more clearly when bringing to the fore the star-status of authors at this festival. It must be pointed out that according to Bourdieu:

the ideology of creation, which makes the author the first and last source of the value of his work, conceals the fact that the cultural businessman (art dealer, publisher, etc.) is at one and the same time the person who exploits the labour of the 'creator' by *trading* the 'sacred' and the person who, by putting it on the market, by exhibiting, publishing or staging it, consecrates a product which he has 'discovered' (1993: 76-77).

It follows from this quote that when the festival uses notions such as *the art of cinema* or *author cinema* they do so in a strategy of concealment where *revealing* and/or *discovering* are euphemisms for trading or exploiting the labour of “creators”. That I am using Bourdieu’s theories as my main methodological ground does not mean that I agree with each and every implication that his propositions may have when applied to the specific contexts of the contemporary Festival de Cannes. Nevertheless, it is important to take this tension into consideration since what I do in my research is investigate the possible shades of grey between two extremes: to what extent does Cannes reveal what markets hide, or does it use authorship and distinction to hide that it is actually part of the market? In this research I address how Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award

behaves in this regard.

According to De Valck, “as tastemakers, film festivals... contribute to upholding the belief in art cinema’s autonomous values” (De Valck 2016: 109), but since Bourdieu explains the interrelations between cultural and economic capital in many different ways this could be but “a belief”. First, institutional recognition of the cultural capital possessed by any given agent makes it possible to establish conversion rates between cultural capital and economic capital (1986: 248). Consequently, in theory, a nomination or an award which recognises higher cultural capital would have a higher conversion rate when it is turned into economic capital (English 2005 offers a good account of these dynamics). In a most interesting 2011 study an international group of business scholars (Mezias, Strandgaard, Svejenova and Mazza) carried out a series of case studies to test the theory of conversion rates regarding cinema awards and they proposed that “nominations at the Cannes’ festival have a significantly larger impact on admissions than nominations at Berlin or Venice. Winning a prize at any of the festivals yields a significant and positive impact on audience size for a film” (Mezias et al. 2011: 18). Admissions are, of course, only one of the possible exchanges between cultural and economic capital, but one that curiously enough brings to question, as I proposed earlier, the separation of business oriented and audience oriented film festivals. Mezias et al.’s study also develops several other conversion possibilities, such as the impact of winning each award on media attention, on film distribution, on subsequent nominations and wins, or, very importantly, on the field re-positioning of award-winners. In my research I investigate similar tensions in relation to a series of Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award-winning films. It is important to highlight that the former study reaches the conclusions that “there seems to be a classification system in operation among these festivals in terms of their effects on commercial success, with Cannes being clearly the most commercially valuable endorsement” (ibid.: 19) and that Cannes is the number one “field configuring event” among film festivals

and European film awards (ibid.). An institution or an event is “field configuring” when being recognised by such institution or event dramatically changes the place that one occupies within one’s field; this results from the accumulated cultural capital of that institution or event. That is what happens at the Festival de Cannes, according to the conversion rate research, and it can explain why the Festival narrates itself in terms of rite.

Notwithstanding conversion potential, the conversion of cultural capital into economic capital should not lead to a reductionist understanding of this form of capital, nor should Cannes’ prestige be reduced to its economic conversion rate. While it is true that according to Bourdieu symbolic capital is misrecognised as immediate economic capital but “under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees 'economic' profits” (1993:75), we have seen that this form of capital can be simultaneously reconverted into political capital, and then reverted back to economic, and so on, creating a dynamics which reinforces the position of dominant classes (capital beholders) without need of physical or economic exchanges. I am not entering a discussion of social classes and/or domination, I am only emphasising one of the motifs concerning why the appropriation of cultural capital is so important, and the many interests at stake in these processes. After carefully reviewing film festival studies through Bourdieu’s theories the result is that when we think of the Festival de Cannes, its number one position, its great prestige, its legitimacy and its field configuring impact, we no longer assume that such accumulation of cultural capital necessarily means increased autonomy. Paradoxically, the accumulation of any form of symbolic capital relies on the sustained belief on the autonomy of symbolic capital. First, its relation with economic or political profit must be concealed for it to be efficient. Bourdieu clearly states that “symbolic capital, a transformed and thereby disguised form of physical 'economical' capital, produces its proper effect inasmuch, and only inasmuch, as it conceals its originates [its origins] in 'material' forms of

capital” (1977: 183), but also it must conceal that in the long run it *guarantees* economic profit. In my research I investigate the extent to which economic capital is concealed behind the symbolic capital of Cannes’ awards and whether Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award guarantees economic profit.

### **Cannes and the author cinema factory(-ies)**

Nevertheless, another paradox, and of no lesser importance, is that a certain degree of autonomy of the field of cultural production *must be granted* for cultural capital to operate. Cultural capital (like any other form of symbolic capital) “is capital with a cognitive base, which *rests on* cognition and recognition” (1998: 85, my emphasis). Therefore, the field of cultural production and/or the art market cannot rely on the exertion of direct economic power because they are sustained by the recognition that cultural capital exists, is meaningful, is unevenly distributed and is not directly related to economic capital. For instance, awards cannot be sold or bought if they are to remain meaningful as signs bestowing cultural capital. The field of cultural production and/or the art market must hold a certain degree of autonomy so that they can have their own field positions, rules, agents and interests. Buying awards would completely break the rules of the field and the field would rapidly dissolve because it had lost its autonomy. So despite many of my previous claims, the field of cultural production and the art market *must* have some autonomy. Cultural capital emerges from the recognition of different field positions and where each stands. It follows from this that an award may only generate cultural capital if bestowed by a delegate person or institution occupying a higher position than that of the award winner, if not it may even generate cultural capital for the awarding institution (as English 2005 explains).

This becomes a most interesting tension when we think that authors are the stars of films festivals, for we may wonder to what extent is it

always the institution conferring prestige, or if the opposite may be true in some cases. Accordingly, I agree with John Caughie when he points out that any “attempt to move beyond *auteurism* has to recognize also the fascination of the figure of the *auteur*, and the way he is used in the cinephile's pleasure” ([1981] 2013: 15). I use his stance to argue that including authors in the game generates profit and pleasure at the Festival de Cannes, and particularly regarding its Competition films. In sum, while it is true that “the author performs a function” (from Michel Foucault, in Galt and Schoonover 2010: 5), precisely that circumstance, which could be read in terms of pragmatism or cynicism, points out that there is a certain degree of autonomy in the field, as the author may not be performing a function (thus not even exist as such) in other cinema cultures. Nevertheless, while the existence of certain rules “of its own” signals autonomy of the field this does not mean that there are economic as well as political or symbolic interests at stake *within* the field of “author cinema” or at Cannes. That is, the claim that the author performs a function which is not directly economic, or that it serves cinephile pleasure, does not mean that such functions and pleasures cannot be converted to economic profit.

While it seems true that someone wanting to *make a name* “ignores or challenges the expectations of the established audience and serves no other demand than the one it itself produces” (Bourdieu, 1993: 82-83), this may not be true for already established authors. Challenge is, according to Bourdieu, necessary in order to acquire cultural capital to acquire a name but maybe not to sustain it. New authors aiming to enter fields which are relatively stable, where field positions are well recognised, and where cultural capital is already distributed, need to challenge expectations; so they produce rare works which can be discovered. That is, following Bourdieu, new authors expecting to make a name for themselves cannot simply rely on serving already established rules, so they rely on challenging those who are interested in discoveries and rarity, the consecrators (critics, institutions, particular audiences) and

the traders. According to Bourdieu, the rarity of those works/creations demands readers who possess enough means, enough cultural capital, to understand such rarity, and those readers are simultaneously assessing their own cultural capital when they discover the new author because, as explained before, “taste classifies the classifier”. That is why new authors have to look for the attention of those who trade with works of art, institutions and/or critics, as these traders have a personal interest in discovering, in rarity and in novelty. This is, certainly, one of the reasons why film festivals are “pressed for discoveries” (De Valck 2007: 176).

However, this *necessary* initial autonomy from audiences becomes in the long term, when they are no longer new authors, a production “which secures success and the corresponding profits by adjusting to a pre-existing demand” (Bourdieu 1993: 82-83). That is, once an author has secured his/her name and his/her dominant field position they have a demand and they want/need to satisfy it. Since The Competition at Cannes, let alone the Palme d’Or, is a high point in a filmmaking career, one must wonder if filmmakers reach it when they are in their initial *expectation challenging* “phase”, or when they already have accumulated cultural capital and they have generated demand for their works.

This brings to question, once more, the extent to which a high position in the field leads to increased autonomy, an issue on which my research makes a significant contribution precisely because it investigates a secondary award. The dynamics described by Bourdieu are called hysteresis (Hardy in Grenfell ed.: 131-150) and are of major importance to understanding the Festival de Cannes, its awards, and the history of cultural fields and artistic creation: “the struggle itself creates the history of the field; through the struggle the field is given a temporal dimension” (Bourdieu 1993: 106-107). While hysteresis explains a field through time and there are several studies on the historical evolution of the Cannes Festival (Beauchamp and Behar 1992, Billard 1997, Jurgen

2014) and even how the festival has been historically defining different filmmaking styles as “the art of cinema” (Ostrowska 2016, similarly De Valck 2007). But I am, borrowing from Cannes, presenting a snapshot of the festival, not an historical explanation and therefore I do not expect to find in my thesis many examples of hysteresis. Nevertheless, in order to understand awarding decisions and the role of authorship and discovery at Cannes these reflections must be taken into account. I include a review of the career track of the award-winners, their pre-screenplay award authorial identity, as well as the funding and the box-office revenues of those films together with my analysis of their surrounding reception discourses. Otherwise, it would not be possible to understand the field of cultural production as it operates at the Festival de Cannes; nor how the Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award performs distinction. In doing this it could be that, even if I did not find cases of hysteresis, I found struggles between well-established and upcoming field agents in the challenging of expectations or the reification of principles.

To sum up, if we took Bourdieu’s notion of the strategic uses of the ideology of creation in the art market we could explain Cannes’ film selection focusing only on how they are read *at* and *beyond* the festival. That is, is there such a thing as author cinema or is this just a reading possibility? In the first case The Competition would select films which fulfil the conditions that make those films author cinema. In the second case, by selecting certain films The Competition automatically places them within author cinema. If this were the case we could question to what extent the Festival de Cannes is a festival; or if it is instead a genre/labelling/branding strategy that relies on certain discourses and practices to conceal its interest in trading with works, and more importantly the trading interests of the network that sustains it. We do not have to choose one option or the other, and it is probably in the convergence of these two opposing forces that the festival is sustained. As De Valck puts it “festivals not only act as gatekeepers, but as tastemakers” (2016: 109), thence there is no need to choose one or the



other. Moreover, she continues “it is Bourdieu’s notion of habitus that is particularly well suited to explain the dynamics behind taste-making and festivals” (2016: 109, my emphasis). Through habitus we can understand how the Festival de Cannes produces agents with cultivated dispositions working in and at many different sites, and why it seems impossible to choose what comes first.

I am developing this issue extensively because it is important for the researcher to be aware of where she/he stands, and I want to clearly explain how I approach the Festival de Cannes. However, I do not want to problematise the self-reflexivity of the warning that was specifically suggested by Toby Lee (2016), Diane Burgess and Brendan Kredell for those undertaking film festivals’ research, especially when the researcher has attended the festivals in question (2016). Therefore, in a self-reflexive disclosure, I consider that “the film festival has emerged as a privileged site for big-screen, art cinema cinephilia” (De Valck 2010: 49), but I stress that the experience of cinephilia responds to the question “what have you seen?” (ibid.: 51) when it comes to the Festival de Cannes. Basically, due to its relevance in cinema cultures, I argue that the question “what have you seen?” can be answered by seeing Cannes’ films outside the event. Therefore, I suggest that the big-screen art cinema cinephilia privileged by this festival may not need the site, in as much as this does not mean that they may not need the festival. Moreover, I also consider that it is fundamental to locate the Festival de Cannes within a “cultural matrix” that expands beyond this event in particular and film festivals in general because it involves institutions, companies, and agents from many different areas which include but are not limited to: film funds, government bodies, producers, sales agents, film talent, film festival institutions, specialised and unspecialised media, etcetera. This is my approach to film festival phenomena, so I acknowledge that my point of view is the same as Bill Nichols when he claims that film festivals are sustained by

a translucent quality: through them we glimpse those creative

gestures and cultural achievements worthy of our attention; in them we witness the productive capacity of an apparatus to define meanings and subjectivities that did not exist before (38).

In my study of Cannes' Best Screenplay Award I will be looking inside and through the festival. Therefore, what I am investigating is how the apparatus works, but, since the term apparatus is a major theoretical concept that entails a history of its own I will mostly substitute it for less ambitious terms such as network, cultural matrix or system.<sup>16</sup> However, I am certainly investigating whether "*a shared ideological framework* is at work during the programming process, fortified by shared backgrounds and affiliations between the programmers and the films (and by extension, the filmmakers), which then is reinforced by similarly invested stakeholders (critics and distributors) in their reception of films" (Rastegar 2016: 185, my emphasis). That is, the network, the cultural matrix or the system that sustains and evolves around the Festival de Cannes. Accordingly, it is necessary to bring together those who make films, festival institutions and those commenting on films and on festival events to understand the extent to which they work under a shared ideological framework and what ends could this serve. Again, I am taking this approach because I use Bourdieu as my most important theoretical tenet and he explained that the shared ideological framework lies in the "relationship between the two capacities which define the habitus, the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate" (1984: 166).

A first approach to film festival research would easily conclude that any film festival needs to isolate films, thus, categorising them according to the strategic work of its artistic director (Iordanova 2009: 31), and this would rule out any attempt to neglect the importance of film selection, but the matter is, as we have seen, much more complicated. Nevertheless, film scholars (working on different matters) have claimed that one effect

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<sup>16</sup> Bourdieu himself used the term apparatus but also the term system (of relations, of dispositions) because apparatus carries a stronger degree of intentionality, planification and negativity than the term system.

of the productive capacity of film festivals is the establishment of certain film forms. For instance, Rosalind Galt in defining *Global Art Cinema* (Galt and Schoonover 2010) stated that “by global art cinema, I simply mean forms of international cinematic production—*typically narrative, no matter how relaxed*—that emerge in the various international film festival circuits” (114). She thereby signals that the cinematic production which can be seen in film festival circuits shares textual characteristics. We have already reviewed how this idea has been problematised, but this does not mean that it has been denied. According to this claim Cannes’ “author cinema with a wide audience appeal” could *also* be explained through textual analysis. Galt, nonetheless, criticises David Bordwell’s claim that there is an art film form which can be studied without taking institutions into consideration because *text form and productive institutions go hand in hand* (2010: 66, my emphasis). As we have seen she does not stand alone in this; on the contrary what we have seen is the inclusion of more agents in the picture.

Similarly, in his manual for film producers, Angus Finney presents a description of the types of films that European producers work with, one of them being the “specialised film”. According to him (and to the British Film Institute and the National Lottery) specialised films are author driven, not mainstream, engaged with current cinema aesthetics and current political and social issues, seeking equally engaged audiences and aimed at winning awards at major film festivals and to be distributed in the arthouse cinema circuit (2010: 37). Therefore, these film projects or products have markets, audiences (cultivated in Bourdieu’s terms; for a study on this, see Harbord 2002) production and textual traits in common. The importance of the “specialised film” category is that, according to Finney, it is used to guide in the designing of film projects.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, it has long been established by genre and reception scholars that generic ascription is not only defined by textual characteristics, but that texts and their production operate in conjunction with promotion

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<sup>17</sup> Similar categories exist outside the UK, as producers using private and public funds have to agree on a common language with which to describe the projects they work on.

strategies and film reception to define genres through an ongoing process of gradual change (Klinger 1994, Altman [1999] 2003, Mittell 2001, Neale 2003, Mittell 2005, Staiger 1992 and 2005, Mathjis 2011, Jancovich and Snelson 2011, and others).

According to Altman, “a genre must be defined according to the complexity of a situation which is made of tridimensional events that are *developed in space and time*” ([1999] 2003: 122) therefore we should not find it “awkward” to talk of the films of a film festival like Cannes in terms of genre. What we gain is that genres are located “in the specific practices and purposes *of those who use them*” (Altman [1999] 2003: 139); therefore we drift Cannes’ films, as a cinema category, away from the festival events, and from their makers to re-locate them in the practices *of all of those who use them*, from academics to audiences, from critics to funding bodies, from film directors to juries. Therefore my method for studying the Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award is a series of approaches to award-winning films where I “look beyond the text as the locus for genre [categories] and instead locate genres [categories] within the complex interrelations among texts, industries, audiences, and historical contexts” (Mittell 2001: 7). On the basis that the category “Cannes’ films” has, in theory, the potential to resemble a genre category, I study a number of them analysing how texts, industries, the festival institution juries, and film critics (the only “audiences considered, as I develop latter) use those films and awards in the contemporary context. In doing this I am following the works of Dorota Ostrowska on the category “Cannes’ films” (2011 and 2016) and Tamara Falicov on “festival films” (2016).

Put simply, all film festivals have “a particular kind of external agency that creates meaning around film texts” (Stringer 2003a: 62), but this agency is neither exerted through the imposition of rules nor by the festival’s institution alone, especially when one thinks of major cinema arenas such as the Festival de Cannes. Therefore, we should equally question to what extent films create meaning around their film festivals.

The idea that film texts are the unique or main source of genre categories has long been problematised, but film texts need not be completely left out of the equation. In conclusion, if “genres should be understood from a *discursive point of view*” (Altman [1999] 2003: 169), following Michel Foucault’s discourse analysis methods (as proposed for instance in his *Archaeology of Knowledge* 1977), what we have then is a “locus without a centre” (an extensively used Foucauldian term), meaning that the centre of genre categories is neither the text, nor the production and commercialisation, nor the reception. And, making clear where I stand as a researcher, this is my approach to the meaning and value of Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award: meaning and value do not emerge from the institution nor the film nor the reception alone, but from the network, matrix or system as a whole. In this research meaning is considered to emerge from all of those who use the festival and its films (from development and production, to consecration, trading and consumption), just like many have claimed regarding genres.

However, it is important to notice that, while film festival scholars make extensive use of the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, they make little use of the theories of Michel Foucault, while the latter was fundamental in taking the study of film genres beyond the comparison of film texts. Consequently, I rely on the theories of Bourdieu. Moreover, Bourdieu is mostly concerned with social practice, practical theory and the sociological understanding of art and culture, while Foucault focused on history and philosophical theory. Since my thesis aims to understand contemporary (rather than historical) practice (rather than theory) I concentrated on the ideas of Bourdieu to guide my methods. However, one could not avoid using the term discourse in considering how a Cannes’ award acquires value and meaning at different sites and for different people, and so the influence, even if not direct, of Michel Foucault has to be acknowledged in order to explain my methods.

## The importance of reception

Even if we considered that it is not necessary to bring in cinema genre questions to approach a film festival, still “the identity of film festivals within broader cinema culture is also largely determined by the participation— if that is the right word— of non-attendees... [as visible in how] casual cinemagoers and festival insiders alike *have seized on the festival as a shared metonym*” (Burgess and Kredell 2016: 164, my emphasis). As we have already seen how important Cannes and the Cannes’ metonym is for academics within broader cinema cultures, I propose that it is important to consider the role of non-attendees in reproducing or reifying this metonym. Therefore, I am going to bring together the previous idea that film festivals contribute to the emergence of cinema categories with the idea that film reception is fundamental in order to understand film categories (Staiger 1992 and 2005, Klinger 1994, Mathijs and Sexton 2011, in general, film reception academics). My purpose is to explain why a research project on the value and meaning of the Cannes’ Best Screenplay award would find it very helpful to consider the critical reception of award-winning films outside the festival.

Moreover, it seems like the role of the press appears to be fundamental to bridging the inside-outside the event gap. In a 2011 essay Harbord explains that media attention contributes to the film festival, acquiring significance because the presence of the media contributes to making festival events staged and glamorous live events. Their comments and reviews, which emerge from their physical presence at festivals, but which are available outside those events, give meaning to the film festival beyond its time and place boundaries. It follows from that perspective that the press does not stand aside and comment on film festivals, but their presence adds meaning and therefore they become fundamental to understanding the role of film festival in cinema cultures.

I use reception studies as part of my mixed methodology because in reception studies “interpretations and values appear as ‘contingent’,

radically dependent on the *positions* and needs of those involved in institutions of evaluative authority” (Klinger, 1994:2, using Barbara Herrnstein Smith). Moreover, in his seminal books *The Rules of Art* (1996) and *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) Bourdieu had already introduced the idea that art criticism plays an important role in the production of cultural capital. That is, I study the interest and the positions at stake in evaluation processes at and around an institution of authority, the Festival de Cannes, but I also consider how it relates to institutionalised film criticism. However, reception studies is a big area of film studies and academics have put emphasis on many issues that I do not address. For instance they may also study how films are used by non-professional audiences through surveys, group discussions (Barker 2003, Mathijs 2011, and many others), or internet commentaries (Curran 2000, Vervoord 2010 and 2014, Kristensen and Fromm 2015). Certainly, in order to better understand the network we should consider non-institutionalised, or less institutionalised audiences, especially when considering how recent scholars have been “emphasizing the blurring of media boundaries” (Verboord 2014: 921) and the decline of the evaluative authority of highly institutionalised criticism (ibid.: 922) That is, I find that it would also be very interesting to analyse if casual cinema goers make use of the same terms and themes, but that would enormously surpass the scope of a PhD thesis; therefore, for a number of reasons I have focused on the traditional centrality of institutionalised critics as cultural mediators (following the ideas of Bourdieu 1993, Bauman 2007, Bennett et al. 2009, Kersten and Bielby 2012, and others) and so I have only analysed professional criticism and not “feedback” (Gillespie 2012: 62).

Since I only study institutionalised and prestigious film criticism, it may look like I am not looking for contesting voices. Moreover, I am not studying historical meaning making processes and changes (a prolific subfield since Klinger 1994’s seminal study). Therefore it could seem like I am trying to contradict Barbara Klinger’s claim that the meaning of films

is contingent and dependent on social circumstances (1992: 2). Nevertheless, my main concern is the autonomy of sites of meaning production *at* and *around* contemporary Cannes, focusing on those who already have great cultural capital in each of their respective fields (or maybe subfields) and that is why I study the practices and statements of top positioned members in the cinema industries, the festival itself and film criticism. For each case study I will give a detailed account of the sources considered, since I shift my focus from chapter to chapter, to offer a comprehensive image of how Cannes' top positioned network members make meaning and give value to present-day Cannes' Best Screenplay Awards. However, in considering the practices and statements of top positioned network members I have to address different national contexts. We have already seen the importance film festivals and the Festival de Cannes are given in national/inter-national/transnational perspectives on cinema, therefore I find it unavoidable to study how the festival acquires meaning outside France and even outside Europe. Therefore, I am comparing how those in charge of the production and circulation of films from different countries and those in charge of the critical reception of films from different countries relate to Cannes and, in particular to the Best Screenplay Award (as has been done by scholars studying transnational/international film circulation/ reception, such as Bergfelder 2005, Van Der Knaap 2006, Denison R. 2008).<sup>18</sup> In any case, "the use value of reception studies includes, then, a foregrounding of differences, of institutions and ideology, and of implicit (and not eternal) systems of cognition, emotion, and judgement" (1992: 13) which makes it a reliable method to analyse the social construction of the Festival de Cannes. I use reception studies to draw special attention to differences regarding several well-defined groups of institutionalised agents and national contexts rather than historical evolution, consumers' practices or other

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<sup>18</sup> I use international rather than inter-national, to ease the reading, but there are many instances in my thessi where the second one would seem more appropriate as it emphasises the "collection of nations" (Denison S. 2006: 6).



types of cultural mediators. The actual choice of sources is explained and justified in each case study, ranging from a comparison of promotion and reception discourses of award-winning films to a comparison of reception discourses in different countries.

According to Bourdieu, “journalistic products are much more alike than it is generally thought. The most obvious differences [such as left wing versus right wing newspapers]...hide the profound similarities” (1996: 23), but he wrote this in 1996 and journalistic products have changed dramatically; which is not to say that it does not apply today but neither the opposite. My research assesses whether we find profound similarities or not regarding the Festival de Cannes and Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award, not to add to discussions on journalistic practices and products but to understand the social construction of prestige *at and around Cannes*. In his book *On Television and Journalism* (1996) Bourdieu reviews institutionalised media and he asserts that “like other fields, the journalistic field is based on a set of shared assumptions and beliefs, which reach beyond differences of position and opinion” (47) and he also explains those similarities, how they occur and why. Bourdieu even states that “this dynamic is probably even more obvious for literature, art, or film criticism” (1996: 24). That is, since I only study institutionalised film criticism and I am using Bourdieu as my main methodological tenet I am not discouraged to find shared assumptions and beliefs, despite the importance that meaning-making differences are given in current reception studies. I will however, look for nuances and shades of meaning beyond their “shared assumptions”.

In sum, the goal of my research is to take several award-winning films into consideration in order to evaluate to what extent the themes around a Best Screenplay Award-winning film are changing or persistent. Second, I think this is most interesting in terms of shaping a better understanding of the national/international/ transnational dimension of the festival, not only reviewing award-winning films from different nations but also examining critical reception in different national contexts,

particularly given the importance that this festival has in world cinema scholarship. Third, Cannes' participants are mostly professionals, of the cinema industries or the press, so I consider that focusing on how the festival acquires meaning for professionals inside and outside the event should illuminate the relations between the festival-event, the creation of knowledge at the event, and how this knowledge travels beyond the event.<sup>19</sup> And last but not least, one of the main concerns of this research is to investigate whether the reification of those values actually serve the interests of "Cannes' elite guests" (as Mazdon described them), so I have remained focused on the top members of their respective fields.

Accordingly, my research does not serve to argue that Cannes' films are in fact consumed for the symbolic values we may find, nor that audiences elucidate films in the same manner, nor to evaluate whether producers or critics who are not top members in their fields contest or further reinforce Cannes' principles and dispositions. Consequently, even if my approach is not historical and I only consider highly institutionalised criticism, yet I look for differences in meaning-making that could be "systematically related" (Staiger 1992: 12-15) to either group-belonging and group-position struggles or the nationality of the film or the reader. For instance, I will compare French reception with reception outside France or the reception of French films with the reception of "foreign" films in France (similar, for instance, to the approach taken by Van Der Knaap 2006).

However, Bourdieu has made a strong argument that institutions in the field of cultural production mostly serve to "ensure the reproduction of agents imbued with the categories of action, expression, conception, imagination, perception, specific to the 'cultivated disposition'" (Bourdieu 1996: 121, in De Valck 2016: 109). Therefore, it should not be surprising to find that around the Festival de Cannes agents engaged in the production of works (for instance, film directors and film producers) and

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<sup>19</sup> There are, nonetheless, a small number of invitations for cinephiles which the institution hands out after evaluating one's application.

those receiving and evaluating them (such as juries and film critics) may share categories of perception. Interestingly enough, reception studies scholar Janet Staiger claims that “in a rather simple dichotomy, reception studies might be placed in antithesis to a hermeneutics based on the authority of the production (authorship)” (1992:3); so it is not that “rather simple dichotomy” which has guided my method in using reception studies. On the other hand, Bourdieu’s premise to similarly consider the production and the reception of works as different tangible practices that may manifest similar dispositions seems more adequate for this research. This idea is similar to how genre studies have approach genres including practices that range from production to consumption, from marketing to reception. In using Bourdieu, what we are assuming is that “dispositions” (possibilities) and “practices and discourses” (manifestations) result from a social construction which social agents simultaneously reinforce with their practices and discourses. Furthermore, it is also fundamental in Bourdieu’s theories that those practices and discourses serve to “appropriate the profits from this operation” (Bourdieu, 1993: 75), which in the art and culture fields are mostly the generation and appropriation of cultural capital. Therefore, through a study of tangible manifestations, we can gain knowledge of the shared inner dispositions and the ends these serve. Consequently, my research wants to contribute to our understanding of the network of interests that sustains Cannes’ symbolic capital and how the practices and discourses of Cannes’ top positioned agents serve them.

As much as, to my knowledge, Bourdieu did not investigate the work of brands, it is not difficult to understand why once we include interests and profits in the picture we may think of brands. It is only lately that film festival scholars have gained interest in using the concept of brands when analysing film festivals (Stringer 2003b, Zielinski 2016, Bruges and Kredell 2016, Falicov 2016); however, Peranson already claimed that festival audiences “will see anything that has been *branded* by the festival” (Peranson [2008] 2009: 194, my emphasis). Claims that at film

festivals “the reassertion of authorial presence demands to be understood in the broader context of a globalized commercial industry in which the auteur has become reified as a marketing category” (Jean Ma in Falicov 2010: 214), further reinforce the perspective that an interest in symbolic capital (such as authorship) does not necessarily lead to a disinterest in economic capital. Actually, according to Jean Ma it is exactly the opposite and film festivals use authorship as a marketing strategy. This is not surprising, given the well-established academic relationships between brands and authorism (Chris and Gerstner 2013, Corrigan 1991, Grant 2008). Therefore, it is worth bearing branding theories in mind when analysing the Festival de Cannes, as this idea highlights the intentionality behind the use of symbolic values such as, for instance, authorship. According to Naomi Klein, whose work on brands has already been used by film scholars (Elssaesser 2005, Benet 2013, Grainge 2007), brands make the consumption of objects or services something out-of-the-ordinary, an idea that many film festival scholars have also related to the film festival phenomenon (De Valck 2012: 32, also Harbord 2009).

What renders this approach interesting is that brands work with/on symbolic capital rather than with physical economic values; as Paul Grainge has said regarding “Hollywood Branding”

while it is important to recognise monopolies of power in the field of representation, brand signification remains a source for the construction and contestation of meaning; it does not position goods or sustain commercial mutations in ways that are ever straightforward and uncomplicated. Brands are instead a locus of rich symbolic activity (2007: 292).

Therefore, in drawing a parallel with how brands work, I am not complicating my research methods but simplifying them. Even if we located a core origin of meaning at the Festival de Cannes’ institution, brands serve to take meaning-making and meaning-appropriation beyond any such centre of signification. In doing this, as Bourdieu said,

the art dealer “rules out 'sordidly commercial' manoeuvres, manipulation and the 'hard sell', in favour of the softer, more discreet forms” (1993: 76-77). Thus, in approaching Best Screenplay Award-winning films and their signification, we should bear in mind the possibility that it is in the reinforcement of symbolic values, rather than in the straightforward or “hard-sell” advertising of films, that Cannes’ practices and discourses perform as marketing strategies. To an extent, in studying the social construction of the Festival de Cannes, I am investigating how Cannes performs its “highly euphemised forms of publicity” (Bourdieu, 1993: 77) bearing in mind that such forms “almost always involve recognition of the ultimate values of 'disinterestedness” (ibid.: 79), and yet these euphemised forms of publicity still serve to “maintain conceptual value added” (Klein 2009: 14), like any other brand. That is, I am drawing a parallel with contemporary takes on branding which have come to substitute direct advertising for an organic approach to image building (Klein 2009: 20). So I am interested the euphemised forms of publicity that may contribute to the building of a Cannes’ identity (I prefer this term to image as it already entails a more organic approach).

For instance, according to Tamara Falicov, “one way for film festivals to solidify their brand is to help fund a particular kind of ‘festival film’ that fits the profile of their festival” (2016: 212); so, just as in the case of genres, in considering the Festival de Cannes’ brand we do not neglect the importance of film texts. This is an idea that has been harshly put by the film director Mansor Bin Puteh when he said that “Cannes has destroyed the very essence of cinema and made the medium one for forcing filmmakers to screen *propaganda* for them” (in Wong 2011: 103, my emphasis). Although I do not take it as far as *accusing* the festival of having destroyed the very essence of cinema, it must be remembered that film festival scholars have made similar claims. If we agree that film festivals such as Cannes are business oriented, but then, consequently, also audience oriented, the interests behind building a strong identifiable identity could be “easing the flow of goods into the market... by investing

commodities with meaning through symbolic processes” (Grainge 2007: 23). This is performed by brands by “transforming the generic into the brand-specific” (Klein 2009: 20), an intention that would, consequently, lie underneath the term “Cannes’ film”. In sum, I find it practical to think of film festivals as brands, not only to investigate their publicity but also to explore production and reception, given that brands “animate certain specific kinds of industrial and textual practice” (Grainge 2007: 506) in order to build deep relationships with the consumer (Grainge 2007: 627); once more, this is an argument that could well be applied to film genres. While Cannes does not produce products it has been said to animate certain practices; moreover, today industrial production is widely dislocated so that “corporations produce brands, not products” (Klein 2009: 347).

## **Conclusions**

If we consider the Festival de Cannes as an event where agents from different fields compete we may better understand how and why filmmakers, producers, or film critics compete within each of their groups, and with their peers, for the cultural capital at stake in each of their fields. But then when we focus on the festival as a social universe we can better understand how and why it generates dispositions which are misrecognised as arbitrary. Finally, putting the emphasis on the Cannes’ brand identity we can relate the practices and discourses of Cannes’ network agents to more direct profits. These three perspectives emanate from a reading of Bourdieu, whom, as we have seen, integrates these elements in his theories. I already explained in my introduction why I consider that Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award is a particularly relevant object of study, but let’s sum up how I address it in this thesis by following my framework and methodology. In this thesis I will be asking, first, how awarding decisions result from event dynamics and what meaning they acquire as the result of such dynamics. Second, to what extent do the discourses of festival participants regarding screenplay award-winning

films become attached to those films, signalling shared dispositions within and beyond the event. And finally what brand values does this award carry, and how does the Best Screenplay Award contribute to the Festival de Cannes' euphemised forms of publicity. These three questions are not answered in this order but addressed transversely in all my case studies, in as much as some points emerge more strongly in certain cases than in others. For instance, in my first case study I am mostly understanding the influence of the particular context of the 2014 festival in the screenplay awarding decision, while in my last case I am more interested in the transportability of Cannes' dispositions around the world. Nevertheless, my method always relies on understanding that Cannes is ruled by the principles that govern the field of cultural production and the art market as explained by Bourdieu.

According to Bourdieu, habitus is "a system of durable, transportable dispositions" which function "as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends" (1990: 53), and yet, it is aiming at ends. Therefore, when habitus is ruling one's practice (which can be the production of works but also evaluating or commenting those works) one does not need to be conscious about the ends this serves, nor does one need to be conscious that one's outcomes emerge from a set of principles which are not "natural" but shared social constructions. Actually, when we talk of habitus, it is precisely because the principles appear objective, "natural" and unrelated to ends that they are durable and transportable. Therefore, if there was a shared ideology effectively producing cinema cultures around Cannes, the dispositions present at the festival should be taken as objective and natural (not related to ends) by the social subjects who configure this festival. But more interestingly, a habitus is only shared by those who belong in the same social class or social group, so a study of practices within and beyond the festival may illuminate the scope of Cannes' cinema culture. In studying the practices of agents at the festival

I aim to gain knowledge of those dispositions, but in analysing film reception beyond the festival I assess the transportability of such Cannes' dispositions. For instance, with this research we can better understand whether the "authenticity" national cinemas has become an objective value and, if so, where it comes from. I aim to make similar contributions regarding the charismatic ideology of the author and the value of novelty and discovery. If the principles governing the practices of film criticism change from country to country, or if they lose their appearance of objectivity as we move away from Cannes, we could find the limits of the field, or tensions within the field. On the contrary, if we find no relevant change in critical discourses within and beyond the festival, or in and beyond France, we could argue that Cannes' principles emerge from and become reified through a vast network, of which Cannes could even be considered a mere delegate/representative.

As to my method, since "no approach to meaning-making and effects avoids doing textual analysis of something ... to study meaning-making, scholars have to interpret" (Staiger 2005: 13). I can only state upfront how I interpret sources. What I do is "place emphasis on the use-value, exchange-value, and *symbolic value* of films" (Mathijs 2011: 16, my emphasis) for the social agents studied. These have been limited to the most visible agents in the fields of film production and film reception gathered *at* and *around* Cannes, as well as Cannes most important institutional members (which include, albeit temporarily, each year's jury members). Finally, I am only interested in their public practices and statements because my research on Cannes' Best Screenplay Award wants to contribute to our understanding of how Cannes' symbolic values are sustained, and for whose interest.



## Chapter 2

### Field Agents Negotiating the Palmarès:

#### The Best Screenplay Award 2013 for *A Touch of Sin* (Jia Zhangke)

I attended the 2013 Festival de Cannes to better understand the interactions among social agents at the Festival de Cannes' event. On the one hand, this study should help us understand the social construction of the contemporary Festival de Cannes; on the other hand, it brings to the fore the particularities of that year's event. My aim is to better understand awarding decisions as the highest consecration moment of the annual event developing from Janet Harbord's idea that the tensions that cut through the time-event are fundamental to understand the meaning of film festivals (2011 and 2016). Accordingly, I will read the decision to give the 2013 Best Screenplay Award to the film *A Touch of Sin* (Jia Zhangke) in relation to the design of the whole 2013 Cannes' palmarès and the augmented interests to promote the "diversity" of cinema at Cannes, which was poignant at the 2013 event. That is, the award does not just result from the textual characteristics or virtues of the text but from the festival's context and the relationships among top-positioned social agents at Cannes. Through an analysis of the public statements of those occupying top hierarchy positions at the Festival de Cannes in 2013 - from stars to producers, from the festival's art director to film directors with films in The Competition - I aim to understand their struggles and their cooperation in defining "field positions" and rules; moreover I analyse awarding decisions in this light.

This case study complicates Daniel Dayan's ([2000] 2013) claims on the social construction of the Sundance Film Festival and Emmanuelle Ethis' 2001 analysis on the sociological dimension of the Festival de Cannes. Following the theoretical work of Bourdieu, we could understand the Festival de Cannes' event as a social space where field agents are simultaneously interested in reinforcing their individual positions and the

overall prestige of the field. According to Bourdieu one has to understand any “social space as a field, that is, both as a field of forces, whose necessity is imposed on agents who are engaged in it, and as a field of struggles within which agents confront each other” ([1996] 2012: 32). Accordingly, there are field forces imposed similarly onto all of Cannes’ social agents and there is a power struggle among them and the combination of these two factors determines their practices and public statements. While this would be true for every Festival de Cannes, when I attended the 2013 event I found that the issues raised there *at that moment* were of major importance in order to understand both the forces equally governing them all and the struggles among them. Basically, I conducted somewhat sociological research on the Cannes 2013 event and several tensions emerged: on the one hand between shared and individual interests, on the other hand between general Festival de Cannes’ concerns and 2013-specific concerns. Since the object of this analysis was the practices of Cannes’ top-positioned agents, my role was purely observation research. That is, even though I attended the festival, I could not really be considered a participant observer, because my presence could not have any impact on the behaviour of the group studied. Moreover, I follow Bourdieu, who also assumes, in general, that his observation and analysis does not change the behaviours of those studied; so my research method was not participant-observation.

In any case, this needs a bit more disentangling. As I introduced in my framework, the Festival de Cannes does not sell tickets for its screenings; one has to apply for a festival-pass and may or may not be given one. Such passes are hierarchically organised and in 2013 I was granted a cinephile-pass. This pass positions the visitant outside the network of professionals, be they film industry or media professionals, as it tags the attendee as a cinephile. It only grants access to a few theatres and no access is permitted to professional areas. Accordingly, I was not regarded as someone invested in the festival, sharing or negotiating interests within the Festival de Cannes’ network; instead I was there for pleasure

(cinephile) and not for work (film industry, film critics, media commentators, and so on). That is, while to an extent I shared the physical space, I did not share the social space of the social agents I was studying: the jury and The Competition film professionals. They stand at the other end of the Cannes' field hierarchy, being the most important participants at the festival each year. Therefore, in studying them I can clearly argue that mine was not a participant observation method. My case study analyses the impact of the event's field forces in awarding decisions, and I certainly had no influence on those. I did have, however, access to the public statements and practices of the social agents at the 2013 Festival de Cannes, and that is the focus of my study. My sources are the festival's dailies, Cannes' TV and the festival's website.<sup>20</sup>

It is important to note that in this chapter I focus on the connections between the festival's institution, the jury and the highest members of the Festival de Cannes' hierarchy. This is not because I believe that meaning emerges from them or relies on them, but because it is a starting point for my thesis' research. In other chapters I will approach Cannes from other complementary angles in order to gain wider and deeper knowledge of the construction of meaning and symbolic capital around the Cannes' Best Screenplay Award and the films receiving this award. Throughout my thesis I will be arguing that meaning and value are generated and reinforced by *all* the Cannes' guests and commentators who *make use of* and *reinforce* the Festival de Cannes' prestige. According to Bourdieu "classes exist in some sense in a state of virtuality, not as something given but as something *to be done*" (Bourdieu 1998a:12, my emphasis); therefore, it is important to understand how hierarchies and symbolic capital are created and re-created at the Festival de Cannes. However, my first approach focuses on the highest classes of the Festival de

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<sup>20</sup> Some of the sources I used could be considered "festival's ephemera" (Burgess and Kredell, 2016), so even if I reference major industry diaries such as *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Screen* or *Film Français* my sources have been the dailies they distribute at the Festival de Cannes and that is why I refer to them as Cannes' dailies. I have eluded adding "my trans." in-text when the source is not originally in English. Often, especially regarding videos in *festival-cannes.com/eng* I work with the English version of the website and the videos (that is from *festival-cannes.com/eng*).

Cannes' social space. I assume, following Bourdieu, that social relations and social classes are neither fixed nor immutable so the approach taken in this chapter is not the only one pertinent.

For a series of methodological reasons, I decided to begin with a study of the relationships among agents occupying top field positions: jury members, the festival's art director and professionals with films in The Competition. First, my project investigates the value and meaning of a Cannes' award, which is chosen by the jury among the films in The Competition; that is, in principle, they are more closely connected to those films and awards than other members in the Cannes' network. However, while juries are in charge of deciding who wins each year, the festival's art director is in charge of putting together both the jury and the films in The Competition each year. Also, these Cannes' agents are the focus of much attention and prestige and they must be aware of their role in the staging of the festival. That is, I was interested in those practices that are part of the film festival as an event (a staged event in Harbord terms) such as ceremonies and press conferences, where their actions could be deemed more explicitly *performative*. When I say performative I mean, first, that their actions are meeting expectations; second, that I am not interested in the conversations held behind closed doors, but on the "staged" resulting practices. I am not trying to unpack the "real" motifs regarding why one film won instead of others, I am interested in the impact that one film winning instead of another could have on the accumulation of cultural capital around films, people or the festival itself. Of course, one could claim against my method that I conducted no interviews, but I chose not to for a series of reasons. First, my thesis is concerned with the public performances of meaning and value. Second, as Peter Bosma made clear in his book *Short Cuts: Curating for Cinemas, Festivals, Archives* (2015) interviews would have, probably, not provided any shocking revelation.

In sum, I have studied how social agents represented publicly their common and individual interests at the 2013 Festival de Cannes. I understand that I am analysing *interested actions and statements*, which

are not necessarily consciously aimed at ends but serving ends. I am not questioning Bourdieu's definition of social agents or social dynamics, but assuming that he is right when he claims that one can learn about the rules of the game, field positions and field dispositions through the visible actions of field agents. In the ten days I stayed at Cannes I collected all the festival's dailies, I watched all the Cannes' TV interviews and press conferences and I observed the physical structuring of the social space to gain a better understanding of the field forces at play at the 2013 event.

### **Field Positions: Frémaux, Spielberg and Weinstein**

Each year, The Competition is composed of the twenty two films in contest for the Palme d'Or (and six other lesser awards).<sup>21</sup> Although films presented in The Competition are not *officially* representing their countries, because they are not selected by national film boards and they are not adjusted to national quotas, they are still often taken as representatives of their national cinemas. As I have already suggested, the brochures produced by the Festival de Cannes attach nationality to films, if nothing else, because each film is accompanied by the flags of its "producing countries". Throughout the thesis, we will see that the nationality of a film or the nationality of a guest is an important matter at Cannes, and in this chapter we will see that in 2013 this was used to claim the presence of diversity at the heart of the festival.

I started finding claims of internationality and diversity already in reference to the composition of that year's jury panel, which featured: Steven Spielberg, Vidya Balan, Naomi Kawase, Nicole Kidman, Christian Mungiu, Daniel Auteuil, Ang Lee, Christoph Waltz, and Lynne Ramsay. Each year, on the first day of the festival, the jury of The Competition is interviewed by Cannes' TV and the institution hosts a press conference

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<sup>21</sup> There is also the Camera d'Or award which can fall on any first or second feature film, whether in The Competition or in the Un Certain Regard category. At Cannes Festival there are other film contests such as Cannes Short Films, or Un Certain Regard, but these gather less media attention and less cultural capital is attached to them.

with them (which is broadcasted at the festival and remains available online on the festival's website for a number of years). The jury is always composed of prestigious professionals from different parts of the world so that was not a peculiarity of the 2013 jury. However, the 2013 jury was repeatedly introduced by institutional speakers and media with a highlight on their many different national origins and both the members of the jury themselves and the press reinforced this idea. The repeated claim was that, since they come from different countries they come from different contexts, and they kept addressing the potential difficulties that could emerge in reaching consensual awarding decisions because of this. I do not fully agree with that claim, because the practices and statements analysed signal that they are closer than they may appear at first glance.

First, they are all prestigious members of the film industries. Therefore as they stated in the Jury's 2013 Press Conference, even if they do not hold the same power, prestige or rely on the same production or commercial circuits, they "all share the same passion for cinema" (Balan 0:09, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*) or "speak a common language, cinema" (Spielberg 0:08, *ibid.*). That is, despite their national origins they share a passion and a language because they are members of the same field,<sup>22</sup> all of them occupying top positions. On top of that, Mungiu, Ramsay, Waltz, Spielberg and Kawase had *all* received awards at Cannes before, and at the opening Jury's Press Conference they all address the festival as representing a cornerstone in their careers. For instance, at that press conference, Ramsay declares that she started her career at Cannes as a student and that they had all been there often with their films. Kawase declared that "the Festival de Cannes is an opportunity to *talk together*" (*ibid.* 0:08, my emphasis). Therefore they acknowledge that they share a background, and, potentially, they are all invested in reinforcing the prestige of the festival. In sum, they recognise that they probably act under somewhat similar field of forces. First, this brings to question the alleged diversity of the jury panel. In this line, at the

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<sup>22</sup>Like a force field, a social space operates semi-autonomously (Thompson: 70) and yet it extremely difficult to establish field and subfield boundaries (*ibid.*: 78).

same press conference, Kidman highlighted that she accepted the festival's invitation because she wanted to "be part of *this* group" (ibid. 0:17); this enables us to argue that they may share certain group-belonging dispositions. As we can see, even a star such as Nicole Kidman makes claims which simultaneously reinforce her own status and the prestige of the festival. Second, since Lee claimed that "sometimes it is important *to contribute* and be part of the community" (ibid. 0:17) we can observe another important shared disposition, that of promoting the Festival de Cannes.

In that same press conference all jury members addressed the festival as the most relevant platform in the cinema industry, as Kawase claimed: "I believe that this festival can truly *send messages* to the rest of the world" (ibid. 0:08, my emphasis). Therefore, they view their decision *as a message*, and they address this message as sent from Cannes to the world, admitting their delegate position. According to Lee, also from the same press conference, the festival is an *artistically* driven event, focused on *highbrow* and *auteur* cinema. In using those words the filmmaker was acknowledging that the jury arrives at the festival bearing certain ideas as to what "types" of films belong there. Moreover, he was describing those films with some of the most important terms which, according to Bourdieu, and as we saw in the thesis' framework, rule the field of cultural production and the art market. Similarly, in the words of Auteuil,

when I was asked I went to the net to see what various films had won the Palme d'Or, and I was struck too by the fact that I had seen a lot of these films. These films in fact had shaped *my taste* as a spectator, and I saw this as a great opportunity to continue this tradition, *to discover* (ibid.0:20, my emphasis).

Even if only because they belong in the same social space - the Festival de Cannes - they would, according to Bourdieu, already share dispositions and taste. However, the need to reach an agreement (at least publicly) is further reinforced by the fact that their choice is acknowledged

from the start as *a message* which must continue the Festival de Cannes' tradition of auteurs, highbrow cinema, and, very importantly, *discovery*.

Accordingly, in the One-on-one Interview each of them gave for Cannes' TV, also before the Opening Ceremony, Mungiu declared he was "Curious to be surprised" and looking for "freshness, to see things which are new" (consulted in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). We already saw in my framework chapter Bourdieu's claims on the relation uses that the art market makes of the author and the notion of discovery, and these jury members address similar notions when reflecting about Cannes. Therefore, not only are they inclined to share taste assumptions because of their field positions at Cannes and in the cinema industry, but they also have a shared and clear idea of what constitutes a potential award-winning film: a film complying with the conditions of auteurism and discovery which, as Bourdieu explains, are two sides of the same principle governing the art market (as seen in my framework chapter). In conclusion, even if one could claim that they come from different contexts, because they all have different national origins, jury members are all acting as delegates of the Festival de Cannes. According to Bourdieu, delegates do not speak their words but the words of their institutions (1991:107). In sum, as Mungiu states in that same interview "Cannes is a lot about meetings, with people who share the same passion" (*ibid.*), therefore it should not be surprising to find strong shared dispositions and maybe also shared interests.

To be part of the Cannes' jury one has to be invited by its art director, Thierry Frémaux; then, one has to accept "the honour". I contend that relations between jury members and the Festival de Cannes' institution are established following kinship rules, as described by Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu's kinship relations, the members of the highest social classes do not interact for directly political or economic interests; instead they accumulate symbolic capital through their relations (which may, certainly, be converted to those other forms of capital). In this light, "the worlds I am going to describe have in common the fact that they create the objective conditions for social agents to have an interest in



‘disinterestedness’ which seems paradoxical” (Bourdieu 1998a: 93). In consequence, as Bourdieu explains, it seems paradoxical but it is an honour to be invited to be part of the Cannes’ jury, as they all claim, precisely because there appear to be *no interests at stake*, and it is on the basis of that apparent “disinterestedness” that it becomes an honour (as English 2005 explains). Nonetheless, jury members and especially the president of the jury (as his is the greatest of those honours), should “noblesse oblige” (Bourdieu 1998a: 90-96): know how, or find a way, to give back to the institution, for instance, speaking highly about the festival and its films, something they often do.

In this light, we shall return to the press conference, where at one point the jurors were asked to compare the Oscars’ race to the Festival de Cannes. Both Lee and Spielberg described the former as a field ruled by interest, whilst the competitive drive of the latter was rendered unimportant by both members of the jury. In doing this, they were reinforcing the perception that Cannes’ social space remains “disinterested”. Thereby, they are already returning the honour bestowed by the festival because they contribute by defining the festival as a place for auteurs and discovery, that is, a place for art, rather than a political or economic market place, thus reinforcing the festival’s cultural capital. It is important to note that when one studies the practices of social agents following Bourdieu, one does not assume that they act following conscious strategies but, nonetheless, their acts serve their interests and the interests of their field. In this light, I propose that Frémaux invited Spielberg to preside over the jury in 2013 because that year the defence of the interests of the European audio visual industries was of major importance to the Festival de Cannes. To an extent, inviting a Hollywood icon (and tycoon) could reinforce the idea that Cannes is ruled by “purely artistic” interests, and not governed by political or economic interests. That is, since the festival was, as we are about to see, actually invested in the interests of the European audio visual industries, inviting Spielberg could serve to perform an act of “disinterestedness”.

On top of that, when honoured with a gift, a member of the high social classes knows that he/she is expected to counter gift (Bourdieu 1998a: 92). The importance of the counter gift is that it must not be made explicit if it is to reinforce the relations of “disinterestedness” which are fundamental in the rules of the art market, and between agents of the highest social classes. Bourdieu asked himself: “why must the counter gift be deferred and different? And I showed that the interval had the function of creating a screen between the gift and the counter gift and allowing two perfectly symmetrical acts to appear as unique and unrelated acts” (1998a: 94). In this light, being asked to preside over the prestigious Cannes’ jury could be considered a gift by Frémaux to Spielberg, and awarding certain films instead of others could be seen as counter gifting. However, the symmetry does not need to be so obvious because these two agents, and many others, are connected in a complex network and will relate to each other more than once throughout their careers, as we will continue investigating in the next case study. However, on that basis it should be no surprise to find that the relations between the agents I study in this chapter, all members of the highest spheres of the Festival de Cannes, are not made explicit, even if these are nonetheless interested. In sum, “rendering explicit brings about a destructive alteration when the entire logic of the universe rendered explicit rests on *the taboo of rendering it explicit*” (Bourdieu 1998a: 113, my emphasis),<sup>23</sup> and this is what happens with interests other than those which are “purely” artistic at Cannes.

In consequence, let us focus on the interests and disinterests that surfaced in 2013 that, nevertheless, signal longstanding relationships among Cannes’ top positioned agents. I now want to draw attention to the field position and the public statements of another important 2013 Cannes’ guest: Harvey Weinstein. He is head of The Weinstein Company,

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Bosma conducted interviews and concluded that juries’ “vow of silence” (noblesse oblige) was stronger than his research acuteness (2015). That is not to say that one could not interpret, find nuances of meaning or read between the lines if the chosen research method was by interview. As a matter of fact, that is what I am doing in this chapter, but by using their public statements.

a major player in the North American “independent cinema industry”.<sup>24</sup> Peter Biskind has studied how Weinstein’s former company, Miramax, and the Sundance festival re-invented the independent cinema scene, market, style, and field (2004). I am certainly not problematising the term independent, nor Weinstein’s role regarding independent cinema, but I would like to highlight that The Weinstein Company is a very important production company, as well as a big sales agent and distributor. It is dominant in the US independent film industry and in the US film distribution market, often handling Cannes’ films in that territory, and it is also one of the most important content providers of The Competition films.

At the 66<sup>th</sup> Cannes Festival, Weinstein had three titles competing for the Palme d’Or, so, as Weinstein declared, Nicole Kidman “would only have to choose which Weinstein film to award” (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013: 18).<sup>25</sup> Harvey Weinstein tends to be unapologetic about his power and, since he was at Cannes presenting his film in The Competition while simultaneously developing and promoting new projects, particularly one starring Nicole Kidman,<sup>26</sup> his joke could bear a great deal of cynical truth; it would seem like he was somehow breaking the rule of not rendering gifts and counter gifts explicitly, but, of course, it was only a joke. What is more important is to understand that there are complex and longstanding relationships among these agents which have an impact on the films selected for The Competition and, possibly, also on the films receiving awards. Accordingly, Thierry Frémaux recognized that “when Harvey Weinstein calls me-I don’t know if I sleep or where he is- we

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<sup>24</sup> De Valck (2007) and Perren (2012), among others, explain the commercial success of Miramax in the nineties and how it relates to film festivals such as Cannes.

<sup>25</sup> For the sake of clarity and consistency I have chosen not to cite authors of film comments and reviews in-text. Often, particularly in chapter 2 and 3 the quote comes from an interview and the statement that I have considered significant is that of the interviewed so I identify that person in-text. Plus, the authors of reviews and comments are only sometimes included in the journalistic sources considered, and this would have complicated the listing of sources in the Works Cited-Newspapers page and, more importantly, the reading and the cross-referencing.

<sup>26</sup> The film in question is Olivier Dahan’s *Grace* (2014), and it surfaced some very interesting tensions between the US and the French cinema industries and business models, and the festival’s position regarding those.

talk whenever" (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2013: 81).<sup>27</sup> In stating this, the festival's director is addressing the bonds that make up the Cannes' network; he was also reinforcing, acknowledging and building his good relationship with Weinstein and confirming the producer's position at Cannes. In sum, as Weinstein's joke surfaces, the festival's apparent disinterestedness and certain market interests are often difficult to reconcile. For instance, at Cannes 2013 Kidman was carrying out her jury duties and her film project duties, watching films but also attending cocktail parties and press conferences for her upcoming film (this is a phenomenon I analyse in the next chapter in relation to its premiere at Cannes 2014). As can be seen, the Festival de Cannes' social space results from a complex series of intertwined relations where economic capital and cultural capital merge; also, as is generally the case in the art market, at Cannes economic interests must be concealed behind disinterestedness. Moreover, I argue that, among the top members of the cinema industries gathered at Cannes, social relations are mostly ruled by kinship, as explained by Bourdieu.

However, the matter gets more complicated because the European cinema industries perceived themselves to be endangered in 2013 and they used the Festival de Cannes to defend their interests. I argue that, as a result of this, the most "disinterested" value the 2013 Festival de Cannes defended was cinema's diversity. As much as the previous could be true for any of the late Festival de Cannes, we have already seen how in that year the term diversity seemed to acquire even more relevance and we are about to see that this was so because of the cultural exception debate. First, not only the jury but also The Competition was composed of an, *allegedly*, heterodox diversity of cinemas. Accordingly, there were six French films, five US films, and films from a collection of other nationalities; and Cannes' dailies (*Screen, The Hollywood Reporter, Le Film Français*, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2013) as well as the field agents studied and read that year's event in terms of national cinemas, either

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<sup>27</sup> The text is like this, so it comes either from a conversation or a translation.

competing or gathering together. That is, despite the fact the Festival de Cannes stopped building The Competition in terms of national cinemas in 1970, the idea proves to still be operating at the festival; in 2013 it was even described as "A France-US match?" (*Cannes Soleil*, May 15<sup>th</sup> 2013: 10). While the statement comes from a film critic, and is thus not my object of analysis in this chapter, I contend that the same tension was present among the agents occupying the highest field positions.<sup>28</sup>

In this light, the jury's president, Spielberg, said in the Jury's Press Conference:

I look at festivals *not as a competition* but as an opportunity to boost all *the different things* that so many cultures get to say about *their own lives* and each other, and the entire world comes together here at Cannes and I think it is an extraordinary *global* cultural event (0:11, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*, my emphasis)

So Spielberg was, even before watching the films, already describing the festival as a celebration of *difference* and, very importantly, as an event which can send messages out to the world because it is *global*. According to his words "difference" and "global" meant a collection of nationalities at Cannes 2013 (a matter that needs careful consideration and which I review in my next section). I argue that with this claim Spielberg was reinforcing his own personal position, as a "Hollywood" icon, in relation to the "French" film festival, while, at the same time, counter gifting the festival because *he* was recognising and reinforcing its prestige. He is one of the most iconic filmmakers and producers in the Hollywood industry and it was in this year, and no other, that he was the president of the Cannes' jury. Spielberg found an opening strategy to disinterestedly return the honour, by highlighting the importance for cinema of *what cultures have to say about their own lives*, a

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<sup>28</sup> I only study highly institutionalized film criticism so these reviews emerge primarily from the cultural mediation institution. Also, the traceability and authorial ascription of newspaper sources is specified in the works cited- newspapers pages.

value which could, potentially, conflict with Hollywood's global cinema distribution; and that is why it seems particularly relevant that it was Spielberg leading the jury that year and that he made several claims defending diversity throughout the festival.

Weinstein also made claims in reference to diversity and/or cultural difference: "any great success is made by underlying its *difference*... The most important issue is to preserve the cultural environment of films, because *it is good for business* also" (*Ecran Total*, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013: 2, my emphasis). While I will mostly problematise the use of the term diversity, following Bourdieu's notion of "euphemism" and the taboo of rendering economic or political interests explicit, we can see that Weinstein does not conceal the relationship between cultural and economic forms of capital. His statement is very significant because it signals that diversity, which is a symbolic value, intertwines with economic interests, sometimes consciously and/or overtly, but most of the time euphemistically, or in a deferred sense. Since, in any case, "the agents engaged in an economy of symbolic exchanges expend a considerable part of their energy elaborating these euphemisms" (Bourdieu 1998a: 99), I argue that *diversity* was a euphemism serving to conceal the relations between symbolic and economic forms of capital at Cannes 2013. Primarily, Cannes' agents were invested in the diversity euphemism because it was being used by the European audio visual industries to defend their position in relation to the TTIP negotiations. Secondly, they used this euphemism because diversity is an extensively used term in relation to cinema and culture, which many film scholars have already problematised, often pointing out the tensions and biases behind its use (as we are about to see).

### **Rule number one of the game: "to promote diversity"**

That diversity can only enrich the festival is a claim the organisers

make on their webpage, and it is a longstanding value of the festival, so, why am I assigning it so much importance for the understanding of the 2013 event? In May 2013 the European Union and the United States were starting the negotiation of a new bilateral trade framework, called the TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership). This new framework, which is, up to this date, still not thoroughly defined, aims to eliminate custom duties between the EU and the US, and it could affect many economic sectors. While the 2013 Festival de Cannes was being held it was still uncertain whether the audio visual industries would be included in this new trade framework, or if these industries would remain under their well-known protectionist regulations. A short time after the festival ended it was agreed that the economic framework for audio visual services and products was not going to change, that is, it was to remain protected.

From my analysis of the public statements of the higher Cannes' social classes, I contend that the 2013 festival was strategically used to defend the cultural exception. From studying the acts and statements of the most visible and prestigious field agents at Cannes 2013, such as Spielberg, Frémaux, and Weinstein, among others, it emerges that Cannes - both as an institution and as a socially constructed field - was actively defending the symbolic value of "the cultural exception". On the basis that public discussions and comments were repeatedly filled with references to the EU-US negotiation and allegations in favour of the cultural exception, I argue that the cultural exception was defended as a symbolic value which concealed the political and economic interests of the classes analysed in this study. Basically, the European audio visual industries claimed, as they generally do, that the US industries should not be allowed to freely compete against them because cinema has a role and a meaning beyond economics. In 2013 they synthesised this idea in a signed petition

entitled *The Cultural Exception is Non-negotiable* which is available online (in *petition.org*) and it alleged that the role of the audio visual industries is to defend “the diversity of its [Europe's] peoples and cultures”. Significantly enough, at Cannes “the Official Selection serves to highlight the diversity of cinematic creation” (as explained by Frémaux in *festival-cannes.com/eng*) and that is why I argue that the constant use of the term diversity was the main euphemism used to conceal the *interests* of the European audio visual industry. Diversity stood up for the cultural exception, so that it could be supported without having to be named, therefore an apparently neutral term was used because the festival's cultural capital demands that it remains somehow *disinterested* in economic negotiations.

However, in order to understand the importance and the influence of the EU-US negotiations it is necessary to explain in more detail what was at stake. Before sitting at the table to negotiate the terms of the TTIP trade agreement (or partnership as they call it), the two political entities first had to agree on which economic sectors they were bringing to the table and which were to remain within their former trading framework. What the European audio visual industries called “the cultural exception petition”, or “the petition”, was a document signed by many members of those industries, and other supporters, demanding that the audio visual industries should not fall under new free trade agreements with the US (*Ecran Total*, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013: 2 and 9). The idea that the audio visual industries are not like other industries, thus, that they constitute an *exception*, is, as we know, based on the idea that “20 years ago, thanks to the cultural exception that emerged from the GATS agreement battle, creation and linguistic *diversity* were granted the right to keep on benefiting from rules aimed at protecting and supporting them” (in *petititon.org*). There are many studies of the GATS agreement (Messerlin et al. 2003, or Steven



2003) and it is not the object of my thesis to discuss the political and economic framework in which the European audio visual industries develop. I am only trying to explain the particularities of the 2013 Cannes' social space and the strategic use of the term diversity in that particular context. In sum, the GATS were endangered and the European audio visual industries were defending them with the petition which was, at the time of the 2013 Festival de Cannes, open and still adding supporting signatures; its defenders were, actually, campaigning at the festival.

The name of the signed document is *The Cultural Exception is Non-negotiable!* and its main argument is that "culture comes before economy" (Joao Barroso, the president of the EU in 2013, quoted in "The Petition" consulted in *petition.org*). According to the EU's Commissaire of Culture in 2013, the purpose of defending the cultural exception is to preserve "current national measures of market regulation and support" (words of Androulla Vassiliou, quoted in *Ecran Total*, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013: 9). The audio visual industries, in a wide sense, is a framework that includes everything from the production of TV spots to sound effects studios, from location managers to catering services or post-production software; however, these were not simply protected because customs duties and other similar measures could be, as Weinstein claimed, "good for the business". Instead, the allegation is that the audio visual industries shield especially significant *cultural value* for the countries and regions of the EU, because they perform and represent identity and diversity. That is, the audio visual industries constitute an exception because of their capacity to protect and generate symbolic capital in the forms of identity and diversity, and not because they represent an important, but maybe not sufficiently competitive, economic sector.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> I am stressing the economic turn of The Petition, not because I consider it more important than the cultural one, but because it is the side that remained concealed.

Therefore, it is important, as Thomas Elsaesser proposed, to study the power-structures at play behind the word “diversity” (2005: 50), because this term can conceal interesting relations between symbolic and economic, or political, capital. Another matter is, of course, that diversity, as it was used at Cannes 2013, is a problematic term because “to view the world as a collection of nations (as in the United Nations) is to marginalize, if not deny, the possibility of other ways of organizing the world” (Dennison S. 2006: 6). For example, in The Competition there was not a single film directed by a woman, thus, gender diversity was not present.<sup>30</sup> The festival’s art director claimed that this particularity was “a sad reflection of the current production industry” (Frémaux quoted in *The Hollywood Reporter*, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2013: 81), denying any responsibility in the blatant misrepresentation; but they, nonetheless celebrated *their role* in representing diversity.

While the Cannes’ organisers neglected some forms of diversity they celebrated others. However, the question may not be why were there no films directed by women, but why was Cannes’ diversity not brought in to question because of that? Similarly, as we have seen, films in The Competition are expected to fulfil certain conditions, such as representing author cinema, or highbrow cinema, and this neglects many other cinematic possibilities, and could be interpreted as representing the opposite of diversity (a major issue in this thesis). The 2013 Festival de Cannes promoted diversity as a collection of nations and, while it is important to bear

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<sup>30</sup> Not only was there no film in the Competition directed by a woman, but there were also certain problems with the representation of female characters in many of the films in the Competition. The Palme d’Or winner was accused of indulging in long sex scenes to please the male gaze. A similar case could be made regarding the film by François Ozon, *Jeune et Jolie*. In *Le Passé*, the protagonist woman necessitates that her ex-husband comes to solve her family problems. In *Like Father, Like Son* the two mothers are denied any agency in the nucleus of their own families and their dilemma is cast below that of the fathers (as can be seen in the title). This is by no means an insight into gender representation at Cannes 2013, which I would find very interesting. It is only a review of what the terms diversity meant, and did not mean, at the 66<sup>th</sup> Cannes Festival.

in mind that this is only one of the many possible definitions of this term, it is even more important to recall that *this was the definition that interested* the European audio visual industries.

I argue that there was a close relationship between the definition of diversity in its defence of the cultural exception and the concept of diversity performed by the Festival de Cannes. This was the case because diversity was defined and used at the festival in line with the power structures at play in the European audio visual industries. Festival agents, in using the same notion of diversity as the European audio visual industries, were defending their claim even when they did not do it in the open. As a result of this, Cannes' high social classes, from jury members to the major European or even US producers, from author-filmmakers to the festival's director, were simultaneously reinforcing the position of the European audio visual industries and the position of the festival with their claims. Moreover, they were also simultaneously acknowledging and building the rules of the game each time they stated that cinema's diversity means a collection of nations and that it is good because it generates symbolic capital (concealing its economic turn).

That the cultural exception alibi is both economic and a discourse on the politics of representation is certainly nothing new, but it was of major importance in 2013. According to Luisa Rivi, "on the one hand, cinema engages with the politics of cultural production, and thus offers the possibility to map a new Europe through industrial practice, media regulations and specific film policies, on the other hand, it uniquely provides *images* for a changed European *imaginary*" (2007:2, my emphasis) and that was exactly what the most important Cannes' field agents were defending. However, as Elsaesser contended in his seminal essay *Double Occupancy* (2005), it is very difficult to talk about either a European production context or a European imaginary. For

instance, a film like *Le Passé* (Asghar Farhadi 2013) exemplifies some of the issues that Elsaesser addressed with the term “double occupancy”. It is a France, Italy and Iran co-production, shot in Paris with many French stars and characters, with an Iranian protagonist and directed by an Iranian filmmaker; so it brings to the fore the difficulties in speaking of European cinema without considering non-European influences. This, of course, is nothing new, since as Dina Iordanova pointed out “the fluid interactions and narrative confluences that take place with the ‘interstices’ of transnational film festivals” (2010:15) require a flexible approach, an approach that could have brought to question some of the claims that supported the cultural exception.

In *Double Occupancy*, Elsaesser dissects the meaning of *diversity* and its implications for European identity and cinema, explaining that “the progressive institutions in the member-states now re-label themselves as promoting (and institutionalizing) ‘diversity’” (2005: 49); a claim that in 2013 appears as poignant as ever. Elsaesser criticises the institutional promotion of diversity from different perspectives, such as the complexities of European cinema’s double occupancy. Nevertheless, although it is very difficult to pin down what brings together European cinema, both the 2013 Festival de Cannes (like all European institutions), and the majority of its top positioned field agents, defended diversity in order to defend European cinema and, I argue, a particular cinema business model (mostly French and European).

In operating within the framework defined by the European institutions regarding nationality, cultural identity and diversity, the Festival de Cannes’ institution and Cannes’ high social classes contributed to make those interests seem objective.<sup>31</sup> If diversity is

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<sup>31</sup> As the petition says: “The Europe that we love worked hard to help make the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions come true. The Europe that we love further ratified this Convention together with 126 countries from around the world. The Europe that we love is admired

“good” in itself it has become an “objective” value, it is taken as natural and it ceases to be perceived as a social construction that serves certain interests. Accordingly, the cultural exception becomes good in itself and not because it serves the interests of some parties.

Nevertheless, as Rivi explains, Europe sustains agencies and mechanisms designed to implement collaboration among different member states, and so it promotes the idea that there is an internationally shared cultural heritage. But, at the same time, European institutions do so with the aim of promoting the diversity of individual national identities in Europe.<sup>32</sup> This is problematic because it stands on the basis of an “almost unanimous dismissal of co-production agreements as a threat to the existence of national cinemas” (2007:4). Accordingly, the cultural exception serves to protect the diversity of national cinema worldwide, while it simultaneously serves to protect and promote international co-production agreements. On the one hand, it unifies European production modes and a European imaginary against the stronger forces of the US audio visual industries. On the other hand, it claims to facilitate national cinema’s diversity, even though such national cinemas would need European funds and markets. None of these issues were raised at Cannes when the cultural exception or diversity were defended.

As much as the nationality of films was of major importance in order to present the festival as a colourful collection of nations, the national ascription of Cannes’ films is still problematic. We can say that it represented, as it generally does, a discursive meaning-making possibility rather than representing an intrinsic quality of the films. First, I found that at Cannes 2013 the nationality

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across the world because it initiated and supported this great initiative” (“The cultural exception is non-negotiable”, in *lapetition.be*).

<sup>32</sup> In her words: “European cultural discourse on diversity and collaboration among member states defends the importance of their different cultural identities”.

of a film could change, mainly because many films were international co-productions. For instance, the film *Heli* (Amat Escalante) is set in Mexico and was made mostly by Mexican talent, but it was co-produced by a Netherlands-based film company. In Cannes' dailies, in the institutional brochures, in the Cannes' TV interviews and at the Awarding Ceremony it was portrayed as a Mexican film; nonetheless, *Heli* appeared in the promotional pages and posters of the Netherlands' National Cinema Board. A "Mexican" film was used by the Netherlands' cinema board to promote *Netherlands' cinema*.

The same happened with several other films in The Competition in 2013, *Borgman* (Alex van Warmerdam) was considered a Dutch film although it was also co-produced by Belgian and Danish companies. The film *Grigris* (Mahamat Saleh Haroun) was considered Chadian although it had been produced with the support of a French company and European funds. The "Italian" film *La Grande Bellezza* (Paolo Sorrentino) is a French co-production; and so on. None of this is new in film festival theory (there are several analyses on the matter in De Valck et al. ed. 2016). Nevertheless, this phenomenon acquired a more relevant meaning at the 2013 Festival de Cannes because the nationality of films was what sustained the claims in favour of cinema's diversity.

Finally, the Best Screenplay award-winning film *A Touch of Sin* was promoted and received as a Chinese film; consequently, as we will see, the award provided recognition *for China*, even though it had been produced using Chinese, Korean and Japanese funds. Despite the difficulties in ascribing national identity to films, the matter was highly simplified at Cannes 2013 in order to render the festival a "highly visible setting in which film producing countries can showcase their cultural *identity*" (The International Village 2013

brochure: 3, my emphasis).<sup>33</sup> What this tells us is that national cinemas and national identities served the interests of national cinema boards and production companies, and, as we will see next, it also served the interest of the jury members and the Festival de Cannes' institution.

Curiously enough, when international co-production was acknowledged, as in the interview for Cannes TV presenting The Competition films *Un Château en Italie* (Valeria Bruni Tedeschi) or *Jimmy P. (Psychotherapy of a Plains Indian)* (Arnaud Desplechin), art and creativity were always rendered more important. In the first case, when the interviewer asks about the collaboration of actors from such different nationalities, the director explains that they as individuals shaped the film more than the complexities of the production. In the second case, the film is a France-US co-production, and the interviewer asks Benicio Del Toro if it had been important for him to act in a French film, to which he responded (*noblesse oblige*) "it is important to act with good people around you". Therefore, what makes a film a Cannes' film is the author and the actors, the artists, which adds, in Bourdieu's terms, to the field's artist persona *illusio* ([1996] 2012:167). Following similar lines to the art market *illusion*, none of the interviews presenting The Competition films made any reference to The Petition, and only the two mentioned above made a minimal reference to production; but of course, in all of them "authorship/art" was of major importance. What I am trying to bring to the fore is, first, that the engagement with The Petition was concealed in the majority of the discourses of the most relevant Cannes' agents, and in particular in the statements of "authors/artists". That is, when it surfaced it was mostly in the words of producers, or more "art dealer"-like figures, and this brings to the fore, once more, the efforts to maintain the separateness of cultural and economic

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<sup>33</sup> The International Village is a tribune for the exhibition of film embassies, of different national film commissions.

capital. Second, I want to highlight that even though it is necessary to understand the particularities that surround each Festival de Cannes, there are still values and meaning-making possibilities which surpass particular circumstances and this twofold identity-building strategy will be of major importance throughout the thesis.

However, many (most) film tycoons close deals for big budget feature projects at Cannes each year as they attend, simultaneously, the Film Market and the Festival. Not only Harvey Weinstein, or the president of Sony Pictures worldwide acquisitions, are involved in such deals, but even the jury's president: "Spielberg was closing deals at Cannes" (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2013: 34). The Film Market is attended by executives from the most important production and broadcasting companies of Europe, the US, and other regions, as well as presidents of many national film boards, and their standard schedule is a hectic succession of overlapping meetings and cocktails, because at the Festival de Cannes the business of making and trading films concentrates upon and moves millions of Euros and dollars. In sum, the festival and its cultural capital, and the market and its economic capital, come together at Cannes very particularly when we think of the interests and disinterestedness of the festival's top field positioned agents, who are often equally well-positioned in the international cinema businesses.

I have already introduced the fact that the films in The Competition are once again handled by a few companies.<sup>34</sup> Although they may be not as popular or as high profile as major

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<sup>34</sup> Some of the film projects or premieres taken to Cannes involve stars and millions of euros or dollars and often the promotional activities and market deals are handled by sales companies. Sales companies are, in principle, not producers of the film but they handle the rights for a percentage of the gain. Nonetheless, the deals are often closed before the making of the film, that is, they sometimes acquire the selling rights on the basis of a project, and therefore they somehow act as producers.



Hollywood studios, these companies and agencies co-produce, sell and distribute *practically all of the films* in The Competition. These companies included: Le Pacte, The Wild Bunch, Studiocanal, France 2 Cinema, Fortissimo Films, and Les Films du Losange (and most of them are French). This results in an imbricated relationship between the Festival de Cannes and those companies which control European cinema at Cannes, as well as most “non-European” films (when those are not US films). That is, it is often the case that even those films with setting, argument and talent from countries such as Mexico or Chad involve the participation of those few European companies. Certainly hierarchies tend to be pyramid-like, thus it is nothing new to claim that at Cannes the top field positions are mostly occupied by a few. Interestingly enough, even the film winning the second most important award in 2013, *Inside Llewyn Davis* (Joel and Ethan Cohen), which may appear to be a US film, had been co-produced by the French company Studio Canal. This is why I previously introduced the idea that there is one particular type of European cinema business model occupying the top positions of the Festival de Cannes. What is important is, following Bourdieu, to understand how the reinforcement of symbolic capital and the objectification of certain symbolic values may be serving the interests of the few agents who occupy the top positions in a field (1992:298), in this case the Festival de Cannes and/or the European audio visual industries. Accordingly, to what extent is the current audio visual trading framework, which is allegedly defending diversity, actually benefiting some cinema business models and not others? Moreover, to what extent does the Festival de Cannes and its awards serve the same ends?

Mike Wayne and others have signaled the fact that European cinema’s most prominent unifying feature is its common problems and needs, rather than its production or its representation of culture

(quoted in Trifonova 2002: xvi, and similarly in Elsaesser 2005). One of those problems is that there is a long and tense history of production, trade, and representation that has resulted in a framework which, according to some, favoured Hollywood studios' business in Europe (Ulf-Moller 2002). As a result of this, European cinema has been, and remains, on guard against the imperialism of Hollywood global cinema. This is performed economically through trade protectionism and the generalisation of a production model that strongly relies on state supported funding and the participation of broadcasting companies.<sup>35</sup> I argue that it is *this* production model, and the representation forms that it produces, that the cultural exception actually defends. For example, a film like the Palme d'Or winner *La Vie d'Adèle* (Abdellatif Kechiche) was partially subsidized by the French government and the Eurimages fund (dependent on the European Union), but it was also produced by private companies such as Scope Pictures, Vertigo Films' Genevieve Lemal and Andres Martin. Although European production companies are often privately owned they still depend on the umbrella that the cultural exception offers; meaning that their business models mix public and private resources. As a result of this, European companies in the business of producing those films benefit from the risk of their activity being reduced by government subsidies and trading protectionism.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, companies which may not be European, such as Weinstein's, may also indirectly benefit from the risk control provided by the current European production framework when they enter partnership agreements. Therefore, the cultural exception and the defence of national cinemas' diversity may probably be *not disinterested*; quite the contrary, we must question the extent to which it serves to protect one particular business model and the extent to which the cultural

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<sup>35</sup> This model is more or less shared across the different continental European producing countries.

<sup>36</sup> For example the ICAA in Spain does not demand to participate in the revenues generated by films.

capital attached to institutions such as the Festival de Cannes and certain modes of representation does the same.

In any case it is certain that the Festival de Cannes is hosted by a French institution so it may be tied to certain nationalistic agendas even if it is a “global” event. Although the cultural exception was defended by industry members all around Europe and beyond, the French National Cinema board had emerged as the cause's champion before the Festival and much more during it (*Le Film Français*, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013:11), and this institution is one of the most important partners and financiers of the Festival de Cannes. The French National Cinema Board profited, first, from the concentration of film financiers and talent from around the world at Cannes.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, these days the city of Cannes also attracts great media attention. Knowing those two facts, the French National Cinema Board hosted a European audio visual industry gathering to protest against the TTIP at Cannes in the early days of the festival, to which European and non-European field agents were invited, and many attended. The event was attended, for example, by directors new to Cannes' highest field positions like the Mexican director Amat Escalante, and by well-established European filmmakers and producers like Costa Gavras and the Dardenne brothers, even though they had no film at the festival that year. It was also attended by Harvey Weinstein, who was even asked to open the event with a speech. Weinstein's speech was highlighted in most of the Cannes' dailies (*Le Film Français*, 22<sup>th</sup> May 2013: 11; *The Hollywood Reporter*, 22<sup>th</sup> May 2013: 18) and it was referred to by some members of the jury (as we will see later).

As we have shown, according to Weinstein the cultural exception relates both to diversity and to film business, and we will also see jury members develop this idea in their final speeches.

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<sup>37</sup> The sections at Cannes Festival are: The Competition, Un Certain Regard, Director's Fortnight and Semaine de la Critique.

Certainly, there is a simple advantage in gathering that many professionals at the Festival de Cannes based on the fact that they would be around anyway (if not presenting films in The Competition, then working on projects at the Film Market). There were also, as I have been suggesting, some strategic advantages to gathering at Cannes. First I propose that inviting Weinstein to head the French National Cinema's Board meeting served to ease the potential EU-US confrontation and to make the cultural exception seem objective, taking it beyond the French and the European borders and making it appear "naturally good".<sup>38</sup> Second, associating this French-promoted gathering to the Festival de Cannes reinforces the political and economic disinterestedness of the alibi.<sup>39</sup> On the one hand the petition clearly supports French interests, and European interests, on the other hand the festival is repeatedly presented as politically *disinterested*, because "it is" a global cinema art and culture meeting.

Moreover, at Cannes, at the time of the festival, fifteen European ministers of culture also met to write "a resolution that the European Commission should be obliged to enshrine the exclusion of cultural and audio visual services in the negotiation mandate" (in *cineuropa.org*). That document was attached to the aforementioned petition, which received sixty thousand supporting signatures and was handed to the president of the European Commission while the festival was being held (*Ecran Total*, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013: 9). Basically, in the petition, and at the aforementioned gathering of audio visual professionals, the European audio visual industry demanded that audio visual services and trade should be excluded from the new TTIP (*Ecran Total*, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013: 2) due "to the recognition of a specific status for audio visual works as they are not just goods like

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<sup>38</sup> Harvey Weinstein made this assertion in a speech at the aforementioned European industry gathering.

<sup>39</sup> The meeting was not hosted directly by the Cannes Festival institution.

any others and must, therefore, be excluded from trade negotiations” (in *petition.org*). Finally, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June, *only two weeks after* the Festival ended, it was agreed that the audio visual industries should remain under the framework of the former GATS agreement. The document reads: “it has been agreed that audio visual services are presently not part of the mandate” (“Member States Endorse EU-US Trade and Investment Negotiations” consulted in *europa.eu*). It is important to understand that this outcome shapes the framework of “European” audio visual productions and audio visual representations for many years to come. And it is also important to note that it was finally settled only two weeks after the most important *international/global* cinema event in the world, the Festival de Cannes, which takes place in Europe, and in France.

Since, according to the European institution negotiating the TTIP, the partnership negotiations favor economic development, they have effectively agreed with the petitioners that audio visual goods *are not just like any other* when they decided to leave this industry out of the TTIP agreement. Although there is an undeniable economic turn in leaving the audio visual industries out, the European audio visual industries did not defend their position on the basis of economic capital alone. Instead, the cultural exception is defended on the basis of being a safeguard for European national cinemas, European identities and European diversity, that is, on the basis of serving to reinforce and generate symbolic capital. I do not want to judge the negotiation nor the arguments brought to the table, I am only disentangling the interests behind the appearance of “disinterestedness” in the term diversity. Moreover, I argue that reinforcing both “diversity” and the appearance of “disinterestedness” had an impact on the 2013 Cannes awarding decisions, including the Best Screenplay Award.

## Bringing together a collection of nations for the 2013 palmarès

While the Festival de Cannes has traditionally been deemed “Hollywood on the Riviera” (book title, Beauchamp and Behar 1992) the matter of the cultural exception in 2013 was somehow confronting the concept of Hollywood and the Riviera. Therefore I argue that the 2013 palmarès was claimed to represent diversity, and to cast a shadow over the political and economic US-Europe confrontation. “Cultural exception” was an important term if we consider that it channelled the idea that culture “provided an alternative terrain for resistance and France has articulated that rationale most persuasively and consistently” (Buchsbaum 2016: xiv) and still Cannes needs Hollywood. Curiously enough, the president of the jury, occupying the most important of the festival’s delegate positions as the ultimate responsible person for awarding decisions, was Spielberg - in the year that the notion of cultural exception was on the table.<sup>40</sup> I understand that inviting a Hollywood executive and filmmaker to preside the jury that year is, first of all, a strategy to smooth things over. Expanding from this idea, and the strategies of kinship and counter gift, as presented by Bourdieu, I propose that it could also be understood that inviting Spielberg to preside over *that* festival paved the way for a French, or at least a European, Palme d’Or.

While the festival, its art director and all its jury members claim that awarding decisions are legitimately subjective and independent, nonetheless, we must not forget what Bourdieu says about taste and distinction: “taste classifies and it classifies the classifier”(1986:6) . The jury’s legitimate subjectivity, therefore, does not necessarily mean that they choose their own *personal favourite* films, since they could well be choosing the film that they subjectively consider *most suited* for the Palme d’Or, and the other

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<sup>40</sup> It would be naïve to claim that they can choose any film or any filmmaker, but, since it is the prestigious Cannes Festival and they managed to recruit the star director Steven Spielberg, one should not think that they relied on whoever was available.

awards. First, because they are aware that they are sending a message, second because they may want to reinforce their field positions and the rules of the game which sustain their field. Consequently, in their “taste-distinction” decisions they may well be showing their own cultural capital and also reinforcing the concept of what good taste means at the Festival de Cannes.

Jury members are only allowed to speak publicly about festival films at the beginning and the end of the festival, but when they did speak in 2013 it emerged quite clearly that they all “shared good taste”. Accordingly, in the One-on-one interviews they gave for Cannes TV at the beginning of the festival (consulted in *festival-cannes.com/eng*),<sup>41</sup> when asked about the criteria each of them would aim to reward their answers were: “the film has to talk to us about how we are and how we are managing in this life” (Auteuil), “honesty in the intentions” (Kidman), “honesty of communicating human feelings” (Lee), and so on. That is, they were all, before watching the films, more or less agreeing on what they were looking for. Afterwards, when they gave the Palme d’Or to the film *La Vie d’Adèle* (Abdellatif Kechiche) they supported their choice on the same grounds, that the film spoke to them and that it was honest filmmaking (Awards Jury Press Conference, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). For instance, each time any journalist wanted to highlight the gender-homosexual politics of the Palme d’Or winning film at the Awards Juries’ Press Conference they all replied, repeatedly, that “politics was not a companion in our decisions; politics was not in the room with us” (Spielberg 0:13, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). That is, the jury appeared once again to agree on what good taste means at Cannes, as Spielberg said “we were bonded from the first moment...I know you would like drama, but it just didn’t happen” (ibid. 0:08).

I am not here interested in whether their decisions were criticised or

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<sup>41</sup> These are really short videos (2 or 3 minutes) so time codes would be futile.

supported by the press, only in understanding the awarding decisions as the result of field forces and self-positioning practices. Spielberg explains the aforementioned lack of dramatic discussions behind closed doors, claiming that “we are all artists and we have understanding of other artists”, thus it was easy to “agree on at least three important choices” (ibid.);<sup>42</sup> that is, he relies on their equivalent position and shared knowledge of the rules of the game to explain why it was easy to agree. Very similarly, Mungiu explains that “we didn’t have the feeling that we missed something essential...it’s subjective effort but *it is not by accident* that this palmarès that we delivered it’s so close to what journalists say, *it’s just common sense*” (ibid., my emphasis). Therefore, according to Mungiu, taste distinctions are objectified and, in a way, no longer subjective, because they are common sense (in other chapters of my thesis I investigate the role of the press in the objectification of that “common sense”). Therefore a Cannes’ jury has to “recognise” common sense choices; this is perfectly compatible with choosing subjectively if one follows Bourdieu’s field theories.

What I propose is that the festival’s art director and his team must have been aware of the tensions that were going to cut through the festival that year and, consciously or intuitively, predicted that the composition of the jury could have some predictable impact on awarding decisions. For instance, the journalist who hosts and conducts *all* the press conferences held in the Palais asked the Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda, in the Winners Press Conference, what his feelings had been when he learnt the composition of the 2013 jury because “being such a Hollywoodian jury” they may have failed to understand his filmmaking, (0:24, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). The question is posed by a representative member of the institution (one of the institution’s most visible faces) and he is conveying the idea that it

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<sup>42</sup> Although the number three may not be particularly interesting in this chapter we will see throughout the thesis the idea that there are three to a handful of films each year that tend to generate agreement around them.



is possible to discern in advance what the jury may appreciate or fail to appreciate just by knowing who is in the jury, plus he says the jury was “Hollywoodian”. In this light the festival’s team could have somehow predicted what could happen if Spielberg presided the jury, all the more since that year’s jury was, apparently, a Hollywoodian one. Since the Cannes’ art team must have been aware of the TTIP negotiations, the position of the European audio visual industries, and, of course, the interests of the French National Cinema Board, the appointment of the jury and the jury’s president could relate to this, and to a strategy to facilitate a French film winning the Palme d’Or. Nevertheless, and this may be even more interesting, *the second most important award* was for the US film *Inside Llewyn Davis* (Joel and Ethan Cohen);<sup>43</sup> accordingly, one can think that Spielberg would, probably, rather not be the Hollywood director who gave the Palme d’Or to a US film instead of a French one, precisely in the year that the European industry and its institutions had arisen “to defend European cinema”. I use his name because the president of the jury does not vote like any other jury member; they can veto decisions and they can impose decisions. So even though Nicole Kidman said in the Awards Jury Press Conference that Spielberg “is a very good listener we were all able to voice our opinions” (0:04, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*) he held the last word. In sum, it seems predictable that the jury’s president should counter gift the award of the Palme d’Or to a French film, or at least a European film, if we believe the jury when they claim that there is such a thing as “common sense”, or “three important choices” on which they, at any rate, agreed.

Since the practices of social agents are also guided to reinforce their own position in the field, Spielberg could want to take

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<sup>43</sup> “This year more than ever the Cannes Competition line-up seemed to suggest that France and America are where things are happening right now- the opening and closing films, and sixteen of the twenty two entries were financed and produced in those two countries” (*Sight and Sound* July 2013: 26).

the opportunity to show that he can appreciate different cinema cultures, and, in particular, French cinema. In fact, before the festival began, he claimed that he loved French cinema and that the two things he most appreciated about it was that it can be “open about feelings” and “French actors” (in his One-on-one interview for Cannes TV 0:02, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). These two values were, apparently, what the jury rewarded when giving *La Vie d’Adèle* the Palme d’Or *ex aequo* to the director and the two main actresses, in Spielberg’s words “to the three artists” (in the Awards Jury Press Conference 0:15, in *festival –cannes.com/eng*). Moreover, given that Kechiche had claimed in presenting the film for Cannes’ TV that he does not believe in directing the actors but in working with them; when the jury gave him the Palme d’Or they were showing, once more, that they shared his ideas about the film. In sum, since one can find, repeatedly, shared discourses about cinema, films and awards among the Cannes’ agents occupying the top positions in the field I argue that Frémaux could well have strategically invited Spielberg to preside the jury in 2013. The Palme d’Or winner was then highlighted, of course, as a victory for French cinema, even by the French Culture Ministry (*Le Figaro*, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2013: front page). It could, therefore, be said that the France-US match, that both The Competition and the TTIP had been claimed to represent, was won by France.

In this light it is remarkable that at the Awarding Ceremony, before giving out the awards, Spielberg made an open vow for diversity:

the selection of films that we have seen is also a pledge for different forms of understanding cinema, and *the cultural exception*, is the best way to support the *diversity* of filmmaking [ovation and applause] (0:12, in *festival –cannes.fr*, my emphasis)

I find it extremely significant that he chose to say those words right

before announcing the palmarès, connecting the cultural capital of the festival to the cultural capital which diversity is supposed to defend, and I propose that we should also read the speech in terms of counter gifting.<sup>44</sup> As we have seen, the major award went to a French film and the second one to a US film,<sup>45</sup> but the lesser awards were divided among other *different* nationalities: the Best Director went to a Mexican film (*Heli*, Amat Escalante), the Jury's Special award to a Japanese film (*Like Father, Like Son*, Hirokazu Kore-eda) and the Best Screenplay to a Chinese film (*A Touch of Sin*, Jia Zhangke), and, finally, the two acting prizes were awarded to a French and a US professional, Bérénice Bejo for *Le Passé* (Asghar Farhadi) and Bruce Dern for *Nebraska* (Alexander Payne). If the cultural exception is the best way to support diversity then the 2013 Festival de Cannes' palmarès was a good way to claim the importance of cinema's diversity, and *to perform* such diversity as a collection of national cinemas.

However, in order to understand the screenplay award decision as the result of the field forces which were particularly poignant in 2013 we should bear in mind *that* understanding of diversity and, very particularly, how it served to objectify the values that the festival was *interested* in promoting. That is, I claim, that in awarding a French film the Palme d'Or, the festival's jury was promoting European cinemas and the *interests* of the European audio visual industries and institutions. Since, at that time, those interests ran against those of many important Hollywood studios and producers, then, they used the second award to reinforce the

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<sup>44</sup> When jury presidents are invited to the stage to present the awarded films they do not give speeches; at most, they say some words about how special it is to be at Cannes, or how difficult it is to choose among such a good collection of films. But it is equally true that in those particular years where there has been a dominant debate or an open conflict it is referred to at the beginning of the Awarding Ceremony. For example in 2010, Kristin Scott Thomas pointed to the absence of the Iranian director Jafar Panahi who had been invited as a member of the jury but did not attend due to his political contest and his hunger strike (0:03, in *festival-cannes.fr*).

<sup>45</sup> I avoid the use of inverted commas but I do not understand national ascription to be a straight forward process.

“disinterestedness” which is fundamental for prestige to remain objectified. Finally, the rest of the awards performed cinema’s diversity as a collection of nations as, allegedly, this is so important for cinema’s cultural capital. I have argued that this is, nonetheless, a euphemism contributing to objectify and naturalise the interests of a few.

The Awards Jury Press Conference started, once more, stressing that the jury members came from many different places; therefore *they* - a group of agents of the dominant class - represented, or performed diversity, on the basis of their national origins (in *festival –cannes.fr*). Spielberg said: “and *yet* we were able to unanimously agree on at least three important choices” (ibid. 0:08, my emphasis). He highlights the potential for discrepancies and disagreement, when we know that, according to Bourdieu, they would greatly share social contexts and they act under similar field forces, following a class-determined notion of taste and distinction and, on top of all that, they were all acting as delegates of the same institution, the Festival de Cannes, in the same year. That is, it is *not so surprising* that they can agree on important choices.

*A Touch of Sin* is set in China, in many distant regions of that enormous country, the characters are Chinese and the writer-director is also Chinese, but it is an international co-production involving China, Japan and Korea. In receiving the screenplay award at The Palais, Jia Zhangke declared “cinema makes me believe. China is now changing so much I think film is the best way for me to look for freedom” (ibid. 0:23) a statement which raised a great ovation. Therefore, the 2013 screenplay award for a Chinese film enabled the Festival de Cannes to include China in the collection of nations which were to represent cinema’s diversity, and the film’s international production was not an issue.

Later, at the Awards Jury Press Conference, a Chinese

reporter asks Spielberg and the “Taiwanese” filmmaker Lee to comment on the fact that a *Chinese film* had won an award, after two years without films in The Competition. In 2010 the film *Spring Fever* (Lou Ye) won a screenplay award and it was repeatedly reviewed as Chinese even though, as we will see, it had been produced in Taiwan for censorship reasons. I address the issue in my fourth case study, and we will see how the film raised discussions about state funding and censorship in China, implying that Chinese politics suffocated cinema; this took place only three years before the state-funded film *A Touch of Sin* came to win the same award. What this will bring to the fore is that neither field forces nor the meaning and value of Cannes’ awards are fixed, even if we find certain regularities and repetitions.

However, the explanation that Lee and Spielberg gave for why this film had received the 2013 Best Screenplay Award is even more interesting. Lee, explained,

we are here to celebrate cinema *from all over the world...* the Chinese *market* and *the people who likes movies there* is growing to be very sizeable, and, perhaps, one day it will surpass the English-speaking territories (ibid. 0:13, my emphasis)

Rather similarly, Spielberg added “China is coming on strong not just as a market place for international motion pictures but coming on strong as a creative force... *and we wanted to recognize this*” (ibid. 0:14 my emphasis). They both addressed the Chinese market when unpacking their awarding decision, and I have not found any other instance, in any of the cases studied or the press conferences reviewed, where the audience potential of the country of origin of a film was mentioned in order to explain an awarding decision.

Spielberg combines the market potential of the film's country of origin with the creative potential of that country, in a discourse where good for business and good for creativity are mixed, following the cultural

exception alibi. In the light of his argument the role of a country in the geopolitics of cinema is twofold: on the one hand determined by its importance as a content buyer or market place, and on the other as a content provider or creative force. Similarly, the cultural exception defends the idea that not only the production of films in Europe should be protected, but also the exhibition of European films in Europe by means of screen quotas. Finally, but of no less importance, the president of the jury openly states that in giving an award to *A Touch of Sin* they wanted to recognize China's economic and creative place in the geopolitics of cinema. That is, in precisely the year when certain economic protectionism was being attached to the creation of cultural capital, these two jury members addressed the Chinese market. If protectionist measures are good for diversity and for business also, why does this change when it comes to China's trade protection? If the jury believes, as they claimed at the opening of the festival, that they can truly send messages to the world, then what is the message they were sending in awarding this film and explaining the award in these terms? It is important to note that the two members of the jury explaining their awarding decision in these terms belong in the Hollywood cinema industries, and they could, potentially, have a direct interest in that market. Curiously enough, in a parallel line, Spielberg bought the remake rights of the film receiving the Best Director Award *Like Father, like Son*, (Kore-eda). That is, the selection of films which make up the Cannes' palmarès each year should not be understood as resulting only from the struggles for cultural capital.

## Conclusions

Elsaesser denounced the fact that the term *diversity* does not clarify any of the *inside and out* tensions generated by the movement of talent and capital across borders. However, it is a greatly operative term in the film industries and at Cannes 2013 it was used as a euphemism to objectify the conditions that actually serve the interests of some parties. At Cannes, films can be inside or outside

a national cinema depending on whether we look at representation or financing, as most are international co-productions; thus the nationality of a film, even while at Cannes, depends on the point of view of the viewer. In addition, when the Cannes' top field agents want to promote a film in order to sell it *to the world* the film is located inside and outside its national cinema, often simultaneously. For instance the screenplay award-winning film was read as both a Chinese and an author film. On the one hand this "allows" state funded cinema "to be" author cinema, on the other hand this makes the film, simultaneously, national and transnational (at least to the extent that, as many scholars have pointed out, Cannes' authors are transnational).

Equally the Festival de Cannes *is* a French institution and is mostly state funded, but it is open (apparently in equal conditions) to cinema from anywhere because it is politically or economically "disinterested", and nominally invested "only" in the creation and promotion of cultural capital. Moreover, following Elsaesser, this institution and its dominant field agents confront the US film industry (outside) but it includes the US film industry (inside). I argue that this is, in Mette Hjorts' terms, the Festival de Cannes' typology of transnationalism (as explained in my framework, from MacKenzie and Hjort 2000: 15). If, according to Temenuga Trifonova, transnational cinema wants to substitute the *(inter)national* character of world cinemas as a collection of films from fixed nationalities for a more fluid approach (2002: xv), to what extent should we consider the 2013 Festival de Cannes a transnational event at all, given the effort put into reifying national cinemas? In as much as the meaning of national cinemas is uncertain, even at Cannes, this concept was being reinforced. The 66<sup>th</sup> Festival de Cannes also had to bring together the French (and European) *nationalistic* agenda and the "auterist transnationalism" (MacKenzie and Hjort 2000: 22) on which this festival (as many

others) relies. It is fundamental for the festival to retain its “global” prestige because it is on that basis that it gathers so much media, critics and academic attention. Therefore, inasmuch as the festival makes use of national readings of cinema, they also build, in parallel, a transnational reading of cinema.

As Stephanie Dennison explains, for a travelling work “to attain any meaningful cultural capital, the host culture’s ability to confer prestige and recognition is paramount” (2006: 2). Accordingly, it is fundamental also for “travelling works” that this festival generates and appropriates cultural capital beyond and above national borders. To an extent, a film at The Competition has already overcome national boundaries and it has found a new label as a film product, “author cinema with a wide audience appeal”, which means a potential audience and new reading possibilities. Consequently, these films belong to a transnational category which is both attached to and detached from national cinemas. However, this would be a typology of transnationalism which depends greatly on the diversity euphemism; therefore serving certain particular interests.

What I am arguing is basically that in order to have meaning as a major gate-keeper and to be able to “boost the film industry internationally” (as they claim in *festival –cannes.fr*) the Festival de Cannes has to be perceived as a disinterested institution. It has been said that a film festival is

a forum where, in the context of the worldwide film business, the boundaries between the ‘cultural imperialist’ centre (Hollywood) and the ‘colonial’ margins (the rest of the world’s cinema) are collapsed, albeit temporarily (Evans 2007: 5).

What is interesting is not if the 2013 Festival de Cannes collapsed boundaries but: how it *performed* that idea. Elsaesser stated that cinema may move “from claiming the real to performing presence”



(2005: 55) and I argue that the collection of 2013 Cannes' awards did the same with respect to the notion of diversity.<sup>46</sup>

The palmarès was not about claiming that award-winning films were *really* French, US, Mexican, Japanese and Chinese but they were about *performing* the presence of diversity and supporting the cultural capital of cinema on that ground. In particular the 2013 screenplay award meant that the Festival de Cannes, its delegates and its dominant classes, were performing a welcome to China. Nonetheless, they were simultaneously “inviting” China to the discussion about borders and protectionism, although with a different approach. Of course “only the perpetual obscurity of the object of theory can guarantee that theory ‘works’ rather than merely ‘describing’ a state of affairs” (Trifonova 2002: xxx) and these are only meaning-making possibilities around the 2013 screenplay awarding decision. My main argument is that the struggle for political and economic capital must be taken into consideration when trying to understand the cultural capital of Cannes' awards. For instance, Kechiche and both of the Palme d'Or winning actresses, Léa Seydoux and Adèle Exarchopoulos, thanked their production and distribution company, The Wild Bunch, when receiving the award at The Palais; bringing together the material production of the object and the symbolic production of cultural capital at the festival's peak moment. It is these tensions that I further investigate in my next case study.

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<sup>46</sup> He uses this sentence to explain the shift that the inclusion of digital cinema means for the realist ontology of European cinema, but I find it a good sentence to make my point clearer; plus, he coined that sentence, which could clearly be applied to many different tensions in cinema, in an essay revolving on European cinema, European identity and European film identity.

## Chapter 3

### **The *Naturalisation* of Cinematographic Criteria at Cannes: from Film Development to Film Awards**

In this chapter I analyse the relationship between the Festival de Cannes and Cannes Film Market to understand the impact they have on the generation and maintenance of Cannes' prestige. While a first assumption could maybe separate them in terms of economic versus cultural capital, when studied from inside this appears not to be the case. Basically I observed that the many different events taking place at Cannes at the time of the festival and market add up to one single but complex phenomenon and one cannot really know where one ends and the other begins. While Dina Iordanova's work on film festivals as industry nodes "focuses particularly on the festival activities that are specifically intended to foster production" (2015: 1), my current case study takes the "industry node" idea one step further, suggesting that there are many other ways in which the Festival de Cannes is tied to the industry (beyond specific production activities). In my previous chapter, I argued that to better understand the 2013 Festival de Cannes it was important to consider it in the context of the TTIP negotiations because the cultural exception campaign had permeated the festival at many levels. I then proposed that the 2013 awarding decisions, including the Best Screenplay Award, mostly served to perform the concept of *diversity as a collection of nations*. Finally I argued that defining and defending diversity as a collection of nations served certain political interests. Therefore, my previous case study suggests that the Festival de Cannes can be strategically used by certain cinema industries to support the messages that benefit them; but, as a result of the current study, I propose that it is not just that certain cinema industries use the festival but that the festival also uses the industries. Accordingly, I will argue that social agents from *both* the festival and the market generate

symbolic capital; first, in terms of visibility. But secondly, and more interestingly, because they share, and they contribute to reinforce, important assumptions regarding Cannes' films. These assumptions, of course, impact awarding decisions and or how these acquire meaning.

In the 2014 Festival de Cannes' Jury Press Conference, when asked on how they were going to judge films, a jury member said that they are all "people who really know cinema and who have an approach which is not personal, but who *judge with cinematographic criteria*" (0:06, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*, my emphasis). Therefore, the jury was making a claim that their distinction in making a decision was based on some sort of objective criteria and knowledge. That is, in appealing to cinematographic criteria, the jury is claiming that there is a "generative principle of *objectively classifiable* judgements" (Bourdieu [1984] 2010:166, my emphasis) governing their decisions; and that is one of Bourdieu's definitions of habitus. Habitus is a very complex term; it is a generative principle which Bourdieu deduces from the observation of the practices and statements of social agents. But since it is the *underlying principle* and not a series of observable rules ("cinematographic criteria"), it is not visible, only deductible (Maton 2008: 51). More importantly, while habitus is embodied in each individual it is also shared by all the members of a field ("they *know* cinema"), and that is why it seems to generate "objective" classifications. Each field or social space has its own principles, which may appear objective but correspond to the shared interests of those interacting within it, and, according to Bourdieu, mainly to the shared interests of those occupying the best positions in the field (Bourdieu's field from Thompson 2008:69). Therefore, if we understand who takes part in a social space and who occupies the best positions, we can understand who is benefitting from making such principles appear objective. In relation to the Festival de Cannes, by understanding who takes part in the festival-market and who occupies the most important positions we can understand who contributes to making Cannes' "cinematographic criteria" seem objective, how this contributes to

generate symbolic capital, and to whose benefit; that is the aim of the current case study.

To approach this case study my method was very similar to the one used in chapter 2. It was based on observation and analysis of the public statements and practices of Cannes' guests and participants. As in the previous chapter, by public I mean those statements openly available at Cannes. That is, I am not interested in the conversations held behind closed doors and I am not interested, in this chapter, in what is said about Cannes outside Cannes (this approach is the focus of other case studies in my thesis). This chapter emerges from my second visit to the festival. This time, without making a different request, I nonetheless received a different badge: I was granted a professional pass. Just by virtue of attending the festival a second time, without having published anything or changing my professional status, I had already improved my place in the Cannes' network. This is significant in terms of how the Festival de Cannes' institution evaluates group-belonging. My 2014 pass, compared to the cinephile pass given in 2013, granted me entrance to many more places, and this facilitated a more insightful perspective. However, professional badges are also hierarchically organised and I was given the most restricted of the professional passes; my badge signalled me as a professional member of the Cannes' network, albeit one belonging in the lowest positions. For instance, producers from small companies would have the same badge, while film critics writing for little-known media, such as blogs or foreign local newspapers, had a different badge, even though it provided them with almost the same access rights (so contrary to Mazdon 2007 claims not all Cannes' participants, are elite guests; although elites are fundamental to understand Cannes).

To watch a festival film at Cannes, bearing one of those badges, one has to be in a queue for no less than two hours. However, thanks to this badge, I could not only attend the same theatres I had visited the previous year but also many others, which are reserved for professionals

only. Entrance to screenings is extremely hierarchical. There is, for instance, a second line in all screenings, which goes in to the theatre first when the doors are opened, reserved for “press only”. On top of that, there are, certainly, reserved seats for those members of the network who can call the organisers to make such reservations, which they can do for any festival screening. For instance, if a member of the jury was interested in watching a “Cannes’ Classics” film, they would have a seat reserved even though such films do not compete. Moreover, Cannes’ important guests, such as a star or a major producer, can reserve seats for any festival screening. There are also press-only screenings, sometimes even before a competing film premieres in the Grand Palais. No professional pass is granted entrance to these screenings, and access is hierarchically organised among press-pass holders.

Finally, there are also invitation-only screenings, such as the red carpet premieres in The Official Selection; thus, one must be given a pass for each one of those screenings. Certainly, these passes are reserved for elite guests, but the Theatre Lumière at the Palais des Festivals seats more than two thousand people, so there are many more invited guests than those under the red carpet focus. One could, if very interested, maybe, get hold of an invitation. Everyday there are people around, with or without badges, holding boards asking for an invitation to that day’s red carpet premiere. However, with a badge like mine, or a low-ranked press badge, (the most common passes available), one can, potentially, access any screening, including the red carpet premieres. One could aim for the seats that became available each morning for those invitation-only screenings, which had belonged to people who had received an invitation but confirmed they were not attending. There were not many of these available, but the important thing is that access to these screenings is always personal, so if you received, or gained, an invitation and did not attend the screening, without notifying the festival’s organisers, this would be recorded in your file and you may be denied another invitation, or you could be granted a “lower” pass the following

year. This signals that the festival does not hide or conceal the importance of hierarchies; on the contrary, its organisation as an event (or an enormous series of events) is based on hierarchies. While this is not surprising, it is necessary to attend the festival, maybe even more than once, to actually understand the importance of hierarchies at Cannes and how these structure each and every event, and potentially (and this is the main idea that we should take from Mazdon 2007 use of “elite”) how elites and hierarchies determine meaning making practices.

As I had a professional badge I could access many sites other than the festival's screening theatres and I gained sight of their dimension. Significantly enough, the two-hour queue was not a singularity of The Competition films: screenings in the Un Certain Regard, Cannes' Classics, Director's Fortnight or Semaine de la Critique had very similar queue lengths. Simultaneously, there are hundreds of screenings of finished, and unfinished, films being sold at the Film Market. These are mostly addressed to film executives, but if there are seats left, someone with a professional badge like mine (not a press pass), is welcome to attend. I visited the Film Market fair, the International Village, and I attended market screenings and master classes. The Film Market ranges from little stands at the trade fair in the lower floor at The Palais, to sumptuous suite or yacht offices, for which one certainly needed a specific invitation or an appointment. The Cannes Film Market also includes the International Village, where film offices from around the world present their shooting facilities and their yearly audio visual productions. As one walks around the Film Market, which is basically positioned all around the city of Cannes, one finds gates and gatekeepers here and there who, after checking your badge, may or may not give you access to each site. This shows that the festival is certainly not only about The Competition; actually The Competition, being restricted to the higher members of the Cannes' hierarchies, gathers less people, albeit more elite members. If in my previous study of Cannes I had concentrated on the public statements of the members of the

Cannes' network directly related to The Competition, in 2014 I was also observing practices and discourses beyond those.

It is important to understand the occupation of the city by film critics and film professionals (the festival triples Cannes' population) and how the festival's institution divides the space as this may relate to meaning making practices as well (developing from Schwartz V. R. 2000, Mazdon 2006 and 2007, Harbord [2009] 2013 and 2016 among others). There are restricted and VIP areas everywhere; for instance, one cannot see the terrace in The Palais until the evening because that is where photo-calls are hosted during the day. This space has a stage function whose audiences are the selected press and/or those watching the broadcast, be it live or not, at Cannes or not. There are restricted hotels, restricted docks, and restricted night clubs; there are VIP seats and reserved seats, tables or cars everywhere; there are limos, fancy cars, and even restricted streets. The shops along the sea front do not sell ice cream or postcards, they are Chanel or Louis Vuitton boutiques; I don't think I have ever seen as many hairdressing salons per square metre. All of this is important because it is certainly not Marion Cotillard, or any other star, that one normally sees inside those hairdressers or boutiques, as they would prepare for Cannes' events in private. It would be the many unknown, but sometimes powerful, film or media professionals who populate the city of Cannes in the days of the festival who may prepare for events and meetings there. What this signals is that "while the festival principally *evokes* the Official Selection and the anticipation of the final awards, it is also the preferred rendezvous of all cinema professionals who attend the Cannes Film Market" (Official Catalogue 2014: 16, my emphasis, for more on this see Bart 1997). I want to highlight the use of the term *evoke*, because it implies memories or feelings, maybe symbolic capital in Bourdieu's terms, but Cannes is a much bigger rendezvous: "with 11,500 participants, 4,000 films on offer and 1,500 screenings, the Marché du Film [Film Market] is the world's premiere market" (Official Catalogue 2014: 20).

Most of the quotes in this case study come from the dailies specially published for the Cannes' festival and market. Some major specialised and trade press, such as *Screen* or *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Le Film Fracais*, *Variety*, or *Movie Scope* publish Cannes' issues; their contents may also be available online, but these special issues are freely distributed at the market venues each day so they are available and greatly address themselves to market attendants.<sup>47</sup> Other not cinema or media specialised newspapers also publish special festival issues, such as *Cannes' News* and *Le Monde Diplomatique* and there are many specific publications such as *Cannes' Market News*, *Cannes Film Festival*. Most of them publish every day and all are distributed in the market venues; that is, the Film Market gathers a multitude of visitors and the dailies generate tons of specific information. Due to the contents and distribution of those dailies, it would seem that they are addressed in particular to the film professionals attending the market.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, they include cinema reviews of the films premiered at Cannes; a first sign, of the many we will find, that the two events are inseparable. There are also festival dailies, which are freely distributed at different festival venues. Cannes' TV is produced by the Festival de Cannes' institution and Canal Plus, and is broadcast live on many TV screens around the market. These videos are also made available for other Channels from around the world and a selection become available on the festival's website (*festival-cannes.com/eng*).<sup>49</sup> I have chosen to analyse these sources because they show what is being spotlighted at Cannes at the time of the festival and the market. In as much all as these publications (and videos) cannot be considered merely as festival or market

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<sup>47</sup> The *Hollywood Reporter* is more than just a Cannes' daily, publishing a weekly magazine and continuously updated website. However, it publishes and distributes a Cannes' issue every day at the festival/market, just like many of the other Cannes' dailies consulted.

<sup>48</sup> Although they are accessible to other professional-accredited festival visitors, so long as they have access to The Palais - for instance, the Cannes Cinephiles pass does not provide access.

<sup>49</sup> Clips of the Cannes TV videos are also broadcast around the world, and on the website.



ephemera, they do contribute “to craft the self-definition of the event itself” (Zielinski 2016:139). Therefore, in studying them we can better understand how the festival is configured, and, in this particular case, how the festival and the film market relate to one another.

On the one hand, the Festival de Cannes and the Cannes Film Market are independently organised because they have different directorial boards, reception stands and accreditations. On the other hand, most of the credentials allow access to facilities shared by both the festival and the market, and the public information generated by/for Cannes’ participants does little to differentiate between market and festival participants. This makes it extremely difficult to know, in general, where one ends and the other begins. As Julian Stringer explained regarding blockbusters “clearly spectacle-herein defined as public display- is a characteristic of all forms of commercial cinema” (2003b5) and this certainly applies to the Festival de Cannes and its cinema; but in this quote spectacle is directly related to commercial objectives and this is a question we must certainly ask when studying the festival events. While my aim was to understand the configuration of the festival and the market and the relationship between them, what I found was that, often, deciding if someone was a festival guest or a market participant became an impossible task. Accordingly I suggest that it is meaningless to attempt to separate them, which will be significant in terms of their shared assumptions and the reciprocal generation and appropriation of symbolic capital that those shared assumptions sustain.

Dina Iordanova already proposed that “the quintessential ‘business’ festival is Cannes” (2015:2); and I will propose that the Festival de Cannes’ success in maintaining the number one position in the film festival circuit strongly relies on its deep rooted engagement with cinema businesses. Therefore I agree with those film festival scholars who have already proposed that festivals are constructed in the negotiations among many stakeholders, including film industry professionals (Dayan [2000] 2013, Iordanova 2015, Peranson [2008] 2009, Ostrowska 2016,

and others) and this case study adds to their works. Following Bourdieu's theories what I am investigating is the extent to which the notion of "art" strategically used by the Festival de Cannes could be said to emerge also from the needs of the cinema industries and businesses on which the festival relies. More importantly, I question whether the mutual dependency and synergy which became evident visiting Cannes has any influence on the meaning and value of the Best Screenplay Award.

### **The double "nature" of Cannes**

It is common knowledge today that the Festival de Cannes has an impact on the films that get distributed and how they are distributed, as well as on the films that get made and how they are made. Dorota Ostrowska summarises those claims in her 2016 text (similarly in 2010), arguing that "the role that Cannes plays in relation to these films is nearest to that of a creative producer" (29). But I propose that it is not just that "the symbolic power of Cannes in regards to new projects lies in the commercial power of the market" (28) but that the symbolic power of Cannes in general greatly emerges from that market. Indeed, in order to maintain its symbolic capital (cultural and otherwise) the festival needs, stars, "authors", specialised and non-specialised media attention, academic attention, and the participation and recognition of the cinema industries. That is, it needs the collective belief that it does have symbolic capital. Therefore, I problematise the idea that the Festival de Cannes exercises "soft power" over production companies (Ostrowska 2016: 26) to argue that, the opposite is equally true (certain production companies exercise soft power over the festival). It is more important to focus on how and why they sustain each other and their shared collective beliefs. In the words of the 2014 jury member Andrea Arnold, "Cannes has the reputation of putting film at the centre so I am expecting to see great films" (in *Le Film Français*, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 9).<sup>50</sup> In this light, one of the

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<sup>50</sup> As explained before for the sake of clarity and consistency in-text citation of newspapers and magazines is cross referenced with the Works Cited Page by the publication's name instead of authors, and their translations are all mine.

questions this chapter (and my thesis) addresses is: who participates in sustaining the shared belief that Cannes showcases great films? Moreover, according to the 2014 Official Catalogue, “The Festival de Cannes reflects *the double nature of cinema* at the cross roads of both *Art* and *Industry*” (16, my emphasis). Therefore in this section I specifically question how and why that “double nature” is being collectively reinforced at Cannes, and how and why the “double nature of cinema” relates to the shared belief that Cannes puts “film at the centre”, or if that double nature of cinema relates to the definition of what constitutes a “great film”. These relations should help us understand why some films receive awards, such as the Best Screenplay Award, instead of others.

When in the Awarding Ceremony it was said that “the selection was ruthless” or “the whole world is eager to find out who will come away with the most prestigious, the most *coveted* trophy of all” (0:30, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*) these comments convey the struggle for both cultural and economic capital because, basically, at Cannes *these are one*, given that Cannes defends the double nature of cinema. This means, of course, that there are economic interests at stake at Cannes and we will see many instances where such interests actually shape the festival. In as much as that is my basic argument, I want to develop it further because the festival does not only adapt to the needs of the industry; its whole meaning and value relies on the industry that supports it (and *also* on the press). Bourdieu explains that “struggles for the monopoly of artistic legitimacy are less innocent than they seem” ([1984] 2010: 37) and that they involve the participation of many in order to produce “the *naturalisation* of its own arbitrariness” (ibid. 1977: 164-165, my emphasis). Therefore, artistic legitimacy does not simply emanate from the festival, it has to be defended. We will see that the cinema industries that sustain Cannes, greatly contribute to the naturalisation of its artistic legitimacy.

To begin with, the iconic Cannes' red steps that are mounted twice a day by glamorized stars may basically seem to be a ritual designed to perpetuate and generate symbolic capital. But they are, nonetheless, filled with stars that are at Cannes attending the market, looking for distribution or financing deals; that is, struggling for economic capital; and yet they add to the image and identity of Cannes and to its place in the film festival rhizome (Loist 2016). For instance, in 2014 Sophia Loren climbed the red steps while at the market promoting her son's film *La Voce Umana* (Edoardo Ponti 2014) and Monica Bellucci, who had a small part in The Competition film *The Wonders* (Alice Rohrwacher) was promoting her upcoming film *Ville-Marie* (Guy Edoïn 2015) at the Cannes Film Market. The institution considers the red steps to be one of the core elements in the construction of Cannes and they carefully look after the "liturgy"; from the dress code to the choreography of arrivals, as carefully detailed in an article in *The Hollywood Reporter* (16<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 22). To an extent, the climbing of the stairs is the most visible image of the festival and yet the ritual, or parade, is also performed by stars that could be said to be attending the Cannes Film Market. In sum the festival's visibility clearly feeds from its film market.

*Le Film Français* opened its first 2014 Cannes' Special issue as follows: "with so many names attending the event and so little time to catch all the films - never mind the endless parties - Cannes is ready to bow" (14<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 5). For that writer what is happening at Cannes, the films and parties, adds up to basically one event, and an event that takes place in many spaces including those outside the festival's formal spaces. For instance, one night, at one of the many parties that take place each night, there were gathered: Quentin Tarantino, Pablo Trapero, Michel Hazanavicius, and many others, whom, did not have films in The Competition that year. Whether they were "networking", or formally putting their film projects together at Cannes, is not as important as the idea that Cannes' bowing, glamour and kinship does not rely only on The Competition and its guests. These directors were also invited to the

premieres of films in The Competition and photographed on those red steps (in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). The aforementioned party was reported in *Le Film Français*, but this is just one of the many affairs held at Cannes in the days the festival and the market take place. Every daily has several reports of this kind each day where you can find pictures of top members of the film industries, from stars to executives, many of whom have nothing to do that particular year with The Competition. All of these contribute to the festival's symbolic capital. I use here the term symbolic capital, because it often builds on stardom and fashion; some market dailies even have a "dress of the day" where, of course, glamour adds to Cannes' symbolic capital.<sup>51</sup> What I am arguing is that when one attends Cannes it seems less true that "disguised forms of economic capital, never entirely reducible to that definition, produce their most specific effects only to the extent that they conceal ... the fact that economic capital is at their root" (Bourdieu 1986:252), and more true that symbolic and economic capital are two sides of the same coin.

The former president of the Festival de Cannes, Gilles Jacob, claims that "artistic, political and professional independence, as well as its financial independence, are aided by three major axis: the Cannes Film Market, the televisions and its partners" (*Le Film Français*, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 9). That is, according to him, paradoxically, the independence of the festival relies on its *stakeholders*, one such stakeholder being the Film Market (although I am suggesting that it is better understood as part of the festival writ large).<sup>52</sup> In the previous statements in this article, Jacob disavows the potential assumption that it is only the film market that depends on the festival and he continues:

the presidents of the jury, poets in general, had great ideas: Le Prix du Film Lyrique in 1952, Le Prix du Film de la Bonne Humeur, or even the Prix du Film Le Mieux Raconté par l'Image in 1953,

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<sup>51</sup> Cultural capital is a form of symbolic capital and in this thesis I use both terms.

<sup>52</sup> As the chapter develops we will see the role of the television (Canal Plus) and the partners as well (Renault, L'Oreal, Chopard, HP and Kering).

certainly it was all very enjoyable, but there was nothing at stake, no Film Market (*Le Film Français*, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 9).

Curiously enough, Jacob uses the market to explain why the names of Cannes' awards have been fixed, clearly stating that the Cannes Film Market has influenced the configuration of the festival. Ragan Rhyne explains that "the rhetorical articulation of a festival is written out by the interests of its stakeholders" and she includes the film industry of financiers, lawyers, distributors and studios (2013: 145, where the author is developing from Harbord 2002: 60). I am here proposing that stakeholders may define more than just the rhetorical articulation of the festival; for instance, stakeholders may influence its visual articulation, its ritual articulation or even festival programming and awarding decisions. Nevertheless, I do not consider the rhetorical articulation to be of little importance. According to Gilles Jacob, it is because of the Cannes Film Market that awards do not receive poetic names anymore and this should make us wonder to what extent the market then relates to the names that awards *do* receive, such as the Best Screenplay Award. That is, while there is certainly no screenplay reading involved, this award uses the term screenplay; therefore it is important to understand the extent to which the articulation of this award relates to its name and if that relates to the festival's stakeholders, a point I will develop later.

In any case, the rhetoric surrounding The Competition very often relies on terms from the art market, such as author and discovery. But, according to Bourdieu, those terms are strategically used to guide our perception towards texts and creators and away from dealers and traders. However, again following Bourdieu, it is the same person, "the person who exploits the labour of the 'creator' by trading the 'sacred' and the person who, by putting it on the market, by exhibiting, publishing or staging it, consecrates a product" (Bourdieu 1993b:76). Accordingly, the acts of consecration and trading are not so separate, in as much as they can be sustained by a rhetoric that consecrates on the basis of the sacred (or unattainable) in authorship, in order to put that "creator" on the

market. That is, both the festival and the film companies handling its films need to sustain the same rhetoric. In this case, given the size, it may not be true that the consecrator and the trader are the same person, but they certainly have shared interests.

To begin with, when it comes to putting together the selection of films, there are simple production constraints. For instance, in 2014 at the Nominees' Press Conference, Thierry Frémaux declared that they had been after the upcoming Terence Malick film, which was finally not part of The Competition in 2014 since, "bad news for us, unfortunately it wasn't ready" (0:49, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). That is, the festival wants those films to which great cultural capital is already attached, often because of the prestige of the film's director. As Gilles Jacob put it "category A festivals compete for the best filmmakers, the most difficult is to discover" (*Le Film Français*, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 9) so the festival's former president claims that Cannes still has to compete to retain its position among festivals. But a director's newest film may not be finished on time, and then when it is finished the traders or the director may not find it worthy, or possible, to wait for a whole new year to then premiere at Cannes (even if it is the most prestigious festival). This way, although Malick has premiered twice before at Cannes, Malick's film *Knight of Cups* (2015) premiered at the Berlinale, so Cannes missed that one. Maybe this was only because film production has its own needs, or maybe it was actually a choice of the producers and the director; in any case, the end result is that Cannes does not simply cherry pick.

Still, Cannes seems to be:

the world's number one film festival, an event rivals find impregnable, precisely because its nature as a select club enables it to attract the biggest names and most prestigious filmmakers. However ... new entries are popping up on the programme... they whet our curiosity (*Box Office*, special issue 9/10: 18).

According to the writer, the festival's top position is indisputable and this makes it easy to attract prestigious filmmakers; however, in the eyes of this commentator the so called "new" are also important for the festival.

In this light it is significant that in 2014 the festival bestowed the Jury Prize to the very young Canadian director Xavier Dolan, *ex-aequo* with Jean-Luc Godard, leveling Dolan with that historical filmmaker. Accordingly the 2014 Jury Prize seemed to combine new and prestigious alike, however, the Box Office article also explains that "the directors in competition have already showcased at Cannes or other major international film festivals (Venice and Berlin, as well as Locarno)". In this case, the "new" Xavier Dolan was actually a Cannes regular with films appearing previously in the Un Certain Regard section, *Heartbeats* (2010) and *Laurence Anyways* (2012). Therefore, while Gilles Jacob's previous quote regarding the festival's competition claims that the most difficult task is to discover, in Dolan's case it seems that rather than discovering, the festival can support a career until a director gets to premiere at The Competition. According to Bourdieu "the 'great' dealers, the 'great' publishers [or the great film festivals], are inspired talent-spotters who, guided by their disinterested, unreasoning passion for a work of art, have 'made' the painter or writer" (1993b:78), and that is what emerges in Dolan's case. However, the term discovery is still used repeatedly. Another writer claims: "it really helps if Cannes can *take credit* for 'discovering' your director" (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 77, my emphasis). Here the writer states that it is more about taking credit than about discovering, a tension that keeps emerging in this and other case studies.

The last quote cited above comes from a most interesting article published in *The Hollywood Reporter's* Cannes' daily (16<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 77) entitled "The back room politics behind Cannes' line-up".<sup>53</sup> The article begins with a review of the selection process behind The Competition's film *The Homesman*, directed by Tommy Lee Jones (2014). It explains

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<sup>53</sup> Authors indexed, for consistency, in the Works Cited-Newspapers Page under *The Hollywood Reporter* entry.



that Frémaux admitted that Steven Spielberg had recommended the film for The Competition and “we were almost too scared to look at it in case we didn’t like it...But it lived up to Spielberg’s expectations”. While the Cannes’ director does not consider their interactions obscure and shameful, as he openly addresses them as “back room politics”, his comments still point out that there are major interests at play in the selection of films. The article continues, explaining the selection in these terms:

if a film doesn’t have a powerful Hollywood studio to exert pressure on Cannes, then a major French distributor is the next best thing. Gallic giants such as Europacorp, Wild Bunch, Gaumont and Studio Canal... influence the festival’s programming. If a major Gallic distributor is set on using Cannes to launch its next big film, then chances are the festival will find room for it. That Cannes is an old boys’ club with an inner circle of anointed directors also is hard to refute (ibid.).

What this writer says, in very critical terms, is that the Festival de Cannes is not autonomous. Some of the tensions that the writer is highlighting have already emerged in my previous case study, but I want to concentrate on the companies he names, for these have been appearing in this case study and keep appearing throughout my thesis. To an extent what the writer is doing is similar to my strategies in this chapter, and in the previous one, in terms of understanding the positions of the field and the power relations at play.

The article continues: “anyone doubtful of the links between the festival and the French film business need only look at Pierre Lescure, a former head of media giant Canal Plus who will take over as festival president”. But this criticism calls for careful consideration. First, it should be acknowledged that Cannes *is* a French institution itself, financed by French public funds and French partners,<sup>54</sup> including Canal Plus.

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<sup>54</sup> These are the Centre National du Cinéma, the French Ministry of Culture, and several regional and local official institutions such as Rhône-Alpes, Île-de-France.

Moreover, as film festival scholars have already pointed out, “the intersection of commercial, non-profit, and aesthetic interests in film festival institutions makes the network indicative of a new breed of cultural industries that are shaped by global economic shifts” (Rhyne 2013 : 143). I want to draw attention to the fact that the article under consideration was published by *The Hollywood Reporter*. While the festival certainly has to negotiate with some of the big moguls in the cinema industries, the article conveys, in its word choices, that these tensions are somehow illegitimate. I deal with these same tensions, but we could think that the writer’s choice of words may relate to his own struggle for field position. However, this critical voice, having been published by one of the most trusted publications for trade members, is of major importance to understand the point that I am making about the Festival de Cannes’ lack of autonomy.

As the aforementioned article points out, the festival and its content providers may also have to agree on the release date of a film. This is also evidenced in Frémaux’s words: “the film *Captives*, will be released in France at the time of the festival and *that is why* it is scheduled for the first Friday” (0:37, in [festival-cannes.com/eng](http://festival-cannes.com/eng), my emphasis). The Festival de Cannes is considered a launching platform of immediate impact, and those in charge of the promotion of the film in France hope to benefit from the media attention, and the symbolic capital of Cannes, in order to promote the film’s release in cinemas; that is, they expect to convert symbolic capital to economic capital. Since there are two or three similar examples of this use of the Festival de Cannes each year, programming at Cannes is not fully independent or “disinterested”, but tightly connected to the conversion of symbolic capital to economic capital that this festival potentially facilitates. Another similar example in 2014 was the world premiere of *How to train your Dragon 2* (Dean DeBlois), a DreamWorks Pictures film (Spielberg appears again) which was hosted at the 2014 Festival de Cannes. The studio performed a

glamorous parade on the iconic Cannes' red steps that caught massive media attention and the film premiered worldwide the day after, adding to the festival's symbolic capital (maybe not cultural, in this case). Cases where the film is released in France or internationally, right after its Cannes' premiere, provides evidence that the festival depends greatly on its content providers.<sup>55</sup> The claim is simply that, as Lydia Papadimitriou and Jeffrey Ruoff have explained, the variety of festival practices relates to "the consistency of many underlying concerns" such as political economy (2016:2, also Stringer 2003a: 202-215, and Jungen 2014), so they are not autonomous when designing their programme.

Nevertheless, it must not be assumed that it is simply the festival that depends on the content providers; it is a relation of mutual dependency where field positions are constantly being fought for and defended. In 2014 the film *Grace of Monaco* (Olivier Dahan) was the festival's opening film on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May. It is a big budget France-US co-production involving TF1 and The Weinstein Company and it was presented at the best non-competing slot, which is often used to promote a subsequent but immediate commercial release. And yet the US co-producer Harvey Weinstein was not present at Cannes, because he was on a charity trip to Syria, which he alleged to have scheduled previously; since the festival always takes place on the same dates, the truth underlying this "prior commitment" is that the film was the object of a major conflict, including legal action and big sums of money. Weinstein disliked the director's cut and he was legally pursuing the right to edit the film differently, at least for his distribution territory, the US. Opposing him, TF1 and the Festival de Cannes defended the director's cut. About a month before, in announcing the Official Selection in a press conference, Frémaux declared: "we are in Cannes and this is France so the only version that will be shown is the filmmaker's version" (0:30, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). This conflict is revealing in relation to how certain cinema industries and the festival rely on each other, not so much

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<sup>55</sup> For instance, in this thesis we will see that *Volver* (Almodovar, 2006) and *Lorna's Silence* (Dardenne brothers, 2008) premiered in France right after Cannes.

in the evident defence that the festival makes of the economic interests of the French major TF1, but much more significantly in terms of the strategy used: he uses authorship to defend the interests of one of the two confronting companies.

Frémaux may have received pressure to defend the French major TF1 in this costly conflict, but he is using the opportunity to publicly reinforce the aim of the festival *to defend authors*. In doing this, he is using the reified value of authorship to defend the interests of a film company and he is taking the opportunity to reify the value of “the creator” at Cannes.<sup>56</sup> However, if one thinks that TF1 claims to produce “amusing and popular cinema that gathers the whole family in front of our [TV broadcasting] slot ‘Sunday Cinema’” (*Ecran Total*, special issue 997: 62), they may not be as invested in cinema authorship as it was being claimed. That is, even though TF1 does not generally promote its productions on the basis of authors/creators, they teamed up with the Festival de Cannes to defend their economic and legal position against The Weinstein Company. As I discussed earlier, Bourdieu explains that such discourse of art and creation serves to hide the market interests of consecrators and traders of authors. What we are seeing is how, in reifying the value of the author’s signature, the social construction that actually sustains the consecration of authors, including the market, dissolves behind the “illusion” of art. This is more evident in this case because neither TF1 nor Olivier Dahan are, in general, actively engaged in such “author” discourses, in as much as they were firm supporters of “the author” in 2014. In parallel, Frémaux also used the conflict to claim that *the French* perspective on filmmaking is that of the author, but we know, of course, that not all French cinema production puts filmmakers at

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<sup>56</sup> The extent to which the film *Grace* is author cinema would open a debate that I will not address since there is no simple answer to it and it is not the objective of this chapter. However, there are important French companies which do not necessarily have to make “author cinema”; their main business is to attend Cannes so they can participate in the Cannes Film Market, or Out of Competition; these companies can still be important in the Cannes’ social space.

the centre. Frémaux was simultaneously reifying the value of authorship, French cinema and the Festival de Cannes.<sup>57</sup>

While it is a common claim that “Cannes traditionally serves as an acoustic box for the many debates that shake the trade” (*Le Film Français*, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2014: 6), it does not simply echo such debates, it takes part in those debates and defends its interests and the interests of its stakeholders. Another 2014 example of this phenomenon is the festival’s involvement in the conflict that emerged when the production company Belladonna and the distribution company Wild Bunch released the last Abel Ferrara film, *Welcome to New York* (2014), directly on VoD channels. In launching the film directly on VoD, these companies were neglecting the traditional priority of theatrical distribution. Theatrical distribution usually comes first, then TV and finally VoD and this order relates to the fees paid (or advanced) and thence to the power each channel holds in the field. For instance, in introducing the Cannes Film Market, I quoted that representatives of theatrical distribution amounted to 21% of its participants whereas “VoD and new media” only amounted to 4%. Therefore, the matter was important for the industry and widely debated at the Cannes Film Market (echoing in all the dailies).

According to Bourdieu, a field’s structure tends to secure first and foremost the place of the top agents in the field. However, there are instances where power dynamics change and hysteresis is when a change in the practices of social agents leads to an abrupt change in field positions and in the rules of the game: “a breakdown in the self-regulation” (Hardy 2008: 134 and 131). In this case, if VoD came abruptly to be more important than cinema or TV in terms of the release and production of films, then that would lead to a process of hysteresis. For instance, if we think of the role of VoD in the production, promotion and consumption of series and we consider the impact that this shift may

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<sup>57</sup> In the previous year he was a bastion defending Europe’s audio visual industries’ right to “the cultural exception” (a big scale negotiation that I have analysed in my previous chapter).

have had on some of the cinema industries, we can understand why they might have been fearful of a process of hysteresis.<sup>58</sup> Significantly enough the festival took a clear position regarding this debate in the Awarding Ceremony, its peak ritual moment: “I had a long talk with Gilles Jacob and Thierry Frémaux and we decided to do things the old fashioned way and announce the winners here from this magnificent Theatre in the Palais des Festivals, so you won’t be getting the announcements straight from VoD” (0:03, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). This is again evidence that the Festival de Cannes uses its symbolic capital to defend certain interests, but, more importantly, it evidences the fact that the Festival de Cannes needs the field that sustains it, and that the festival itself fights hysteresis in that field. If we think about the director’s cut conflict surrounding the film *Grace*, in this light we could also see the festival confronting potential processes of hysteresis (Weinstein’s demand could transfer “authorship” to the producer, which would debilitate Cannes’ discourses on authorship, and, potentially, also the festival and its network).

### **Sharing principles, blurring borders**

As we will see next, the most important companies meeting at Cannes engage in activities ranging from production to distribution, and they often seem to operate following David Hesmondhalgh’s understanding of “vertical integration based on the marriage between content creation and distribution” ([2002] 2012 : 201). I am not discussing the matter of vertical integration beyond the examples pointed out here; my point is simply that as this practice also seems to be operative at Cannes, it is necessary to question to what extent is the Festival de Cannes included in vertical integration and can we still perceive the festival as an autonomous event/entity? As one major distributor put it when asked “From what

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<sup>58</sup> Hysteresis became a threat again in 2017 since two films produced by Netflix have been selected for The Competition. The conflict has involved French distributors, exhibitors, exhibition policies and the Festival de Cannes.

moment do you engage in a film?”, responding “From the script ... Films Distribution invests around 6/7M each year, money which will serve to produce next year’s upcoming films of Ozon and Moretti “(*Ecran Total*, special issue 997: 82). Accordingly the cinema of “authors” promoted by Cannes, such as Moretti or Ozon (Cannes’ favorites), results from practices of vertical integration. That is, certain companies capitalize the cultural capital generated at the Festival de Cannes in an ongoing process which also results in the production of films that may strive for a place in The Competition. I am not saying that these two individuals would not be making films without this type of support; I am saying that the system of consecration needs the work of a closely related system of production of “artistic” products and “creators”. Without the cooperation of a system of production of adequate works and “authors”, the system of consecration would be meaningless. The relationship may not be fixed but it involves great efforts to generate (historically) and maintain (year after year) the prestige as consecrator of the Festival de Cannes, and the Festival de Cannes’ institution cannot do this alone. We will see in upcoming chapters the role of the press, but certain cinema industries certainly participate in this process of generating prestige *for* Cannes.

This leads me back to the concept of habitus and its role in bringing together the Festival de Cannes and the Cannes Film Market. Any form of symbolic capital (and this includes cultural capital) necessitates objects, such as works of art or films; people, such as artists or cinema authors; and shared knowledge and dispositions (applying Moore 2008: 106), but it also needs a concealed but existent economic and political backdrop. Therefore, the festival necessitates the cinema industry that supports it and the collectively produced and maintained beliefs that have positioned the Festival de Cannes and its network at top positions in cinema cultures. Accordingly, the festival does not simply defend the institutions, companies and individuals that embody those principles: it needs them to “work its magic”.

The Festival de Cannes and the Cannes Film Market received an estimated 127,000 visitors in 2014, of which 4,000 were accredited journalists and more than 12,000 were accredited participants of the Market (*Le 1*, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 5). The Festival de Cannes 2014 had a 27 million USD budget (*Le 1*, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 5), but its market hosted the signing of many contracts, amounting to some 450 million USD (*Cannes Market News* 17<sup>th</sup> May: 3) which could be very telling in terms of explaining Cannes' success in getting hold of so much attention, at least regarding professional attention. In particular, the 2014 market had "more than 1,350 screenings and representatives from 108 countries" (Official Catalogue 2014: 17). At the 2014 market, "producers account for 29%, followed by theatrical distributors with 21%, sales with 11%, and VoD and new media with 4%. A total of 1,900 buyers are present to acquire films and projects" (*Screen*, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 6). Therefore, from one perspective, the Festival de Cannes attracts much international media attention, while its market has no coverage outside the specialised dailies; but from another point of view there are more stars, companies, filmmakers and movement of economic capital at the market than at the film competition, and these, as we have just seen, add to the festival's symbolic capital. The matter is not so simple as to claim that one event is invested in cultural capital and the other in economic capital, nor that one sets the guidelines and the other follows; first and foremost because, according to what is published at Cannes, it is difficult to separate them, even though they may seem separate (or they may be claimed to be separate) from an institutional point of view or from outside.

The difficulties in distinguishing one event from the other are such that some even claim that "foreign sales are *the heart of Cannes*" (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014: 1). The Cannes Film Market's dailies publish a series of reports every day on "Cannes' Deals... who is inking on the dotted line *at the festival*" (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014: 6, my emphasis), according to which contracts are signed at the festival. To begin with, films in The Competition do not necessarily



have all their distribution deals closed when they premiere at the festival, and such contracts can get signed at the Cannes Film Market. This certainly brings the market very close to the festival. For instance, Ken Loach's "*Jimmy's Hall* marks Sony Pictures Classics third acquisition on the ground at Cannes" (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014: 1), or "Nuri Bilge Ceylan's competition entry *Winter Sleep* has sold to the U.K., Ireland, Benelux, Portugal, Israel and Mexico, among other territories" (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2014: 4). More examples of this are Cohen Media Group's acquisition of *Timbuktu's* (Abderrahmane Sissako) U.S. rights on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, or, Sony Classics' acquisition of *Leviathan* (Andrei Zvyagintsev) on the same day. Such agreements are echoed in all the market dailies the day after, which not only means that the trade press announces deals but that such deals, which bring together the festival and the market, are important in the configuration of the event.

Accordingly, we should consider the possibility that some producers or distribution executives decide on the price or on the acquisition of films depending on how such films are thought to be doing at Cannes. Therefore, the translation of symbolic capital to economic capital may not need to be deferred at Cannes, another sign of Cannes' presumable lack of autonomy. Some films in The Competition are bought only on the basis of having been shortlisted, as in the case of Sony Pictures Classics with *Saint Laurent* (Bertrand Bonello), which they bought before the film's premiere, but others are purchased only after its premiere, as was the case with *Winter Sleep* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan). Film executives can attend premieres and hear and compare the applause (films are actually applauded or booed at Cannes); they can read reviews or they can rely on their own criteria. In any case, the festival's generation and attachment of cultural capital to its films has an impact on the trading of these films at Cannes. However, the lack of international distribution deals for Jean-Luc Godard's 2014 film *Goodbye to Language*, despite the film being in The Competition, signals that the cultural capital

generated and accumulated at the festival does not directly translate to economic capital in all cases. Such disruptions serve to reinforce the idea that “money cannot really make art” and that “there is something else, more essential, at the heart of artistic creation” (De Valck 2014a:74). However, the aim of this chapter is to take such statements “with a pinch of salt” and consider that those ideas are socially constructed and reinforced at Cannes to cultivate its symbolic capital (which often translates to economic capital).

Moreover, it is not only the case that films in The Competition are looking for distribution deals at Cannes. Future film projects involving companies that currently have films in The Competition are being put together at the same “market/festival”. The *Cannes Market News* publishes daily “*The Buzz of the day*”. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of May they highlighted that “EuropaCorp has announced a new 450m dollars five-year credit facility to finance a new slate of English language movies... EuropaCorp has Bertrand Bonello’s *Saint Laurent* and Tommy Lee Jones’ *The Homesman* in official selection” (3).<sup>59</sup> So while the company is signing huge finance agreements, it is also presenting other films at The Competition. On the one hand, the amount of the economic transactions carried out at the market greatly exceeds the economic capital of the festival (around 25 million Euros per year, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). On the other hand, these companies still use the symbolic capital of The Competition to convey the prestige of the company and the importance of such transactions, trying to transfer symbolic capital from the festival to the market. This makes the translation of symbolic capital to economic capital an ongoing complex process that renders the Festival de Cannes and the Cannes Film Market inseparable, so it cannot be said that one is interested in economic capital and the other one in symbolic capital. We could agree that both forms of capital are subject to appearances in market practices and in festival practices, and this would need to be

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<sup>59</sup> On top of that, the founder of EuropaCorp, Luc Besson, would come to appear as a co-writer of this film, which serves to further illustrate how lines get blurred in the development and production of films.

taken into consideration when unpacking the meaning and value of Cannes' Best Screenplay Award for both festival and market participants (if we can still divide them along those lines).

I argue that another reason why market practices and festival practices are not easy to separate is because there is no red line marking where distribution companies or sales agencies enter the development and production of films. For instance, Wild Bunch presents itself as an international sales and distribution company (in *wildbunch.biz*) and it was handling the international distribution rights of the film *Two Days, One Night* (Dardenne brothers 2014) which was in The Competition in 2014. But they had acquired those rights at the Cannes Film Market in 2013, while it was still a film project. Moreover, I explained in my previous chapter that the actresses and the director of *La Vie d'Adèle* (Abdellatif Kechiche 2013) thanked their production company, Wild Bunch, when receiving the 2013 Palme d'Or. (I did not clarify that this company had been widely criticised for their *production* methods in the 2013 festival dailies, because this fact was not relevant to my previous case study's approach). That is, it is not only finished films that are looking for distribution at Cannes and companies often associated with the films in The Competition are not only distribution companies. The only reason why I am calling our attention to this and other similar examples is because we can find vertical integration of film companies among those companies that develop/produce/sell films in The Competition at Cannes.<sup>60</sup> This is nothing new in itself, for David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson already argued in 2010 that "distribution companies form the core of economic power in the commercial film industry" (34), because they mediate between talent and financiers, and exhibitors and broadcasters. The topic has been widely discussed by film festival scholars (such as Iordanova 2011 and 2015, Harbord 2002, Stringer

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<sup>60</sup> My own experience working at a production company was the same; when trying to finance a film project (sometimes at the Cannes Film Market) we would contact distributors or broadcasters. These companies could either advance funds or back up loans with their distribution contracts.

2003a, Ostrowska 2014) but there seems to be a prevailing divide between production practices and festival practices. However, what I observed in my 2014 visit to Cannes is that much of the movement in the Cannes Film Market, and therefore much of the Festival de Cannes' hype surrounding industry professionals, revolves around different stages of the production process. We have already seen how distributors and the Festival de Cannes are accused of assuming too tight relations, and now I am taking that criticism a bit further since we may question to what extent these companies are just distributors. I am not adding to the discussion of vertical integration in the film industries (as there is an ample bibliography on this matter, ranging from Branston and Stafford 1996 to Schatz 2009, and including Acland 2003 and Finney 2010). I simply raise the point here to question the extent to which production, distribution and festival practices (including awards) are autonomous from one another.

I am going to review the statements of a Notorious Pictures executive at the 2014 Cannes Film Market to illustrate the previous claim. Notorious Pictures is one of Italy's top "distribution" companies and one could think that at the Cannes Film Market "distribution" companies primarily make deals to distribute finished films, but this is not always the case:

generating these kind of numbers in just one quarter has placed us at the centre with exhibitors, who can see us as an important partner today...Notorious has a staff of 15 as well as several freelance script readers covering the main markets... we read about 450 scripts a year ... When a film has strong elements (screenplay, director and cast, and important distributor, a high production value, a US release date), we can buy it in the script phase... (*Box Office*, issue 9/10:14).

As we can see, this "distribution" company can engage with film projects at any stage of development or production, and they are considered *partners* of exhibition companies, not mere providers; consequently there is no red line dividing each stage of the making of films as projects, texts

or products. According to the quote, “distributors” present at the Cannes Film Market read and evaluate scripts/screenplays.<sup>61</sup> It is a very interesting interview that touches on many issues, such as what does a “distribution” company consider are the elements that make a film project strong, in a clear attempt to judge the value of the product at the earlier stages of the project.

At the Cannes Film Market, it is often the case that film projects are looking for partnership during the early stages, on the basis of what the industry terms “the package”; this consists of the elements quoted previously, or at least as many of those as can be secured. What these companies do is sometimes similar to what Thomas Schatz explains regarding Hollywood blockbusters, for instance in terms of pre-sales (2009:29). Moreover, as it emerges in the previous quote, there are many statements from film companies' executives at Cannes claiming that, when it comes to evaluating film projects, screenplay drafts are very important. For instance, Matthew McConaughey, promoting his new film project with Gus Van Sant, said that “the script for *Sea of Trees* was the best he’s read in five years” and that this had determined his decision to appear in the film (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 4). The film came to be premiered in The Competition in 2015, providing yet another example of where the market and the festival rely upon an ongoing reciprocally productive relationship.<sup>62</sup> What we can see is that Cannes is a site where screenplays or “screen ideas” (MacDonald 2004) is important,<sup>63</sup> since much of the buying and selling in the Film Market is

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<sup>61</sup> I am aware of the specialized terminology use (Maras 2009, MacDonald 2010) but the film industry at Cannes seems to use both terms – script and screenplay - indistinguishably.

<sup>62</sup> Gus Van Sant is a director who has a strong track record at the Festival de Cannes and, as will be seen throughout this thesis, the festival develops longstanding relations with certain film directors. For instance, Gus Van Sant received the Prix de la Mise en Scene in 2003, participated in the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary Cannes’ produced film *A Chacun son Cinéma* and that same year won the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special Award, and he was present at 2011 in the Un Certain Regard competition.

<sup>63</sup> The discussion on the “ontology of the screenplay” (Horne 2007) and the research on the uses of this and/or other terms to refer to screenwriting practices is complex and I do not want to engage in it here; therefore I mainly use the term screenplay because it is the term used to name the award. I do, however come back to this issue in my thesis conclusion.

either done around the acquisition of screenplays or the screenplays are used to put talent and financing together for a film project.

Gaumont Film Company is another studio often associated with films in The Competition, and according to their general manager they “always turn back to the same thing: the story” (*Le Film Français*, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 13). While this may not be one hundred per cent true, it is still an interesting claim and supports my suggestion that screenplays are enormously important at the Cannes Film Market, which, I have argued, is inseparable from the festival. In any case, film financiers and producers speculate with the potential economic success of their film projects, to figure out the adequate risk-rate for each project, and they often include screenplays, or maybe other forms of screen ideas in their calculations. While this means, of course, that they do not draw a line, dividing film production processes away from the other stages, it also means that as soon as they engage in a project they want to generate hype and buzz around it. According to Jonathan Gray (2010, also Austin 2002) the hype for a film can start from the early stages of a film’s production so, as Finola Kerrigan puts it: “film marketing, in line with the marketing management in other industries, begins at the new product development stage” (2009: 9). Therefore, although it may be true that “regular business models that predict demand and calculate costs and sufficient margins do not apply to films” (De Valck 2014a:74) it is not surprising that we often find hype being generated around a screenplay and/or screen ideas to cope with this “uncertainty and the consequent risk of producing films” (ibid.).

There are also examples of how the reception of a film at the festival has an impact on the development and production of future films. *The Lunchbox* (Ritesh Batra 2013) was a 2013 Festival de Cannes’ success,<sup>64</sup> and after such success it was released in more than 70 territories. The producer of that film claimed in 2014, while attending the market, that because of *The Lunchbox* “I am now more exposed to the

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<sup>64</sup> *The Lunchbox* did not open in The Competition but in Un Certain Regard.

world. I have to think about global audiences, which influences the creative process" (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 24). What happened to the producer of *The Lunchbox* is very illustrative because she makes explicit that the relationship between economic and cultural forms of capital at Cannes is bi-directional and continual. Another example of similar tensions is evident in the following case: "with a film from the Ivory Coast selected for the first time to screen at Cannes, hopes are high that the West African country's long dormant film industry might finally be on the rebound" (*Cannes Film Festival*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 12). It can be seen here that, first, the festival and a film industry are brought together, and, second, festival selection is claimed to impact future productions. One final example may further clarify my point: it is under the umbrella of the Festival de Cannes that the MEDIA Award is given out. This is an award for the best project financed from development by Europe Creative MEDIA, one with "a strong potential for a European success" (*Ecran Total Cannes*, issue 997: 23). The award brings together two elements: the development of a film and its success. Again, this is actually nothing new, but it is interesting that the 2014 ceremony took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> May, during the time of the festival, at the Palais des Festivals, bringing together European institutions, ideas concerning films' development and films' success, and the festival's iconic symbols; it further reinforces my idea that production practices, from the development stage onwards, and festival practices, such as the festival's contribution to the success of a film, may be tightly connected.

As we have seen, Bourdieu claimed that relations in the art market between economic and cultural capital should remain somehow concealed or indirect, but he also pointed out that art markets tend to lose autonomy in favour of economic capital; thus, the extent to which the relationships observed are not deferred or concealed could be a signal of a lack of autonomy, and this lack of autonomy could have an impact on awarding decisions or on the meaning that awards acquire. However, these examples were publicly revealed at Cannes. That is, the

relationship is overt, for those who have access to the market dailies these excerpts are taken from. Curiously enough, while the Cannes' website claims, as is well known, that The Competition films are "author cinema with a wide audience appeal", the Official Catalogue, available only for registered press or professional participants, claims that the festival stands for "author cinema *developed* for a wide audience" (Official Catalogue 2014: 16, my emphasis). The inclusion of the term "developed" is, I consider, of major importance as it signals that Cannes' guests are aware of, or are made aware of, the development and production hype that surrounds and permeates the city of Cannes at the time of its film market and film festival. In sum, while film festival scholars have widely argued that Cannes influences how films are distributed, received or even made (as extensively referenced in my framework), the process is too continuous to defend the idea that the influence takes place in one direction. In this respect, I somewhat follow Dorota Ostrowska (2016), but I mostly relate her arguments to the potential influence that a Best Screenplay Award, nominally given to a film's "screenplay", may have on this ongoing development, production, marketing and distribution process, which seems to have no red line separating one stage from another.

### **Cinematographic criteria regarding *Leviathan***

It is not news that each year The Competition becomes "a symbol of culture and diversity and a high point in the year of French and international film industry professionals... a window onto the most adventurous *auteur films*" (Official Catalogue 2014: 1, my emphasis), yet we have seen that the meaning of adventurous could be questioned. Even when the inclusion of certain directors in The Competition raises difficulties, "because their films can't be classified under what is actually a now somewhat dated genre of 'auteur cinema'" (*Box Office*, issue 9/10: 18), Cannes' selection still serves to define authored cinema. We must remember reviews on the categorising agency of film festivals, and the



idea that Cannes contributes to the definition of author cinema, points which have been widely argued already (Stringer 2003a, Elsasser 2005, Chadhuri 2005, Harbord 2002, Ostrowska 2016). But, while these scholars tend to agree that “the development of the Cannes’ market played a key role in the process of the emergence of ... ‘Cannes film’” (Ostrowska 2016:28) they mostly consider that “the political and aesthetic tastes” (Ostrowska 2016:27) of the Festival de Cannes are more autonomous than I have been suggesting. That is, I propose that social agents occupying the highest positions at the festival and the market have common interests (often it is difficult to know if someone is attending the festival, the market or both). Therefore, they share assumptions about cinema, assumptions which they take to be “natural”, but which serve to reinforce their field and their field positions. I am also considering that when we use the term field we cannot quite separate traders from consecrators, so it is not the case that the festival “leads” or “discovers” and then the market follows the trends set by the festival. My argument is that they are engaged in an ongoing relationship of mutual dependency which renders them inseparable. It is in this light that I want to draw attention to the use of the term screenplay in the award that I am studying. According to Bourdieu, “by structuring the perception which social agents have of the social world, the act of naming helps to establish the structure of this world, and does so all the more significantly the more widely it is recognised, i.e. authorised” (Bourdieu 1991:105). Therefore, if widely authorised members of the network, such as Cannes’ juries or the Cannes’ institution, claim that a film deserves a “screenplay award” they would be structuring the perception held by other social agents (for instance market participants). This is a very complex question which I address throughout my thesis; at this point I am only suggesting the possibility that it were so, and I am only considering social agents at the market and at the festival (there are many other social agents involved in “naming” operations, from film critics to academics).

However, naming and structuring the world would not only apply to the term screenplay in the Best Screenplay Award. My main point here is

to understand how market and festival agents (who are often the same people) cooperate in their use of language and what this tells us regarding how author cinema is structured *at* and *by* Cannes. We have already seen that films in The Competition are sometimes looking for international distribution deals at Cannes Film Market and so the reception they experience “at the festival” may influence the hype they will have “at the market”. In this light, before the Palme d’Or was bestowed, the film that was later to win the award was reviewed in these terms: “*Winter Sleep*. No doubt every festival in sight will pick it up and every self-respecting art-house will program it” (*Screen*, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 20). In this example, the film’s marketability is being highlighted in a market daily from the UK, *Screen*, before the film had been sold to that territory (according to a previous quote, it sold UK rights on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May). Before each festival, Frémaux announces in press conference the films of the Official Selection.<sup>65</sup> Regarding *Winter Sleep* he said: “it is 3 hours and 30 minutes in Turkish but it is a film, like many others, that represents *cinéma d’auteur* in the traditional sense” (0:33, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). That is, there was a shared agreement - between the terms of its selection, its jury reception (the film won the Palme d’Or), and its foreign sales (which occurred before the award was announced) - that the film represented author cinema.

In that same press conference Frémaux goes on to explain more types of author cinema with a wide audience appeal, citing films and their countenances: “we have classicism from Tommy Lee Jones and we also have it from Nuri Bilge Ceylan, but we also have modernity here [making reference to Dolan] where we are looking at cinema art now” (0:60, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). Such statements, I argue, contribute to the building of author cinema within the rhetoric of classic/old boys versus modern/discoveries which is so important at Cannes. As Ostrowska explained, Cannes’ films “do not form a uniform group in formal terms; such uniformity would have defied the whole ethos of discovery”

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<sup>65</sup> The Official Selection is composed of The Competition and The Special Screenings Out of Competition.

(2016:28). As a member of the jury put it “we have seen what cinema will become *in the future*” (Andrea Arnold in the Awards Jury Press Conference 0:01, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*, my emphasis). Therefore, this jury member assumes that what they have seen at The Competition is going to influence how cinema is made in the future; which again, relates to the ethos of discovery and the rhetoric of the art market (I develop this idea in my fifth chapter in relation to the press).

On the other hand, the president of the Brazilian Film Commission (André Sturm) hoped that, for the Palme d’Or, the jury would “choose a film that can *be distributed* around the world and people can enjoy” (*Cannes Market News*, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014: 3, my emphasis), highlighting the industrial side of cinema at the festival. Similarly, “Canal Plus Loves Cannes Cinema”, as they claimed with full page ads in several market dailies on the first day of the 2014 festival. The claim is not surprising given that it is one of France’s most important production and broadcasting companies and many of the films in The Competition had Canal Plus support. While this argument is not new, my focus is on how the embodiment of habitus naturalises decisions which are beneficial for the individuals and for the field as a whole.

I want to argue that the Festival de Cannes’ jury members, in their awarding decisions, reinforce the continuity of certain cinematographic criteria. I argue that juries are not only “speaking the words of” the Festival de Cannes’ institution, but the cinema companies that we have seen are closely related to it as well. When Gilles Jacob reflects on the relevance of the jury’s decisions over the years, he acknowledges that not participating in the discussions “does not prevent us from, at times, thinking that the jury is making a historical mistake. But if there is any pressure it does not come from the festival” (*Le Film Français*, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014: 9). I argue that if their decision is “historical” in any manner it is because they concentrate the accumulated capital of the group, therefore pressure could come from many places other than the festival’s institution. However, the acquired symbolic capital of the social agent

within a field is directly related to their embodiment of habitus, how effortlessly they demonstrate their feel for the game (Moore 2008:105). Therefore, pressure may not be such a common practice after all, because they “are people who know cinema”. They should often perform the festival’s agenda without any pressure being excerpted because they have embodied that “adequate” cinema knowledge, they share assumptions and these assumptions appear natural for them, in as much as those assumptions also serve the interests of the group they represent and to which they more or less belong.

I contend that the film *Leviathan*, when arriving at Cannes to compete for the Palme d’Or, was promoted according to certain values which are naturally assumed (while being simultaneously reinforced), as author cinema values. All films in The Competition have an electronic press kit which is available on the festival’s website after the festival and which, in printed version, is handed to all professional and press participants when they collect their badges. *Leviathan* was presented to the Cannes’ network with a note from the director in that electronic (and printed) press kit saying that:

Thomas Hobbes’ outlook on the state is that of a philosopher on man’s deal with the devil: he sees it as a monster created by man to prevent ‘the war of all against all’, and by the understandable will to achieve security in exchange for *freedom, man’s sole true possession* (4).

The moral conflict and the importance of individual freedom that the director highlights here is very similar to the ideas the institution and the jury valued when reviewing the film. Therefore, this film ended up basically embodying the idea that author cinema means freedom from state control. I investigate such meaning-making processes in depth in my next chapters; here, I am simply pointing out that there seems to be a general agreement on certain values around author cinema with a wide audience appeal.

In the first interview Zvyagintsev gave at Cannes (before the film was premiered) he said that “an *artist* reflects on what he sees” (0:03, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*), associating the film with art, and art with the personal position of an individual. Then he went on to say that: “art must give hope to people”. So he was giving a social function to his work, and to art. Accordingly, the selection of this film contributes firstly to associating “Cannes’ cinema” with art. As much as this is such a widely shared assumption that we may stop seeing it, Cannes and art have become associated because field agents are both embedded and interested in reinforcing it, not just because the festival’s institution makes the claim. On the Cannes’ website Thierry Frémaux is quoted explaining the film as “an adaptation of the story of Job into modern Russia” (in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). Here we find similar philosophical and social dimensions to those claimed by the “author” (ibid.).

Afterwards, the screenplay award was introduced in the Awarding Ceremony with the phrase “transcendence beyond perception, beyond understanding, that is exactly what we request from a screenwriter” (0:27, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*) and then the award was bestowed on this film. The Cannes’ institution commissions those discourses, and knows the winners before the ceremony, so the Awarding Ceremony and the awards should be understood to make sense together. Therefore if they claim to request transcendence and then they award the screenplay of *Levithan* they are considering it to be a transcendent screenplay (for instance appealing to the Bible and Hobbes). These practices serve to attach to author cinema and to the Cannes Festival certain values which may appear to be objectified in the work, but actually emerge from the common effort and interests of all participants. I also propose that, as it follows from the previous quote, by giving the film a *screenplay award* those values became somehow attached to the award-winning film’s screenplay and/or the work of the screenwriter because the use of those words “officialises visions of the world” (Bourdieu 1991:129). That is, I am not arguing that values such as “transcendence”, or an “artist’s

vision” emerge from the film’s screenplay but that they become attached to it. I investigate these tensions in my next chapters, where I consider the reception of screenplay award-winning films after the festival.

Finally, at the press conference after giving out the awards, the jury was asked about the Best Screenplay Award: “was there a political content in your discussions?” To which they responded: “the word that was most repeated was freedom, we tried to look for some sort of freedom of speech in the films” (0:20, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). Therefore, they claimed to have distinguished this film on the basis that it stood for “freedom of speech” (in particular against Russia’s state control). Significantly enough, the film *A Touch of Sin* (Jia Zhangke 2013) had been read similarly in reference to China’s state control; therefore I suggest that this type of political engagement is one of such shared assumptions and is part of a strategy performed at Cannes to reinforce the festival’s prestige and that of the network which sustains it. This suggestion is further investigated in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

## **Conclusions**

Without even considering the specific values being reinforced, with each award the jury is making a statement about cinema values and cinematographic criteria. But, more importantly, they rely on shared assumptions. Since, following Bourdieu, top-positioned social agents act under field forces mostly to strengthen the importance of their field and the status quo, awarding decisions are, more than anything, field-reinforcing strategies. Taste and cinematographic criteria are “naturalised” around Cannes because this serves the interests of the festival, just as much as it serves the interests of its guests and the interests of the cinema industry “behind” them. Each year the jury changes and they are supposed to be making “historical” decisions but, if nothing else, they are sustaining the collective belief that the value of “author cinema” emerges from signatures and texts and not from the collaborative efforts of consecrators and traders. However, as Bourdieu explains in both *The Rules of Art* (1996) and *The Field of Cultural*

*Production* (1993), style, authors, dealers, consecrators and commentators must all be taken into account in order to understand the dynamics of art and culture. These days it would be very controversial to put forth an analysis of the textual countenances shared by Cannes' award-winning films. While I do not study how cinematographic criteria or habitus may define the formal terms of competing films, awarding decisions are not taken independently of those.<sup>66</sup> In this I am somewhat leaving open the possibility that there is, after all, certain uniformity around the films of The Competition, based on this cinematographic criteria or habitus which I have been arguing that the festival and the market share, and this uniformity does not only influence awarding decisions but also the selection and the production of films for The Competition. In any case, in order to further understand the social construction of the Festival de Cannes and the reification of taste around it, I introduce in my next chapter the role of the press in those dynamics.

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<sup>66</sup> For instance, the consultant producer Stephen Follows gives a historical account of the advantage of drama-films over other genres in The Competition shortlist and other similar Cannes' trends on his website (in *stephenfollows.com*).

## Chapter 4

### **A Best Screenplay award-winning film from hype to reception: *Lorna's Silence* (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne 2008)**

In this case study I have analysed the interaction between *Lorna's Silence* and its readers, *before* and *after* it was awarded a Best Screenplay at Cannes 2008. In analysing press reception, I investigate how the relation between readers (film critics) and texts (films) gives meaning to Cannes' awards, and how that meaning is transported beyond the festival. As we saw in previous case studies, the tensions within the festival as an event and the reception of films during the festival can influence decision-making processes. I argue that this is because the members of the jury, acting as institution delegates, award films which reinforce the values required by the festival in order to maintain its cultural capital. Studying field dynamics at the event, it becomes clear that awarding decisions are central to ensure not only the Festival de Cannes' position in the field, but also the field positions of the most important agents who meet there, from film directors to executives. However, we have already explored how the relationship between the cultural capital of its awards and their field-configuring impact is due to the Festival de Cannes being the number one film festival in the world: a distinction it receives and/or claims on the basis of its films, its guests and the media attention it receives (specialized and non-specialized). Nonetheless, we should not forget that film critics also produce "paratexts" (Gray 2010) which also construct the meaning of films and of the festival, and which are often available or produced to be read outside the event proper. That is, while we have studied how field dynamics within the festival influence awarding decisions, this case study questions the role of film critics in making meaning of those decisions. I have studied how the



reception of a film evolves from its premiere at the festival to its commercial release in order to understand the relations between agents in the production field and those in the field of film criticism. In this chapter, I am further analysing the social construction of the Festival de Cannes only now I am including the function of film critics in this process. Just as I have previously pointed out the mutual dependence of the festival's institution and the top agents in the field of cinema production of *author cinema with a wide audience appeal*, I am now investigating the relations they establish with those film critics in charge of reviewing *author cinema with a wide audience appeal*.

When a film is submitted to Cannes, the festival's institution has to evaluate it in order to include it (or not) among the films that will premiere there, as well as in order to locate it in one of its different sections (such as Out of Competition, in The Competition, or in Un Certain Regard). Therefore, selecting a film for The Competition already involves interpreting and evaluating it; that is, it is a practice of film reception performed by the Cannes' institution. Since "reception studies has as its object researching the history of the interactions between *real readers* and *texts*, actual spectators and films" (Staiger 1992: 8, my emphasis) we must conclude that, to an extent, what I have done in my previous case studies, where I studied awarding decisions, was already a study of the interactions between readers and texts, only these were relatively recent and not historical cases. Including *Lorna's Silence* in The Competition entails making meaning of it as *author cinema with a wide audience appeal*. Nonetheless, when a film premieres at Cannes it already attains a "level of distinction above its unselected peers" (Czach 2004: 82), and therefore film selection is more than just a practice of reception; it is also a practice of film promotion. Moreover, we have also seen that to a great extent the interaction is not simply between readers and text, as neither selection nor awarding

decisions are performed by disinterested readers, and they are not based solely on texts (if any of those actually exists). As Elsaesser (2005) pointed out, films often arrive at festivals already bearing their own cultural capital; therefore, as we have seen, festivals select those films that help *them* in their field positions, so selection is also, simultaneously, a practice of the festival's self-promotion (similarly in De Valck 2007, Chan 2011, Stringer 2003b). In sum, that *Lorna's Silence* participated at Cannes in The Competition should serve to secure, in principle, both the value of that film text and the value of the festival. All the above is equally true in relation to awarding decisions, for these should secure the value of the festival and of the award-winning film, and we have already reviewed how aware institution delegates are of that fact. Janet Harbord writes that the importance of a film festival is that it "secures, to a large extent, the value of the text as product" (2002: 69), but we have seen that the opposite is equally true: the importance of film selection and film rewarding is that it secures, to a large extent, the value of the festival as a field-configuring event. In this chapter I investigate the role of film critics' reception in these dynamics, and the extent to which they could also be considered institution delegates. In this respect, I am following Pierre Bourdieu's idea that "tiny 'mutual admiration societies' grow up" as the field of cultural production departs from the general public and criticism "places itself unconditionally at the service of the artist" ([1984] 2010:5-6). In this light, film critics at Cannes would be *securing* the value of Cannes' films as artistic or author-signed pieces and tiny mutual admiration societies could be growing in that field. I analyse the extent to which this is true at the Festival de Cannes and the terms of such operation. It is necessary, therefore, to evaluate the disinterestedness of film critics reviewing Cannes' films in order to understand how these films and the festival (and certainly also its awards) acquire meaning through reception practices. What is being brought to question is, once more, the

extent to which taste is shared, as this should be illuminating in terms of the field configuration of the Festival de Cannes.

In this chapter my object of study is the creation of meaning around the Cannes 2008 Best Screenplay award-winning film, and I approach this question by considering how it results from complex field relations. I start with analysis of the promotional paratexts which introduced the film *Lorna's Silence* to the Festival de Cannes' institution delegates and to the registered critics. My aim is to add to current discussion on the role that hype and paratexts have in the construction of films' meanings assessing to what extent it remains true regarding Cannes' films that "hype, in short, creates meaning" (Gray 2010:113), and, more importantly, whether paratexts "create proper interpretations" (ibid.:426), which become reified and attached to a film (following the ideas of scholars such as Acland 2003, Kernan 2004, Mittell 2004, and others). Thousands of film critics meet at the festival each year, and before they watch films, they have access to the promotional leaflets. These critics also have access to the Jury Press Conference where, as we have already seen, the jury advances how they are going to face the films in competition for the awards. As reviewed in previous chapters, the festival's institution also facilitates (and demands) participation in certain promotional acts by the representatives of The Competition films: a photo call, an interview for the Cannes TV, the mounting of the red steps, and, of course, a press conference after the film's press premiere; all these events are available for the press, either staged or broadcasted live. Moreover, beyond the institutional acts, the press and the stars and filmmakers of The Competition films can meet and hold interviews. From day one, and even before, the press writes about the festival and its films and their reviews are published and readable both inside and outside the festival event. On the one hand, the role of the press is to project the meaning and value of the festival and its films outside

the city of Cannes; on the other hand, each film critic is playing in accordance to his/her particular field position. From thence arises the question of whether they stand aside and comment, or whether they are members of a certain kind *within* the Cannes' field; this issue needs to be carefully addressed but the aim of the study is to complicate Daniel Dayan's claim that different groups mainly compete at film festivals ([2000] 2013). This point brings into question whether they have at least one shared interest: to naturalise or objectify the taste distinctions which govern this field.

There is, however, another important circumstance to be taken into account: that film critics have to watch and write "in the pressure of getting things out in a hurry" (Bourdieu [1996] 2012:28). According to Bourdieu, "fast-thinkers offer cultural 'fast food'-pre-digested and prethought culture" ([1996] 2012: 29) and while this may be because they don't have time to actually come up with anything other than pre-digested cultural assessments, fast-thinking actually serves, in Bourdieu's view, to reinforce the *status quo*. Certainly Bourdieu is ambitious in making these claims and so am I in bringing them into question in the context of the Festival de Cannes. However, in order to examine the role of film critics in the social construction of Cannes, it is necessary to examine the relevance of the aforementioned argument, and understand if this relates to the judgement of taste at Cannes. The navigation of films and their reception practices develop from arrival to awards, because the press comments on the films and the jury's decisions and, as we saw, the members of the jury have to explain their decisions to a selected group of critics and journalists. Moreover, award-winning directors and stars also give press conferences before and after receiving awards. Thence through the analysis of these practices we can learn about the processes of meaning-making and the generation of cultural capital around award-winning films. Finally, at the time of its commercial release,

the Cannes' award stamp is attached to the award-winning film potentially framing how it gets to be received beyond the festival. This case study also contributes to building the gap between the festival as an event and its gatekeeping function, with an impact outside the event proper, by analysing whether critical reception changes through these processes and how it might change (following Harbord 2002 and 2011 as well as Ostrowska 2016). In sum, I am addressing the question: how does the event and its inside field dynamics influence the meaning and the value of films in commercial circuits?

The film *Lorna's Silence* was written and directed by two Belgian filmmakers, the Dardenne brothers, and the main production company of the film was Les Films Du Fleuve, located in Belgium; it was also partially subsidized by Belgian funds. The story develops in Belgium and most of the characters, except the main protagonist, are Belgian. However, it was also co-produced by French companies, partly financed by French TV and also received financing from French public funds (as well as European funds). Furthermore, the film's main language is French and it was released simultaneously in France and Belgium. I decided to consider the French press reception of this Belgian, and to an extent "almost-French" film, in order to address the impact that this France-based festival has in its most immediate commercial circuit, France. First, I consider how the cultural capital and the meaning of the film and the festival were constructed by those agents who surely had an interest in securing the value of the film (its financiers, producers, filmmakers and cast). Then, I studied how the Cannes' institution also participated in reinforcing the cultural capital of the film. Finally, I explore the French critical reception of this film at three stages (during the festival, when receiving the award, and when it was launched in the theatrical circuit) in order to evaluate the interest or disinterestedness of those French film critics in adding value to the film and the festival. I will argue that the Cannes' Best Screenplay award for *Lorna's Silence* did

not significantly change the film's reception because the film already arrived at the festival bearing the hype of having a particularly remarkable screenplay. Therefore, I will conclude that those three apparently independent groups of agents (its makers, the institution and film critics) do not provide substantially different readings, thence they cooperate in reifying meaning and value. In as much as we will see some exceptions and nuances of meaning, these are minimal in comparison to the general agreement.

It must be stressed that I only consider highly institutionalised professional criticism, therefore that this case study does not contribute to debates on the different types of film criticism (as discussed by Curran 2000, Verboord 2010 and 2014, and others). The newspapers consulted are *La Croix*, *Libération*, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *20 Minutes*, and *L'Express*, all well established and best selling newspapers. I have accessed their online archive but these are printed newspapers. I have also consulted the specialised magazines *Positif* and *Cahiers du Cinéma*, which are also highly recognised traditional cinema mediators in France and tightly related to Cannes.<sup>67</sup> That is, the sample is representative of traditional cultural mediation discourses (those of newspapers and specialised magazines); so if we can assert their practices show widely shared dispositions, this could signal a shared social space and potentially also shared interests, such as the objectification of taste.

### **Reception by the Cannes institution**

Certainly, the festival is a legal and economic entity which has the ability to sign contracts (with offices based at Cannes and in Paris), and it seems to have a certain "identity". According to what we have already seen, the Festival de Cannes is, to an extent, devised by its artistic director who will be held responsible for many important decisions, such

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<sup>67</sup> The festival once wanted to give an award to the magazine *Positif*, but they declined the invitation; and we have seen the festival's historical connections with *Cahiers du Cinéma*.

as what films to programme. However, we should not forget that setting up a programme is a process controlled by taste and negotiated with the providers of content, so that individual responsibility is limited, even if the press often neglects those tensions. Nevertheless, festival programming does entail interpreting, evaluating and giving meaning to films. That is, programming is a practice of reception that is already considering films as products, and not only as texts. However they also claim other artistic values such as *diversity* or *freedom* (as we have already seen). Consequently, once selected, Cannes promotes the arrival of each film in The Competition with a series of events. Those activities serve to promote the film and the festival reciprocally; but they also give testimony of the film's reception by the institution, and they show us the relationship between the text and its first public reader, the festival's institution.

Although, as we know, jury members are invited to judge the films according to their own subjectivity, and this is officially the basis of the decision-making process, it should not be forgotten that they speak *in representation* of the Festival de Cannes when bestowing awards. That is, after interpreting and evaluating films, their enunciation is "*The winner of the Best Screenplay is*"; thus, their allegedly subjective taste has become objectified and it has turned into a distinction-making decision that entails the attachment of symbolic capital. Consequently, I have been considering that an award is a public statement enunciated by the Festival de Cannes, even if it is expressed by its jury's president. In this light, it is remarkable that Sean Penn, who was the President of the Jury in 2008, stated in the Press Conference of the Jury, before the festival started, that they were all aware that awarding "allows some films to be shared with a wider audience" (0:01, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*), pointing out that they were well aware not only of their delegated function but also the gate-keeping function of the festival, which, I have argued, is yet another delegated function. Penn's is not an original argument or statement, since most presidents of the jury acknowledge, as we have seen, their field position and their awareness of the rules of the game. However, he went on to say: "we are all *very like-minded* as to how we

are going to receive films... I think that we all have the idea that we have to be certain that the filmmaker *is very conscious of the time where he or she lives*" (0:04, in [festival-cannes.com/eng](http://festival-cannes.com/eng), my emphasis).<sup>68</sup> Penn is thus stating upfront, once more, that the jury has shared dispositions and he reveals the particularities of those shared dispositions in 2008. The jury was, allegedly, looking for filmmakers with a close contact with the world as it is (rather than, for instance, an interest in fantasies). We saw in a previous chapter how important diversity and discovery was for some juries, but this panel claims to be looking for a commitment to reality. This does seem to have been the case when one considers the films awarded that year: *The Class* (Laurent Cantet), *Gomorrah* (Mateo Garronne), *Post Tenebras Lux* (Carlos Reygadas) and *Lorna's Silence* (the Dardennes). Since all those films fulfilled the first condition of the jury, which was to represent the time in which the filmmakers live, I argue that it was fundamental for *Lorna's Silence* to also fulfil that condition in order to receive the 2008 Best Screenplay award. I propose that the film selection and the jury's presidency worked together in the year 2008 to reinforce the idea that *realism* was very important for *author cinema with a wide audience appeal*. In this chapter I will use the term *realism* following the meaning of the jury's previous statement, and the many following and related statements from other Cannes' guests, but not in its academic sense. I am not interested in disentangling the meaning of realism in cinema, but in the construction of this term as a cinema value promoted by the institution and its delegates, and assessing whether it may have influenced the jury's decision to bestow the Best Screenplay Award to *Lorna's Silence* in 2008.

However, in order to support this argument, it is necessary to review the hype already surrounding the film *Lorna's Silence* on arrival at the festival. First of all, The Dardenne brothers had won a Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1999 with the film *Rosetta* and another

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<sup>68</sup> The quote comes from the video and was translated live; the statement was quoted in the newspaper *Telegraph* as "I think we are going to feel very confident that the film-maker who made the film is very aware of the times in which he or she lives" (14<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in [telegraph.co.uk](http://telegraph.co.uk)).



Palme d'Or in 2005 with *The Child*, so they were not new in the field. Their work is often reviewed in the following terms:

a growing oeuvre has established their reputation as leading cinematic auteurs whose mode is a *gritty social realism* that we associate with practitioners of the '*new French realism*'....The films of the Dardennes share with these contemporaries and others elsewhere a preoccupation with *the lives of working-class individuals struggling* to survive... While the brothers are undoubtedly exemplary *realist filmmakers*, their relation to *cinematic realism* is as nuanced and complex as the notion itself (Mosley 2013: 1, my emphasis)<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, when writing about the Dardennes, academics, despite an awareness of the complexities of the notion, do not avoid using the concept of social realism; nor do, as we will see, film critics. Thus, since the film had been written and directed by the Dardenne brothers it was preceded by their author signature: a cinematic realism which includes struggling working-class individuals as a key feature.

Accordingly, the synopsis of *Lorna's Silence*, as presented in the Cannes' 2008 press kit, reads:

In order to become the owner of a snack bar with her boyfriend, Lorna, a young Albanian woman living in Belgium, becomes an accomplice to a diabolical plan devised by mobster Fabio. Fabio has orchestrated a sham marriage between her and Claudy. The marriage allows her to obtain Belgian citizenship and then marry a Russian Mafioso willing to pay a lot of money to acquire the same quickly. However, for this second marriage to be possible, Fabio has planned to kill Claudy. Will Lorna keep silent? (3)

Consequently, both the author signature and the film's press kit

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<sup>69</sup> As we can see in this quote their filmmaking is included in a French tradition.

preceded the text, potentially functioning as paratexts leaning the possibilities of the meaning of the film towards *social realism*. This signals that the film was preceded by the same values which that year's jury was looking for: a depiction of the world we live in. However, even if this film and this criterion seem to perfectly match, we will see that this match was criticized by some members of the press, who disagreed on the importance of this cinema value.

I have already explained that it is important for the festival to generate hype and cultural capital at the arrival of each new film. Accordingly, films' premieres and arrivals turn into broadcasted performances which become rich paratexts of each new Cannes' film. The day that *Lorna's Silence* premiered the cast and the directors appeared, first, in a photo call. While the image depicted is of the bright Cannes' Croisette and the happy and elegant cast and directors, the voice-over says: "that is the power of their cinema, to explore *social realities*" (0:01, in [festival-cannes.com/eng](http://festival-cannes.com/eng), my emphasis). After this statement the voice-over narrates the storyline of the film, exactly as presented in the press kit. At Cannes it is common to narrate films' storylines over their photo call images, but it is not a rule. Significantly enough, in the videos of that year's Palme d'Or, *The Class* (Laurent Cantet 2008) and the Grand Prix award-winning film, *Gomorrah* (Matteo Garrone 2008), were not introduced by their story lines. The voice-over accompanying the images for *Lorna's Silence* also introduces the young actress' back-story, to highlight the parallelisms between her story and that of the character, and her proficient work in the construction of a very realistic female character. We are beginning to see that the promotion of a film by the Cannes' institution is based on a couple of main ideas, which are already introduced by the makers of the film in the film's press kit and then repeated at the different Cannes' events and broadcasts. In this case, that cluster of ideas focused on the actress' realist performance, the career of the filmmakers

and the film's storyline. On the one hand, the Festival organisers are working to a tight schedule, pressed with time, with several films to present to the Cannes' network each day. On the other hand, this repetition is reinforcing the depiction of the film that its makers have agreed to be best for this context.

Later that day, the filmmakers and the actress gave an interview about *Lorna's Silence* for the Cannes TV, which, as I said before, was available for all Cannes' guests including, of course, the press. The first question that the interviewer poses to the Dardennes is how they came up with the idea of writing that *story* (0:00, in [festival-cannes.com/eng](http://festival-cannes.com/eng)), which they relate to having met a social worker who told them similar *real* stories; thence connecting their film to the time in which they live. The interviewer also asks the actress how she constructed the female character.<sup>70</sup> According to her, the many initial rehearsals with *no cinema equipment* were fundamental (ibid. 0:05). To an extent we could consider that, inasmuch as the character is *filmic* for us, for the actress the character was somehow *pre-filmic* (as according to the actress, Lorna emerged from their work on the screenplay rather than in the film's shooting); this is an idea that we will also find emerging later in the words of the directors. The interview is closed by asking the actress if this work touched her personally, because she is Albanian like the main character, to which she responds that she *knows* or *has heard of* some similar stories (ibid. 0:03), in real life, or so it is implied. This reinforces, yet again, the notion that this film reflects the real world. Finally, on that same day came the red steps, and the Cannes' TV broadcast of this iconic moment. Once more, the institution highlights the filmmakers' commitment to the

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<sup>70</sup> Finally, the interviewer asks Arta Dobroshi if she felt especially moved by this story, because both she and Lorna are Albanian. The question is somehow presuming that she could have had a different approach to the story of an illegal immigrant for that reason, but this is not the point here. What is of interest for this research is her answer, as she admits to know of people whose story could have some parallelism.

time we live in, asking the Dardennes: “would you say that your films are getting deeper into the globalized world?” (ibid. 0:01). Next, the team mounts the steps as the Cannes’ commentator, in a voice-over, presents the filmmakers’ previous successes at Cannes, the construction of the main character and, again, the storyline as it appeared in the press kit. Once again this may be the effect of time pressure, but the event works to reify a set of ideas around this film; it frames its reading possibilities.

In their 2008 press conference at Cannes, after the film’s premiere, the Dardennes said of their film: “we wanted to *record* rather than write with our camera, we wanted to *record* Lorna, a very mysterious woman” (0:03, in [festival-cannes.com/eng](http://festival-cannes.com/eng), my emphasis). The writer-directors, as the actress had done earlier, distinguish *pre-filmic* work from filming and they claim that, rather than creating Lorna in the filming process, the character was *recorded*, so that it had come to existence previously. What I am pointing out is that the paratexts that surrounded the film *Lorna’s Silence* emphasized the pre-shooting creative stages and they connected the film via its earlier creative processes to realism. This is not necessarily true for every Dardennes film; for instance, regarding their 1999 Palme d’Or awarded film *Rosetta*, the Dardennes said that it had been the shooting that created the character (ibid. 0:04). Regarding *Rosetta*, they explained that the trembling shot which closed the film was an accident that had occurred during the filming and that they decided to leave it because it worked as a stylistic strategy to convey Rosetta’s emotional despair. Their comparison between *recording Lorna* and *writing Rosetta with their camera* could even open a debate on the hierarchy of filmmaking strategies, and creative processes at Cannes, since *Lorna’s Silence* won the Best Screenplay award and *Rosetta* the Palme d’Or, which as we have seen have different cultural capital attached. Finally, in the above statement, the Dardenne brothers refer to Lorna as *a woman*, not as a character, and the actress is asked about her personal commitment to the story and the character, since it may

echo her own *reality*. Thus, the film's institutional reception and hype is mostly built on the idea that it is a story and a character which mirror the times we live in, rather than, for instance, *the unique vision and style of an author* (Spielberg in 2014, as seen in chapter 2). The jury will, with its awarding criterion and decision, secure *that value* for the film, but did the press follow this idea? The extent to which we find repetition and assumed agreement will reveal the extent to which several groups of agents, the institution, the makers of the films, the members of the jury and the film critics share dispositions, and, consequently, the extent to which they constitute one social class in Bourdieu's terms. That is, I am trying to "construct the objective class, the set of agents who are placed in homogeneous conditions of existence imposing homogeneous conditioning and producing homogeneous systems of dispositions" (Bourdieu [1984] 2010: 95) at the Festival de Cannes.

### **Press reception at Cannes**

In this section I consider the reception of film critics who attended the festival in order to find out the role of the press in reinforcing or contesting the ideas of the makers of the film and the Cannes' institution. The Festival de Cannes is, as Harbord explained, both a time event and a mediator that generates a particular cinema culture. Consequently, the practice of press reception at Cannes is determined by press knowledge that it has a mediating/gate-keeping function, as well as the time constraints of the event. We will see, once more, that most critics highlighted the film's storyline, the main character and the work of the leading actress. There was also general agreement among film critics in stating that this film is *classic* compared to the Dardennes' usual filmmaking style, (an idea they somehow introduced in their press conference), but critics showed no agreement as to whether this was positive or negative. *Lorna's Silence* was not unanimously praised, yet most critics showed great admiration for the Dardennes, whom, as I said earlier, had already been awarded two Palmes d'Or. We will also see

that, at Cannes, film critics evaluate films in relation to the opinion of their peers, which brings to the fore the role of taste and distinction in the self-depiction of these critics. Moreover, *Lorna's Silence* was also evaluated, even numerically, in terms of the expectations it created as to whether it was going to win. That is, winning expectations among peer film critics are used as a measure of the films' quality, thus naturalizing and objectifying the taste of the critics, the taste of the press and the taste of the jury. Finally, they also review films in terms of anticipating the winner of the Palme d'Or, which means, first, that they consider film criticism as part of the strategies that secure the cultural capital of the film and of the festival, and second, that they, at least sometimes, blur the boundaries between the members of the jury and film critics. As one such critic puts it addressing awards' poles: "It is the game of all games at Cannes...but it means, above all, the emptying of critical discourse" (*Libération*, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2008, in *liberation.fr*).<sup>71</sup> There are several tensions at work around that game, like how film critics assume that they will agree among themselves and with the jury, or how film critics consider that their criteria should be heard by the jury, and finally, how the awarding decision is read as an objective judgment of taste. However, the matter is even more interesting, as there is not a complete agreement as to what constitutes *that* objective taste, and yet still there is a clear attempt to present it as objective. All these ideas help us understand the terms under which cultural capital is generated by the different agents that meet at Cannes, their mutual dependence and the production of homogeneous systems of dispositions.

To begin with, it was often the case, in the reviews analysed, that film critics would build a sense of community instead of writing only about their own personal judgment. One critic said that "the film was only briefly applauded at the press projection" (*Libération*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in

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<sup>71</sup> As explained earlier, all the quotes from French and Belgium newspapers in this chapter have been translated by me. To ease the reading, I do not specify *my trans.* in the text. Also the authors of such comments and reviews are referenced in the Works Cited-Newspapers page rather than in-text, for consistency (these are only sometimes available), to ease the reading, and to ease cross referencing.

*liberation.fr*). Another is less critical: “on the way out from the press projection of their last film *Lorna’s Silence*, yesterday morning, the predictions remained open” (*La Croix*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008: 19). And, coming out from the same event, yet another film reviewer claimed: “The brothers are in contest for a third Palme d’Or” (*La Croix*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in *la-croix.com*). That is, these critics do not agree in their judgment of the film, but they evaluate their taste in relation to that of their group, and in relation to the taste of the jury. Even when some days had passed since the film’s premiere, the film critics still rely on similar strategies to convey the worthiness of the film: “I do not share the almost general critics’ enthusiasm” (*L’Express*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in *lexpress.fr*). As we can see, critics do not have the same perception of *the shared taste* and yet they claim that there is one.

It is also necessary to investigate if critics repeatedly share clusters of ideas, even if they did not fully agree on the film’s winning chances, or its worth. There is a question which emerged in almost all the dailies reviewed, which was to consider if the film was a disruption in the career of the Dardenne brothers, or if it showed continuity and coherence with their previous works. Comments ranged from “the style has changed in comparison to their previous films....the tone, however, remains the same” (*Le Monde*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in *lemonde.fr*) to “The Dardennes have (correctly) shot *Lorna’s Silence*, just like others would have shot it, in a too classical manner. Some may welcome their capacity to renew themselves. I disagree” (*L’Express*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in *lexpress.fr*). Similarly, the critic reviewing for *Le Figaro* writes that “shifting to a more painful dramaturgy which emerges from an increased sustained suspense the Dardenne brothers have not abandoned their style. There is the same nakedness going straight to what is essential” (20<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in *lefigaro.fr*). These critics agreed that this film was more classic than previous films by these filmmakers and they also recognize that something had not changed. Thence, it is important for Cannes’ film critics that the Dardennes can be said to have a style, an author

signature which remains “*in each new film*” (*Libération* 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in *liberation.fr*, my emphasis), even though that signature may have been somehow challenged in this film. Then, of course, their style is addressed by all in terms of realism: “Lorna’s Silence could well seduce the jury given how it depicts current realities” (*20 Minutes*, 20<sup>st</sup> May 2008, in *20minutes.fr*).

There is one detail which requires careful attention and that is the dichotomy these critics raise between the Dardenne’s style and classicism, and how they build a relationship between that classicism and dramaturgy to the extent that “despite the strength of the screenplay there is something in this Silence that remains in suspense” (*Libération*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in *liberation.fr*). Such reviews signal that the film’s screenplay was being considered particularly relevant in its reception before it won the screenplay award, but also that this did not secure the film’s worth. We can also read how “The brothers *film* an immigrant” (*Le Monde* 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in *lemonde.fr*), echoing the idea conveyed by the filmmakers in their press conference, an idea that the main actress had also introduced when interviewed for the Cannes’ TV. That is, the reception of this film entailed certain disagreement, but this does not mean that such disagreement is not still based on a set of common places; so, as Bourdieu claimed

It remains true that, like other fields, the journalistic field is based on a set of shared assumptions and beliefs, which reach beyond differences of position and opinion. These assumptions operate within a particular set of mental categories; they reside in a characteristic relationship to language and are visible in everything implied in a formulation (Bourdieu [1996] 2012:47).

Even the most negative review I found of *Lorna’s Silence* relied on the shared taste of colleagues and similar clusters of ideas. These ideas were not only shared among film critics but also in the film’s press kit and by the Cannes’ institutional reception: “a dark haired actress as expressive as a slice of meat hits her head against the walls, with that



picturesque of the *mise en scene* that our contemporaries so much appreciate” (*Le Figaro*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008: 28, in *lefigaro.fr*). It is clear that the critic dislikes the work of the actress and the film but, since he considers that other critics like it, he is using the review of the film to criticize his peers and he focuses his criticism on the work of the actress, which, as we have seen, was central in the promotion of the film at Cannes. While film directors and jury members have to explain themselves, journalists are there “to explain things themselves, to make meta discourses, a talk about a talk” (Bourdieu [1996] 2012:35, my emphasis) but they seem to overlap often. In consequence, we have to wonder how important their role is in the reification of cultural capital and reading patterns around each Cannes’ award-winning film, and to what extent their voice is delegated.

In a different review, the same newspaper published a harsh criticism of Sean Penn’s defence of realism in cinema: “what is this story that cinema must reflect the state of the world? ...The debate has been re-launched by Sean Penn, who appears to be a supreme judge in life” (*Le Figaro*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in *lefigaro.fr*).<sup>72</sup> The critic even goes on to claim that the jury’s condition that award-winning films must be realistic is against cinema since “cinema does not allow rules” (*ibid.*). What this journalist is defending is the opposite of what has been emerging in this chapter therefore we cannot argue that all critics agree with the jury. However, to the extent that, from promotion to institutional reception to press reception at Cannes, the different groups of agents configuring the field appear to echo each other, even when they do not totally agree, they could, maybe, be considered players in the same field. This is significant because the film festival has been claimed to be an agora for debate and cinema knowledge, so certain disagreement, discussion, may actually be necessary, to support the cultural value of this festival and the cultural value of film criticism at Cannes.

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<sup>72</sup> The article on the issue of realism is accompanied by a half page image of Gwyneth Paltrow in a night dress, in what I would consider to be an illustrative image-text Cannes’ combination.

The formulation for supporting a theory of critical reception based on peer agreement implies that, if the jury agrees with them, they show *good taste* or their decision is *correct*. We saw in the first case study how one member of the jury (Christian Mungiu) referred to this jury-press agreement as common sense, and another one made claims for cinematographic criteria (Spielberg). Consequently, the objectification of taste and the social construction of cultural capital around Cannes' awards and around Cannes' films is also performed by the press and it is necessary to then analyse very carefully to what extent they have common or separate interests. What I related in previous case studies to the intertwined interests of the institution and the top agents in the field of author cinema (with a wide audience appeal) production may have now expanded to integrate certain specialized film critics, so that the spheres of film production-festival's institution-film criticism would not be autonomous fields at Cannes. Given that, as we know, "the authorised spokesperson is only able to use words... because his speech concentrates within it the accumulated symbolic capital of the group which has delegated him and of which he is the authorised representative" (Bourdieu 1991:110-111), I am wondering to what extent this could be true for critics, and what group they are then representing. Accordingly, certain film critics, at least those occupying top positions in the field of author cinema criticism, could be understood as authorized representatives of the festival; therefore they would share not only dispositions but maybe even interests with other field agents. This needs careful consideration and it will remain the focus of my next case study.

I have already introduced the idea that the press reception of films in The Competition at the Festival de Cannes includes a poll of winners, which most dailies present in the form of an index with symbols of stars and/or Palmes, and I am now going to analyse this practice. Obviously with these symbols film critics position themselves in relation to the upcoming palmarès, but by also anticipating the festival's winner, such reports on the Festival de Cannes add value to the awards, as they

create hype and suspense. Basically, since “ritual symbolism is not effective on its own, but only in so far as it represents” (Bourdieu 1991:115) the Palme d’Or symbol stamped in those charts represents the taste of the film critic, and the accumulation of Palme d’Or symbols represents the shared notion of distinction that film critics appear to have at Cannes. Such graphics also signal that film critics can attach cultural capital to films in strictly hierarchical, numerical, terms. This practice, to an extent, brings to question the basics of cultural capital, and we saw one critic stated the danger of this practice. Being a form of symbolic capital, cultural capital should, in principle, not be easily conveyed in a quantitative chart. However, what is most important is the extent to which the Palme d’Or itself is not effective on its own but as a symbol which represents the general agreement among Cannes’ field agents that a film in particular deserves to attain distinction above the others. Following Bourdieu, distinction and a shared notion of taste serve the interests of the agents who occupy a field’s top position. At Cannes this translates to distinguishing films which can contribute to reinforce the cultural capital of the festival, the cultural capital of those leading field agents and the legitimacy of their practices.

Moreover, while the reception practice of attaching Palme symbols to the films in The Competition appears to be innocently trying to “guess” the upcoming Palme d’Or winning film, critics come up with three to a handful of favourite films. It is expected that the winner will be either the film they all have signalled as their favourite or, at least, one of the few that were ranked higher. It is also anticipated that the rest of the awards will be distributed among the other favourite films. This expectation has proved right in all the cases I studied, signalling either “common sense” or that just as festival directors are aware that the press will judge their selection decisions, jury members share this awareness in relation to their awarding decisions. One could easily relate *Lorna’s Silence*, and certainly the 2008 Palme d’Or winner, *The Class* (Laurent Cantet), to the idea of reflecting the world we live in. This is important because critics

highlighted only some of the films in The Competition and these are realistic films; what they could be doing is - because realism in cinema was being promoted by most members of the Cannes network or simply because the jury was judging films that way - adhering to the set of common themes which seem to have governed the 2008 Festival de Cannes. All in all, *Lorna's Silence* was rendered a strong competitor and it did not leave the festival empty handed. Moreover, this film was not unanimously expected to become the number one winner, and it did not. The awarding decision concords with the expectations the press had generated precisely because the film won a secondary award instead of the main one, strongly reinforcing the objectification of taste, and the agreement between the group of film critics and the jury. To an extent, what I am proposing is that at Cannes it is true that it is the "collaboration of their respective production apparatuses and clients which produces the value of culture" (Bourdieu [1984] 2010: 247).<sup>73</sup> That is, these two apparatuses (if taken separately) agreed on the "adequate" cultural value of this film.

The navigation of a film through the festival finishes when the awards are given out in the Awarding Ceremony. In receiving the award one of the brothers says: "thank you to the jury for this wonderful prize and thank you to all who gave substance to *this screenplay*: the lights, the sound, the actors and Arta Dobrovshi who is here, our leading actress" (0:12, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*, my emphasis). Therefore they related their screenplay award to their screenwriting work and separated it from other filmmaking processes and collaborators.<sup>74</sup> It is not new that the Festival de Cannes relies on the symbolic capital of

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<sup>73</sup> Whilst Bourdieu is here comparing high-brow and mid-brow culture and their apparatuses, his sentence, I argue, also serves to explain the social construction of the Cannes Festival.

<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, the same speech in the French version has been edited to become: "thank you to the jury for this wonderful prize and thank you to [cut] the actors and Arta Dobrovshi who is here, our leading actress". Thus, while the writer-directors highlighted their screenwriting, the French version has cut this out. In doing this, the French video version of the ceremony emphasizes the director figure. I have found repeatedly in this research that the screenplay award at Cannes is received by the writer-director of the film in terms of their directing, neglecting the fact that it is nominally an award for the film's screenplay.

directors as *authors* to reinforce its own capital and that of its films; consequently, it is no surprise that, when studied in detail, the value that the festival's institution gives to the screenplay award becomes unclear. However, these filmmakers made a clear statement locating cinema values in their film's screenplay, and in their writing process, at least in the Awarding Ceremony. Unfortunately, the video of the 2008 Awards Jury Press Conference (which they give after the ceremony explaining their awarding decisions) has been edited and it does not include any remarks about *Lorna's Silence*. This is a clear sign, however, of the secondary role that this award has been assigned by the festival's institution. As I have explained previously, there is a hierarchy of awards at Cannes, where the Palme d'Or is the most important, followed by the Jury's Prize, and in the 2008 video of the Awards Jury Press Conference these are the ones that have been kept in the coverage. Since it is the Festival de Cannes' institution that emerges as the *enunciator* in its website, whatever they choose to include or exclude is a choice of *how they* want to be seen. Thus the omission illustrates and reinforces the idea that the Best Screenplay Award, along with the film that wins it are not central in the construction of cultural capital at Cannes.

We have seen that film critics at Cannes not only review films, but they also review the festival as an integrated event, and as a gate-keeper. Film critics analyse the cinema trends they have observed at the festival, and they hand over to their readers those debates which are most acute each year, while they also take sides in those debates. In this respect the 2008 celebration of the Festival de Cannes was repeatedly interpreted as reconsidering the terms and aesthetics of "a new cinema realism". As *Cahiers du Cinéma* puts it "*The Class* is also exemplary of this festival where the play between documentary and fiction have had a considerable role" (June 2008: 2). This specialist magazine's review of the 2008 Festival de Cannes includes a review of *Lorna's Silence*, comparing it to the other films in The Competition, and the critic claims that no one "would have raised their finger to question a

*Palme d'Or*- if not because a third one may have been too much- for *Lorna's Silence*" (June 2008: 12) thus using the same strategies that we have already reviewed. But more interestingly, the magazine analyses the awards and films against the backdrop of Cannes' gate-keeping role through the years (referred to by Gilles Jacob as its historic role). Accordingly, "Sean Penn and his gang have *insulted the institution*, and real cinema and real craftsmanship" (June 2008: 12, my emphasis) with awarding decisions based solely on the criterion of realism. With this statement the critic is attacking the performance of the 2008 jury, whom he accuses of having failed their delegated responsibility. Following that statement, in making erroneous distinction decisions, the jury has affronted the institution and as a direct result of this they have endangered the legitimacy of field positions and rules, since legitimacy and the naturalisation of cultural capital come from the shared recognition of its value by the agents who constitute a field. As we know, the close relation between the Festival de Cannes, auteur cinema and *Cahiers du Cinéma* dates back to the nouvelle vague and pre-nouvelle vague years, thus the position that this film critic occupies in the field of film criticism and festival criticism (if they are indeed to be separated) is one of major importance, plus we have seen that he was not alone in this view. But this critic is appropriating the festival and claiming that his taste is better adjusted to the field than that of the jury members, not just in term of aesthetics but also in terms of the status quo of the field. What is most important is not to find out whose judgement of taste is "better" for the festival's institution or for the field's equilibrium, but that an important French film critic believes he needs to protect the field and the institution from the offense performed by that year's delegates; so while he is *nominally* outside the institution, he is examining the performance of the institution's spokespersons because they represent the institution and the field.

### ***Lorna's Silence* a film from Cannes**

By the time *Lorna's Silence* had reached the commercial circuit, its Cannes' screenplay award had become a promotional quality of *the film as product*. In this light, the Cannes' Best Screenplay award becomes a midpoint in the navigating process of a finished film, from its earlier promotion to its reception. Therefore, in this section I investigate the meaning of the award, not as a practice of reception but as a practice of promotion; that is, as a paratext-feature of the film which should, in principle, serve to secure its value as a product of a certain type. To do so, I analyse how the film was received by the press at the time of its commercial release in France. *A priori*, the Cannes' award could have some influence on the reading of the film and it is on this ground that we should question if an award at the Festival de Cannes brands a film. While scholars have claimed that a film that has navigated the festival circuit is attached certain meanings which the spectator is eager to discover (Nichols 2013), I basically question whether the Cannes' Best Screenplay award has the agency to change how a film is read, or its worth. More importantly, in using the idea that a film can be branded by Cannes we are claiming that it necessarily acquires certain symbolic values, those of the Cannes brand. On the one hand, the reception could change because the film is now an award winner; on the other hand, critics could more or less respond to the film using similar clusters of ideas to those which had preceded it at the festival and those which accompanied it through the festival. As an award-winning film, "being the product of the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence, it unites all those who are the product of similar conditions while distinguishing them from all others" (Bourdieu [1984] 2010:49).

Curiously enough, when it comes to the press reception of the film at the time of its premiere - which took place both in France and in Belgium, on the same date (7<sup>th</sup> August 2008) - newspapers actually use the term screenplay often, even though they are often highlighting the

same characteristics of the film which had been important before it won that award. However, by way of mentioning the screenplay award, the values of the film are attached to its screenplay more openly than they had been before. From "a well-deserved award" (*La Libre*, 27<sup>th</sup> August 2008, in *lalibre.be*) to "we are surprised about the screenplay award received at the Festival de Cannes" (*Le Figaro*, 29<sup>th</sup> September 2009, in *lefigaro.fr*), the reception of the film evaluates both the award and the film's screenplay (from the basis of watching the film). Thus, the award meant a change in the reception of the film because it brought to the fore the "need" to evaluate it in terms of screenplay values. In an interview for *Libération*, published on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, the Dardennes claimed, explaining themselves: "there must be about 250 shoots all in all. It was the screenplay that imposed that" (in *liberation.fr*), thus reinforcing the idea that, in this film in particular, the screenplay had been more important than in their other films. Nevertheless, receiving an award at Cannes does not lead to film critics agreeing that the film has a *good* screenplay; film critics remained divided, just like they had been before the film won an award at Cannes. The first review quoted continues, saying that the film has a "perfectly outlined screenplay" and that its award was "a perfect reward", while the other reviewer assumes, as it emerges from his quote, that the award has a cultural value which surpasses the value of this award-winning film, suggesting it was undeserved.

On the contrary, the film critic in *Le Monde* considers that winning a screenplay award signals that the film represents a break and a failure in the career of the Dardennes, as if the authors themselves had higher cultural value than the award. The statement "the Dardenne brothers are conveying to the mould as their Best Screenplay Award at Cannes evidences" (26<sup>th</sup> August 2008, in *lemonde.fr*) implies that "conveying to the mould" is bad; it is set in opposition to authorship style, and also suggests that a screenplay award rewards films which convey to *the* mould, where even the use of the determinant *the* is significant, as it



assumes that he shares with his readers a concrete referent for that word (we are assumed to know what mould he is referring to). One cannot but think of the screenwriting mould proposed by screenwriting manuals in reading this remark and how it is set in opposition to authorship: this is way out of the purpose of this chapter, although it is an idea we will need to bear in mind when approaching the thesis conclusions.

In contrast yet again, another film critic, in *Liberation*, writes that the danger for the Dardennes is “that their films, as moments of intense explanation or the real, get too systematic” (27<sup>th</sup> August 2008, in *liberation.fr*). Therefore for this critic what could become dangerous is precisely the fact that their “style is of an absolute consistency (a Dardenne signed shoot can be recognized in less than three seconds...) while never directing the film with the aim of satisfying the filmmaker ego” (ibid.). Importantly, this review highlights the possibility that a signature style may become something bad. For *L'Express* the filmmakers in this film were “at the summit of their art”, and the critic finds everything about the film good (15<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in *lexpress.fr*). He goes on to claim that the festival’s aim was to fix the limits between documentary and fiction, but that “the Dardenne brothers had already answered that question by themselves”. What I see here is, yet again, how films, authorship and the Festival de Cannes feed into each other’s worth and how film critics respond to the debates which are central each year at the Festival de Cannes, projecting them beyond the festival and making them central to the understanding of author cinema with a wide audience appeal. That is, the different agents and the different groups of agents agree on the most relevant issues to address when making meaning of Cannes films. These issues may be constant year after year, such as the importance of the signature style, and authorship hermeneutics, or they may change from one year to another. For instance, in 2014 diversity was a central topic and in 2008 realism was a more important issue. In any case what is important for this thesis is to

observe the existence of mental sets implied in the different promotion and reception practices of those films.

## Conclusions

In sum, we can see how this case study brings to question if "with every prize it confers, a festival also confirms its own importance" (Elsaesser 2005:97). On the basis that an award can be either deserved or undeserved some prizes could, potentially, contribute negatively to the value of the award, or even the festival. There seems to be a responsibility of the jury towards the festival; at least that is what other members of the festival's network say, basically because they acknowledge Cannes as a field-configuring event. The press evaluates the jury's performance as if *they know better* what Cannes is worth or what Cannes means; in doing this, the press is reinforcing their own position in the festival's field and claiming that they also give meaning to awards. Moreover, we have also seen that while awarding is supposed to be based on the subjective preferences of the jury, it is not necessarily right for the jury to say what they will –subjectively- consider valuable in the films they evaluate (in this case it was *to reflect the time in which we live*). Therefore, although it is agreed that an award-winning film has fulfilled the conditions set by the jury (as it happened to do with this film, from promotion to reception) does not necessarily secure the verdict that the awarding decision is right in the eyes of the press. Thus, having received this award does not seem to secure the value of the film as a product, since it can still be criticized. In sum, since a film can *even* be criticized on the basis of having received this award, the award could even hold negative cultural capital. The meaning of a Cannes' award surpasses each awarding decision because, I argue, it also emerges from the accumulated capital (cultural and otherwise) attached to Cannes by the whole Cannes' network.

I contend that the meaning of the Best Screenplay award is to be

found in the reconciliation of those only apparent contradictions. So far we have seen that while it is nominally given to the screenplay, there is no reading involved. Also, while the festival needs to appear disinterested, its field agents are sometimes openly negotiating their interests at Cannes. Finally the jury's decision, while being subjective, is not always right. On top of that, the supposedly objectified cultural value of a Cannes' award can even be considered negative by those who are, in principle, outside the network of interests, and are explaining things, texts, awards, as they witnessed them. However, we have also seen how films tend to be surrounded by clusters of ideas, which Bourdieu called received ideas, or common places, which often appear very similar to those used in the film's promotion. Consequently, it remains necessary to investigate the extent to which what is said about Cannes' award-winning films is based on a set of shared assumptions and beliefs, which may reach beyond differences of position and opinion, and this is what I continue to address in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### Reception of non-European films: *Spring Fever* (Lou Ye 2009) and *Poetry* (Lee Chang-dong 2010)

In the previous chapter we saw that the French reception of an “almost French” film, *Lorna’s Silence*, echoed the film’s promotional hype to the extent that the independence among groups of social agents could be brought into question, and I further investigate such tensions in the current chapter. In the year 2009 the “Chinese” film *Spring Fever* (Lou Ye) was given the Best Screenplay Award at the Festival de Cannes and the next year the same award went to the Korean film *Poetry* (Lee Chang-dong). I investigate here the interactions between the producers of content, the festival’s institution and the press regarding those films. In doing this, I want to further analyse Cannes’ field dynamics and how the relationships among social agents impact the meaning and value of awards. This case study is the only one that considers two screenplay award-winning films together, and I have done this because these films seemed to be very different commercial products even though they had both won the same award at Cannes. Accordingly, I found it interesting to compare how these films navigated the festival and to explore their reception afterwards to better understand the extent to which prestige “emerges from” or is “attached to” films. Since *Poetry* was an international author cinema world-beater, while *Spring Fever* could be considered an “invisible” film this could bring into question whether the cultural capital of Cannes’ Best Screenplay Awards relies on the award proper.<sup>75</sup> In this chapter I study the interactions between the makers of those films, the Cannes’ institution, and French film critics, to further understand the

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<sup>75</sup> This is not to say that *Poetry* was an outstanding success in relation to other films from South Korea or in that territory, only that compared to other films in The Competition it was widely distributed. Equally, *Spring Fever* is not impossible to obtain, but it had little distribution compared to other films that compete at Cannes. What is important is not how each film did in absolute terms but compared to one another, as we are going to see in this chapter.

naturalisation of taste and the reification of prestige as films navigate their way through the Festival de Cannes and beyond. Interestingly enough, what has emerged is that each of these two films had rather different meanings built around them from their first arrival at Cannes, and that neither the festival nor their awards changed this. To an extent this case study raises questions regarding the effect on films of Cannes' Best Screenplay Award, and the possibility that despite Cannes' hype the festival may not have much impact on the distribution of certain films.

As we have seen in previous chapters, awarding decisions seem to relate to the promotional values that each film already has when arriving at Cannes. Nonetheless, it has been argued that the Festival de Cannes performs a gatekeeping function and also that it brands films. While the term gatekeeping refers mainly to the festival's influence on the promotion, distribution and reception of films, the notion of branding has been used by film festival scholars (Ostrowska 2016, also Falicov 2016) to argue that the festival influences which films are made and how they are made. Since I have been arguing that the festival's institution and its spokespersons could be considered field delegates, I have somewhat de-centred the festival's gatekeeping and branding agency. Nevertheless, I also suggest that it serves the interest of many that the festival retains and concentrates the cultural capital generated by the field. In this light, my thesis investigates how cultural capital is generated and appropriated and the role of different groups of social agents in those dynamics. We will see, as we saw in the previous chapter, that the reception of films beyond Cannes follows the same clusters of ideas that serve to introduce each film to the festival, and that the screenplay award does not change this. That is, the two films I study in this chapter experienced very different receptions, even though they had received the same Cannes' award and "what such differences demonstrate is [that]... filmic facts are clearly subject to processes of meaning construction, in which their meaning is shaped by successive paradigms" (Klinger 1994: 25). While Klinger argues that the meaning of the same filmic fact

changes as paradigms of theory and criticism change, she still addresses processes of meaning construction. Taking her proposition beyond historical approaches, I suggest that the meanings of this award at the Festival de Cannes and its films are (unsurprisingly) re-constructed each time they are commented upon. Consequently, I contend that Cannes' cultural capital does not emerge from the institution to then become attached to films or people, and equally that the meaning the festival and its awards have is not fixed. On the contrary, the Festival de Cannes and the network that *sustains it* build cultural capital and meaning *for* and *from* films and people through continuous processes of signification, as we are about to see.

This chapter continues the work initiated in my previous chapter and follows the same methods. As in my previous case study, while the first section focuses on the relationship between a film's hype and its festival reception, the second aims to study whether or not the reception changed once they had received the Cannes' screenplay award. I have presented the chapter with both studies in parallel because I study whether meaning making processes change depending on the film. My primary sources have been the festival's official material (press kits and videos), the most popular French dailies, following the exact same method used in the previous chapter, and the specialized French magazines *Positif* and *Cahiers du Cinema*, on the basis that these two publications have a close relationship with Cannes and a historical one with Cannes' and French cinema's prestige (as I explained in my previous case study).

The current case study investigates the French reception of two non-European films to understand how the previous operate in relation to "foreign" films. However, putting these films together was a research choice, and I agree that the use of "Pan-Asianism, a concept that one may view as synonymous with Orientalism" (Teo 2008: 349) could be a potential criticism of the chapter's proposition. Therefore, I find it necessary to justify the comparison. First, Cannes is held in France and

the institution is dominated, as we have seen, by French executives. Plus, I am studying here the reception of these films in France. From a French-European point of view, the two films studied in this chapter could be considered Asian (although maybe not from other perspectives). Therefore, I assume that my point of view is European; hence, I do not draw on *innate* Pan-Asianism to frame this chapter, but on incidental Pan-Asianism. I have selected these two films, in part, to see how the French press and Cannes treats films from Asia, and because one was more commercial than the other. I consider that this “Asian” frame may be constructed from the outside and still be meaningful for some purposes; in this case to study differences in reception within and beyond the Festival de Cannes in relation to a Cannes’ award. Since I understand Kim Soyoung’s demand that “mobilizing Asia in an ‘inter’ mode suggests a critical inquiry of Asia itself and an incessant dialogue among academics and activists” (2010: 2), this research does not aim to participate in a dialogue among specialists in that area, but to add to the field of film festival’s studies. But Cannes seems to be vital to world cinema, and, therefore, I feel it is necessary to consider the meanings of the Best Screenplay Award for films from beyond Europe. This case study allows me to think about how Cannes deals with the world outside of Euro-American concerns, in as much as the object of this case study is not to investigate how Cannes or its network design and/or use Asia or Pan-Asianism to explain production or representation, but how the French promotion and reception of non Euro-American films relates to the Cannes’ screenplay award.

As we have seen in previous chapters, while films no longer “represent” their nations,<sup>76</sup> the national *ascription* of films remains significant at Cannes, and we have seen it being used to give meaning to the term diversity. This should mean, in principle, that neither selection nor awarding criteria target national quotas of any kind. The matter, however, may be less simple. Between 2006 and 2014 *seven out of nine*

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<sup>76</sup> As would happen, for instance, in the Olympic Games. However, the films are often claimed to represent their countries in terms of visibility and/or production.

Palme d'Or winners were European or US films. On the other hand, if one reviews the complete *palmarès* in the same nine year period, the image changes dramatically: there have been a Turkish and a Japanese Grand Prix winner, a Korean, a Mexican and a Chinese Jury Prize, two Mexican and one Filipino, one Turkish and one Mexican Mise en Scène Prize, and two Chinese, one Korean and one Israeli Best Screenplay awarded film. Just as this list comes across as assorted and confusing, Cannes' palmarès between 2006 and 2014 have a mixed international dimension which could easily be understood to represent diversity; as Frémaux claims "diversity can only enrich the Festival de Cannes" (in *festival-cannes.com/eng*).<sup>77</sup> However, the Palme d'Or concentrates more cultural capital and attention than secondary awards, so diversity at Cannes may mean films "from many nations", but not all are treated equally. The current chapter serves to further investigate the extent to which the festival strategically uses this secondary screenplay award to maintain and reinforce its own cultural capital.

As it emerged in my first case study, these power struggles are played out in relation to the national ascription of films, and so I am going to focus on the other meanings that the term diversity may acquire at Cannes. Primarily, what captured my attention was the fact that *Spring Fever* was only very discretely distributed in France and it was not distributed in any other country outside the festival circuit (and only modestly within the circuit).<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, *Poetry* was an international success from various different perspectives, such as in terms of its fervent reception, extensive promotion and substantial box office revenues. Therefore, comparing their respective promotion and reception I was able to better understand the fluid value and meaning of the screenplay award, and to evaluate if this also connects with Cannes' claims of *diversity*.

For instance, the film *Spring Fever* is a low budget film that was

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<sup>77</sup> The term diversity is central in the festival's stated aims, and it is repeatedly used in the festival's website and in their brochures.

<sup>78</sup> Outside the festival circuit, that is in theatres.



censored in its “so claimed” country of origin, China. It was actually produced jointly by Hong Kong and French companies, but it was addressed by the Cannes’ press and institution as a Chinese film. On the other hand, the 2010 screenplay winner *Poetry* was a Korean film (from South Korea) partially financed with state funds and directed by a former Minister of Culture of that country. Thus, one film is rejected by the political elites of its so-called country of origin (China),<sup>79</sup> whereas the other is supported by the government of its country of origin (South Korea). Seen in this light, these two films were very different film products from inception, and they became very different products in terms of their success.

Certainly, taken together these two case studies speak of the geopolitics at play at Cannes, but more importantly, what this analysis signals is that each award and each award-winning film contributed to the festival’s cultural capital in a different manner and vice versa. While this could signal that the award does not have value of its own, because it can fall on “any type” of film and it cannot change the commercial fate of films, what I want to understand instead is the extent to which this award serves to align Cannes with the term diversity. I have suggested in previous chapters that “diversity” at Cannes is similar in effect to the concepts of “discovery” or “authorship” (in that they can “only enrich it”). And I have also explained that these two terms, according to Bourdieu, are used in the art market to conceal the interests behind the practices of consecration and trade and to conceal the efforts of the system in generating symbolic capital. That is, such terms channel the interests of certain social agents while making sure those interests remain concealed, so that the art consecrator can maintain an appearance of disinterestedness. Therefore the festival makes a big claim for diversity because it serves to reinforce and retain the symbolic capital of the festival and of the network that sustains it. This theme was explored

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<sup>79</sup> In the year 2013, another Chinese film won the same award, *A Touch of Sin* (2013). I have not studied the two Chinese films together because the 2009 and 2010 award-winning films constitute a particularly enlightening pair on the basis that they represent two extremes in terms of commercial and critical success.

earlier in reference to national cinema diversity (chapter 2), so I will mostly focus on other meaning-making possibilities for this term at Cannes in the analysis that follows. Apparently the Cannes' Best Screenplay Award can be given out to very different films: from censored to state-funded, from invisible films to box-office beaters. I am thus investigating the extent to which this award may be securing the term diversity, which becomes widely used and legitimated regarding Cannes award-winning films, as well as assessing the meanings that this term acquires.

### **Promotion when arriving at the festival**

The screenplay awards of 2009 and 2010 were the first awards received by these two "authors" in The Competition, but both directors already possessed solid filmmaking careers, which included participation in other European film festivals and previous entries in The Competition at Cannes. However, as one compares the arrival of the films at Cannes, it is easy to see that each of the directors had had a very different author/creator *persona* constructed around him, and these two different author/creator *persona/signature* were extensively used in the paratexts which framed the presentation of each of their films to the festival's network. We will see that the director of *Spring Fever*, Lou Ye, is constructed as the embodiment of authorship as a subversive act; while in the case of the director of *Poetry*, Lee Chang-dong, authorship meant skilled craftsmanship and sensibility. What is important is not the terms used to describe each director, but that "the work of self-depiction [of the creator] is a collective work, sustained by a whole set of social institutions... functioning with the support of a group which benefits from it" (Bourdieu 1998a: 119). That is, a Cannes' author is collectively defined. We are going to see how the Cannes' institution and the press frame each director and how they cannot overcome such depictions. While it is easy to understand that one's claim to be "an author" is not enough, because the claim only becomes legitimate when it is

collectively sustained, I suggest that the work of the collective also provides the author the terms of his/her depiction. To an extent, in selecting different “types” of authors for The Competition, the Festival de Cannes reinforces the “singularity” of the author. However, the meaning-making possibilities authors have generated are sustained by the whole network, thus they are neither open nor autonomous.

Lou Ye had a film in The Competition in 2006, *Summer Palace*. The film is a love story in the context of the Tiananmen massacre. Actually, it was this film that caused him to be banned from making or releasing films in China for five years. So the film *Spring Fever* was not produced by a Chinese company because of that earlier ban, and not for any particularity of Lou Ye’s 2009 film text. In the press kit of the 2006 film the director had already said “Chinese cinema still isn’t free, either in terms of creativity, management, or regulations” (5, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). Thus, even before he presented the banned film *Spring Fever*, the author had spoken out against China’s lack of freedom while attending the Festival de Cannes. In doing this he was already reinforcing the notion that, contrary to the Chinese context, the festival's context was one of freedom.

*Spring Fever* was produced by French and Hong Kong companies, and it was not legally Chinese.<sup>80</sup> The press kit of the film includes a synopsis and then an interview with the director so he is already relying on external voices to present him and his film. Furthermore, as the interviewer is not specified the interview is “signed” by the French company Rosem Films, that was handling the rights of the film at Cannes 2009. In this document Lou Ye’s filmmaking career is depicted by as one in which he was always struggling with censorship:

Your first film, *Weekend Lover*, in 1994, was censored, your second,

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<sup>80</sup> Hong Kong was legally returned to the control of China in 1997, and it is now an administrative sub-state of the Chinese nation. But, the distance between Hong Kong and the mainland in this period is interesting. On the one hand it could, technically, be a Chinese film. On the other hand this film was legal in Hong Kong but not in China. Therefore, being illegal in China, it could not be considered to represent Chinese cinema.

*Suzhou River*, which you filmed clandestinely in the streets of Shanghai, was banned in China and won the Grand Prize at the Rotterdam Film Festival, and *Summer Palace*, presented at Cannes in 2006, and which dealt with events surrounding Tiananmen Square in 1989, resulted in your being banished for five years... In Cannes, in 2006, everything that happened around the production of *Summer Palace*, the secrets, the censors, the chases and the media attention that ensued, were they beneficial or detrimental? (3)

I do not question whether this discourse was beneficial or detrimental for the film director. I want to highlight how the interviewer is already constructing Lou Ye's meaning as author in this depiction introducing the 2009 film to Cannes. However, to the previous questions Lou Ye answers:

Since I had been 'banished', prohibited from directing for five years, why finance my new film, which they wouldn't even be able to show in Chinese theatres? They all said: "Let's schedule a meeting in five years!" Thankfully, in the end, we were able to secure all necessary funding through the French film financing system and partly from Hong Kong.... At the time, I thought, neither one nor the other [beneficial or detrimental]. But after the dust settled we received the five-year ban. It's true, in the beginning, I was very angry with the Film Bureau, and with Chinese decisions regarding freedom of expression, and I made that known, which, in turn, aggravated the situation (3)

The film director is thus explaining that there is nothing in the text of *Spring Fever* that led to the film being banned; it was his previous film that had caused the ban. The fact that his film being prohibited did not depend on its story, its portrayal of homosexuality, or any other characteristic of the film text, was systematically neglected. The film *Spring Fever* is often addressed as a prohibited film and even *read* in those terms, just as the film director is repeatedly framed under those terms and meanings. What we will see is how the author's

“self-depiction” does not depend on himself alone. Another idea being introduced in Lou Ye’s answer is that the film had been made thanks to French institutions. Without evaluating whether this claim is true or false, good or bad, he conveys the idea that, without this financial support, his film would not have been produced. This idea is also going to be very important throughout the chapter. First, this notion was repeatedly used at Cannes to position the festival and the French industries and funds against China’s state-controlled cinema. Second, we will see that even though the film did not come to be much appreciated, its funding was never questioned.

Quite on the contrary, *Poetry* was produced with major support from UniKorea Culture and Art Investment (a state-funding mechanism). Before taking *Poetry* to Cannes, Lee Chang-dong had been in The Competition in 2007 with *Secret Sunshine*. This earlier film had been praised for its story and its actors (it was awarded an acting prize) and for the mastery of its director (in [festival-cannes.com/eng](http://festival-cannes.com/eng)). Thus, when Chang-dong took *Poetry* to Cannes in 2010 his author *persona* was already functioning as that of a proficient and uncontroversial film director. Moreover, the “author” kept inviting audiences to read his film as an intimate poem. It represented quite a different author depiction than the previous example. Lee Chang-dong introduced his film, in the first sentence of the press kit, drawing a parallel between poetry and filmmaking: “these are times when poetry is dying away...a question I pose to myself as a filmmaker: What does it mean to be making films at times when films are dying away?” (3, in [festival-cannes.com/eng](http://festival-cannes.com/eng)). Following these quoted comments, the press kit for *Poetry* continues with a synopsis of the film, and a short introduction to the director's career and also to the main actress.

Finally, interestingly enough (as this is not the norm in press kits) this press kit also includes an interview with Lee Chang-Dong conducted by Claude Mouchard, a prestigious French cinema critic.<sup>81</sup> Therefore the

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<sup>81</sup> Curiously enough *Poetry* had been released in South Korea two weeks before it

*French* interviewer is also helping the “author” introduce himself and his film to the Cannes network. As he had seen the film already and he opens the interview with his own remarks:

The Bold Serenity of Poetry

Ah... poetry!

From time to time, I think to myself ‘poetry’ is a word that implies ‘that something which people no longer desire’ (8)

Mouchard follows this “poetic” introduction with an interview filled with constant references to *the poetic* intention of the film. The author and the interviewer agree on the idea that the film is to be read in those terms and that poetry is both what gives the film its unity and what gives value to this text: “poetry becomes the central theme of this film. At the same time, I believe the structure of this film has close relation with poetry ... And you also commented that it is a question directed toward the cinema” (8). In sum, those who reviewed the press kit were led to read the film as a piece of poetry. Moreover, the press kit also claims that the meaning of this film has to do with what is poetic in life. That is, in view of this paratext, the film should be used by the audience to gain a poetic understanding of life: “can we relate poetry to film? [Chang-Dong responds] Yes. ‘To see things well’ refers to poetry, but it also refers to film as well. Certain films help us see the world in a different light” (8).

The interview in the *Poetry* press kit follows a discussion of the genesis of the film and of the film's title without using the terms screenplay or screenwriting. They refer to such processes as “making the film” (8). We must bear in mind that the director tends to be the centre of attention at the Festival de Cannes,<sup>82</sup> to the extent that even when the “author” is both a writer and a director it is frequently the second role that attracts the attention. More interestingly, in the press kit for *Spring Fever*,

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premiered at Cannes, but it was not preceded by the aura of having been a success in its country of origin.

<sup>82</sup> There is a general pairing of film directors with film authors that the festival does not challenge, but this is one of the tensions that the current research has addressed at several points.

Lou Ye talks about the moment when *he* started writing the film, and does not mention his co-writer Mei Feng (6). This signals that at Cannes the “author” is the director of the film, even if when screenwriting is a collaborative process.

As we can see, these “self-depictions” were not even autonomous in the two films’ press kits (interviews), and certain ideas had already been sustained and others systematically neglected.<sup>83</sup> That is, first, interviewers were framing the meaning of each of these two authors and their films already in the press kits. Second, the ideas in those press kits will be constantly reinforced as each film navigates the festival and beyond. That is, the navigation of each of these two films “represents a sort of deep-structuring cultural matrix that generates self-fulfilling prophecies” (Bourdieu’s habitus explained in Swartz 1997: 104). In this light, the first film stands mostly as a work that materializes Cannes’ claim for *freedom of speech in author cinema* (something we have seen in previous chapters), whereas the second film represents a Cannes’ celebration of *poetic intimacy in author cinema*. While readings and meanings depend on the contexts of each year’s event it is also important to bear in mind that there are, nonetheless, some recurrences.

Accordingly, the fact that we have found *no case so far* where this award highlighted the work or the creativity of any non-directing screenwriter is very meaningful. In some of the cases already studied (in the first and second chapters) there was collaborative work regarding the screenplay, as seen in the current case, but the award does not serve to highlight the participation of non-directing writers in the creative processes of making films; this is because the festival relies upon and reinforces “this charismatic ideology, in effect, which directs the gaze towards the apparent producer” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 167). Another significant neglect is that Lou Ye had already had a prestigious track record at Cannes (his films had been in competition in 2003 and

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<sup>83</sup> At Cannes, press kits have images from the films and text from the directors, at times also from the producer or the protagonists; interview excerpts are only sometimes included in these texts.

2006) so he could have been appraised for values other than his film having been banned, but this was not the case. In sum, “author depiction” at Cannes systematically, although not necessarily consciously, neglects some authorship possibilities and reinforces other authorship possibilities.

After the press kit, the next strategy to introduce films at Cannes is the photo call of the cast and director the morning before their film’s premiere. This act, as I have explained, functions as evidence of the institution’s reception and as a paratext preceding the film for other Cannes’ social agents (be those members of the jury or film critics). Moreover, these photo calls are often broadcast in the news around the world, giving meaning and attaching cultural capital to the film and the festival simultaneously. The official Cannes’ video of the photo call for *Spring Fever* is dominated by the idea that the film had been censored: “we can understand their joy in being here because they had to fight to make the film” (0:09, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). The voice-over also highlights the French participation in the financing of the film, conveying that it wouldn’t have been produced otherwise. We can see again how Cannes is using the film’s ban to reinforce the idea that the Festival de Cannes is *a political no man’s land* (in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). Moreover, they are making this somehow extend to France’s culture at large, in implying that *this censored film* had been made thanks to French funds. This signals that France is one of those countries which, as Dina Iordanova explains, “make film festivals a regular part for their international relations in the sphere of culture” (2010:18), and this is a good example of how they do it.

Later, in the Cannes’ TV interview, the same ideas reappear. The interviewer starts by asking the actors whether they are afraid of retaliation for having made this film. Then, he asks Lou Ye “is it still banned to talk about homosexuality in China?” (0:06, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*), as if the film had been forbidden due to its topic, although that was not the primary reason. The interview continues with several questions about homosexuality, China, and the ban, trying to



bring these facts together. This is important because it seems to repeat a tension which also emerged in the case of *Leviathan* (Andrei Zvyaginstev 2014), and which may signal the strategic use of a film's nationality to locate Cannes, and, to an extent France, on the side of "freedom". Plus, it also signals that meaning-making possibilities are strategically (even if not consciously) designed and reinforced by institution delegates.

I find that the most remarkable statement of this interview is the final proclamation:

Now it is the Festival de Cannes that greets you, congratulations for having made *Spring Fever* and it is a pleasure to see you shooting after all. Keep on working, you have to make more films and we are here to support you. In a few moments the press conference will begin with *Spring Fever representing China* (ibid. 0:09, my emphasis)

First, the director is congratulated and offered a safe haven at Cannes. Second, it is stated upfront that the festival supports him. Third, the film is addressed as *representing China* notwithstanding the fact that the film is not Chinese, and, that films do not officially "represent" nations at Cannes (and yet, as we can see, they repeatedly do). As is evident, representation is about more than legality/authorization by the State. *Spring Fever* depicts Chinese people in China (Hong Kong), and in this respect it does, to some extent, represent China. But what is important is how the film's nationality became of major importance as this clearly evidences the fact that Cannes uses films strategically. This also suggests that the Festival de Cannes plays an important part in France's geopolitics of culture.

When the film premiered, the voice-over made the same claims about the film, while we see *Spring Fever's* cast and director walking the festival's red steps in their evening gowns, being flashed by photographers and welcomed by the festival's director, Frémaux. The presenter claims: "this is where the festival plays an important role to open up the avenue for directors who don't have an opportunity in their

own countries....the funding was European, particularly French" (0:02, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). It must be said that, although the ideas are the same, they acquire "grandeur" when heard over the images of the glamorised and ritualized red steps ceremony. Over these iconic and idealised images of the Festival de Cannes, the discourse of freedom made the festival seem some sort of "resistant" welcoming consecrator that defends "artists", and their voices.

After the film's press premiere, the director, the main cast and the Hong Kong and French producers gave a press conference; by that time the ban had become such a central topic, such a focus in the building of hype and meaning that the director demanded:

I don't really want to say much about this ban, *I prefer to talk about the film itself...* it shouldn't be possible to ban directors anymore and I hope that I am the last to be banned. And I hope that now we will be able *to talk about cinema* (0:04, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*, my emphasis)

Nevertheless, despite Lou Ye's request, the questions turned once again to the ban, whether the cast was afraid, how the prohibition had affected the shooting, and so on. In asking the director about the shooting conditions and the aesthetic of the film, the press is trying to convey the hardships of overcoming censorship; notwithstanding Lou Ye's claim that this had always been his shooting style. Also, although the director tried to describe his story as a complex love triangle, disregarding the gender of those involved, the press kept returning to the story in terms of homosexuality. In doing this they were once again making meaning of the film in relation to censorship. Equally interesting is that the press asked Lou Ye a couple of times what he thought of state-funded Chinese cinema, as if trying to get him to talk about how censorship controls cinema representations. Instead he claims that there are different authors, and so there are also different financing possibilities. Interestingly enough, in reviewing the 2013 screenplay award-winning film, *A Touch of Sin* (Jia Zhangke), discourses regarding China and

ensorship were different since Zhangke's film, also winner of a secondary award at Cannes, had been funded by the Chinese government. And equally interesting is that similar questions were asked of the director and producer of *Leviathan* (Andrei Zvyaginstev 2014), regarding Russia's state control. What these examples tell us is that the Cannes Best Screenplay Award is often used to position Cannes politically.

Finally, the French co-producer is asked how it had been to work with a banned director, and he replied that they work with talented directors, regardless of political issues or struggles, in a clear attempt to legitimize his practice on the basis of disinterestedness in anything other than "pure art". That is, he was trying to claim for himself, for the director and for the film, symbolic capital beyond political interests (albeit, not very successfully). Next the Hong Kong producers are asked about distribution in mainland China, and they respond that the film will be *illegally* distributed through *piracy*. As we have explored the role of film distributors at Cannes in previous chapters (mainly the second and the third), it is extremely interesting that in this particular case piracy was not criminalised; since the film had been banned, piracy was, surprisingly, yet another strategy to criticise China's state control in Cannes' discourses. That is, the festival, in inviting producers and co-producers to the press conference, stressed the production values of the film. Then, the press insisted on giving value to the film and the film director on the basis of political commitment and, notwithstanding that the makers of the film sometimes tried to escape this reading, the film's meaning was collectively resolved.

Similarly, the promotion and reception of *Poetry* was based on the reading of the film that had already been introduced in its press kit. The interview with the cast and film director given to Cannes TV opens with the question: "why did you choose this subject and title?" To which Chang-dong responds: "Poetry is a way of feeling beauty in life. It is true that poetry is agonizing and so is a certain type of cinema" (0:01, in

*festival-cannes.com/eng*). When the interviewer asks the film director about casting Yoon Jeong-hee in the leading role, he responds “I was looking for the image of a flower and she was perfect” (ibid. 0:11); thus, beauty and flower metaphors are used to explain filmmaking decisions. Finally, just as we have seen in the analysis of the press kit, the film director says that “poetry is something that helps in life... art and cinema can do good and also pose moral questions” (ibid. 0:15). Therefore the clusters of ideas surrounding the film’s first reception were the same as those used to introduce it at Cannes. Also these are clearly different from the clusters of ideas surrounding *Spring Fever*. What this tells us is that films do not substantially change their meaning as they navigate the festival and that films framed in different ways may receive the same award at Cannes. Therefore the Best Screenplay Award serves to recognise different text or production values.

The reception and promotion of a film by the festival’s institution seems to be a staged repetition (redolent of Harbord’s film festival’s staging) of the same clusters of ideas that introduce a film in its press kit. So that even when a question apparently deviates a little, as for example when the actress is asked why she would return to shooting after so many years (the actress had been very important in the sixties and seventies, but had not shot a film for many years), she says that she decided to shoot this film for its poetic nature. However, she also claimed twice in her interview and in the press conference to have made the decision when reading the script, thus bringing to the fore the film’s screenplay, as happened in the case of *Lorna’s Silence* (Dardenne brothers 2008). So we must consider that this award sometimes falls on films that have been building prestige around their screenplays, while at other times it does not. In conclusion, for each case we must consider the extent to which Cannes’ groups of social agents reach a concord and what this means.

In light of the above, while:

struggles between possessors of specific capital and those who are

still deprived of it constitute the motor of an incessant transformation of the supply of symbolic products, it remains true that, they can only lead to deep transformations of the symbolic relations of force that result in the overthrowing of the hierarchy of genres, schools and authors when these struggles can draw support from external changes (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127)

The struggles observed signal the field position of each director and they are very telling of the geopolitics of culture at Cannes. But the lack of deep transformation still points out the stability of the hierarchies. From comments by the Korean director, such as “with this film I wanted to talk about cinema” (film’s premiere press conference, 0:05, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*), to how Lou Ye also wanted to talk about cinema but was not given the opportunity, we can see that the Festival de Cannes uses different films for different purposes.

### **Press reception for *Spring Fever* and *Poetry at Cannes***

I am first going to briefly summarise the two films from my own viewings; I do not want to “explain” the films, but I have introduced these summaries so we can better understand the reviews.<sup>84</sup> *Spring Fever* is the story of a young homosexual man whose extra-marital love affair is unmasked by a photographer hired to spy on him by the other man’s wife. This causes the suicide of the married lover, and the young male protagonist begins an affair with the spy. The film has a bitter sweet ending and it could be addressed as a *bildungsroman* type of tale, where the main character loses his innocence. It is a low budget production, shot in natural locations and recorded with a low quality video camera, hand held and with rough light and sound work. All in all, one gets the idea that the characters want to hide from society, and the camera work mimics the act of spying on these people in seclusion. The characters

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<sup>84</sup> I personally found no particular aesthetic or topic choices that made either of these two films more or less valuable than other films in The Competition. What I am saying is that while we are about to see a great difference in the worth given to each of these films each one is similar to other films in The Competition in those years.

relate to one another amidst sentimental turmoil involving spying, adultery and secrecy. There are many sex scenes between the protagonist and several other characters, and also many scenes where the characters wander around the city; plus, many scenes are not filled with dramaturgy. Though, in general, both soft dramaturgy and documentary aesthetics are not uncommon choices in author cinema with a wide audience appeal, the use of these strategies was severely criticised in relation to *Spring Fever's* style and in relation to the jury's awarding decision, as we are about to see.

*Poetry* is the story of an old woman who finds out that she has incipient Alzheimer's and joins a poetry club; at the same time, she learns that her grandson has been harassing a classmate, which has caused the girl to commit suicide. It is a rather "classic" but "minimalist" film, slow-paced but with a plot-driven character and plot development.<sup>85</sup> Even though it also appears to have been shot in natural locations, the images are stable and the shots are not as close as in the previous case of *Spring Fever*. The image is allowed to breathe and the camera pans or travels smoothly on a tripod or a steady cam, moving from the main character to her points of view of landscapes and nature. The protagonist faces a major conflict of a moral type and she also has aesthetic curiosity towards poetry and nature. In sum, what I am trying to convey is that this film, just like the previous one, fulfils many of the conditions that Cindy Wong explained regarding films that compete at Cannes and other festivals (in Stringer 2003a). Many scholars ranging from Rick Altman (1999) to Julian Stringer (2003a) have addressed the formal characteristics of the films that compete at Cannes and other film festivals, and Tamara L. Falicov offers a comprehensive review of their work (2016), but the issue here is not their formal characteristic but each

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<sup>85</sup> I am not interested in analysing the film's aesthetic choices and much less in problematising the terms "classic" or "minimalist", just as I am not interested in problematising what is "documentary aesthetic" or "lack of dramaturgy". I use these terms in the sense of their widespread use and hope they ease the understanding of how each film looks and their reception. I am not making claims regarding the formal aspect of these films.

of their meaning-making processes.

Unsurprisingly, the traits that film critics point out in reference to *Poetry* revolve around the film's intimacy and the use of this film to approach reality in a more poetic way. However, another important cluster of information appears, one that we have also seen in previous case studies, appraising it on the basis of a general agreement and its chances of winning the Palme d'Or: "the Palme d'Or has just arrived. Magnificent film" (*L'Express*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2010, in *lexpress.fr*). Since we have analysed this idea previously, what is important here is that these types of reviews did not occur in relation to *Spring Fever*. I am not claiming to know *why* some films win instead of others, nor that winning relates to how the press gathered at Cannes received the film. We can understand, however, *the significance* of certain films winning instead of others.

In this light, I have not found a single review that did not highlight that Lou Ye is a censored "author" and that this was "a film preceded by a scandalous reputation since it has been shot in secret" (*Metro* 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009, in *lapressedefrance.fr/metro.htm*). Moreover, the tension that emerges from the fact that Lou Ye had been banned and yet he was releasing a new film is often interpreted as a political act: "Lou Ye loves to hit China where it hurts" (*L'Express*, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009, in *lexpress.fr*). Plus, this film was rarely applauded and in those rare instances where the reception does not revolve exclusively around censorship, critics write: "We have now a best actor candidate... The film's best: Lou Ye knows how to film the bodies, the faces, the sights. His *mise en scène*" (*L'Express*, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009, in *lexpress.fr*). That is, for this critic it was the acting and the *mise en scène* that gave value to this film, not the story or the screenwriting. Accordingly, films do not necessarily have to be surrounded by an aura of having a good screenplay to receive this award. Therefore the use of the term screenplay in the award studied remains unclear for a number of reasons.

On the other hand, since *Poetry* was deemed “one of the three best films in the 2010 selection” (20 Minutes, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2010, in *20minute.fr*), the awarding decision was not controversial. In the same newspaper, the reception of the film was accompanied with an interview with the director where, again, the idea of poetry in life came to the fore: “do you think that the poetry that your film points to is possible at a place like Cannes? Yesterday, after dinner, we walked along the sea line with Gilles Jacob and he said 'You see, maybe it is here that poetry is at the Festival de Cannes'... what I wanted to say with this film is that there is poetry all around and specially in ourselves” (ibid.). Similarly, the newspaper *Le Monde* states: “Lee Chang-dong... can make beauty emerge there where we would not have looked for it... This old lady gets lost by admiring flowers, in sensual rhymes, in her attempt to grasp the airy quality of things. What poetry teaches her is the meaning of truth” (20<sup>th</sup> May 2010, in *lemonde.fr*). What this shows us is that meaning-making possibilities become mostly reified around each Cannes’ film, rather than questioned or contested through successive commentaries.

The aforementioned 20 Minutes interview also reviews the meaning of Cannes’ awards, as the writer asks Chang-dong if it would be important to receive an award, to which he responds: “yes, it is very important... for the track of the film and for the people who have made it. In Korea we give much credit to the Festival de Cannes. The audience success of *Secret Sunshine* [his previous film] was due to having received an award at Cannes” (22<sup>nd</sup> May 2010, in *20minute.fr*). According to this director, and producer, Cannes secures the value of a film as a product, because it attaches cultural capital which translates to economic capital and audience success, at least in Korea. However, this doesn’t seem to be true for every film and every territory, in relation to the screenplay award. I have been suggesting that this is so because the attachment of cultural capital to a Cannes’ award is a complex operation that necessitates the cooperation of several groups of agents (the award itself is not “enough”).



Having seen how differently these two films navigated the festival, it would now be difficult to argue that Cannes' Best Screenplay Award served to recognise the same cinema values, or, even, the same worth. After the Awarding Ceremony, at the 2009 Awards Jury Press Conference, there was a certain amount of tension. In 2009 the president of the jury was Isabelle Huppert and, according to the presenters of the Cannes' Festival TV in that particular year, the debate had been vivid and the final decision autocratic (Awards Jury Press Conference 0:40, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). Nevertheless, the jury tries to convey a sense of agreement, "noblesse oblige", in front of the press. As I have explained before, we must bear in mind what Peter Bosma explains in his research, where he interviews festival juries regarding jury's statements (2015); in light of his conclusions, it is not surprising that the jury does not overtly contradict the president, or that they do not address conflicts among them at press conferences, in as much as the TV presenters had addressed the conflict, somehow de-legitimising Huppert's performance as president of the jury. In this respect Huppert claims that award-winning films had "something that moved *us*" (Awards Jury Press Conference 0:25, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*, my emphasis) and also that "we thought that attention should be brought to these movies. *That is all*" (ibid. 0:33, my emphasis). In her statement we can see both the use of the plural to conceal the underlying conflict but also the tension underneath, in her "that is all" abrupt remark.

Basically, I propose that *this something* that moved the jury (or the president of the jury) could be located in the textual characteristics of films as well as in their production constraints. That is, attention may be brought to films not for their textual characteristics but for other reasons, and yet, this is not overtly stated. On top of that, the institution's video narrator resumes his commentary by stating that: "there is some radicalism [in the 2009 palmarès] *but* it includes some major films" (ibid. 0:40, my emphasis). In doing this the institution is, first, taking a step back from the jury's decision; so while I have been arguing that the

general tendency among Cannes' discourses is that of mutual support and agreement there are struggles for legitimacy even at the heart of the festival. Second he is dividing the palmarès into two clusters of films, or imposing two separate reading possibilities: either a film is radical or it is a major film. We do not know if by major he meant films with a wide audience appeal and expected to have a good commercial fate, or if he meant works of art. In any case he lists some of the "major films" in the palmarès and does not include *Spring Fever*; therefore, unsurprisingly, it must be considered to be among the radical ones. Anyhow what is important is to see that the meaning possibilities of an award-winning film are not open but patterned, pre-digested, from the film's arrival to the awards; and that the navigation of a film through the festival, including the awards, serves mostly to crystallize the reading possibilities of any given film.

According to Bourdieu's theories (and many others) the way in which social agents use language structures the world as much as it represents how their world is structured already. Therefore, I question what the term "screenplay" allows, when it is used, and what it represses, and, of course, how this structure of the world serves certain interests. Facing Lou Ye, now as a screenplay award-winner, a member of the press commented on the film's screenplay for the first time: "Your film looks a lot like it was written while it was being shot and also while it was being edited, I just wanted to know if it was an impression or if it's true, and then how it feels to get a screenplay award?" (0:58, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). The director explains that the critic's impression is right because he had worked with his screenwriter, since he had not written the film alone, from inception to the editing stage. Lou Ye explains that his collaboration with Mei Feng had been long and fruitful; including films that had been at Cannes previously. This could have suggests that his author signature, and not only this screenplay award-wining films, results from collaborative work, but the issue is not addressed further. The conversation turns promptly towards sanctions,

so the potential tensions between the collaborative creative process and the author signature remain basically neglected. The director is asked whether he is afraid that those who work *with him* may be banned from working in China (ibid.0:61, my emphasis).<sup>86</sup> Therefore, even if written in collaboration, its director who is held responsible, so this award serves to reinforce the signature and the depiction of the award-winning film's "author", notwithstanding who has written the film.

To conclude, Lou Ye is asked about the meaning of the film, and what he would like to say *to the Chinese people*. His answer becomes a plea for freedom: "the freedom to make films independently is something that all filmmakers should have" (ibid. 0:64). The awarding decision and the press conferences are particularly illuminating in terms of the meaning that the 2009 Cannes Best Screenplay Award had and how it was constructed jointly by the press and the festival-as-institution. That is, I argue, rather than the film using the festival to gain symbolic capital *the network is using the text and the author to build the consecrating-signature* of the Festival de Cannes, and its value as a site where political freedom can be asserted in the face of restrictive legislation. While the integration of the 'screenplay' into the production process, with endless revisions during the filming and editing, suggests that the screenplay was not really a separate entity to the finished film, the political controversy seems to be the main reason that the film won. This adds complexity to current claims that the Festival de Cannes is a brand because it signals that, just as Naomi Klein pointed out in 2001, the main interest of corporations is to build and sell brands rather than products. This film appears, in essence, to be just another strategy of brand building; an extension of the Cannes' brand to include political outsider filmmakers (so long as they tell the kinds of stories that Cannes is open to). However, the Festival de Cannes could hardly be considered a corporation, and I have been arguing that the construction of a brand around this festival is performed via the cooperation among different

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<sup>86</sup> The video is not coded on a 60 minutes basis, it last 85 minutes.

groups of agents, so Klein's argument about producing brand values rather than branding products (7) becomes rather complex, and I will address it later on in my thesis.

Contrary to what we have just seen, at the 2010 Awards Jury Press Conference journalists kept applauding the winning film for its "textual" values and they congratulated the jury on their "inspiring decision" (0:14, in *festival-cannes.com/eng*). One of them said: "most film critics were very pleased with the choice" (ibid. 0:18); emphasizing the agreement, first among critics and then between these two sets of agents. That is some jury's choices are *more* right than others. Nevertheless, according to the current research, the agency to attach cultural capital to a film seems greater in those instances when agreement about the award is wide-spread, thereby making it seem more authorised. That is, as we have seen already, the cultural capital that the Festival de Cannes attaches to any one film seems to emanate from the reception of the film performed by all field agents, the awarding decision being *but one* of such practices. Unsurprisingly, we will see in this chapter (and in other case studies) that when the cultural capital attained by films through awards is then reinforced by general agreement about their worth, it translates better into economic capital.

To an extent this may mean that reception practices other than awards may have even more impact than the prizes themselves. This certainly signals, again, that the Festival de Cannes' awards fulfil their symbolic function of legitimation on the basis of shared recognition (Bourdieu 1998a:90). Therefore, De Valck's 2007 proposition that the Festival de Cannes relies on its network gains more significance. In Bourdieu's terms, the authority of the Festival de Cannes would be "itself a credit-based value, which only exists in the relationship with the field of production as a whole ... This 'authority' is nothing other than 'credit' with a set of agents who constitute 'connections' whose value is proportionate to the credit they themselves command" (1993:78). And what is beginning to emerge is that the press is part of the field of production of

meaning and value (they do not stand to one side and comment).

Since the fact that these two films had such different theatrical distribution and audience appeal reinforces my argument, I am going to summarize their numbers. According to IMDb, in their first weekend in the US, *Spring Fever* made 854 dollars and *Poetry* 18,900 dollars. *Spring Fever* was commercially released *only* in France.<sup>87</sup> This means, of course, that it was not released in China. On the contrary, *Poetry* went to the theatre circuit in: South Korea, France, Belgium, Russia, Hungary, Spain, Greece, Taiwan, the Netherlands, USA, Brazil, Portugal, Italy, UK, Sweden, Argentina and Japan. I am not denying the possibility that *Spring Fever* received greater visibility because it had competed for and received an award at Cannes; that is, it could be the case that if the film had not won an award at Cannes it would have received even less attention. This possibility should make us question the role that the Festival de Cannes plays in the legitimization of films financed with French funds. However, distributors and audiences did not translate this Cannes' award into box-office revenues. Maybe, that is why that year the awarding decision process was surrounded by tension and criticism. It may seem like using Cannes' promotional potential to drive the attention to a film which did not have appeal to distributors or film critics, leads to questioning if the jury is correctly fulfilling their delegate function (an idea we must bear in mind when we think of "Cannes' brand"). What such tensions bring into question, especially when compared to the joyous general agreement of the 2010 case, is if the festival always secures the value of films as products (as Harbord claimed). These tensions also bring to question the extent to which the festival is autonomous, not in making awarding decisions but, more importantly, in securing the value of films as products, and the values of its awards.

It seems that (according to IMDb), back in the year of its release, *Spring Fever* had two official websites, a French site and a Hong Kong site, but the French website is not operative any more. The Hong Kong

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<sup>87</sup> It did travel to some international film festivals.

site shows no visible symbol of the Festival de Cannes or the award the film received there. Plus, it seems like one cannot buy *Spring Fever* at stores or watch it on VoD; I did not find it either at the Cinémathèque Française or the BFI, thus, in order to watch it I had to ship a DVD copy from the United States (via Amazon). Although this does not mean that the film is unavailable it shows that the film did not attract a distributor. What it means is that although the Competition is defined as author cinema with a wide audience appeal, distributors may not fully agree on the appeal of one particular film.

Once again, the scenario changes dramatically when it comes to *Poetry*. First, IMDb offers three links to official and operative websites, a French one, a Japanese one and a South Korean one, and you can buy the DVD from any of those sites. Second, distributors from other countries, such as Spain, also maintain their own official websites for the film. Moreover, *Poetry* can be bought in many countries and with subtitles in different languages and it can easily be rented online and it is a common film in libraries.<sup>88</sup> In short, *Poetry* has had greater distribution and visibility, which is still apparent today. While this difference shows that the award has a fluid value that may change for each award-winning film, this award could always be performing diversity and reinforcing the singularity of the “author”.

### **Reception after Cannes**

I claim the agency of a screenplay award to attach meaning and value depends strongly on how the press receives a given year’s awarding decision. I am now going to analyse how these two films were received by the French press once the festival ended. I contend that the meanings generated around a film while at Cannes travel with them when they get released commercially in France, so that we could even think of French press reception outside the festival as a prolongation of the festival. The

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<sup>88</sup> It was available at the BFI shop, in a Public Library in Norwich, in the Cinémathèque Française, at Netflix and in Filmin.

promotion and reception of these two films while in The Competition built the reading possibilities for the films when they performed as products for the French public. I contend that the screenplay award did not substantially change their receptions, but navigation through the festival did frame each reception. Consequently, I also argue that the term screenplay appeared more frequently in the reception of these films after the festival, whether to criticise or praise the decision. This introduces the possibility that the award may, by virtue of its name, slightly change how a film is received, maybe not in terms of “worth”, but in terms of bringing to the fore the word “screenplay”.

According to *Cahiers du Cinéma*, the 2009 palmarès was “predictable” (June 2009: 8), a term which is very negative in the art market as it stands in opposition to the value of discovery. Plus, they did not review *Spring Fever* even though it was an award-winning film. This is very significant because many non-award-winning films were highlighted. We see that film critics may sometimes reinforce their own field positions, even challenging the festival and its awarding decisions. In 2010 the picture was quite different, with comments such as “*Poetry*: Lee Chang-Dong, screenplay award, punctuates this *good taste* Palmarès” (June 2010: 6, my emphasis). Other interpretations suggested that Southeast Asian cinema, “which we had announced as the new *El Dorado* for years, has been crowned” (June 2010: 8).<sup>89</sup> What we can see is that the screenplay award becomes more or less important depending on the interest of the film critic in calling attention to the award-winning film so that “the *real* verdict of a competition happens outside Cannes” (*Cahiers du Cinéma* June 2010: 9, my emphasis).

The same tension emerges if one compares how newspapers received the films *Spring Fever* and *Poetry* at the time of each of their releases in France. Regarding *Spring Fever* we have sentences where

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<sup>89</sup> The 2010 Palme d’Or went to the Thai film *Uncle Boonmee Who can Recall his Past Lives* (Apichatpong Weerasakatul) and this magazine interpreted the festival’s palmarès as calling attention to Southeast Asian cinema, using both the Palme d’Or and the screenplay award to reinforce their idea.

the filmmaking style is “giving a tactile air to his screenplay, which, paradoxically, has won the screenplay award at Cannes, when it has reduced to a minimum the psychological or logical bounds” (*La Libération*, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2010, in *liberation.fr*). That is, the award decision is questioned, and the film’s screenplay is reduced to a narrative that the film does not possess. At Cannes the term screenplay only emerged at the Awarding Ceremony; to an extent it did not capture much attention even in the Winners’ Press Conference. But this same term comes to the fore after the film receives the award. There is, even after the award, a lack of agreement on whether it is a good or a bad screenplay, as another critic wrote that it was a “subtle and brave screenplay” (*20 Minutes*, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2010, in *20minutes.fr*). Nevertheless the term is being used in the reception of the film, which signals that the press gives certain weight to the word screenplay in “Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award”.

However, as had happened before, the press still focused, again, on the “value” of censorship:

When one sees the films that have come from China it would seem like the country is becoming the first producer in the world of disenchantment. Lou Ye, who refuses to bend to the official rules of filmmaking (censored before and after the film) is one of the main contributors to this...The screenplay (by Mei Feng) follows the flow of several love triangles... but this world remains a little empty (*Le Monde*, 13<sup>th</sup> April 2010, in *lemonde.fr*).

The film is interpreted as a Chinese work. Then it is addressed in terms of the ban imposed on Lou Ye, just as had been common before it received the screenplay award. But this review also names the screenplay and the screenwriter, even if it is not to praise them, and attention is brought to collaborators. Another important repetition is the role of French funds in making possible the film’s production (*Paris Match*, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2010, in *parismatch.com*). Curiously enough, even though it could not be said that the film was received with enthusiasm,



inside or outside the festival, I have found not a single instance where the use of French funds is criticised, even though these served to make this *not so liked* film. Consequently, I contend that the fact that this film stands against a China-imposed ban was rendered a positive value *in itself*, to an extent even disregarding the qualities of the film.

This opens up many questions in relation to the social construction of the Festival de Cannes and the social construction of the cultural capital of Cannes' awards. This study brings to question if this Cannes' award has any value in itself or if the cultural capital we may attach to it actually emanates from the hype and the reception of each film. Accordingly, the year that it befalls on a film which is not much appreciated, the award loses much of its agency to attach cultural capital (if we can still claim that the award itself has any agency or value as an object). And yet we have seen that there is one thing this award does do - it mildly brings the term screenplay to the fore in the reception of award-winning films.

When it came to *Poetry*, the award led to headings such as "I was waiting for the right screenplay" (actress Yoon Hee-jeong in interview, *Libération*, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2010, in *liberation.fr*). Also, as it had when the film navigated the festival, it continued receiving really good criticism: "the Korean filmmaker builds the nagging bitterness of the struggle between the ideal and the real at the heart of existence around a strange screenplay" (*Libération*, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010, in *liberation.fr*). Moreover, reception within and beyond the festival also have in common the reference to ideals, transcendence, and/or poetic thought. The film is "an ambiguous and touching poem" (*Libération*, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2010, in *liberation.fr*) representing "when Poetry rhymes with master piece" (*L'Express*, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2010, in *lexpress.fr*). In conclusion, the screenplay award cannot be said to substantially change the reception of a film. So the meanings that the award itself, and even the term screenplay has, depends to a great extent on the context of each award-winning film. However, the award directs the attention of film critics towards commenting on the screenplay. In this light I contend that

even if Cannes Best Screenplay Award cannot be said to convey the meaning that a film's screenplay is “good”, nor even that a film is “good”, it still plays an important role for the identity of Cannes, since it channels certain brand values; which are repeatedly (albeit differently) attached to each film from its arrival to its commercial release. Furthermore, I suggest that precisely because the Best Screenplay Award can be given out to different films, it *performs the presence of diversity* at the heart of the Festival de Cannes. Finally we have also seen that this award invites film critics to think and talk about screenplays.

## Conclusions

This pair of films represents two contrasting ends in terms of visibility and the critical reception of a Best Screenplay Award-winning film. The textual and paratextual differences between them could lead to an analysis on Cannes' preferred aesthetic, the favourite author-persona type, or on the geopolitics of cinema distribution. However, the focus of this study was to argue that the Best Screenplay Award has no fixed cultural or even symbolic capital of its own; instead, meaning and value are constructed at the intersection of the award, the film and the different groups of agents in the field. These examples show multiple things: first, the complexity of national identity for Cannes and for the films it chooses to reward; second, that the Best Screenplay Award is highly politicised, and sometimes is less about signifying the worth of a film, and more about Cannes's jury making a political statement; and, third, that the press has the final say on those statements, either bowing to the authority of the Cannes' jury, or questioning their legitimacy within French culture. Therefore, these examples really show the limits of the Cannes Best Screenplay Award to confer cultural value and prestige to films. On the other hand, we have seen how a film's meaning becomes reified and how that meaning is appropriated by the Festival de Cannes.

Nevertheless, I have simultaneously argued (this has been emerging throughout my work) that this award performs diversity, but this does not

mean that we have to take the meaning of this term at face value. Taken together, these examples show us that Cannes' claims to diversity are challenged by its own perceptions of cultural difference, and then once again by the perceptions of the wider reception community. Sometimes this means that establishment films become praised while more radical films are denied cultural legitimacy. Finally, we have seen that French film critics reproduce, to a great extent, the language of those presenting films and the language of Cannes' institution-delegates; however, we have also seen them criticising how a film has been made or an awarding decision. In order to better understand the role of the press in questioning or repeating Cannes' language and judgement of taste, in my next case studies I continue analysing press reception of Best Screenplay Award-winning films in national contexts other than France.

## Chapter 6

### **The Value of a Screenplay Award when Bestowed to an Already Successful Film: *Vol/ver* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2006)**

The claim that Cannes is an “international” film festival does not just mean that films from different countries can participate, but also, of course, that it gathers media attention from around the world. Therefore, I found it important to consider press receptions other than the French response, in order to understand how cultural capital is internationally constructed around this festival and the Best Screenplay Award; this is what I will now do in the current and the final case studies of my thesis. The film *Vol/ver*, which received the screenplay award in 2006, was written and directed by the Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar and in this chapter I analyse the Spanish press reception of this film, in order to understand the press reception of this Cannes’ award in a national context other than France. However, Almodóvar was a critically acclaimed and high grossing filmmaker long before receiving this award, and the film *Vol/ver* had been successfully released in Spain before it went to Cannes, and this has brought many interesting tensions to the fore. To an extent this case study brings to question whether or not Cannes has a real effect on all its films and for every territory; a tension which is not new in this thesis. Also we find, again, that the press can either bow to the authority of Cannes’ juries or deny it, thereby making it seem like prizes themselves are not sufficient to reify a film’s worth. This case study has become very helpful in terms of reaching a better understanding of the practices of trading, reviewing and awarding films and how these relate to each other, and it brings to the question the centrality of Cannes in the consecration of a cinematic “work of art”.

The Festival de Cannes, sometimes, as in this case, asks directors to send in their films (*El Mundo*, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2006: 15), which is clearly part of a strategy that wants to associate the festival with critically

acclaimed authors (Elsaesser 2005: 91). While this is not a new idea, I am interested in understanding how it worked in this particular case because on this occasion the film had already been critically acclaimed. I have observed in my two previous cases that press reception has a tendency to make meaning of Cannes' films following the same ideas employed by the festival's institution. Moreover, I have suggested that this repetition of meaning-making possibilities leads to a reification of the meaning and values that serves to reinforce the idea that taste is objective. Considering one of the few cases where the press *precedes* the festival, can help us understand if the festival is influenced by the press in the same manner that we have seen the press being influenced by the festival. What I am investigating is the extent to which the object of the Best Screenplay Award can be considered as a material representation of an accumulated symbolic capital which does not emerge from the institution of the Festival de Cannes, but from the work of all of those invested in creating, trading and consecrating author cinema with a wide audience appeal. That is, analysing if Cannes' Best Screenplay Award changed the discourse about *Volver* in the Spanish press should help clarify to what extent prestige is generated via the network (without a centre), or if Cannes' decisions are vital in the processes of building symbolic capital around a film.

I will argue that awarding decisions must be understood as part of an ongoing process which serves at least three purposes: to attach prestige to films and authors, to secure Cannes' position in the field, and to conceal the arbitrariness of the game and the interests of the players. That is, "it is this charismatic ideology, in effect, which directs the gaze towards *the apparent producer* - painter, composer, writer - and prevents us asking who has created this 'creator' and the magic power of transubstantiation with which the 'creator' is endowed" (Bourdieu 1996: 167, my emphasis). Accordingly, an award would channel the work of those who build the "creator" because it directs our gaze towards his/her "magic power" and away from the work of putting up the idea that such

“magic power” exists and that it can be embodied in one individual. In previous chapters I have suggested that the Festival de Cannes follows this pattern and that the press repeats those ideas. Yet it is equally necessary to analyse if the press directs our gaze towards the “creator” when the film does not come from Cannes. Our instinct tells us that they do, but it is important to study how and why in order to understand the game of *transubstantiation* of a film author and the interests that it serves. We saw in the first two chapters *why* the Festival de Cannes and the Cannes Film Market direct our gaze towards the “creator” reinforcing the “charismatic ideology”. We have also seen French film critics participate in this, but, so far, their work *seems merely to echo* this ideology beyond the festival. The current chapter studies the extent to which the charisma of the author and the symbolic capital attached to one film originate in a place other than Cannes, and, if so, what interests does this serve. As a result of this analysis I will argue that in Spain the meaning of Almodóvar as a film writer-director who is a “creator” are closely related to his international appeal but do not depend on any one particular recognition or success. We will see that the festival’s taste was even questioned by the Spanish press.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, I suggest that the charisma of Almodóvar results from a national and non-national ongoing process of “transubstantiation” which surpasses the Festival de Cannes and its awards, because it is repeatedly performed by many different agents *to serve their interests*.

The chapter takes as primary sources a number of Spanish press publications. My approach relied on two different types of publications: newspapers and their weekend magazines on the one side, and specialized cinema magazines on the other. To study national newspapers and their magazines, I have reviewed the three best-selling

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<sup>90</sup> My primary sources were, therefore, published in Spanish, which was an advantage for me as a native Spanish speaker. I have translated the quotes from Spanish to English and I have written them directly in English to ease the reading of the chapter. The same applies in the subsequent chapter with quotes from sources in French, Italian or Portuguese translated directly in English. Consequently, the original sources cited, often available online, will be found in their original languages.

newspapers: *El País*, *El Mundo* and *ABC* (OJD, information and control of publications, website consulted 24<sup>th</sup> June 2013).<sup>91</sup> I considered publications from the 1<sup>st</sup> of March until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2006; that is, I started before *Volver* premiered in Spain (on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2006) and I finished at the end of the year in order to study the evolution of the Spanish press reception before and after Cannes' awards (the film received a Best Screenplay and a Best Actress Award, with this last award given to the whole feminine cast *ex aequo*). The analysis of specialised cinema magazines has also been pinned down to three publications. Firstly, *Fotogramas* and *Cinemanía* are the most popular titles in the country (OJD, information and control of publications, web-page consulted 24<sup>th</sup> June 2013).<sup>92</sup> Secondly, *Dirigido Por* is the number one highbrow cinema magazine in Spain.<sup>93</sup> I reviewed issues from March to the end of the year of those three specialised magazines, to understand the impact on these types of publications of the Festival de Cannes and its awards. Exceptionally, there is one reference to Almodóvar's blog, not because I study online sources, but because it serves to *illustrate* a very particular conflict between the film writer and director, and a film critic. The object of this chapter is to understand how Cannes' Best Screenplay Award for *Volver* was given meaning and value in the Spanish press, and if this award changed in one way or another how the film or the filmmaker had been judged before the award. However, in order to analyse the press reception of this film and this award it is important to have an idea of Almodóvar's image in the Spanish press. This is fundamental to understanding the value that Cannes' Best Screenplay Award 2006 had against the wider frame of Almodóvar's construction as an author; after all, according to Janet Staiger "attributing unusual narratives or narration as coming from directors-as-authors predated the 1940s" (2005:135) and my aim was to

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<sup>91</sup> These three dailies publish more than any other in Spain, for instance *El País* 400,000, *El Mundo* 298,000 and *ABC* 230,000.

<sup>92</sup> *Fotogramas* has more than 135,000 readers and *Cinemanía* 47,000.

<sup>93</sup> Its contributors are film scholars and historians.

understand this as a phenomenon occurring beyond Cannes, to gain an idea of the place that the festival and the award occupy in this case.

*Volver* is the story of a group of working class women led by the character of Raimunda, interpreted by Penélope Cruz. Raimunda's teenage daughter kills her stepfather because he is trying to abuse her. Raimunda sets out to protect her daughter by getting rid of the body. Meanwhile, Raimunda's long disappeared mother comes back to live with Raimunda's sister. We will learn that the mother had been hiding since she killed Raimunda's father, and also that she killed him because he had also abused his daughter. That is, we will find out as the film develops that the two mothers have struggled with a similar conflict. The story takes place between the little village where they all come from and the city outskirts, where Raimunda, her daughter and her sister now live. This brief introduction should assist with the understanding of the press reception. We will often find that the press highlights certain elements, themes or strategies from the film as “coming from the director-author”. Certainly, this notion is also well established among academics discussing Almodóvar (Holguin 1994, Arroyo 2000, Gutierrez-Albilla 2005, Royo-Villanova 2006 and others cited in this text). Moreover, we will also see the film being compared to wider frames of reference in the history of cinema; for instance, the character of Raimunda is read as a neorealist heroine. These practices signal that the film was being read as art cinema (as explained by Staiger in her review of art and avant-garde cinema reading in 2005, or in Peterson 1994). However, this also means that the film was being read as an Almodóvar film retaining “his unique tone” (D’Lugo 2006: 133). For instance, the plot of *Volver* is read as noir cinema mixed with melodrama, topped with some comic situations. That is, we will see that *Volver* is interpreted by the press as a “work of art” that needs to be framed within the *unique* body of work of a “creator” and also as giving continuity to a long established view that the films written



and directed by a director-author are connected to his biography.<sup>94</sup>

There is, however, a different idea which is also repeated in the press reception and promotion of this film: that the screenplay of *Volver* is inseparable from the film (one cannot really tell one from the other). This idea follows Almodóvar's own statements. For instance, Almodóvar is commonly appraised for carefully composing the colour scheme in his frames, a visual filmmaking strategy that one would, in principle, not attach to a film's screenplay. However, the published version of *Volver*'s screenplay often describes the colour composition of frames: "the red car crosses the yellow fields" (Almodóvar 2006: 15). In another example of the film's visual strength, the scene in *Volver* where Penélope Cruz sings became one of the most appraised by the press as it was "glued to one's eyes" (*El Mundo*, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2006: 46). The general appraisal of this scene added to the shared, and preceding, reading of Almodóvar's songs as an "ecstasy medium used to express powerful emotions... which threaten to deluge the frame of diegesis" (Smith P.J. 2000: 3). However, this song-sequence which "threatens to deluge the frame of diegesis" is carefully described, with the whole song's lyrics transcribed, in the published version of the screenplay, making, to an extent, the use of this song a writer's decision rather than a director's one. Therefore, as we will see, it seems difficult to judge *what* in *Volver* results from its screenplay, or to what extent Almodóvar is an "author" precisely because he writes. Despite the screenplay and the visual elements being "inseparable", the film received, nominally, an award *for its screenplay*, which raises many questions on the use of this term at Cannes. That is, we can see an integrated discourse around the filmmaker which precedes and follows this film's reception and awards, according to which it is his writing as much as his directing that makes him an author; and this could relate to the awarding decision. Since his filmmaking and his author persona have long been linked to his writing, the study of this screenplay award becomes even more interesting. Pedro Almodóvar

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<sup>94</sup> I mostly use masculine pronouns in my text because I have not studied women authors, as there was not a single female screenplay award winning author.

usually defines himself as “a director and a scriptwriter” (Almodóvar in D’Lugo 2006: 146) and the critical and reception discourses which surround him tend to do the same. Therefore we will see that Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award could, to an extent, contribute to reify a reading possibility which long preceded the award.

### **The prestige of Pedro Almodóvar in Spain before *Volver***

One grasps here, directly exposed, the injection of meaning and value performed by the commentator... The ideology of the inexhaustible work of art, or of 'reading' as re-creation, masks – by the quasi-exposure which is often observed in matters of faith – the fact that the work is in fact made not twice, but hundreds of times, thousands of times, by all those who have an interest in it, who find a material or symbolic profit in reading it, classifying it, decoding it, commenting on it, reproducing it, criticizing it, combating it, knowing it, possessing it (Bourdieu 1996: 171)

Although it is well known that Almodóvar is an important figure in contemporary Spanish cinema culture, I want to illustrate how the press has been “injecting meaning and value” into his films and how they may have been “finding a material or symbolic profit” in this act. Since his filmography is long, and mostly successful, I am going to focus on two high points in his career. First, how the press received his first win at Cannes, in 1999, when he received the Best Director Award for *All About My Mother*. Second, how the press received his Best Original Screenplay Oscar for *Talk to Her* in 2002. However, I do not aim to establish any comparison between awards, the purpose of this review is *only* to illustrate the importance that Almodóvar’s author persona had for the Spanish press before the release of *Volver*, and certainly before he received a Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award for that film. I am studying the construction of his author persona in the Spanish press to understand to what extent the process develops through time and who is invested in it, and to later evaluate if these discourses changed with the

2006 screenplay award. This introduction to the later analysis will become more meaningful when we see that this Cannes' award was received as a loss by the Spanish press. First and foremost this is related (among other tensions that we will see) to the extremely eulogistic and optimistic discourses that tend to surround Almodóvar and his films in Spain, which I am reviewing here.

*All About My Mother* (1999) was his first film competing at Cannes. There, it was bestowed the Best Director and the Ecumenical Jury Prize, which are two of the most important awards of the festival. With this international start at the Festival de Cannes, *All About My Mother* grew to receive "more awards and honours than any film in motion-pictures, Spanish or otherwise" (D'Lugo 2006: 105). *All About My Mother* had opened in Spain in mid-April, and each year the Festival de Cannes makes public the list of films in The Competition around mid-April. Therefore, *All About My Mother* had just recently been released in Spain when it started collecting international recognition at Cannes. The Festival de Cannes admits only international premieres for The Competition, but competing films can have premiered in their country of origin already. Curiously enough, the Spanish release dates of the four films immediately following *All About My Mother*, which were *Talk to Her* (2002), *Bad Education* (2004), *Volver* (2006) and *Broken Embraces* (2009) all took place *in mid-March* (Cannes' selection is announced in mid-April and the festival takes place in mid-May). Since all those films premiered internationally at Cannes (in and out of The Competition) it seems like the Spanish release date of those films could relate to the Festival de Cannes. This seems to signal that Almodóvar, his production company and his national and international distributors, found out, or decided, that Cannes was a remarkable platform to launch films internationally but not a necessary prequel to launching each new film in Spain. This could be a sign of a tension that I have addressed in previous chapters (mainly in my second case study) that the trading and promotion of films relates to the Festival de Cannes' consecrating role

but does not simply follow its guidelines.

The 1999 success of Almodóvar at Cannes had other consequences for the director: in his words, “*All About My Mother* gave me confidence in myself” (quoted in D’Lugo, 2006: 105). Also, the budget of Almodóvar’s films increases with each new success from 1999 to 2006, and similarly, so does the films’ revenues (consulted in IMDb). Already back in 1996, academics were stating that: “the marketing efforts of *El Deseo* in Spain contributed greatly to the success of the film [*High Heels* (1991)] in neighbouring territories” (Illott in Smith P.J. 2000: 43). That is, in 1991 he had already been used as a paradigm for meeting markets and budgets in European cinema, while his films continued escalating in scale in terms of both budget and box office revenues from 1991 to 2006. Without entering a deep analysis of those dynamics it becomes already visible that recognition, budgets, markets and self-confidence are interrelated. Therefore, we can bring to question the intrinsic or purely charismatic origin in the construction of an international cinema author. As Bourdieu claimed, “perhaps we ought to stop thinking within the theological logic of ‘first beginnings’ which leads inevitably to faith in the ‘creator’”. The principle of the effectiveness of acts of consecration resides in the field itself” (1996: 169). In this chapter I investigate how the Spanish press and the Festival de Cannes perform that “faith in the ‘creator’” and the “effectiveness” of the 2006 Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award as an “act of consecration”. This study aims to contribute to our understanding of the system of relations which builds value and meaning around authors and festival awards. It is one of the main arguments of the current chapter that awards do not always consecrate authors or films but that these authors or films may be strategically appropriated by a festival by means of awards.

Almodóvar also won a screenplay Oscar in 2003 for *Talk to Her* (2002), the film immediately following *All About My Mother*, and this award was reviewed as a *national achievement*. What this signals is that the press and certain institutions may make strategic use of the achievements of one film director to meet their own interests. In that

particular case, the consecration of the film's screenplay became the consecration of Spanish culture, in a clear example, first, of the reliance on foreign recognition to generate and objectify symbolic capital (a tension widely referenced in my framework and in previous chapters), and second, in the use made by various different agents of one very specific award as a symbol of much wider reach. The Oscar nomination and subsequent award-winning of his screenplay generated massive press and institutional recognition, with full page advertisements and monographic issues. On the basis that thirty six years had passed since a screenplay not written in English had won the Original Screenplay Oscar, Almodóvar's award became "historical for Spanish cinema" (*El País*, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2003: 45) and was interpreted as a sign of the international appeal of Spanish culture. This brings to the fore the complex system of interests and agents who put together value and meaning for a "creator" and his work.<sup>95</sup> That year Almodóvar was a nominee for the Best Director Oscar and the Original Screenplay Oscar, and he had also won several important awards in the US, such as a Golden Globe, a New York Critics award, and a California Critics award.

*El País*, the daily with the largest print run in Spain, issued a whole Sunday magazine entitled "Almodóvar, American Pop Diary" (16<sup>th</sup> February 2003) with a picture of him and Nicole Kidman on the cover. The image is ambiguous as it seems to convey that Almodóvar had his picture taken with a star, while it can also be read as the image of two stars. The *pop diary* was written by Almodóvar himself, and accompanied by the pictures he had taken himself during his journey around the US, where he had been attending a long series of cinema consecration ceremonies. I do not study the idiosyncrasy of those US ceremonies and awards in my thesis, and I am only reviewing their Spanish reception to better understand the complexity of the author-making apparatus in Spain, in particular the role and practices of the press. The

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<sup>95</sup> I am not comparing two screenplay awards but analysing them separately to introduce and reinforce the previous argument, which is merely a located study of a theory proposed by Bourdieu.

aforementioned text had several sentences such as “we ended up at the party that CAA organised. This is the agency with more stars among its clients, therefore the most powerful one, they also represent me” (*El País* magazine, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2003: 46). As we can see, the rhetorical strategy is, first, to create a certain distance (“we ended up”) between Almodóvar and those super-glamorized events and people (“the agency with more stars”), to then, of course, attaching that glamour to himself, since he had actually been invited. For example, he tells how Georges Lucas, Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese were together at “the most powerful table” (*El País* magazine, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2003: 48) which he instantly finds out to be his table. There is, of course, a relationship between symbolic capital, which he is constantly reinforcing, and economic capital. After all, according to Bourdieu “the different types of capital can be derived from economic capital” (1986:252) and they are talking about a Hollywood agency. Moreover Bourdieu’s quote continues, explaining that this is done “at the cost of a more or less *great effort of transformation*, which is needed to produce the type of power effective in the field of question” (ibid., my emphasis). In sum we can see here the effort of the press and Almodóvar in generating symbolic capital, in the form of prestige, and concealing its origin (and potential exchange) in economic capital.

Following a similar approach, focused in the production and attachment of symbolic capital through press discourses, one writer said that the writer-director was “a candidate for the two most important Oscars: Best Director and Best Screenplay” (*El País*, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2003: 3). There is a remarkable neglect in this quote, in that it fails to mention the Best Film Oscar, which, in general, would be considered the most important Oscar. Later on, when Almodóvar received his screenplay Oscar, *all the newspapers analysed* printed out a full page advertisement congratulating, or even *thanking* him. These were accompanied by several official communications sent from major Spanish institutions, such as the Royal Family, the President, the Culture Minister, the President of the Audio-Visual Institute (ICAA), the President of the

Cinema Academy, and the Society of Authors (*El País*, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2003: 43-47 and *El Mundo*, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2003: 23-25). For these officials, the screenplay Oscar “places Spain, and, of course, Almodóvar’s cinema, as *referents for international cinema*” (quoting the president of ICAA in *El País*, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2003: 47, my emphasis). Furthermore, according to the president of the ICAA “this second Oscar means for Almodóvar the confirmation that he is, possibly, the most prestigious director *in the world*” (*El País*, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2003: 47, my emphasis). In sum, although it is true that Almodóvar was receiving great recognition outside Spain, his prestige was often reinforced by the press and by Spanish institutions using biased exaggeration, because it was being used as a platform for the promotion of Spanish cinema and culture.<sup>96</sup> That is, since those in the field of production of meaning and value “structure the perception and appreciation of the different positions offered by the field” (Bourdieu [1996] 2012: 164), their discourses can alter the perception and appreciation of those positions. For instance, receiving an Oscar secured Almodóvar’s high position in the field but we can see how perception and discourses rendered the award even more important (“the most prestigious director in the world”). On the one hand those in the field of production of meaning and value are in charge of giving “objective” meaning to awards so that these serve to consecrate authors and works; on the other hand they can still structure the appreciation of the field positions which should, in principle, derive from receiving “objective” recognition such as prestigious awards. These tensions need careful

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<sup>96</sup> The year that Almodóvar won the Original Screenplay Oscar, the Spanish Cinema Academy had chosen to send the film *Mondays in the Sun* (León de Aranoa, 2004) to compete for the Foreign Film Oscar. The American Academy did not even shortlist this film for the Oscars, and yet they nominated Almodóvar for two Oscar categories other than the Best Foreign Film. He could not compete for the Foreign Film Oscar since his national academy had not sent it. This shows a lack of strategic thinking on the part of the Spanish Academy because, as his Spanish distributor put it, Almodóvar’s distributor in the US is Sony Pictures Classics, and they are acknowledged as an important agency in Hollywood cinema (*El País*, magazine, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2003:46). Nonetheless the general discourse in the Spanish press did not highlight the error in terms of strategy, but in terms of taste (for example, *El Mundo*, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2003: 47). There was an implicit meaning that Spanish evaluation is not self-sufficient, and that instead it should follow international tastes.

unpacking and I will return to this point regarding the Spanish press reception of the Cannes' Best Screenplay Award.

What is even more interesting is that after such vaunting, a film critic would still write that Almodóvar, when he took his film *Bad Education* to Cannes some years later, was “a prophet outside his country” (*El País*, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2004: 40). We can see, once more, how the use of terms by the press builds on the transubstantiation idea. But that quote was the title of a chronicle on the Festival de Cannes which claimed that Almodóvar had more prestige outside Spain than inside, although we may not fully agree with that view. Moreover, the review somehow introduced the possibility that prestige resulted from the collective efforts of a system of consecration, as it explained that the city council of Cannes was covered with a massive close up of the director and that books about him populated Cannes' shop windows. According to the film critic, Almodóvar was also central in the festival's dailies and in international film critics' conversations (ibid.). In sum, I suggest that the iconic construction of Almodóvar in the discourses of the Spanish press *is* associated with his foreign recognition and awards. This introduction should serve to clarify why it may be “especially difficult now to disavow the effect, on both film culture *and* Screen Studies, of the increasingly reificatory and commodifying processes of contemporary auteurism” (Grant 2000: 101) and the complexities these involve. It is within those processes that I want to understand the particular case of Almodóvar's 2006 screenplay award at Cannes.

### **National press reception of *Volver***

Longer articles and more reviews of the film *Volver* were published in the month of March, surrounding its release in Spain, than in May or June,<sup>97</sup> accompanying its presence in Cannes. In March several non-specialised magazines and cultural pages centred on this film. Furthermore, the

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<sup>97</sup> These were also broadcast, as evidenced by the advertising of TV programmes in the newspaper pages.



specialised cinema magazines in Spain had *Volver* on their covers in the March monthly issues (*Cinemanía*, *Fotogramas*, *Dirigido Por*: March 2006), and all of them published long interviews, full page pictures and reviews of the film in March and April, while featuring none in May or June (let us remember that Cannes takes place in the second half of May and lasts ten days, thus awards are usually given out in the last days of May). In general, the Spanish press promoted the film with monographic studies connecting Almodóvar's life and work to the new film; that is, performing yet concealing the role of the system in the creation and attachment of meaning and symbolic capital around *Volver* and Almodóvar.

Before reviewing the press promotion and reception of the film, it should be clarified that *El País* is addressed as “the country's ‘reference diary’” (Davies 2011:36) and is the publication with the greatest print run, belonging to the media group PRISA. This group also owns some television channels which handled the broadcasting rights of Almodóvar's films, and often finances his projects as co-producers. It is no secret that this group has had a long positive relationship with Almodóvar, just as it is no secret that there is economic capital involved in this relationship. However, they did not “ignore the fundamental law of the universe: the imperative imposed by disavowal of the ‘economy’ is presented with all the appearance of transcendence” (Bourdieu 1996 [2012]: 161). That is, the value of the author and the value of the films were always addressed as emerging from the transcendence of the text and, as we have just seen, from the transcendence of Almodóvar and his accomplishments.

In the weeks preceding the Spanish release of the film, Almodóvar and *Volver* became the subject of many written (and televised) interviews as well as the focus of numerous articles. As early as the 5<sup>th</sup> of March (one month before its release, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April) *El País*' magazine featured Almodóvar and the film's cast *on the front page*, and they were already making *Volver* the main topic of the publication. They were building up expectations (hype in Gray's 2010 terms) and they published

an interview with the director and the actresses, accompanied by a series of classy studio pictures in black and white. On top of one of those pictures, in a banner filling two pages, it said “the screenplay is nothing without them, this is an actresses’ spectacle” (ibid.: 28). Therefore, this review was already highlighting the work of the cast and Almodóvar’s screenwriting, a meaning-making possibility that came only to be reinforced, or even simply echoed, when the film won those two awards at the Festival de Cannes.

A second article in the same magazine presented an interview with Almodóvar’s sisters under the title “Ghost Stories”. This text claimed to be an insight into Almodóvar’s creative sources for the making of the film. It dealt with his sources of inspiration for the screenplay, relating them to the stories and tales of his hometown, as well as to his personal traumatic relationship with death. This second article was illustrated with pictures comparing the shooting set with pictures from Almodóvar’s family home. Both the text and its images integrate Almodóvar’s roots within the fictional world of *Volver*, so the article is building a tight connection between creativity and the personal back-story of the apparent producer of the work of art (using Bourdieu’s terms). As this magazine was published before the release of the film, it was not film reception but a promotional paratext which built the hype of the film on three pillars: the actresses, the screenwriting and the hermeneutics of the author. None of these pillars were new and, to an extent, they are the same pillars that the Cannes’ awards will recognise. It is becoming obvious that in this case the theory that “the discourse on the work is not a simple side-effect, designed to encourage its apprehension and appreciation, but a moment which is part of the production of the work, of its meaning and its value” (Bourdieu, 1996 [2012]: 170) proves to be of much relevance. Moreover, we can begin to understand the 2006 screenplay award as “a moment” in the production of the work that may not even be the most important one for the Spanish press.

One week later, the same magazine put *Volver* on its cover and central pages once again, making this film the central theme of two consecutive issues. In between these two dates, *El País* daily announced that the television channel of their media group (Canal Plus Spain) had produced, and was going to broadcast, an interview with Pedro Almodóvar revealing “all his truth” (*El País*, 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2006: 46), using, once more, the self-*persona*-art discourse to promote the filmmaker and his latest film.<sup>98</sup> The interview was critically reviewed in the three dailies I have studied (*El País*, *El Mundo* and *ABC*, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2006: back page). On top of that, stills from the film became the leading picture for the majority of cultural and gossip television programmes announced in the newspapers, and, presumably, the film occupied some central time in their broadcasts (*ABC*, *El Mundo* and *El País*, TV programming pages from the 8<sup>th</sup> of March to the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2006). In sum, Almodóvar was already the main focus of the social and cultural press pages (and also on the TV pages) *three weeks before* the release of *Volver*. In general, the press related Almodóvar’s creative sources and his author *persona* to the story and characters of the film: “in the writing of the screenplay and the shooting my mother has always been strongly present and very close” (*ABC*, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2006: 56). Since his mother had already been dead some years, the “confession” must be read as a metaphor explaining a very personal creative process. In fact, since all the characters in *Volver* are from a fictional village which represents the place Almodóvar’s mother had lived, and in the film there is a mother who returns from death, it is easy to understand why the writer-director and the press strongly associated the film with his personal history and his mother. Nevertheless, as we have already seen, texts-makers-traders and consecrators all cooperate in sustaining the ideology of charisma and the author; so, in this analysis we need not neglect the clues in the text that facilitate such operations. However, the filmmaker’s past was taken even further than usual to explain the film.

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<sup>98</sup> The contents of the interview were not dissimilar, but I have not analysed them because my object of study is press reception.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, the same three dailies dedicated their back page to the premiere of *Volver*, which took place in the village where Almodóvar is originally from. The title of the film means “to return” in Spanish and this led to recurrent puns. First, he was returning to his village as a film star; second, this film took place in the village where he was born (after a filmography mostly set in the city of Madrid), and third, he was *returning* to stories about women (after his male lead film *Bad Education*). In *El País* the chronicle was entitled “Pedro, Pedro, Pedro” (37), as it was supposed to be what the people were shouting at the premiere’s red carpet. The title of this chronicle is a reflection of Almodóvar’s popularity, in as much as it means that the director’s name is, in itself, relevant enough to constitute a meaningful newspaper heading. This film event, as well as its coverage, functioned at multiple levels regarding mostly local-transnational authorship and biography-signature tensions. But the use of the *Volver* pun was not limited to explaining the film in terms of a hermeneutics of the author.

The meanings of “to return” were expanded by the press in a variety of metaphorical senses, reinforcing and exemplifying “the ideology of the inexhaustible work of art” and how this is performed by commentators. From early March, and throughout the month, Almodóvar, his films and the feminine cast of *Volver*, occupied the front pages of the culture section of all the newspapers reviewed, and their weekly magazines, but the film also came forward in pages other than culture. For instance, the aesthetic world in *Volver* came to mean that a certain neorealist femininity was returning in the fashion pages of those magazines (*El País* magazine, 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2006: 34). Similarly, the looks of Penélope Cruz in the film heralded a return of the make-up style of neorealist actresses (*El Mundo* magazine, 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2006: Cover). Furthermore, on account of the fact that the characters cooked and ate several times throughout the film, the movie also meant that traditional Spanish recipes were “returning” in the cooking pages of those magazines (*El País* magazine, 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2006: 43). Finally, in a travel

magazine, the film was read as “a mythical return to the land of La Mancha” (*El País* magazine *El Viajero*, 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2006: cover). This publication proposed a journey around the film’s locations claiming that this was *the best* way of visiting that region of Spain, La Mancha. It must be noted that La Mancha is the same mythical land of Don Quixote, but following the path of the film *Volver* was now seen as the best way to visit the region. As we have seen previously, press discourse can alter the value of apparently objective field positions, in this case mostly intensifying the meaning and value of this “work of art”.

What I am trying to point out is that while it could be true that “Pedro is the best sales agent of his films, and that he knows how to create an outstanding expectation around him” (*El Mundo*, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2006: 58), he was not alone in this. The film had not yet been commercially released and the attention kept growing, to the extent that some film critics felt compelled to denounce “the informative and eulogistic overdose that accompanies each opening” (of Pedro Almodóvar’s films) (*El Mundo*, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2006: 67). These two mildly caustic quotes come from a newspaper which is not *El País*, and belongs to another media group, and yet one cannot see here the operation of difference as a real struggle, since after all they are still reviewing Almodóvar and his upcoming film, even though they introduced it with one critical sentence. In the same newspaper we can still find highlights such as “nothing will be the same for her after *Volver*” (*El Mundo*, 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2006: cover of culture pages), in reference to Penélope Cruz, whom was anything but an incipient star. This shows that even though *Volver* had not yet been commercially released, it had already been invested with great worth (enough to change the world for an actress who was already the number one international star of Spain). All in all, the previous evidence shows that *Volver* had received strong support from the Spanish press in cooperation, which suggests that the film may not have needed Cannes to assess its value.

However, the vaunt which we have been reviewing was still to increase further once film critics actually watched the film. The reception began with the official press premiere and the opening-night gala, hosted on Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, and it was generally agreed that the film was *a masterpiece*, building on the idea that cultural capital emerged from the text itself. For instance, “it is so much of an Almodóvar film that it could now be selected as the essence, substance, extract, compound and synthesis of all Almodóvar cinema” (*ABC*, 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2006: 61). I have not found a single critic not applauding the film, and most of them actually claimed it was one of the best, if not the best, Almodóvar film. Curiously enough, I found only one critic who appealed to the taste of his peers to convey that the film was good, as “Almodóvar has unanimously seduced the critics” (*El Mundo*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2006: 212). While, in general, the press reinforced the idea that the value of the film emerged from the text *itself*, and from its “creator”, we can still find some instances where value relies on critical reception, a tension we have seen before. What is important is that, although we find minor nuances in the reception of this film, the Spanish press speaks *unanimously* well of it; this contributes to reify taste and symbolic capital. Moreover, *Volver* held the number one box office position in the opening and second weekends, taking in more than 1 million seven hundred Euros during the first weekend and 1 million three hundred Euros in the second weekend (in *cineporlared.es*). This indicates that it was both an economic and critical success.

Although Almodóvar had already been a solid cultural hallmark in Spain for many years, the spring of 2006 was ostentatious. Moreover, in April 2006 the French *Cinémathèque* opened a monographic exhibition about him. This French institution showed his notebooks, drawings and pictures in a recreated “Almodóvar-esque” setting, complete with a cinema cycle reviewing all his filmography. To understand the “objective” worth of such recognition it must be highlighted that only Jean Renoir had received a similar honour before Almodóvar. This became, again, great news in the Spanish press. Dailies and magazines published long

articles and several pages of interviews with full page pictures of the exhibition. This was, again, used as part of a promotional strategy to consecrate not just Almodóvar but Spanish culture. On a different note one reviewer said that “the Olivetti stands out in the itinerary of the exhibition because it occupies a sort of glass protected *altar*” (*El País*, 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2006: 35 my emphasis). The director explains that this particular Olivetti writing machine was the one he had used to write his first screenplays. Since the exhibition commissioner, Almodóvar, and the writer of the chronicle decided to turn this object into one of the author’s main icons, we can see how his writing is given a central place in the construction of his author *persona*.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of April that year, Cannes announced The Competition and, once more, the selection of *Volver* was widely covered and boosted in Spanish newspapers. However, after what we have just reviewed, one can think that both the Spanish and international production and sales companies associated with the film, El Deseo and Sony Picture Classics, were not worried about the Spanish market or promotion. In as much as we have seen the interplay of economic and cultural capital at Cannes, in this case the interests of the traders could be more closely related to how the film was going to perform internationally.<sup>99</sup> Finally, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2006, right before Cannes, Almodóvar was announced as the year’s *Príncipe de Asturias* laureate artist, earning him *even more* media attention and symbolic capital. This award is a high honour bestowed by the Spanish crown to any artist, *national or international*, of their choice. He received the news that he was the chosen artist for such an honour while packing for Cannes, where, apparently, his film was awaited with expectation. Rather unsurprisingly, the press and the circle of the director became intoxicated with a sense of optimistic commotion, to the extent that by his own avowals he tried to cool down the atmosphere (*El País* 15<sup>th</sup> May: 39). In the middle of all this, Agustín Almodóvar, producer of the film, raised the

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<sup>99</sup> This is not always the case if we remember previous case studies.

stakes by stating “we are not coming back empty handed, Cannes owes Pedro Almodóvar a Palme d’Or” (*El Mundo*, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2006: 31, my emphasis). The idea that Cannes may owe to an author is extremely interesting as it adds to the argument that the festival appropriates symbolic capital from its authors, as well as signalling ongoing network relationships between such authors and the festival. However it also signals euphoria and we are about to see how this inebriating optimism gave the screenplay award a curious meaning: that of a loss.

### **Press reception of the screenplay award**

In this section I will demonstrate that not winning the Palme d’Or award became viewed as a loss in the eyes of the Spanish press, even though the film won two awards at Cannes. The neglect of these awards was such that the Cannes’ issue of the specialised cinema magazine *Dirigido Por* does not even mention the film *Volver* (July 2006). However, the screenplay award was given on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, and, by that time, the Spanish press had been fervent about Almodóvar for nearly three months (they had started in early March). It is also important to note that the Spanish promotion of *Volver* had finished, as it had already been in the theatres for two months when it arrived at Cannes (it opened in Spain on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2006 and it premiered at Cannes on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2006) and by the time the Best Screenplay Award was given out the film had already taken in more than 9 million Euros in the Spanish box office; this had turned the film into the third highest grossing Spanish film up to that date (in *cineporlared.es*).<sup>100</sup> Therefore, according to the Spanish press, the “consolation” prizes did not do the film justice and, as if in

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<sup>100</sup> *Volver* is one of the highest grossing Spanish films in history (the third highest according to Wikipedia), but the importance is not so much whether it is the number three or six film. Two of its direct competitors in terms of box office results, *The Others* (Amenábar, 2001) and *The Impossible* (J.A. Bayona, 2012), starred Nicole Kidman and Naomi Watts, were shot in English and had double or even three times the budget of *Volver*. The other close competitors were popular comedies associated with low brow cultural regard and with no prestige attached: the *Torrente* saga (Segura, four films from 1998 to 2011). *Volver* was also the 4<sup>th</sup> highest grossing film in Spain in 2006, after Hollywood films (*ABC*, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2006: 64).



return, we will see that the press did not pay much attention to the two Cannes' awards the film received (Screenplay and Cast). Moreover, given that the Spanish promotion and reception of the film had already focused on the cast and the screenplay to convey the film's worth, these awards did not offer much "new light" to the Spanish press. Finally, since those awards were given to a film that had arrived at Cannes already surrounded by discourses which highlighted the screenplay as a major source of value (as we saw happening, for instance, when *Lorna's Silence* won the screenplay award), we must consider the extent to which awarding decisions can follow established clusters of ideas.

Following their tendency to boost the film, the Spanish press read the film's reception at Cannes with grandiloquent chronicles such as "after the twenty minute applause in the Palais, she collapsed. Penélope Cruz had her mascara all over her face because she was crying so much, overwhelmed by the ovation" (*El País*, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2006: 56). The chronicle continues: "even the drivers, the waiters, the doormen, *everybody was saying* Pedro was going to win" (*El País*, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2006: 59, my emphasis). In these quotes we can see, again, the operation of discourse in increasing the value of an apparent "objective" consecration act, to premiere at The Palais and compete at Cannes, as well as an attempt to reify taste as a shared notion. More interestingly some diaries were less enthusiastic, writing that "experts whose conjectures include politics or industrial affinities do not state anything for sure. The Palme d'Or has not been bestowed to a Spanish-speaking filmmaker since it was awarded to Luis Buñuel with *Viridiana*, as far as 45 years ago" (*El Mundo*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2006: 54). What we can see here is that, even before the awards were given out, when "experts" were not sure it was going to win, it was not because they were questioning the worth of the film but because they were bringing to question the legitimacy of the awarding decision, a tension that reappeared when awards were given out.

According to what we have been reading, it is not surprising that the two awards received at Cannes were seen as "consolation trophies" (*El*

*Mundo*, 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2006: 42), and that “Almodóvar had to make up to his two awards” (*ABC*, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2006: 1). Even Almodóvar said that reading dailies at Cannes (and this does not only relate to the Spanish press) “I had seen that my film was a favourite and I must say that being a favourite at Cannes is a curse” (*El Mundo*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2006:back page). I would agree that being a favourite became a curse to the extent that he won two awards in the most prestigious international film festival and yet this did not seem to add to his prestige; but, according to my research, I may not completely agree that being a favourite is a curse for films in The Competition. Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award was mostly reviewed in the Spanish press together with the Best Actress Award, which seemed more important. The five Spanish actresses holding a Cannes’ award made it to the cover of all the newspapers, while the Best Screenplay Award was addressed in the text. The image of the actresses also fronted the culture pages of those same newspapers, often with Almodóvar among them (*ABC*, *El Mundo* and *El País*, 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2006). Nevertheless, it was received as “the scarce reward given to the actresses... since no one could help feeling something almost like defeat” (*ABC*, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2006: 56-57), or “the girls shoo away Almodóvar’s sorrow” (*El Mundo* 28<sup>th</sup> May 2006: 33). This idea is taken as far as to question the joy of the actresses: “they were deceived because Almodóvar did not win the Palme d’Or” (*El País*, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2006: 59). It is also important to point out that the press often related the actresses’ award back to Almodóvar’s authorship; as, for instance, in the heading “Cannes rewards Almodóvar's women. They all thanked the director” (*El País* 29<sup>th</sup> May 2006: 1). However, what is interesting is that the writer-director did the opposite at the awarding ceremony. When receiving the Best Screenplay Award he said: “the award for the actresses is swelling me up way more [than the screenplay one]... because they are the soul of this film, just by being there *they have actually written* half of the screenplay” (*El Mundo*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2006: 33, my emphasis). In spite of what has just been said, the screenplay award was sometimes read positively, and certainly always reinforcing the “the

unquestionable talent and *the genuine personality*" (*El Mundo*, 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2006: 43, my emphasis) of Almodóvar and *his* screenplay.

The scarce and even negative impact of Cannes' Best Screenplay Award in the Spanish press evidences, as we have seen in previous cases, that this award does not necessarily change the value of a film or its reading possibilities. Marijke De Valck claims that "such emphasis in *selection criteria* film festivals are able to offer cultural legitimization" (2016: 106, my emphasis); however, what has emerged here is that we can reverse the statement in various manners. First selection criteria may also serve to offer cultural legitimization to the festival; that is, symbolic capital does not flow in one direction only. Second, neither being selected for Cannes 2006 nor winning two awards seems to have offered much additional cultural legitimization to this film for this territory. These tensions do not deny the scholars' statement; I simply suggest that the flux of symbolic capital and the struggle for cultural legitimization is complex. The previous quote by De Valck continues by saying that at film festivals, films get to be

"embedded in a *rich discursive context*... competitions and their prizes have *the necessary news value* to attract film critics, who will write and report on the festival's program from an expert position that *can amplify* the cultural legitimization that is *already offered* by festival selection" (2016: 106, my emphasis)

She acknowledges some of the complexities of the process, but she locates the centre of the net in the game of cultural legitimization at the film festival and within its selection process. De Valck claims that festival selection is the first bearer of cultural legitimization, which can then be "amplified" by commentators, but in this case what we can see is that "the rich discursive context" surrounding a film may well precede the festival. In this particular example, it seems like in Spain the prestige of Almodóvar and his film surpassed that of the awards and even, as we are about to see, that of Cannes 2006. Therefore, a prize or award may be "the most *tangible* form of symbolic capital" (De Valck 2016: 106, my

emphasis), but it may not bear the first nor the last word.

Interestingly enough, the Spanish press dressed down the 2006 Festival de Cannes and its awarding decisions. A good example is the following response from *ABC*: “It is usually a miracle that such different people as those that make an international jury can reach an agreement; but this time more than a mystery or a miracle it has been an atrocity... I will finish my chronicle just like the festival has finished: botching” (*ABC*, 29<sup>th</sup> May: 59). That is, the writer severely criticises awarding decisions, claiming that the jury had performed poorly. This particular review also claims that “they had awarded the actresses and the splendid screenplay, that is, they were actually rewarding the flesh and the soul of the film” (*ibid.*), in an attempt to promote the idea that *Volver* had deserved to win the Palme d’Or. We will see other reviews in this line, but I want to pay particular attention to the use of the term “miracle”, because:

In matters of magic it is not so much a question of knowing what the specific properties of the magician are... but of determining the foundation of the collective belief, or, better, of the collective misrecognition, collectively produced and maintained, which is at the source of the power that the magician appropriates (Bourdieu 1996 [2012]: 169).

That is, I argue that neither meaning nor value emerge “magically” from the award, the jury or the festival (just as they do not emerge “magically” from the text or the author). Accordingly, in this particular case, the Spanish press had shared and produced “collective belief” which was somewhat challenged when the film did not win the Palme d’Or. Nevertheless, this “loss” did not bring to question Almodóvar’s “magic”, but the “magic” of the festival. I propose that it is the rich discursive context that constitutes the source, de-centred, of cultural capital. We can also see that commentators alter the supposedly “objective” value of one act of consecration, such as an award, to meet their ends; which, in this case, were to reinforce Almodóvar’s “magic”, even over Cannes’ “magic”.

Another review of the festival and its awards brings back, as has emerged in several previous case studies, the idea that the jury's decisions are not just subjective. While this is not new, this particular writer denies the legitimacy of the jury by claiming that awarding decisions are connected to a network of interests. The relevance is not so much the claim, which this thesis somewhat supports, but the fact that it is a very rare criticism (we only found a similar note in my second case study and it criticised only festival selection, it did not go as far as to question awarding decisions): “the palmarès was contaminated with a suspiciously salomonic spirit, *if not decidedly corporativist...* most probably this unsubstantial celebration of the festival did not deserve any other palmarès than the extravagant and sometimes even ridiculous one it has” (*El Mundo*, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2006: 39, my emphasis). The critic does not simply disagree with the jury (as we have seen in many previous instances), he goes as far as disrupting the illusion of misrecognition and magic that surrounds symbolic capital by denouncing the festival's corporatism. On a different note, it is also important to note that this criticism was not even published by *El País*, the newspaper with direct (economic) interests in the success of Almodóvar, but in *El Mundo*. This newspaper often takes, as we have seen, a mildly critical position against the eulogistic discourses in the press that surround Almodóvar, with statements such as “Almodóvar is the favourite of that group [PRISA Media Group, owner of *El País*] and they give him a cover in *El País* every three months” (*El Mundo*, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2006: 32), and yet even they criticised the Cannes' 2006 awards. Months after the film had failed to win the Palme d'Or, the most high-brow Spanish cinema magazine, *Dirigido Por*, still wrote that Almodóvar was responsible for the title which had generated the greatest consensus at the festival (July 2006: 28), further reinforcing the idea that the film had deserved to win and somewhat bringing to question the awarding choices.

## Press discourses after Cannes 2006

Despite the previous lack of attention to the Best Screenplay Award, and the subsequent criticism against Cannes in 2006, I still argue that the festival offers cultural legitimization. On the one hand, *Volver* won many national and international awards, and of Almodóvar's films it was the one with the greatest box office revenues inside and outside Spain (IMDb: consulted June 2013). Almodóvar and *Volver* kept occupying pages in the Spanish press throughout the year, becoming "the Spanish film of the year" (*El País*, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006: 31). On the other hand, this film had *first* been internationally appreciated and awarded by the Festival de Cannes, contributing to reinforce the festival's prestige. We have already seen in previous chapters that taking credit for *discovering* –or being the first to appreciate– the new works of filmmakers is part of Cannes' strategy to compete with other film festivals and to remain a major player in the field of author cinema with a wide audience appeal. *Volver* successfully opened in France while at Cannes, right after its festival premiere. But it was *later* released in England after its premiere at the London Film Festival, it was released in Canada while at the Toronto Film Festival, and in the United States while at the Telluride Film Festival, and so on. Accordingly, I propose that, "Almodóvar ... has managed to take advantage of the so-called new global order, using revitalised film festival circuits" (Epps and Kakoudaki, 2009: 11), but the Festival de Cannes has equally "taken advantage" of him. Nevertheless, *Volver* earned, *even in the US*, much bigger box office revenues than his Oscar-winning film *Talk to Her* (which had also won several other major US awards). This could give us an idea, in economic terms, of the importance of this festival as "a field configuring event" (Mezias et al. 2011) even if the poor Spanish press reception of the two awards this film received at Cannes has shown that the matter is more complex than just the festival adding symbolic capital.

I also suggest that Almodóvar's international recognition, including (but not limited to) Cannes, is used by the Spanish press, and other

Spanish institutions, to promote not only Spanish cinema but Spain itself; and this is one of the reasons why, in their eyes, Almodóvar may become more important than Cannes. For instance, in September 2006 scenes of Almodóvar's films were part of the Spanish stand at the Venice Architecture Biennale because, in their words, "Almodóvar *has done* more for Madrid than any campaign" (*El País*, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2006: 54, my emphasis). Since he has not had any special relation with architecture as such, this is basically supported by the idea that "Almodóvar's universality derives precisely from his localisms" (Epps and Kakoudaki 2009: 2, and Gubern, 1995), therefore he can represent Spain or Madrid universally. In this line, an economy expert writing for the economy pages of a newspaper denounced that "in China... some think that Almodóvar or Picasso are French" (*El País*, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2006: 74) to stress the importance of increasing Spain's presence in China. First, Almodóvar was repeatedly being used as a symbolic ambassador, so we can see the intertwined political, economic and cultural interests that operate in the construction of an international author. Second, his nationality was confused with French and this mistake (especially because it, supposedly, also applied to Picasso) speaks of the importance of the practice of consecrating authors, which may also have political and economic value beyond art and culture.

These examples seem to signal that there is a widespread collaboration in the reification of value, but there are disruptions in the processes. I am going to briefly review the Spanish press reception of the arrival in Cannes of *Broken Embraces* (2009), because it raised a major conflict in the struggle for cultural legitimacy. First, the Spanish press highlighted that *Broken Embraces* had the biggest budget yet for an Almodóvar film (*El País*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2009: 218); since it was the film immediately following *Volver*, we can see the intertwined and ongoing relations that sustain the field. Second, Cannes is repeatedly utilised as a market place and as a promotional platform for his and other films internationally (as we saw in my second case study). In Almodóvar's words:

Visiting Cannes ... is highly worthwhile; to begin with, I finish the French promotion as the film comes out in French movie theatres at the time of the festival. I save myself many promotional journeys because in five days I sort out most of the countries which I will not be able to visit. (Almodóvar's blog, in *todopedroalmodovar.blogspot.com*, posted in May 2009)

In this same line of mutual recognition the Festival de Cannes' art director, Thierry Frémeaux presented Almodóvar's 2009 film claiming that "first Buñuel cast a shadow over the rest, then the same thing happened with Saura, and afterwards with Almodóvar" (*El País*, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2009: 41). That is, there is an ongoing strategy to maintain each other's prestige, even via recognitions other than the Palme d'Or.

However, the film critic Boyero, writing for *El País*, published the following statement: "this Almodóvar for whom Cannes feels ancestral devotion (he is admired around the world but nothing compares to being discovered and satisfied by the super cultivated French, as they know about the real art)" (20<sup>th</sup> May 2009: 46). Boyero uses Almodóvar to mock France's symbolic capital in relation to art-cinema. This provoked an immediate, and equally aggressive, response from Almodóvar who wrote defending himself and the festival:

is it possible that *El País* cannot find a better critic to send to Cannes, the most important festival in the world?... when someone declares openly such harsh hostility against me the last his newspaper should do is ask him to report on my last film, as this violates any principle of objectivity or disinterestedness (*El País*, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2009: 3)

While this could have signalled that the newspaper was in conflict with Almodóvar, the newspaper in fact responded with the following: "does Almodóvar forget the many pages we have devoted to *Broken Embraces* before the film's premiere?" (22<sup>nd</sup> May 2009: 3, in a reference to their 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008 eulogistic article and several others). In as much as they did not defend their writer's opinion, they defended their writer's right for an opinion, but they also pointed out their role (which we have appreciated)



in building hype around Almodóvar films. This struggle for cultural legitimacy grew and it channelled debates on the role and responsibility of the national press, and national institutions regarding the international promotion of Almodóvar. The conflict came to be known in the Spanish press, and academic circles, as the Boyero-Almodóvar controversy (Davies 2011: 36), and it has even been used to explain the dynamics of contemporary Spanish cinema in those years because it could be said to have precipitated Almodóvar's peace-making with the Spanish Cinema Academy, which he had left in 2005 (Davies 2011:36). Therefore, "Cannes' adoration", and the criticism that this relationship raised, started a struggle that reached the Spanish Film Academy, and the academy took sides with Almodóvar. In sum, this is another example of how the film critics make claims for a final say regarding cultural capital, while signalling that they are not at the centre either; adding to my suggestion (which follows from Klinger 1994 study on meaning making practices) that the system of consecration has not centre. Nevertheless, in the bigger picture, press discourses tend to reinforce this author's prestige, often on the basis of his international prestige.

## Conclusions

What this case study illustrates is that the value of the Screenplay Award is not only related to its immediate impact, but to the system and intertwined interest that make the rich discursive fabric necessary to build up a cinema "creator" and a cinema "work of art". As to the use of the term 'screenplay' and how this relates to Almodóvar in particular, it is important to highlight that this award simultaneously emerged from, and contributed to, the screenwriter-director persona discourses which have been consecrating Almodóvar as an author. When presenting *Broken Embraces* (Pedro Almodóvar 2009) Penélope Cruz's first words at Cannes were "it is the best, most courageous, riskier, and most complex that Pedro has *written*" (*El País*, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2009: 38, my emphasis).<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> This film arrived to the Spanish press one month after Penélope Cruz had been

Thus, at this festival she introduced the immediately following film by highlighting the writing of Almodóvar. Accordingly, an award, in this case Cannes' Best Screenplay Award, is merely a tangible manifestation of a much bigger system of consecration. However, the most important tension that has emerged in this study is that in Spain Almodóvar constitutes "a press genre in itself" (*El Mundo*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2006: 56) and that "Almodóvar is a brand image" (*El País*, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2009: 38). This has brought to question the centrality of the festival and its awards in the complex discursive fabric that sustains the charisma ideology of the creator. It is not the first time that such tensions have come to the fore, so I suggest that it is necessary to problematise Thomas Elsaesser's claim that "by supporting, selecting, celebrating and rewarding - in short by adding cultural capital" film festivals influence the world's annual film production (2005: 96). Elsaesser's statement connects selecting and rewarding to the addition of cultural capital, but festivals' agency to add cultural capital emerges from more complex interactions. That is, consecration takes place through several different practices which involve different agents; and it is in the intertwined relations among those who make films, those who comment upon them and festivals themselves that such capital is generated and attached to films, authors, or awards. These groups, or certain individual agents within each of these groups, sometimes confront each other, which diminishes the value of, in this case, an award. However, in a bigger picture these agents seem to cooperate more than they struggle. Basically, they all tend to support "the collective belief, or, better, of the collective misrecognition, collectively produced and maintained" that meaning and

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awarded an Oscar for her role in Woody Allen's *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008). Curiously enough the Spanish press positions Cannes Festival as the launching platform of her success, as "Penélope Cruz has brought Spain an Oscar... This marks the end of a journey which *started* nearly one year ago at Cannes" (*El País* magazine, 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2009: 218, my emphasis). The two quotes show that the Cannes Festival is considered both as an initiator and a measuring pole for international success by the writer-director and by the Spanish press. The magazine mentioned above includes two promotional articles for *Broken Embraces*, where they emphasise the skills of Almodóvar in directing actors as much as his writing ability; two creative commands that are related to the two awards he had recently received at Cannes, though, curiously, his visual style is not commented upon in those articles.

value emerge from authors and their works. It is not strange to be approaching these conclusions as my research approaches its final case study since I have focused on the study of practices of social agents who occupy top positions in their fields (be those film executives, directors, juries or film critics). According to Bourdieu “in the structure of the distribution of the specific capital... Those in dominant positions operate essentially defensive strategies, designed to perpetuate the status quo by *maintaining themselves and the principles on which their dominance is based*” (Bourdieu 1993a: 83, my emphasis). In this light, it is not surprising that well established authors such as Almodóvar, or well established corporations such as Sony Pictures Classics (the international distributor of Almodóvar’s films), may take advantage in sustaining the Festival de Cannes’ prestige: firstly because it helps them maintain their own field positions, and secondly, - and this is one of the main arguments of my thesis - because it serves to maintain the principles on which their shared dominance is based. Accordingly, it is not strange either that film critics participate in the maintenance of those principles which, in general, also serve to sustain their own importance as commentators-consecrators. In as much as film critics appear to excerpt their power to reassess the apparent objective value of awards, increasing or diminishing value through their discourses, the ones studied (writing from well-established positions) still tend to reinforce the illusion of art and authorship which masks the works of the system of trading and consecrating Almodóvar’s films, or Cannes’ films. In my next, and final, case study I analyse the work of the press at an international level; that is I study the press reception of a Best Screenplay Award winning-film in many different national contexts, in order to further understand how cultural capital is generated around films and awards.

## Chapter 7

### The Meaning of the Best Screenplay Award “Around the World”: *Beyond the Hills* (Christian Mungiu 2012)

I have argued that meaning-making at the Festival de Cannes is an operation performed by the many agents who meet there, and that their practices sustain the cultural and symbolic capital of Cannes. I have also analysed the transportability of Cannes’ prestige and themes beyond the festival, in France and Spain. Studying the French reception of films, we saw that the themes that introduced films at Cannes became attached to the festival and got widely repeated when the film was commercially released. However, the image was significantly different in the Spanish case, primarily because the film had been successfully released in Spanish cinemas before going to Cannes. Therefore, although the Festival de Cannes is thought to have consecrating power at an international level, this did not seem true in relation to Almodóvar’s Best Screenplay Award in Spain; however, and this is very important, the award was read as a loss because the Spanish press “wanted” the Palme d’Or. Film festival research has already investigated the field configuring agency of the Palme d’Or (Mezias et al. 2011) and certainly the agency of film festivals in cinema cultures (Harbord 2002, Stringer 2003a, Elsaesser 2005, Chadhuri 2006, De Valck 2007 and 2016, Wong 2010, Iordanova 2013) but (to my knowledge) no research has compared two awards from the same festival; it must be noted that I am addressing a comparison between two Cannes’ awards, and the importance of this festival in particular. Therefore, it seems necessary to further investigate the impact of the Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award in comparison to the Palme d’Or in order to disentangle *how* festivals perform their “soft power” in current cinema cultures (Ostrowska 2016: 27) via awards. In this chapter I study Christian Mungiu’s *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* (2007) and *Beyond the Hills* (2012), not only because each film received

one of the awards I am contrasting, but also because they are deeply rooted in two of the most repeated film festival themes: discoveries and national waves. According to De Valck film festivals are pressed for “mind-blowing discoveries similar to the one generated by the archetypal French New Wave” (2007: 177), but this also means that “every new wave would inevitably have a limited life span at the festival circuit” (2007: 176). For example, Mungiu’s 2007 film won the Palme d’Or and turned academic and critical attention to the Romanian New Wave, but his 2012 film “only” received a secondary award. This research investigates how, in giving these two awards, Cannes was actually performing the aforementioned tension described by Marijke De Valck; what I am questioning is to what extent did the 2007 Palme d’Or serve to enable the festival to emerge as the discoverer of a “mind blowing new wave”, whereas the 2012 Best Screenplay Award represented the “limited span” of that new wave at major festivals. While it seems evident that receiving a Palme d’Or is a greater prestige than receiving a Best Screenplay Award, the object of this case study is to better understand how that difference is performed at an international level by film critics.

This chapter focuses on comparing the films’ critical press reception in a number of countries, because too often festival critics “explore the limits of constituting the national in a manner that fails to take into account the contingencies of festival[s]” (Chan 2011: 253). Since throughout my research I address the contingencies of the Festival de Cannes, this case study adds to current discussions of the role but, more importantly, to the interests of film festivals in the emergence of national cinemas (Stringer 2003a, Czach 2004, Chadhuri 2005, Ostrowska 2010, Chan 2011). Moreover, the screenplay award-winning film discussed in this chapter had barely any commercial distribution (nor institutionalised critical reception) outside Europe, which already gives us an idea of the “global” (and not so global) dimension of Cannes. As I have explained before, in studying how films are received outside the festival, my first aim is to expand current theories on the festival’s role in the

commercialisation and consumption of films (Harbord 2002, Stringer 2003b); and specifically the role of the press regarding this (following Ostrowska 2016). Therefore, this chapter complicates the idea that festivals trigger national waves internationally, through a detailed research on the international reach and life span of one such “festival-triggered” national cinema wave.

Accordingly, this case study had two purposes. First, I aimed to evaluate the shared use of terms and themes among critics from different countries (given that in all my previous case studies we have found a strong agreement among critics from the same country, be it France or Spain). Second, I wanted to know whether critics found it difficult to project a common author signature on *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* and *Beyond the Hills*, given that each film had won a different award. Therefore, I searched for terms and themes which were systematically repeated, systematically differentiated or systematically neglected in different territories or regarding each film (following Staiger 1992: 12-15 and Klinger 1994, but geographically rather than historically). The focus of my thesis is to better understand the extent to which groups of agents apparently autonomous from one another (such as film authors, juries or film critics), but always occupying high positions in the Cannes’ hierarchies, are really autonomous when it comes to generating meaning and value. In my two initial case studies I analyzed the practices and statements of the jury and top members of the cinema industries. Next, I explored the dialogues between producers, authors, juries, and the French press. And finally, in the Spanish case study, I focused on highly institutionalized film critics from that country. Therefore, I have always considered only the most prestigious specialised magazines and the best-selling newspapers to remain focused on studying the correlations between the Festival de Cannes’ elite guests and critical elites (I explain later which sources and countries I have considered in this case study and why).

One of the main questions I have been addressing throughout my

thesis is: to what extent, and how, do the practices of those in dominant positions around Cannes serve to reify and perpetuate (as seen before) “the principles on which their dominance is based” (Bourdieu 1993b: 83, my emphasis). Cannes claims to be an “international festival” but I have been arguing that the festival is more Western and French than they claim. Consequently, it becomes extremely interesting to evaluate the position of film critics from countries other than France, and outside Europe, regarding Cannes’ principles and hierarchies. Consequently, investigating Cannes’ reputation and the value of its awards, as understood by critics from outside its immediate cultural sphere, adds a new dimension to the understanding generated in this thesis about Cannes’ meanings, and the significance of the Screenplay Award within a wider global critical community. Adding a further and wider international dimension to my research on critical reception, I aim to assess the extent to which critics struggle for cultural capital by contesting the French-European critical reception. It could be the case, nevertheless, that critics from outside France-Europe, still writing for well-established institutional media in their respective countries, share an interest in sustaining the principles on which the “dominance” of the Festival de Cannes and the “dominance” of traditional critical reception is based.<sup>102</sup>

Since I analyze here the reification of value and meaning in different countries and around different Cannes’ awards, it is important to acknowledge the limits of this case study. First, I basically analyze reviews available online from a range of national contexts, but always coming from what Marc Vervoord calls “highly institutionalized media” and “highly institutionalized critics” (2014: 929). That is, just like I have done in my previous case studies, I investigate here traditional cultural intermediaries and not “peer-to-peer online reviews” (Vervoord 2014: 922). The only reason why I analyzed online versions of *institutionalized printed media* was to have access to data from several different

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<sup>102</sup> As I explained in my framework I do not assume, nor contest, the dominance of neither the Festival de Cannes, nor traditional critical reception. In order to enter such a debate I would have to compare them with others who may challenge their dominance such as, for instance, online communities.

countries. Consequently, even though I accessed online archives, this study does not contribute to current debates on the different modes of reception related to any typology of cultural mediators or the role of internet discourses in current cinema cultures. In an article published in 2015, the reception scholars Nete Nørgaard Kristensen and Unni From review how academics have been differentiating cultural critics regarding their media and they summarize preceding works as representing “the heterogeneous cultural critic question”. In their view we can differentiate the intellectual cultural critic, the professional cultural journalist, the media-made arbiter of taste and the everyday amateur expert (853). In this light, what I am considering here is the mediation practices of professional journalists and also intellectual critics writing for high-brow magazines such as *Screen* (UK), *Dirigido Por* (Spain) or *Cahiers du Cinéma* (France) because I am interested in investigating how European critical elites used/denied Cannes’ significance when applying the label of New Romanian Cinema to this particular filmmaker’s work. This suggests that it is not just Cannes that has the cultural power to shape understanding of such films, but that new waves are created at a nexus point between elite critics and the elite space of the film festival.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, although film reception studies has widely engaged with meaning contestation either historically (Klinger 1994, Staiger 2005, Jancovich and Snelson 2011) or by addressing different types of critics (Holopirek 2007, Vervoord 2014 and Kristensen and From 2015), I study meaning differences across countries (like Kersten and Bielby 2014).

Accordingly, I have analysed film reviews from newspapers and cinema magazines but not comparing typologies of criticism. Instead I have focused on comparing reception in territories which released both films: France, Italy, Spain, UK, the US and Brazil. I am analysing the French, British, Italian and Spanish reception because these four countries are major European territories in terms of cinema

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<sup>103</sup> As I explained in my framework, I rely on Bourdieu’s theories on cultural intermediaries and on how that has been read by Maguire (in Maguire and Matthews, 2014).



distribution.<sup>104</sup> I have also analysed the US because it is an important territory in the map of international cinema distribution and is an important player at the Festival de Cannes. I am including Brazil because it is the only Latin American country where both films were released commercially (in other Latin American countries *Beyond the Hills* was either not viewable or premiered only at festivals and cine club showcases). Finally, I am not studying the reception of these films in their country of production, in as much as they were also released there, because I already analysed the press reception in the country of origin of a screenplay award-winning film in my previous chapter.<sup>105</sup>

This case study is basically a Western-European press reception analysis which is complemented with information from two other territories; the reason for this more than anything is to assess if the discourses that surround the Festival de Cannes awards in Europe are similar or dissimilar to those generated outside Europe. According to Janet Staiger: “differential interpretations [link] back to the socio-economic structure of society, showing how members of different groups and classes, sharing different ‘cultural codes’, will interpret a given message differently” (2005: 12-15). Therefore, the opposite should also be true and should non-differential interpretations signal that they share the same cultural code, a globalized film festival code? To an extent this could mean that even if they are from different countries they are members of the same group or social class. This is important because comparing their reviews we can understand the international/transnational dimension of institutionalized journalistic film reception regarding Cannes’ award-winning films.

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<sup>104</sup> I left Germany out, despite the fact that it is also one of the most important cinema distribution territories in Europe, because throughout my thesis I only analyse original sources first hand and I do not read German.

<sup>105</sup> Certainly, as much as there were other important factors aiding my decision, such as the importance that both Almodóvar and his film *Volver* had in Spain before going to Cannes 2006, the original language of the sources was also relevant to frame these two chapters as they are: one national (Spanish) and one international (Romanian).

I consulted online archives from widely distributed press sources, including four or five in each country, depending on the distance between the fourth and the fifth. The dailies I have reviewed from Italy are *La Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*. From France I have studied *Le Monde*, *20 minutes*, *L'Express* and *Libération*. From the UK I have analysed *The Guardian*, *The Mirror*, and the *Daily Mail*. From Spain, I have reviewed *El País* and *El Mundo*; from the US, *The Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, and from Brazil *O Globo*, *Correio Braziliense* and *Folha de São Paulo*. To select the titles I relied on sales figures data available online.<sup>106</sup> I have also reviewed some cinema magazines from the UK, *Screen* and *Sight and Sound*; from Spain, *Caiman* and *Dirigido Por*, and from France, *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Positif*.<sup>107</sup> As I explained in my previous chapter, I argue that considering both specialized magazines, which are addressed to particularly interested readers, and dailies, which address a wider public, gives us a better idea of reception discourses in traditional criticism, but it is not the focus of this research to investigate the differences between newspapers and cinema magazines.

We have, in previous chapters, focused on how various groups of field agents perform and restrict meaning-making possibilities, and I have been arguing that Cannes' cultural capital is collaboratively performed by them. Moreover, I have also suggested that such cooperative strategies signal shared interests among different groups of agents. On that basis, I study here the extent to which agreement can be perceived among film critics from different countries and what this could signify in terms of shared interests. However, I want to finish my thesis assessing whether the system of consecration is regular at an international level by also

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<sup>106</sup> I consulted several newspapers selling data web-pages. For instance I have used *wikipedia.com* to find out which were the best-selling dailies in each country, and when possible I have contrasted the information with other web-pages such as *Francepress.fr*, getting the same results.

<sup>107</sup> All the quotes which do not come from sources originally published in English have been translated by me (be those originally in French, Spanish Italian or Portuguese). For clarity and consistency I have chosen not to include "my trans." *in-text*. For the same reason the names of film critics and journalistic commentators are referenced in the Works Cited page instead of *in-text* and with cross references via the name of the publisher and the date.

comparing the Best Screenplay Award and the Palme d'Or. That is, I question if we can talk of a "regulated system of differences and dispersions" (Foucault cited in Bourdieu [1996] 2012: 39), both geographically and regarding these two awards. I introduce this Foucauldian idea to analyze my sources following Pierre Bourdieu and Marc Verboord. I am following Bourdieu and Verboord when I consider that the focus must be "critic's use of discourse, which is the ideological underpinning of cultural value attribution" (Verboord 2014: 935). Therefore, I argue that the critic's use of discourse relates to how they build cultural value and reflects the ideology in which they are embedded, clearly a Foucauldian notion (1977). On top of that, the theories of Bourdieu constitute the methodological basis of my thesis and he claimed that "it is probably in Michel Foucault that one finds the most rigorous formulation of the foundations, of the structural analysis of cultural works. [As he is] Conscious that no cultural work exists by itself, that is, outside the relations of interdependence that unite it to other works" ([1996] 2012: 39). Therefore, in order to conduct research comparing the reception of two different cultural works directed by the same person I cannot avoid using some Foucauldian notions.<sup>108</sup>

I approached *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* and *Beyond the Hills* looking for systematic repetitions and systematic differences in the critical reception discourses that surrounded them. I have been arguing that the Best Screenplay Award is mainly a secondary award (and more than an award given to "the best" screenplay), and I want to understand how, and maybe even why, it is a significantly less prestigious award than the Palme d'Or. Regarding Cannes' Best Screenplay we have already observed that both awarding decisions and award-winning films are often

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<sup>108</sup> It is important to remember that both Foucault's and Bourdieu's "structural analyses" were not necessarily *textual* analyses. This pair of "cultural objects" could be very telling of any structural logic based on contrastive relations because they have been directed by the same filmmaker and one immediately follows the other, but each received a different award. We know that Bourdieu applied to social relations "the logic of contrastive relations" that Foucault used in his analysis of discourse (1983:314) and so I am basically following that logic in this case study. Having already analyzed Cannes' social relations in previous case studies I am focusing now on the discourses which express them beyond the festival.

surrounded by contestation and debate (chapters 4 and 5); and also, that this award does not necessarily add worthiness to films (chapters 5 and 6). Therefore, I will pay special attention to such tensions. I want to investigate, first, if agreement and dissent took place in different countries around the world and regarding both films. Second, the extent to which, even in disagreeing, film critics make use of similar terms and themes. It could be the case that the screenplay award provides cultural mediators the possibility to secure their “sincerity” and the sincerity of the system of consecration, precisely because it leaves room for certain, instrumental, dissent; whereas the Palme d’Or remains basically uncontested. Sincerity is, according to Bourdieu, one of the preconditions of symbolic efficacy ([1996] 2012: 164); therefore, the lack of agreement we have been finding regarding the screenplay award could actually have a function of its own when analyzed in contrast to the Palme d’Or.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, if one award channels dissent and contestation and the other does not, *the difference itself could have a function*.

The reason why I chose to study a Best Screenplay Award-winning film and a Palme d’Or winner directed by the same person, instead of two films competing the same year, is to better understand how each of these awards builds meaning and value around a Cannes’ author. After all, we have seen in my previous case studies that the system of consecration around the Festival de Cannes greatly relies on the charismatic ideology of the creator (using Bourdieu’s terms, as investigated previously in this thesis). Foucault already said, back in 1977, that the author

*results from a complex operation whose purpose is to construct the rational entity we call an author... these aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author (or which comprise an individual as*

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<sup>109</sup> It must be remembered that, as I explained in my framework, Bourdieu also claims that sincerity “is only possible - and effective - in the case of a perfect, immediate harmony between the expectations inscribed in the position occupied and the dispositions of the occupant” (1996: 164), which means that those occupying the highest positions in a field tend to effortlessly and honestly observe what is expected of them. While it is interesting to attest the extent to which this is true, the current case study will not make a stand against the sincerity of film critics, nor the opposite, just as the sincerity of other members of the Cannes’ elites has never been my concern.

an author), *are projections*, in terms always more or less psychological, *of our way of handling texts*: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign, or the exclusions we practise (21).

Since claiming that the author results from discursive practices is certainly not news, what is interesting is to understand how critical discourses give continuity to the author entity while dealing with the different values of these two awards. I have been arguing that the meaning and value of Cannes' Best Screenplay Award is performed (it does not "magically" emerge and become attached to award-winning films); therefore it results from a *complex operation whose purpose is to construct the rational entity* we call an award. Consequently, the discursive operations involved in the construction of an author and in the construction of each award could, potentially, enter in conflict. In summary, since the meaning and cultural capital of each award is socially constructed, I study here the systematic continuities and differences and their international dimension through the analysis of institutionalized journalistic critical discourses.

#### ***4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days, and Beyond the Hills***

This chapter is based on several facts that make it more significant to compare these two films than any other pair. First, that Christian Mungiu received both a Best Screenplay Award and a Palme d'Or with two *consecutive* films. Second, that he had not received major international awards before receiving his 2007 Palme d'Or. Consequently, the award-winning films, and this filmmaker, came to the fore as Festival de Cannes' *discoveries*. Third, at roughly the same time the international press, the industry and even academics began "discovering" the *Romanian New Wave*. This new wave brings us full circle, as it became often associated with Cannes and the Palme d'Or through Mungiu's two award-winning films. Consequently, this chapter should contribute to our

understanding of Cannes' power as a cultural centre and as a gatekeeper for global film taste-making, and to reify the prestige of films, authors, national cinemas and new waves at an international level. But it should also help us understand the reverse: how Cannes' power emerges from cultural discourses at an international level.

I am going to briefly introduce the two films to ease the understanding of the quotes and comments that emerge in the analysis of the press reception. The film *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* tells the story of a voluntary abortion in urban Romania in the final years of Ceaușescu's dictatorship, from the point of view of a friend of a pregnant girl. The protagonist has to assist her friend in every thinkable way because the intervention is illegal and the practitioner is an abusive man. The story's urgency and the constant presence of bribery and the black market reflect the oppressive atmosphere and the endangered situations that the two girls overcome. The film *Beyond the Hills* is also the story of two young female friends; one of the girls comes back from Germany to persuade the other to emigrate abroad with her. The girl who stayed in Romania is a devoted nun and she wants them to live in the convent together. This conflict grows to conclude with the exorcism and death of the visiting friend. Although the story is set in contemporary rural Romania the poverty and the isolation of the convent de-contextualize the film.

In sum, these two films share the same context of production in contemporary Romania, they share their director, their cinematographer, some producers and several other creative contributors, and both films seem to have significant narrative and stylistic strategies in common. According to their reception, the two films introduce characters struggling against scarcity, immersed in a context of people abandoned or even prosecuted by institutions. Also both films have long takes following the main characters with hand-held camera movements and the two films were shot with a naturalistic cinematography in dreary colours, and no music or affective sound or image effects. These clusters of ideas were

repeatedly used to give continuity to the films' author, and yet, curiously enough, despite these similarities they were not enough to secure the value of the film that did not win the Palme d'Or.

Since I have been arguing that the cultural and symbolic capital of Cannes' awards depend on how many different agents perform it, I want to present some other instances of that complex discursive fabric in order to frame each instance of their international press reception. To begin with, and because this is very helpful to understand the primary sources analysed in this case study, I want to introduce the international distribution of each film. The film *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* received significantly wider theatrical distribution. Both films were widely distributed around Europe and in Turkey and had a limited release in Israel. In Asia, *Beyond the Hills* was only theatrically distributed in Japan and Hong Kong, while *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* was also shown in South Korea. In North and South America the Palme d'Or winner was released in cinemas in seven countries, while the other film appeared only in two (and that is why I only analyse US and Brazilian film criticism from America). Only *4 months* reached cinemas in Australia and neither of them had theatrical distribution in African countries or any other country not already listed. The Palme d'Or award-winning film was commercially more successful as further evidenced by the films' respective US box offices, which in this case is *ten times* the box office of *Beyond the Hills*, with 1.185.783 dollars for *4 months* against 109.248 dollars (*imdb.com*), even though the second film was a Foreign Film Oscar nominee. Therefore it seems like the Palme d'Or may have an immediate impact on US distribution and/or box office (as Mezas et al. 2011 claim, and as I argued in my framework chapter).

In France the difference is also noticeable, with the Palme d'Or winner having four times more theatrical admissions than the screenplay award-winning film. In sum, comparing these two films, the Palme d'Or seems, unsurprisingly, to be an award that secures the commercial value of a film more than the Best Screenplay Award. As we know, the Festival

de Cannes defines the films programmed in The Competition as author cinema with a wide audience appeal, so the film *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* either arrived at the festival already having more audience appeal (for instance, because of its subject matter, its pace, or its length) or, in awarding the film with the Palme d'Or, the film was made more appealing for distributors and/or audiences than the one receiving a secondary award. It is not the object of this study to disentangle whether the Palme d'Or attaches or recognises the audience appeal of a film, but to point out that there seems to be a coherent system of differences that relates to the cultural and economic capital around Cannes' award-winning films. Nevertheless, the matter is not as simple as a direct relationship between these two variables (awards-box office), as we have seen in previous case studies (mainly in my fifth chapter).

Regarding international film festivals, the two films toured a number of important events. This fact could be a significant example of why Skadi Loist claims that “the term film festival *circuit* is foremost an industry term” (2016: 59, my emphasis), as much as it could also illustrate why Marijke De Valck's wondered whether film festivals secured the success of films or rather provided them with an alternative exhibition context beyond commercial success (2007: 338). For instance, *Beyond the Hills* reached Mexico via a film festival and a university showcase, but it was not commercially released and in most countries it was *only* released at film festivals. On the other hand, *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* did reach the theatrical circuit in Mexico and many other countries. As De Valck explained in 2007, on the one hand this could mean that having festivals allows films to reach different countries, but on the other hand only one of those awards made the film a success outside the circuit.

What seems true in any case is that the Palme d'Or secured greater cultural capital for the film *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* than the Best Screenplay Award did for *Beyond the Hills*. After the Festival de Cannes, the Palme d'Or winner received considerably more awards and nominations than the 2012 film, attracting around 33 wins and 26 further



nominations, including some of the most recognised prizes in the film industry. The film *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* also received several awards from the Romanian national cinema academy and from the European Film Academy, but not as many. The Palme d'Or winning film was also winner of the FIPRESCI Best Film of the Year awards, and several other prizes from other critics' boards (including the National Society of Film Critics). Furthermore it was the best foreign film at many national academy ceremonies around the world. On the other hand, *Beyond the Hills* received little international recognition besides the Festival de Cannes' awards (the film received two awards at that festival, the Best Screenplay Award and the Best Actress Award for both actresses). For instance, although it was nominated for the Best Screenplay by the European Cinema Academy it did not win. It appears that, despite the fact that both films premiered at many film festivals, the cultural capital of each film was built through a continuous systematic difference; and it is this apparent difference that I investigate comparing the critical reception of the two films.

Several interesting tensions emerge when considering the different production and pre-sales profiles of each film. The distribution rights of a film can get sold to a series of distributors for each country, or one company can acquire the international rights of a film, even before it has been finished as seen in chapter 3), and then manage separate deals for each territory. Christian Mungiu had already been at Cannes in 2002 presenting his film *Occident* at Un Certain Regard. Afterwards, the film *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* was his first contending film in The Competition, and he won the Palme d'Or with it. *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* premiered at the Festival de Cannes and it was simultaneously presented at the Cannes Film Market (in [festival-cannes.com/eng](http://festival-cannes.com/eng)).<sup>110</sup> As we saw in chapter 3, when films are premiered at Cannes and taken to the market it is often the case that the distribution deals get made at the

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<sup>110</sup> Films can be premiered in their country before going to the festival, but they cannot have premiered in any country other than their country of origin.

festival's market and are influenced by the festival's hype. *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* was handled by a major distribution company of each territory (such as Artificial Eye in the UK or Golem Distribution in Spain), which signals that the deals were most likely made after its positive festival reception. However, the impact of the award is debatable because Wild Bunch announced beforehand that they "had sold the film to 90% of the countries before the palmarès was announced" (Wild Bunch 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2008, in *l'express.fr*); therefore, it should not be assumed that it was just the award that triggered the film's aforementioned commercial success. That is, I am arguing, once more, that a Cannes' award is not *what* secures the value of a film but is rather *part* of a complex process where we often find agreement and/or cooperation among different groups of agents.

On the other hand, as we also saw in chapter 3, when a film project, that is a film not yet made, is considered significant by distributors, it often gets to be distributed by one single major company; such a company would bet on the strength of the film from the early stages of its development. Wild Bunch appears *in collaboration* in the production credits of *Beyond the Hills*, and this means that at least some part of the distribution rights fee had been paid in advance by this company to the producers of the film. That is, not only was the distribution deal closed before the film had been finished, but cash was also put into the production of the film. Wild Bunch is a France-based company and, as I have introduced earlier in the thesis (chapters 2 and 3), one of the most important providers of films for The Competition programme, and I have also explained some of the mutual dependency relationships that this brings about. Accordingly, I propose that the change of distribution profile could be a sign that the Palme d'Or and the success of the Palme d'Or award-winning film meant that Christian Mungiu's next film project was considered *strong* (a term that many executives used in chapter 3) by this major international distribution company.

Finally, *Beyond the Hills* is labelled as a Romanian production, but it was co-produced with French and Belgian production companies, French television and the Eurimages fund. On the other hand, the film *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* was produced by Romanian companies and public bodies and, according to the film's credits, only received international financial support from the Rotterdam Festival projects' fund (as seen in my framework and in chapter 5 and as explained by Steinhart in 2006 and De Valck and Loist in 2012 among others). That financial support would, nonetheless, mean that the film belongs to "the emerging transnational cinema fostered by the film festival networking opportunities and funds" (Ostrowska 2016: 27-28). In consequence, I argue that we should consider the extent to which the success of his 2007 transnational film contributed to facilitating Mungiu's place at the Festival de Cannes, which places the Palme d'Or as a field configuring award (as we have seen previously and as Mezias et al 2013 explained).

In as much as the current chapter reviews press reception, I have briefly argued that Mungiu had his 2012 film in The Competition not only for the textual values of the film, but also because he had been consecrated in 2007. I have also highlighted a possible relation between his 2007 success and having his next film backed up by one of the most important international film companies in the Festival de Cannes' arena, which may have helped him enter The Competition. "What this reminds us is that... the work of material fabrication is nothing without the labor of production of the value of the fabricated object" (Bourdieu [1996] 2012:172). I have introduced this point so that we bear in mind that the work of production of cultural capital is complex but not disinterested, and that it entails the participation of many social agents who may simultaneously benefit from it.

### International press reception of a Palme d'Or winner

In 2007 the Palme d'Or was awarded to a film that had been claimed almost unanimously to deserve it, and was received as a major work of art by critics from all the countries studied. I argue, as I have done previously (for instance in the study of Lee Chang-dong's 2010 film, *Poetry*), that this reception yields a sense that the jury's verdict *was right*, which separates it from subjectivity. For instance, in the French daily *Libération*, the commercial release of *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* came with the words: "Festival de Cannes had *the good taste* of not missing the opportunity to hit a master stroke. I surrender to it" (29<sup>th</sup> August 2007, in *liberation.fr*, my emphasis). That statement clearly reinforces the idea that good taste is objective and that the Palme d'Or is merely recognising a value which resides in the work itself. However, criticism also points out that the work itself may still necessitate the work of production of value to sustain it, since awarding decisions "claim a particular conception of the *mission* that the festival and the juries have" (*Cahiers du Cinéma* June 2007: 78, my emphasis). On the one hand the mission is not to miss a master stroke and on the other hand it is to sustain Cannes as "the greatest meeting of *worldwide cinema art*" (June 2007: 37, my emphasis). Both can be summarised, I propose, as reifying "good taste".

We find similar ideas in the reception of this film and this award in other European countries. Before the award had been given, an Italian critic stated that *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* had been "the best film seen in competition" (*Corriére della Sera*, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2007, in *corriere.it*), adding to, or following, the idea that value emerges from the work. Likewise, another Italian critic wrote that the Palme d'Or "went to the film that everybody was expecting would get it from the beginning" (*La Repubblica*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2007, in *repubblica.fr*) giving continuity to the idea that good taste is shared. We find similar statements in the Spanish press where the film was claimed to be "undoubtedly the best film in contest" (*El País*, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2007, in *elpais.es*; similarly much later in 2<sup>nd</sup>

December 2007, *ibid.*). And still in Spain we also find: “in the end the prediction was right and the 60<sup>th</sup> Festival de Cannes *crowned* the modest yet brilliant early favourite film with the Palme d’Or” (*El Mundo*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2007, in *elmundo.es*). Comparing these reviews we can identify three key themes: attaching value to the film itself (a master stroke, the best film), claiming that taste is shared (everybody, the predictions), and bowing to the festival (I surrender, crowning). Relying on the widespread agreement that this film deserved to win draws attention to the social construction of prestige, but relying on the worth of the film and the use of the word crowned do the opposite.

However, the match was not perfect as we can see in the following commentary published in the UK:

Here is the Romanian film which won the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival, and it is very much *the sort which usually wins* such prizes: a grim, extremely low budget film that offers an un-witty, ugly bleak view of its home nation ... the film’s a hard slog and despite the *critical praise* that will be lavished upon it by *the usual suspects*, it isn’t well made. (*Daily Mail*, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2008, in *dailymail.co.uk*, my emphasis)

Still, in disliking the film, the UK’s critic positions himself apart from critics and from Cannes’ juries, so that it is him who is taking a step back from the general agreement. Nevertheless, the critic does not consider that the film did not deserve to win, but the opposite. Furthermore, he introduces several key terms and ideas which other film critics will also highlight in giving meaning to this film, but giving them opposite value, such as the film’s nationality and its sluggish pace. In sum, in his statement he makes use of similar discourse strategies and, according to Bourdieu “this sort of game of mirrors reflecting one another produces a formidable effect of mental closure” ([1996] 2012: 24).

Beyond Europe we also find both points: the game of mirrors and the idea that there was a general agreement regarding this film. According to

a US film critic “the audience in the Palais des Festivals was audibly delighted by Mr. Mungiu’s victory. His film, shown early in the festival, had enjoyed ardent critical support from the start” (*New York Times*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2007, in *nytimes.com*); that is, taste was shared regarding this film. And for a Brazilian critic “Mungiu’s film ... had been the dominant favourite for the Palme d’Or and had already been awarded the international critic’s award” (*O Globo*, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2007, in *oglobo.globo.com*). Here we find a definite clue that taste was shared among film critics. Interestingly enough the international critics’ award given out at the Festival de Cannes before the Palme d’Or chose the same film, a fact that does not have to signal that juries follow critic’s choices, but it does mean that in this case they agreed. We have seen in previous chapters that when a screenplay awarding decision was contested by the press the award seemed to lose prestige, but this does not seem to be the case regarding the Palme d’Or. In sum, the 2007 Palme d’Or award-winning film had been evaluated from the start as the film that deserved to win *by its own merits*, and then it won. This serves to draw the attention away from the work of consecration and the work of commentators, highlighting instead “the worth of the work itself”.

As to the specific values that, according to the press, made this text worthy, we are about to see that these are precisely those advanced in the aforementioned negative review: the film’s slow pace, and its nationality. That is, certain clusters of ideas reappear consistently. In the UK, the same country of that review, the Palme d’Or award-winning film was reviewed as “a master piece of intimate desperation with a succession of brilliantly created and controlled scenes” (*The Guardian*, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2008, in *theguardian.com*). Moreover, almost one year later, when the film premiered in the commercial circuit in the UK, the same newspaper publishes: “not a single frame is wasted” (ibid. 29<sup>th</sup> December 2009). This notion of control was also agreed to be the film’s most remarkable trait in other countries “the film does not have a single missing or excessive frame” (Spain’s *El País*, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2007, in

*elpais.es*). In a similar line, in Italy the film *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* became “a rediscovery of that *simplicity* ... that maybe, the authors of *Occident*, have already lost” (*La Repubblica*, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2007, in *larepubblica.it*, my emphasis similarly the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2007).<sup>111</sup> In using terms such as austerity, simplicity or control, what these critics are claiming is that the film was well made and that the value of the film emerged from the text; however, this last quote is introducing the film’s “non-Occident” quality, and this tension needs careful unpacking, which I will address later in this section.

*4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* was often read as a difficult or unpleasant film. Moreover, just as the *Daily Mail* critic advanced, those are often considered desirable qualities for a Palme d'Or winning film. For instance, in Spain, this film “led sunny Cannes to the deepest corners of the human soul... it knows how to bring about the best and the worst of the human soul with the talent of a master” (*El Mundo*, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2007, in *elmundo.es*), where the talent of the author and his ability to bring about the worst of the human soul are connected. Likewise, in Brazil the film was said to have won because of “its depiction of a brutal world, as much as for the humanity it shows” (*O Globo*, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2007, in *oglobo.globo.com*). In this light, one Italian critic claimed that the film “brings to the fore, through its particular atmosphere and theme, a universal story on the devastating consequences of a social system” (*La Repubblica*, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2007, in *repubblica.it*). While in the US, *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* was “a pitiless, violent story that in its telling becomes a haunting and haunted intellectual and aesthetic achievement” (*New York Times*, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2008, in *nytimes.com*) And back in the UK, one critic “can’t think of a film that has shown life in the Eastern Bloc more fiercely than this” (*The Guardian*, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2008, *theguardian.co.uk*). The critic claims to evaluate *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* against *all the cinema* he knows, to convey the breath of its socio-political scope

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<sup>111</sup> In a film review written by the film director Marco Bellochio, acting as film critic for that diary; I must stress that I am not comparing typologies of film critics in this case study.

and the worthiness of this film; plus he relates those qualities, just like the Italian critic writing for *Corriere della Sera*, to the nationality of the films, a matter of much interest that I investigate later.

This is, in general, not new in itself but my analysis should serve to highlight that the same ideas remain true when one studies the reception of Cannes' films in different countries. Accordingly, I suggest that the cultural capital of the award, and the meaning of an award-winning film, is not established by the festival alone but in concert with the press (even if some critics may dislike this "connivance"). I would argue that this general coherence shows the reciprocated network of legitimation at work between the festival, its films and journalists. These relationships result in a seemingly hegemonic narrative that brings to stake 'taste hierarchies' at and around Cannes. Moreover, this points back to the idea that Cannes may be a delegate institution; and the issue becomes even more interesting when we analyse how the critical reception of this film made meaning of its nationality, and how that relates to the festival's mission.

Mungiu's 2007 film went to The Competition and received the Palme d'Or after other Romanian films had already been gaining recognition in Western Europe, and even at Cannes. This phenomenon was commonly addressed as New Romanian Cinema, or sometimes the Romanian New Wave (somehow relating it to an idea of a political cinema). The role of this film, its Palme d'Or and the Festival de Cannes in the emergence of this "wave" was very differently regarded among commentators. In this line, a French critic wrote that:

[on] the 27<sup>th</sup> of May from Bucharest to the deep end of Transylvania the Romanian population was in jubilation. They rang their claxons, they brandished their flags, they danced in the streets ... Romania had just won cinema's world cup (*L'Express*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2007, in *lexpress.fr*).



In the eyes of this critic the award was a national success for Romania, an idea which also emerged in the study of the Spanish reception of international cinema awards. However, this review describes how Romania reacted to the award with great pomp, claiming that the festival is extremely important at an international level, thence reinforcing the value of the award and the festival. Since I argue that attaching cultural capital to the Festival de Cannes is a practice performed by different groups of agents *because it serves their interests*, it is not surprising that, as we are about to see, French critics may place more emphasis on this; after all, this practice would be giving value to a French institution and, to an extent, to France's role in the consecration of culture. Similarly another French critic claimed that "the Palme d'Or of the last Festival de Cannes for 4 months consecrates a new generation of filmmakers" (*L'Express*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2007, in *lexpress.fr*). Here the festival concentrates in one single award, bestowed to one single film director, the agency of the whole system of consecration; yet we know this issue is far more complex. Moreover, *this one award* is claimed to have impact on a whole generation.

Nevertheless, a review of the specialised magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma* renders the matter more complicated. Before Cannes 2007, one critic wrote that he was anticipating Mungiu's new release and he alleged to be eager for Romanian cinema, which he had *discovered* "some months earlier, at the Sarajevo Festival" concluding that this cinema "was promising without any doubt and was already announcing a beautiful future" (May 2007: 30). This article was published in early May, that is, before Cannes 2007 and before the Palme d'Or. What we see, first, is that just like De Valck pointed out in 2007, film festivals feed each other (similarly Stringer 2003a, Iordanova and Rhyne eds. 2009). Second, as I explained in chapter 3, Cannes can be said to select films for The Competition that already bear interest and admiration, so the festival does not build the cultural capital of its selected films "from scratch". Finally, the critic is claiming for himself and for his magazine "more"

cultural capital or greater insight into the world's annual film production than the Festival de Cannes via discoveries (as studied earlier in this chapter and in previous chapters).

Curiously enough, these tensions disappeared when the film received the Palme d'Or. Another critic writing for *Cahiers du Cinéma*, but after Cannes, wrote that the award had fallen on a “completely unknown filmmaker” so the festival “made clear its will to accompany *discoveries*” (June 2007: 78, my emphasis). I find this tension telling of the place that Cannes is bestowed in the process of consecration of film authors and national cinema waves by French highbrow/intellectual critics. We may see some field-position struggle between the two critics, but we analysed in previous chapters the importance of “discovering” to sustain the cultural and symbolic capital of this festival, and I am arguing that what was important was that the festival could *take credit* from discovering (chapter 3). On the one hand, critics and specialised magazines as important (historically) as *Cahiers du Cinéma* want to claim cultural capital for themselves and so the first critic positions himself ahead of the festival. On the other hand, the second critic still gives the festival the credit for discovering to emphasize the value of the 2007 Palme d'Or. According to previous case studies, this “surrendering” to the Palme d'Or, or such efforts to sustain the prestige of the Palme d'Or, and even hide behind it, did not take place regarding the Best Screenplay Award, and the same seems to be true regarding the screenplay award-winning film studied here; what signals, once more, systematic differences.

Film critics from countries other than France repeated the same theme and they also drew a close relationship between a Romanian national cinema wave and the Palme d'Or, concealing the works of the whole system of consecration behind this award. In so doing, we can see subtle nuances in the importance attached to the festival and the Palme d'Or. In the UK it was claimed that “Christian Mungiu rides the crest of the Romanian new wave, having won the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 2007” (*Filmcomment*, December 2012, in *filmcomment.com*), meaning that the

Palme d'Or positioned Mungiu at the front of a movement which existed before the award, but also that *it is this award* that places him at the front of that movement. In Italy the importance of this film and award is further stressed, since, in a review published when the film premiered almost four months after the festival, we can find: “this is the year of Romania, a country that in 2000 had not even produced one film!” (*Corriere della Sera*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2007, in *corriere.it*). Similarly, another Italian critic wrote “that is how life was in Eastern Europe” (*La Repubblica*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2007, in *repubblica.it*), so in reviewing this film he is not only making it represent Romania but Eastern European cinema as a whole. Finally, as the US newspaper *The New York Times* put it, “the message from the Festival de Cannes’ juries was clear: Romania rules” (28<sup>th</sup> May 2007, in *nytimes.com*), where we can see the international press concentrating under the festival’s signature the works of a system of consecration (their own role as well as that of funds, financiers, producers and distributors). In other words, we could say following Bourdieuan theories that film critics “hide” behind a signature, the festival, which they use as an “objective” marker of cultural legitimacy: for instance, with ideas such as “Cannes *discovered* a national cinema”. In general, in reifying the meaning making possibilities of this film, and even of this national cinema wave, the result is that their meaning and value appear to be objective instead of socially constructed.

In as much as for some film critics, and academics, New Romanian Cinema was *acknowledged* by the Palme d'Or, whereas for others the award was *the beginning* of this New Romanian Cinema, it has never been my intention to reveal what comes first. Instead I want to mobilize several other ideas, such as the works of a system of consecration in the reification of meaning and prestige. First, this Palme d'Or awarding decision did not only draw the attention of the international press to the film and the filmmaker, but also to a new wave of films and filmmakers from Romania. Second, the creation of cultural capital around Cannes relies on the practices and discourses of international agents,

including film critics, who tend to use similar key terms and themes even if they are from different nationalities or if they “disagree” with their peers. In sum, I propose that the consecration of films, authors, and national cinema waves, emerges from complex and ongoing processes at an international level of which the Festival de Cannes and its awards are but a step. This is evident in as much as this festival and these awards are often used to conceal the works of the system behind the “magic” of the consecrator’s or the author’s signatures (using Bourdieuan terms). The academic Rodica Ieta published an article in 2010 where she criticised “‘the miracle’ of the New Romanian cinema. With very few exceptions, most Western critics and commentators have used the word ‘miracle’ to describe a phenomenon on which they do not seem to have spent enough time researching” (31).

Therefore, according to Ieta, and as we have just seen in the examples given, critics and commentators were identifying a national wave and addressing its consecration as a miracle (which reminds us of Bourdieu’s use of “the magic” of authors and consecrators); that is, they were neglecting the systematic *labour of production of value* in which they were engaged. She continues explaining how the Palme d’Or awarding decision was not a miracle but a milestone in a much bigger process of consecration:

After Cristian Mungiu's Palme d'Or in 2007 (for *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days*), preceded by Cristi Puiu's Un Certain Regard for *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* in 2005 and by Corneliu Porumboiu's Caméra d'Or for *12:08, East of Bucharest* in 2006, young directors from Romania have continued to make waves at film festivals, as if trying to prove that by now these prizes have a past and a reason other than accident. (32)

Nevertheless, Ieta is still sustaining the prestige of the Palme d’Or in as much as she situates it at the centre of that process, an idea that will become very important in the analysis of the press reception of the 2012

film *Beyond the Hills* because this film was once and again read against 4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days.

In summary, while some still claim that “countries around the world *seem* to produce films in swells and sags ... often there is no social or economic reason for this surge: it depends on the *capricious* occurrence of talent along with *good luck* in distribution” (Cardullo 2012: 327, my emphasis), putting certain emphasis on the “miraculous” emergence of such swell or sags, I suggest that this is only an “*illusio*” of magic (using Bourdieuan theories, as explained in previous case studies). First, the scholar identifies talent and distribution as the main drives, to which we should add, at least, the influence of film festivals, awards, the international press and academic attention. In this I am following those academics who state that national cinemas and national cinema waves are constructed with the interaction of many participants (Trifonova 2002, Czach 2004, Elsaesser 2005, Galt and Schoonover 2010, and others) to propose that the Festival de Cannes acts as a *field delegate* which helps secure the cultural capital of such waves. Although in my research I have mostly analyzed three constituents of the field of author cinema with a wide audience appeal - the Cannes’ institution, the press commenting on Cannes and the industry members gathered at Cannes - it should be acknowledged that the generation of cultural capital is actually put up by many other participants/field agents (from cinephiles to culture Ministers, from funding institutions to academics, from financiers to exhibitors). Therefore, to better understand the complex operations of the system of consecration, I suggest that, just as Cardullo advances in the aforementioned quote, we put emphasis on how countries *seem* to produce swells and sags rather than claiming that they do. Moreover, we should consider to what extent awards *seem to* put a national cinema on the map, and why, rather than claiming that they do.

## International press reception of the Best Screenplay Award

In reviewing the critical reception of the film *Beyond the Hills* I found several interesting continuities with the previous film's reception. Sometimes these were addressed as typical values of Cannes' films, and sometimes as typical of Mungiu's author signature. Moreover, these values were sometimes applauded and at other times criticized. It is generally accepted that, just as Foucault explained, "the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses" (Foucault 1977:19). Similarly, we have just seen that a Palme d'Or also mobilizes certain discourses; that is, we could identify a Palme d'Or function. For instance, one of the functions of the 2007 Palme d'Or was to consecrate Mungiu and New Romanian Cinema at an international level. Moreover, just like the author function, the Palme d'Or function is not only discursive, as both functions also translate into economic capital (as explained by Tzioumakis 2006 on authors, and as explained by Mezias et al. 2011 regarding the Palme d'Or).

On the other hand, the Best Screenplay Award seems to mostly acquire meaning and value from each individual award-winning film, to the extent that its prestige, its visibility or its economic impact change dramatically with different films. Accordingly, we may claim that the function of the Best Screenplay Award is not fixed, or that this award does not mobilize fixed discourses. For instance, both the award and the film were well regarded in 2010, in the case of *Poetry* (Lee Chang-dong), whereas the awarding decision was criticized both in 2006 and in 2009, but for opposite reasons (on one occasion because the award did not do the film justice, and on the other because it was the film that did not deserve the award). What I have investigated in this section is how Mungiu "the author" functioned discursively when he went from winning a Palme d'Or to winning a Best Screenplay Award with two consecutive films. In reviewing the continuity of themes and ideas as well as their discontinuities we can understand to what extent the 2012 Cannes' Best Screenplay Award was read in relation to the previous Palme d'Or and if

that led to the giving of prestige to this film and award, or the extent to which Mungiu's author value went down because he 'only' received the screenplay award.

What emerges in this study is that the meaning of these two Cannes' awards is *systematically* different; hence, the differences observed carry signification (following Foucault's and Staiger's quotes from the opening of this chapter). While one film was thoroughly admired (with an occasional exception as we have seen), the critics were decidedly torn about the other film; and yet critics often used the same themes to describe both films. I will suggest that the difference among these two cultural objects, the Palme d'Or and the Best Screenplay Award, serves the interests of the festival and the interests of the commentators. First, we are going to see how they both serve to crystallize certain meaning possibilities around Cannes' films and around an author. In a US newspaper we find:

By Sunday morning the 65<sup>th</sup> Cannes Film Festival had its first master-work and an overwhelming critical favourite in Michael Haneke's *Amour* ... critical ambivalence greeted another strong competition entry, *Beyond the Hills*, from the Romanian director Christian Mungiu, who won the Palme in 2007 (*New York Times*, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2012, in *nytimes.com*).

In that quote we can already see most of the themes that international critics relied on to review *Beyond the Hills*: it generated critical ambivalence, it was read in reference to its author, he was introduced as the 2007 Palme d'Or winner, and his nationality is important. Just like this critic predicted, Michel Haneke's *Amour* came to win the Palme d'Or in 2012. Later, *Amour* became the European "film of the year" in terms of critical reception and awards, just as it had happened in 2007 with Mungiu's Palme d'Or winning film.<sup>112</sup>

Agreeing with the US critic, a Brazilian critic wrote that with the film *Amour* "the first candidate for the Palme d'Or has emerged" while in

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<sup>112</sup> This is not always the case, but is generally true.

reference to *Beyond the Hills* he claimed that “the Croisette is divided about it” (*O Globo*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2012, in *oglobo.globo.com*). Although neither of these two critics is European, the division of opinions about the film, which they claim to have perceived, can be equally attested in reviewing the statement of their European peers, so we observe no geographical significance in this respect. In the UK, a few days later, it is reported that:

*Beyond the Hills* is an agonizing, mysterious movie — it is the first event at this year's festival which has come close to providing any controversy: there were whistles and jeers at the final blackout. But I found it enthralling, mysterious and intimately upsetting (*The Guardian*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2012, in *theguardian.co.uk*, my emphasis).

Curiously enough, it is a critic from the UK, once more, who claims to be swimming against the tide at Cannes (as we saw in previous case studies or in the quote from the *Daily Mail* reviewing the 2007 Palme d'Or). However, this may not be absolutely true, since a Spanish critic agreed with him in that the film was “really rigorous cinema, and that is a most coveted qualification” (*ABC*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2012, in *abc.es*). So these critics are arguing against what they “said” to be happening to the film’s reputation at Cannes, which gave them a counter-cultural stance from which to claim their own critical reputation. Since another Spanish newspaper accused the film of being “intense but painfully repetitive” (*El País*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2012, *elpais.es*, similarly in *The New York Times* 20<sup>st</sup> May 2012, in *nytimes.com*), what we observe first is that there is no specific geographical distribution of opinion and, unsurprisingly, there are divided opinions regarding a film that will come to win a screenplay award. In sum, the worthiness of the film was not uncontested, as the French critic writing for *Le Monde* explained: “there are films that we find boring but which haunt us at night. This is the case of *Beyond the Hills*... at Cannes, more than elsewhere, we feel that the frontier separating devotion and rejection tends to be as thin as a hair thread” (*Le Monde*, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2012, *lemonde.fr*).



However, while it is true that there was lack of agreement concerning the international reception of *Beyond the Hills*, in contrast both the 2007 and the 2012 Palme d'Or winning-films were generally acclaimed (I found one single exception published by *The Guardian*).<sup>113</sup> In other words, it would seem more accurate to claim that the films that compete at Cannes and *do not win the Palme d'Or* may yield both devotion and rejection (and the reverse). I propose that this sustains and generates the recognition that the value of the Best Screenplay Award (as well as it's the value of the film that received it) is lesser than the value of the Palme d'Or. Moreover, such systematic differences of opinion around certain films but not others could perform a particular function for the Festival de Cannes, such as projecting debate and diversity of opinions onto The Competition films but away from the Palme d'Or. Or, it could be that the initial screening reactions at Cannes are the point at which the Palme d'Or emerges, and that it does so in relation to critically loved films. When there is disagreement, other awards come into play. I am still not interested in which of these comes first, but on the dynamics of a system of consecration. Plus, since this last critic uses the ambivalence around *Beyond the Hills* to state that *films* at Cannes generate devotion and rejection, the dissent generated by one film *can be* projected and claimed to reach the whole festival selection. What this serves, I propose, is to support the idea that the taste of commentators is autonomous. This reinforces their cultural capital without endangering the cultural capital of the Palme d'Or.

In two of the previous quotes we find another important theme that is going to emerge in many reviews of *Beyond the Hills*: that the film is upsetting and yet also boring. Curiously enough, in the previous quotes these ideas were raised by critics who claimed to have liked the film but we find similar terms being used to criticize it. Again, we can hardly claim that reviews follow any pattern regarding the nationality of the film critic;

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<sup>113</sup> One may want to jump to conclusions regarding this newspaper position in its own national context but I cannot say that I have found systematic differences in this respect.

for an Italian critic it was a “never-ending film” (*La Repubblica*, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012, in *larepubblica.it*), but, for another critic it was “a tough but powerful film: for Friday’s cine club” (*La Repubblica*, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2013, in *larepubblica.it*). In a similar vein to the latter review, a Spanish critic warns readers that *Beyond the Hills* is “not a film for all tastes” (*El País*, 28<sup>th</sup> December 2012, in *elpais.es*). We saw that the film *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* had also been claimed to be upsetting and/or a hard slog and yet these same issues became more negative regarding *Beyond the Hills*; the point here is that these are the same kinds of comments that were made positively about *4 months*, and they are now being reframed as negatives for *Beyond the Hills*.

As a Spanish critic put it, “the director insists on the same chords of old days to go higher, further ... and worse. If the challenge is overcome (it’s a matter of endurance and a good nap before the screening) ... the feeling that it leaves is bitter and violent, lucid and fervent” (*El Mundo*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2012, in *elmundo.es*). In the US the film was considered “a tough and engrossing work” (*New York Times*, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2013, in *nytimes.com*). And for another critic writing for the same newspaper *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* “had the clarity — and to some degree the comfort — of hindsight. Viewers could be soothed”, whereas *Beyond the Hills* “is in many ways a more troubled and ambiguous film” (*New York Times*, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2013, in *nytimes.com*). That is, both critics found the film’s “troublesomeness” positive. However, in line with what was said previously, for one of these critics the second film was more difficult for audiences than *4 months*. Therefore, while the idea that Mungiu’s films challenge spectators can be said to be fairly constant in the reception of these two films, the meaning of this challenge is not constant: for some it is a positive value and for others it is negative. “One grasps here, directly exposed, the injection of meaning and value performed by the commentator” (Bourdieu [1996] 2012:71); moreover, one also grasps here that commentators, both in liking and in disliking the film, still rely on a number of shared ideas.

Another of those shared ideas was to make meaning of *Beyond the Hills* from the author's signature, a film apparently based on "the same chords" used in his previous film. Another Spanish film critic explained that "filmmakers like Cristian Mungiu... have the courage to turn the thematic threads of their film to challenging and beautiful formal enquiries that account for their creative vitality, aesthetic risk and their ethical radicalism" (*Caimán*, June 2012: 9). We find, once more, the notion of challenge, the drawing of similarities between films and the explanation of such similarities as the result of the author's creative force. This was not a Spanish peculiarity; we can see examples of all those continuities from all the different countries observed. For instance, in France "Just like in *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days*, Mungiu has filmed a feminine pair being judged by the masculine authorities and being moved to and fro in the turmoil of institutions" (*Le Monde*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012, in *lemonde.fr*). Likewise, in Brazil "the director Christian Mungiu likes to touch on controversial subjects. He talked about abortion in *4 months*, now the director addresses religious fanatics" (*Folha de Sao Paulo*, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2013, in *folha.uol.com.br*).

Finally, not only was the director used to explain the film, his previous Palme d'Or was repeatedly brought to the fore. In this light, in the UK we find: "Mungiu made his name with *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, an agonisingly tense account of a backstreet abortion that won the Cannes Palme d'Or in 2007. Like *Beyond the Hills*, *4 Months* charted the pinched, shifting dynamic between a pair of young women" (*The Guardian*, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2013, in *theguardian.co.uk*, my emphasis). And in the same news paper Cristian Mungiu "won the Palme d'Or at Cannes and seemed to confirm that something remarkable was happening in the Romanian cinema. Now, after a longish wait, Mungiu has made another feature, *Beyond the Hills*, a painful and exacting picture that confirms his position as a film-maker of the first rank" (*The Guardian*, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2013, in *theguardian.co.uk*). What these quotes bring to the fore is that, in as much as critical opinion might have been divided (as claimed by the

earlier quote in *The Guardian*), division of opinions does not seem to follow patterns regarding neither countries nor publications. Furthermore, we can already see that the screenplay award this film received at Cannes 2012 was not as visible as the Palme d'Or Mungiu had won with a previous film.

As we can observe, comparing this film with the Palme d'Or winner often served to give value to *Beyond the Hills*. In this light, in the Italian press, we find: “a return to the theatres... of him who had won the Palme d'Or in 2007 in Cannes, the return of the sequence shot, of a story about two young women” (*La Repubblica*, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2013, in *larepubblica.it*, my emphasis). Here the textual features of the film are, once again, put in relation to Mungiu's previous film but, more importantly, instead of highlighting that the film *Beyond the Hills* had won two awards at Cannes 2012, what gave meaning and value to this film in the eyes of this critic was that the film represented the return of an author who had previously received a Palme d'Or. Likewise, the French diary *La Croix* headed the film's review with “five years after his Palme d'Or, Cristian Mungiu comes back” (20<sup>th</sup> November 2012, in *la-croix.com*). Once again, we are finding a “global” discourse shared by these critics rather than patterns relating to critics' nationalities. The Brazilian diary *Folha de São Paulo* published three articles in 2013 reviewing *Beyond the Hills* in which the film's director was *always* identified as the director of the 2007 Palme d'Or winning film and in which it is never highlighted that his 2012 film had won two awards at Cannes. First, the film was reviewed in the promotion of a cine club showcase “that screens eleven films in contest for the Oscar, including Christian Mungiu's, who won a Palme d'Or at Cannes for *4 months*” (25<sup>th</sup> October 2012, in *folha.uol.com.br*). Second, when *Beyond the Hills* won the major prize at an important Argentinian film festival, it declares that a: “Romanian candidate for the Oscars wins at Mar del Plata ... the director is also responsible for the praised *4 months*” (26<sup>th</sup> October 2012, in *folha.uol.com.br*). To an extent, this disavowal of the screenplay award appears throughout my case studies, and it

certainly signals that the award I am studying has less cultural and symbolic capital than the Palme d'Or; but, simultaneously, such disavowal is reinforcing the lack of value.

That is not to say that there was no mention of the Best Screenplay Award or the Best Actress Award in the reception of this film. For instance, yet another critic in *Folha de São Paulo*, *Beyond the Hills* is introduced as the film “that received two of the most important awards at Cannes last year” (11<sup>th</sup> March 2013, in *folha.uol.com.br*). Nevertheless, the fact that reviewers repeatedly addressed the Palme d'Or and systematically, but not always, neglected the screenplay award is very significant. For example, I did not find a single instance where the reception of the film *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* was related to Mungiu's previous film, although it too had participated at Cannes in the Un Certain Regard programme. As a consequence, what I am arguing is that by constantly referring back to the Palme d'Or, what film critics are doing is further reinforcing the symbolic value of that award as the most important consecrating act in the field of author cinema, well beyond other awards such as Cannes' Best Screenplay (it must be remembered that according to Bourdieu's theories, the practices of social agents are guided by interest, even when agents are not aware of the ends that their practices fulfil). On the other hand, it is becoming visible that Cannes' Best Screenplay Award mainly has meaning as a secondary Cannes award whose function is not so much to consecrate films or authors, and certainly not screenplays. Therefore, I suggest that these two awards have different functions, and that these differentiated functions are built through meaning-making and value-adding processes in the critical reception of films at an international level.

Interestingly enough, the Romanian New Wave which we saw gain international attention thanks to the 2007 Palme d'Or was again addressed in the reception of the 2012 Best Screenplay Award-winning film and the press mostly legitimised its value and significance on the basis of the 2007 award. While there appears to be no significant pattern

regarding the nationality of commentators, in France the Palme d'Or is addressed as a national achievement for Romania: "the most representative author of the '*postdecembristes*' [in reference to the 25<sup>th</sup> December 1989, the date of the execution of the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu] Mungiu gave to Romania, in 2007, its first Palme d'Or" (*Le Monde*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012, in *lemonde.fr*). The idea of the Palme d'Or as a national achievement, somehow beyond cinema, equally appeared in a French diary in the reception of the 2007 film. This discourse strategy shows that there is an interest, obviously, in the French press in attaching as much international prestige as possible to this French award. In any case what is most interesting is that the same critics show no interest in the building of prestige around the other award I study; for example, in the previous review the screenplay award was not mentioned.

In this light, Mungiu is not the most representative author of the Romanian movement because he has won many awards, but because of just one. In the USA the 2012 film was "*the latest evidence that Romanian cinema is flowering*" (*New York Times*, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2012, in *nytimes.com*). Still with the theme of finding/building similitude among films, a Spanish critic wrote that in *Beyond the Hills* we can appreciate the "constant features of a movement that has been feeding the international circuit of cinema showcases and art house theatres since the film *4 months* won the Palme d'Or at Cannes" (*El País*, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2013, in *elpais.es*), but he didn't explain those features.

We can appreciate, then, as it emerges from this study of the reception of the Palme d'Or winning film, that this Cannes' award is repeatedly claimed to have been the initiator of a cinema movement or wave. Accordingly, for another Spanish critic, reviewing *Beyond the Hills*, Mungiu was the author who turned our eyes towards Romanian cinema, thanks, primarily, to being canonized with the Palme d'Or (*Dirigido Por*, June 2012:40). Interestingly enough, he reinforces the idea that it is *authors*, thanks to their charisma, who lead and shape the system of

consecration; nevertheless this critic still explains that Mungiu acquired that authorship power thanks to his Palme d'Or, so it did not simply emerge from him, it was attached to him in the act of consecration. However, for yet another Spanish critic, the Palme d'Or did not mark the beginning but the highest point of that wave: "the Palme d'Or constituted the final reward for a whole generation of Romanian filmmakers" (*El País*, 28<sup>th</sup> December 2012, in *elpais.es*) and this is even more interesting in the context of a study of the 2012 screenplay award. Since the quote comes from a review of *Beyond the Hills*, it is striking that the commentator claimed that the 2007 award was a *final* recognition, because he is clearly neglecting the recent screenplay award and, consequently, diminishing the cultural and symbolic capital of this award.

Finally I want to highlight an important area of systematic neglect that has "emerged" from critical reviews in this and previous chapters. In the study of the event's field dynamics and in other reception case studies, discourses about the screenplay award tend to bear very little relationship to the term screenplay. Moreover, it is almost a "rule" for such discourses at the festival and beyond, not to bring to the fore the collaborative nature of cinema (even though the name of the award could potentially invite commentators to reflect on the matter). Finally, as has emerged in previous studies, the "national authenticity" of films is not problematic for the international press, despite the fact that many of the reviewed films, such as *Beyond the Hills*, are co-productions with more than one country involved and intended for markets inside and outside the film's alleged nationality. These neglects have been "substituted" with discourses on how the award signals controversy or failure at the Cannes' screenings, and how the screenplay award, unlike the Palme d'Or, carries contingent meanings that change as the film travels. Plus, since there is no real distinction between the views of critics based in different places in the world, Cannes' discourses seem to be made at the initial screenings (or even before, as we have seen in previous chapters), and reinforced through a later "globalised" discourse (and not so global),

in their repetitions as well as in their neglects. In sum, the press tends to fall in line with Cannes, thereby reinforcing *its narrative* about the festival being the centre of art film culture (for instance, stressing the importance of the discoveries made at the festival).

## Conclusions

In the Winners Press Conference in 2007, Mungiu stated that receiving the Palme d'Or gave him great self-confidence (in *festival-cannes.fr*), but in the press conference of award winners in 2012 he said that he did not understand why he had received the screenplay award (ibid.). From the current study, we can understand both claims. First, the meaning of Cannes' screenplay award is difficult to grasp; second, Mungiu's Palme d'Or was received with great applause and he was enthroned as the most important film author of a newly discovered national cinema wave as a result. Therefore, while some academics claim that Cannes and other similar institutions should "let Eastern European *auteurs be*" (Ieta 2010: 32), according to my analysis of the international press reception of two Eastern European Cannes award-winning films, the festival and particularly the Palme d'Or seem to be, today, fundamental for *auteurs to be*.

While this claim would be yet another example of the role that film festivals such as Cannes have in the construction of national cinemas, adding to the works of Bill Nichols (1994), Liz Czach (2004), Marijke De Valck (2007), Robert Koehler (2009) and Felicia Chan (2011) among others, we have seen that the role of the Best Screenplay Award complicates those claims. To an extent, when academics denounce "why does Eastern European cinema still have to demonstrate that it is worthy of the West's attention, time, and financial investment? Why is it always that 'the second world' has to prove itself to 'the first world'?" (Ieta 2010: 32), they are neglecting to mention the need for international acclaim and major institutional support. And yet, according to this case study, there



are awards that do not serve to bring much “first world attention” to “second world” films. Moreover, for those immersed in the work of material fabrication of films (and not their symbolic fabrication) the misfortune seems to be that attention is concentrated only on the Palme d’Or:

People speak about this New Romanian Wave, but we missed the moment to set a production standard when we got the Palme d’Or in 2007. After that, we didn’t revisit the system, and now it is increasingly difficult to get funding.... The film commission understood that we are popular and appreciated abroad. We owe this completely to the foreign press and to the Cannes Film Festival. The moment we lose this foreign interest will be the end of this generation of filmmakers (Mungiu in *Film Comment*, November/December 2012: 12).

Here, the director acknowledges his dependence, and the dependence of his peers, on the international system of consecration which involves appreciation abroad and finds its centre in the Palme d’Or.

However, what I have been arguing is that the international press reception of the Festival de Cannes constructs the value of Cannes’ awards and that their discourses are fundamental to understanding why the Palme d’Or is a field configuring award and the Best Screenplay Award is not so influential. That is, one cannot understand a film festival’s prestige without considering the role and interests of their stakeholders, so this chapter has added to the findings of Mark Peranson (2002) and Ragan Rhyne (2009) regarding festivals’ dependency on their stakeholders; and this is important because it brings to question the autonomy of film festivals like Cannes. Moreover it even reinforces the possibility that institutions like Cannes are field delegates whose cultural capital, and their ritual power to change the state of things, results from the recognition, thence the delegate power, of a much bigger network in which we can find international institutionalised film criticism as well as

funds, or production companies (an idea already introduced in Ostrowska 2016).

More importantly, through a detailed study of the different values that the international press gives to two different awards this case study has complicated Dorota Ostrowska's historical typology of films from the Festival de Cannes (2016: 18-30), because hierarchies and differences in meaning do not operate only between The Competition and Cannes' sidebars, but also *within* The Competition. While the Palme d'Or seems to recognize the intrinsic value of a work of art, Best Screenplay Award-winning films seem to channel controversy and contestation, allowing, to an extent, more room for the struggles for cultural capital than the Palme d'Or. As this is my final case study I suggest (following Ostrowska's take on the different showcasing sections) that precisely because these two awards are systematically differentiated, the prestige and the meaning of the festival remain constant. On the one hand Cannes consecrates "unquestioned" works of art; on the other hand the festival remains a site of cinema knowledge creation, of debate and discovery, where commentators are still "allowed" (by habitus, disposition and/or governing principles, certainly not by rules) certain, instrumental, dissent. Such dissent, being concentrated on a secondary award, permits, or even invites, field agents to struggle for the acquisition of cultural and symbolic capital while the symbolic and cultural capital of the Palme d'Or and of Palme d'Or winning films basically remains undisputed and unquestioned.

I argue that the two differentiated sets of meanings around these awards and, consequently, the function of each of these awards, is sustained and reinforced at an international level. The only national peculiarity I have found in the reception of these films and awards is that French critics are more grandiloquent in giving value to the Palme d'Or than critics from other countries; possibly because they are more interested in generating cultural capital for this festival and its awards. Nonetheless, there was a general agreement across countries on the

difference in the worth of these two films; this is not to say that there was agreement among all critics on the worth of each film (especially not regarding the film *Beyond the Hills*). However, since, even to criticise a film, critics relied on similar themes and terms, they sustain and reinforce the principles on which the dominance of the Festival de Cannes is based; these are in turn the same principles on which their own dominance is based (as reviewed in comparison to the themes and terms used, but with less institutionalized critics, in Verboord 2014).

To an extent this brings into question the geographical dimension of festival legitimization, and previous claims that, since many major international film festivals and funds are geographically located in Western Europe, so is the system of legitimization. Without contradicting this idea, we have seen how film critics from other geographical areas contribute to the reification of meanings and prestige around the Festival de Cannes and around certain of its films, but not others. Thus this case study should serve to complicate claims that locate the centre and source of cultural capital at the film festival (Nichols 1994, Stringer 2003a, Czach 2004, Ostrowska 2010 and several others which we have been reviewing throughout my thesis). I propose that both the general agreement among institutionalised film critics and the differences between awards facilitate how the Festival de Cannes operates as a brand (together with many other strategies which I review in my conclusions), but that its agency is performed by a wide array of different agents. I suggest that having different awards enables the festival to build longstanding relationships based on values and principles rather than being based on any one film or author. I also suggest that cooperation or shared dispositions are necessary for those values and principles to become prestigious, admirable or even “natural”. However, while it is true that institutional journalistic press discourses on these two films somewhat agreed at an international level, both the films’ distribution and their box-offices make us wonder how “global” the Festival de Cannes truly is.

## **Conclusions**

The Festival de Cannes operates with the logic of the magician, directing our attention towards the marvel and away from the trick; but my research has attempted the opposite. Therefore, while Thierry Frémaux opens his recently released behind-the-scenes book on Cannes claiming that “artists are passing birds” (2017: 32) I suggest that we would do better to consider them as engineered airplanes whose flight involves the work of many. Accordingly, my approach to the screenplay award in contemporary Cannes wanted to disentangle certain assumptions, such as that it magically/automatically confers prestige, that it is given to the best screenplay in competition, or that it brings to the fore the collaborative nature of cinema. Opposing these face value ideas I have suggested that the Best Screenplay Award mainly serves to reinforce the director-author premise, it is neither given to the best screenplay nor to the best film, it does not always attach prestige to films (we have even seen it carrying negative value). In sum, I have been arguing that prestige does not emanate from the festival or its awards; instead it is performed by the whole Cannes’ network. Basically what I have observed with this research is that Bourdieu’s theories of capital, field and habitus prove very useful in understanding the “magic” of Cannes and the “magic” of an award. These complex layers of significance are based on my argument that awarding decisions result from and are used to reinforce Cannes’ shared notion of taste; such “taste discourses” simultaneously emerge from the rather collaborative practices of the most important members of the Festival de Cannes’ network and serve to sustain the festival’s cultural capital and its role in “the worlds” of cinema, as well as sustaining the cultural capital and position of Cannes’ network members. Cannes’ social agents follow internalised scripts and that their practices and discourses have an impact on Cannes’ meanings and value.

Several tensions which have emerged in the study of Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award have brought this argument to the fore. First, each year’s awarding decisions seem not to be not taken independently from

one another, but result from the effort of putting together a Palmarès in which the Palme d'Or is outstanding/must be outstanding. The Best Screenplay Award is, thus, clearly a secondary award which, rather than channelling the festival's prestige, serves mostly to build and strengthen relationships between the festival and certain films, filmmakers, waves or styles, and also with certain art, culture and political values. It could be said that my main argument is that the Festival de Cannes does not simply invite film industry and film criticism participants, but that these people should be considered, at least, festival's "partners". In order to put together the festival as a field configuring event, a reference point in cinema cultures and industries, the profuse cooperation of a wide range of professionals is vital; on this basis, I have greatly decentred the meaning making and value adding agency of the Festival de Cannes. I have also proposed that it is for this reason that the meaning and value of this award does not only depend on the festival's institution or on each year's jury; therefore, even if the jury makes "autonomous decisions", the system of consecration reassesses them and can "correct/interpret" the meaning and value of each awarding decision to better fit the ends of the whole system of consecration and production. Awarding decisions are taken each year by the changing juries, and I have never disputed this fact; but through the performance of all the agents involved in the construction of Cannes' meaning and prestige, their decisions meet some consistent ends, at least in the period studied.

This thesis and its conclusions want to serve as an invitation for researchers to relate my study to wider frames of reference rather than defending a grand statement or finding. Nonetheless, I would say that the most important argument of my thesis is that Cannes' prestige results from the practices and discourses surrounding it and, more interestingly, that those practices and discourses which may seem heterogeneous mostly serve to reify the Festival de Cannes' prestige and values. This is possible because the best positioned Cannes' social agents cooperate in sustaining and naturalising the principles which govern the field, the

field's accumulated symbolic capital and, in general, their status quo, above and beyond their struggles. While this may seem unsurprising since I have studied the practices and statements of Cannes' high hierarchies, I still consider it relevant to confirm that film festival boards, juries, film executive elites, film directing elites and film criticism elites basically defend the same "natural" cultural and cinematographic criteria at and around the Festival de Cannes. That is, regardless of their country of origin or their specific professional activity, their shared dispositions are such that they assume as natural and constantly reinforce the principles that sustain both the Festival de Cannes, and each of their own individual positions. In chapter 2 and 3, we saw that Cannes' Best Screenplay Award stands for *the particular notion of diversity* which sustains the symbolic and the economic capital of the festival and its network. In chapters 4 and 5, we saw that the discourse of promotion that frames a film upon arrival at the festival navigates with it through the competition and beyond, becoming the meaning of that year's screenplay award and of the award-winning film. In the fifth case study, in chapter 6, we saw that meaning making and value adding processes do not necessarily begin at Cannes. And in the final case study, in chapter 7, we confirmed the international reach of Cannes' "transportable dispositions" (using Bourdieu's terms). We have also seen that the charismatic ideology of the author as the source of meaning and worth was never questioned, either on the basis of the necessary work of the whole system of consecration, or on the basis of the collaborative nature of cinema. And also that the festival's institution, Cannes' cinema industry and film critics using the same terms or themes to attach cultural value and make meaning of Cannes' awarding decisions and films. Finally, we have also seen that films and awards channel the social and political values and debates which the festival and its network want to associate with author cinema. Accordingly, I would suggest that further research on these matters could take any of these directions: the role of major film festivals in the geopolitics of cinema and culture, the branding agency of film festivals and their co-branding needs.

Reading my case studies together, I noted a tension which related the Best Screenplay Award mainly to three Festival de Cannes' brand values: author cinema, awareness of the world we live in and diversity. The first value is paradoxical because authorship in cinema is strongly related to film directing and not to the writing of screenplays. The second value positions Cannes, and to an extent French and European culture, as champions of freedom of speech and critical social thought. And the third value makes Cannes appear like a worldwide agora of film knowledge and celebration, when actually the field is dominated by a few, mostly Western, artists, consecrators, traders and commentators. I suggest that the festival and its network have an interest in reinforcing those brand values rather than the particular work of any film director, so that longstanding relationships with consumers can be established. All these arguments are developed in my thesis' conclusions.

### **The magic of diversity**

It must be considered that as much as the Festival de Cannes showcases and rewards films "from many different nationalities" it is still dominated by French, European and US talent, companies, institutions and interests. Certainly, the national borders between talent, creativity, film financing and film marketing are blurred around the Festival de Cannes; however, the Cannes' network is hierarchically organised, and so are its international relationships. I suggest that my thesis could be read as yet another reflection on the strategies of French-European cultural institutions to reify their values so that they can appear "disinterested", when actually they are defending their own particular interests. What is significant is not that the festival's institution defends its own interests, but that in doing so it defends the interests of the film industry and businesses that sustain it as well as the role of international institutionalised film criticism in defending those interests.

Obviously Cannes is a France-based festival. While it could be difficult to decide whether it is an international or a transnational cinema event or brand, it is manifestly French both in terms of its discourse and in relation to the power structures at play. It is pertinent to bring back some facts and numbers about the festival: half of the festival's budget comes from French public funding and only French brands can opt to become official partners. The festival's budget amounts to approximately 20 million Euros and yet still it is the site where hundreds of contracts valued significantly greater than that amount are signed. This means, I argue, that the French institutions involved have performed remarkably well in making and maintaining the festival's centrality in the world of cinema. I am not judging whether the festival's budget and institutional engagement is big or small, but certainly it receives so much attention and it has acquired so much symbolic capital, because it is a site where much more than the premiere and the competition of several films takes place. Plus, the Festival de Cannes is the annual event with most international media participation worldwide,<sup>114</sup> so the Festival de Cannes certainly contributes to France's visibility around the world and reinforces France's place in the cultural and cinema industries. Therefore, within a wider frame of reference, it is much more than a cinema showcase: it represents a French geopolitical move. Certainly, this emerges from my review of the practices and interests that sustain the festival's prestige, both as a meeting place and as a cinema brand. These two takes on the festival are quite different and they result from the two almost opposite traditional approaches to film festival phenomena: the film festival-event and the film festival-gatekeeper/tastemaker. The first claim regarding the festival as a meeting place is related to my two initial case studies, those in which I analysed the festival from a guest's perspective; but in order to understand my second claim it is necessary to consider all my case

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<sup>114</sup> While the Oscars are broadcast in many different countries, the press representatives at the Oscars are not as international. Also the Olympic Games attracts much more media attention from around the world, but it only takes place every four years.



studies together, since a brand needs harmony between the production and the promotion of products in order to have meaning and impact.

We have seen that The Competition's films are often transnational in terms of funding, distribution and talent; still, The Competition is generally read as an international collection of films, which signals a systematic neglect (conscious or unconscious). I have related this neglect to the use of the term "diversity" at Cannes. While it is true that the Best Screenplay Award was given (in the period studied) to films which *were claimed to represent* a wide array of different nationalities, the Palme d'Or has *an undeniable Western bias*. This poses two problems regarding Cannes' diversity: first, the Palme d'Or is a more prestigious award; second, the national ascription of films at Cannes is questionable on many grounds. In chapter 2 we saw that the French Palme d'Or served to reinforce the symbolic value of diversity and the interests of the European audiovisual industries. Moreover, the Chinese Best Screenplay Award further reinforced that symbolic value, as the whole palmarès was used to perform the presence of national cinema's diversity. I argued that the French-European interests were concealed behind a palmarès that "disinterestedly" celebrated diversity but the hierarchy was maintained. In as much as I claim that this is a common strategy it did not occur in all the years of the period studied. For instance in 2008 the Palme d'Or was awarded to a French film and the Best Screenplay Award to a Belgian film, and in 2010 the Palme d'Or was given to a Thai film and the Best Screenplay Award to a Korean film. However, I still claim that, even when Cannes' films appear to represent different nationalities, The Competition is dominated by a transnational business model, mode of representation and a critical reception which has its origin and centre in the West, in Europe and, even in France. As I reviewed in my framework, many academics have made a similar claim before me, so the chapter mainly stands for a detailed account of how this is performed in a particular case. For instance, Thomas Elsaesser explained that often international authors have more in common among

themselves than with their respective national cinemas (2005); Shohini Chadhuri (2005) asserted that the Iranian films which had received major international recognition greatly resembled those of Michelangelo Antonioni (2006); Marc Peranson (2009) states that sales and distribution agencies providing films for The Competition are but a handful of Western companies; Marijke De Valck and Skadi Loist explained that the Rotterdam fund and other European funding institutions can basically decide which films from small countries are made (2012); and Ostrowska has shown that Cannes has historically had major impact in the definition of the dominant style in author/arthouse cinema (2016). In this light, my thesis adds a clear understanding of *how* the Festival de Cannes and its elites neglect all those tensions using the diversity euphemism; and, more importantly, how the term conceals the interests of a few companies and institutions (mostly Western, European and French) behind an appearance of disinterestedness.

Thus, the international dimension of the Best Screenplay Award serves to veil the fact that the system of production and consecration is Western and mostly French. Therefore, it also serves to sustain the role of France and Europe as the centre of international author cinema businesses and discourses. I have studied the reification of symbolic capital but, naturally, Cannes generates economic capital as well. It is important to bear in mind that the Festival de Cannes is not only a network but also a French institution, greatly financed by French funds and partnerships, and this provides a better understanding of the economic weight of the festival in France. While this is easy to understand if one thinks of the tourism industry of the Cannes' region, I propose that it is equally true for the French film industry, which benefits economically from the Festival de Cannes' brand. Moreover, this could be equally true for the French luxury goods sector, since Cannes becomes, for ten days, the worldwide centre of glamour and luxury. This idea relates to Bourdieu's theories on the various relations between symbolic and economic capital, to branding theories and to the economic

valuation of intangibles. What the economic valuation of intangibles proposes is that any variable that can influence a decision is an economic asset, so it can be valued in strictly economic terms (Damodaran 2011). I have argued that the Festival de Cannes acquires symbolic capital in the practices and statements of social agents, and this means that the festival's symbolic capital relies on innumerable variables and decisions. According to the valuation of intangibles these are intangible assets which could actually be valued in strictly economic terms. Certainly any definition of intangible assets includes brand names; for instance, the festival's brand name or the brand names of directors and stars, the brand names of companies operating at this festival, the network relationships of a company and so on. The point that I am making is that the economic impact of the Festival de Cannes is not restricted to the revenues of its films, nor to the local economy; it is much broader than that because this festival serves to give value to many different intangibles. When valuating intangibles practitioners are asked to "convert stories to numbers" (ibid.: 230) and we have seen many stories emerge around the Festival de Cannes. I am only arguing that business and finance people can convert many of Cannes' intangible assets, and the Frenchness that we have perceived, into numbers. I would think that those numbers amount to much more than 20 million Euros and that the festival is a good economic investment, and not just a cultural investment. My main concerns have not been the economic or the French dimensions of the festival, but these issues cannot be neglected. For this reason, I am keen to highlight the important relationship between symbolic and economic capital in general, but very particularly at Cannes, to invite further research in this area and to make a very specific political remark in my thesis conclusions.

Basically, I would like to open up the idea that Cannes' values and author cinema values are projected as universal but they are biased, because Cannes is *a French celebration of cinema worldwide* and *a French brand*. Furthermore, I would like to reconsider the relations

between symbolic and economic capital on the grounds that discourses, when using terms, do not reflect a reality, they perform it. Therefore, when we observe that the Best Screenplay Award serves to naturalize principles such as “national cinema’s diversity is good”, or “cinema should reflect the world we live in” this award is serving French symbolic and economic interests (as well as European and Western interests). In using terms such as “freedom of speech”, “social justice” or “diversity”, Cannes’ discourses are not only reflecting how these terms are defined in the context of France, Europe or the West; each time the terms are being used they are being reified *in that definition and no other*. Thence, I propose that the festival serves France’s, Europe’s and the West’s interests to emerge as champions of those values. However, my claim could, to an extent, deny the transnational nature of Cannes’ elites and, more importantly, if that was my main and exclusive argument, I would be contributing to an understanding of the world where the centre and the periphery can simply be located geographically, but the matter is certainly more complex.

For example, as we have seen in several instances, the cultural production and mediation elites around Cannes also have an interest in the reification of principles that relate directly to how films are commercialised. I have introduced in several case studies how the agents studied defend the prevalence of the status quo that allows them to occupy their preeminent positions, as was the case when they rose to defend the maintenance of protectionist measures in 2013 or when they stood against the VoD release of Abel Ferrara’s film in 2014. This last tension acquired a much more significant dimension in 2017 when the Festival de Cannes selected for The Competition two films produced by Netflix. Netflix is not a traditional festival content provider and, more importantly, it does not follow traditional distribution paths. A conflict emerged because the festival asked Netflix to release those films in the theatrical circuit in France, but if they premiered their films in cinemas they would, for legal reasons, have to wait two years to then distribute

them on VoD; that particular law reflects and protects the traditional cinema exhibition path. Netflix certainly did not want to wait two years to release *their* films through *their* distribution and exhibition channel, and so the films will not premiere in theatres in France. The result is that Cannes has now imposed the rule that films in The Competition must have a release date in the French theatrical circuit. This is extremely significant because the Festival de Cannes made great claims *that they consider all the films they receive* and that the only condition is (was) that the film had sixty or more minutes (*festival-cannes.com/eng*), but no production, budget or format constraint, and certainly, there were no commercialisation requirements. That is, in imposing a “theatrical release” condition of eligibility the festival stood up to defend the interests of its elites, *at the expense of their own stated principles*. Moreover, in making this stand against VoD they are betraying one, if not the most important, naturalised principle of author cinema: that the value of a film emerges from the charisma of its author and the film text (and not from the system of production or consecration, and certainly not from the system of distribution and exhibition). This decision was defended by Pedro Almodóvar, President of the Jury 2017, with the euphemism that “cinema” has to be seen at the “cinema” (in *festival-cannes.com/eng*); Netflix’s films received no awards. This may remind us of the widespread controversy and discussion, years ago, of whether cinema had to be shot on celluloid to be “cinema”, a controversy which also, certainly, reached Cannes (but falls out of my thesis’ scope). The reason why I am referring to the “Netflix issue” is to highlight how romantic claims made at Cannes often conceal economic struggles, so the festival becomes a platform for defending the interests of well-established cinema business (in this case mainly distributors and exhibitors, but also “traditional” producers). It is for future researchers to follow what happens if/when VoD platforms, which concentrate much cinema and audiovisual economic capital, continue to struggle for symbolic capital. My research lays a foundation for such future work by bringing to the fore the use of euphemisms at and around Cannes to defend the interests of traditional and well-established

cinema businesses that belong in the Cannes' network but which are often located beyond French or European borders; the question of whether Cannes serves French interest or the interests of certain companies, many of which, but not all, are French remains open, but the answer is unlikely to be straight forward.

The tensions that remain open regarding *status quo versus hysteresis* at Cannes will be very interesting to observe in the near future. For instance, what could happen if VoD platforms produce the next films of authors such as Michael Haneke, the Dardenne brothers, Terrence Malick or Xavier Dolan in an attempt to appropriate "author cinema"? Or, maybe more interestingly, what would happen if they decided to finance film from less developed cinema industries trying to appropriate "cinema's national diversity"? Moreover, what could the Festival de Cannes do if films representing national cinema's diversity, and financed by VoD platforms, were systematically launched at Busan or Berlin? How long can Cannes rely on its historically acquired prestige before becoming just an "old boys' club" (an accusation that Scott Roxborough and Stuart Kemp already published in *The Hollywood Reporter* in 2014, also MacCabe 2011). How long could the Festival de Cannes not include such films in The Competition and retain its position, not only in relation to other film festivals but also regarding the complex system of consecration that we have observed? Hysteresis has a deep impact on field structures but also on the principles that sustain a field, and it takes place when there is a gap between opportunities and dispositions that cannot be contained (Bourdieu 1977: 83). There is a gap between Cannes' disposition to favour traditional distribution and exhibition and the economic opportunity that VoD represents, and, I would think that it cannot be contained. Video or celluloid is no longer an issue, but how long is this new hysteresis going to take to resolve? In this light, further investigation relating to the economic, political and symbolic power struggles beyond the geographies of centre and periphery are of major interest to understand how Cannes, film festivals and cinema

cultures are and will be articulated in the near future. My research, having shown some of these power struggles between 2006 and 2014, could be of major interest for researchers interested in studying similar tensions between economic and cultural capital at film festivals and other similar sites of legitimisation in cinema cultures.

### **The magic of authors**

In my introduction I reviewed a report commissioned by the screenwriter's guilds which said that it was important for screenwriters to increase their visibility at film festivals, though it included no reliable analysis of why their presence did not seem equally important for those film festivals. According to my research they err on two assumptions: that they associated such neglect to budget constraints and that they proposed to solve this neglect with screenplay awards. As to the first proposition, I have argue that budget is not the problem because it is also a discursive neglect. First, most often the screenplay of the films that received this award had been written by the film's director. Second, in those cases where the screenwriting had been done in collaboration, the non-directing screenwriter was not spotlighted. Therefore, the terms screenplay and screenwriting are used to draw attention to the *author* of the film, whom, at Cannes during the period of study, is *always* the director. The constant reinforcement of this idea means that it is of importance for the Cannes' network. Since the visibility of non-directing screenwriters could potentially debilitate the sealed *author cinema* discourse which is central at Cannes, screenwriters are not visible at Cannes even though a screenplay award is given out. That is, their systematic neglect responds to the construction of the festival's identity, so it is not fortuitous and it is not only related to budget constraints. Therefore, screenplay awards do not necessarily serve to increase the visibility of screenwriters at film festivals; in fact they may even serve the opposite purpose, reinforcing instead directors' authorship. On top of that, we have seen that the Cannes' Best Screenplay Award is

connected to the idea that the award-winning film is not as good as other films competing the same year, and/or not as good as previous films by the same director-author. These tensions have interesting ramifications, which I will now develop.

We saw, in analyzing the Spanish press reception of *Volver* (2006), that the Spanish press appeared to be constructing a solid discourse around the author, where comments on the film's screenplay and, in general, about Almodóvar's screenwriting were common strategies to reinforce his individual author persona. This is, at first, not surprising given that he writes his films without any known collaborator. Similarly Cannes' Best Screenplay Award served to reinforce the individual author signature of Lee Chang-dong in his film *Poetry* (2010). The jury and the press read Lee Chang-dong as an author and his film as an author film, and the fact that he had written the award-winning screenplay was repeatedly used to applaud both his individual vision and the high value of the film. Just as we saw in the case of *Volver*, the continuities between the film's inception, its screenwriting, its final form and its meaning were also constantly reinforced in the case of *Poetry*. Moreover, we saw a repeated use of the film's name, either *Volver* or *Poetry*, as a metonym of why the film was worthy (Almodóvar's *Volver* represented a "return" of the master to his origins, and *Poetry* embodied Chang-dong's "lyric" approach to art and life). What is interesting is that if we agreed with the discourses around *Volver* and *Poetry*, a film's screenwriting would be defined as a personal creative process which is vital in the construction of a filmic *work of art*, and this could certainly debilitate the author cinema premise in other cases.

Notwithstanding the facts of the previous cases, the author signature was never questioned regarding the films *Leviathan* (Andrei Zvyagintsev 2014) and *Spring Fever* (Lou Ye 2009), despite the fact that the screenplays were not signed exclusively by the film's directors. In the first case the screenplay was written by the director and Oleg Negin, while in the second case the main writer was Mei Feng; and in neither case was



the signature of the *director as author* questioned on the basis that a film's screenwriting is a creative process that has obvious impacts on film texts. In 2009 the screenplay award was received by the director as recognition *for the film* and whether the award was meant for the screenwriter or the director was never an issue. As much as the director credited the writer, he still took the opportunity to talk about *his* film. Furthermore, the film was read once again as a stance against censorship on the basis of its *subject matter*, but nevertheless the film's director (and not the main writer) was held responsible for the film's political content. To the extent that a film's subject matter is highly (if not mostly) determined by the film's screenplay, this particular reading of *Spring Fever* should have directed the attention of critics towards the film's main writer, but it never did. In sum, at the Festival de Cannes an author film results from the individual creative force and vision of *only one* creator, the film's director, disregarding the person who has written the film's screenplay; even if it was nominally the film's screenplay that was being recognised.

Finally, it also appears like a film author's ability to write screenplay award-winning films is somehow secondary for a Cannes' film author, even in those cases when the writing is part of the individual creative processes of a charismatic creator. This idea emerges from the fact that practices and discourses around Cannes repeatedly question the prestige of the Best Screenplay Award, and whether it is a straightforward recognition of a film's worth. When one uses discourse analysis and social construction as theoretical backdrops, one accepts that practices and discourses equally reflect and construct realities and mindsets. Consequently, in writing (or failing to write) about the screenplay award, critical reception is giving value to this award as much as they are also reflecting a reality which precedes them. More research would be necessary to disentangle this complex idea; for instance, further investigation on the matter could compare Cannes' Best Screenplay Award to the Best Acting and Best Director Awards.

However, we have seen some important tensions emerge in my case studies which signalled that this award can even become a negative. Both *Lorna's Silence* (The Dardenne brothers 2008) and *Beyond the Hills* (Christian Mungiu 2012) were often read as “not as good films” as the previous works by their authors, and their respective screenplay awards either evidenced this idea or resulted from the film’s relatively “minor value”. In doing this, critical reception practices and discourses are reinforcing the idea that an author’s ability to write films which receive screenplay awards does not necessarily make those films “good”. Moreover, while Almodóvar’s writing was used to sustain the notion that *Volver* was an individually signed film, and that this author’s signature was present in his writing as well as in his directing, receiving an award for the film’s screenplay *was still rendered a loss*. Although in chapter 6, in my discussion of Almodóvar, I focused on the argument that the consecration of authors is an ongoing process and that the press can increase or decrease the prestige of awards, it could also be argued that the way in which the Spanish press read the award related to the value that they were giving to screenwriting in comparison to the all-time favourite cinema authorship act of directing films. This suggests that a film author’s ability to write award-winning screenplays, even when screenwriting is considered a personal creative process, is considered *less important* than a film author’s ability to direct films. Once more, the idea is not new: it dates at least as far back as *Cahiers du Cinéma* in the late 50s’. However, what we have seen is *how* and *why* this concept is being currently reinforced and reified around the Festival de Cannes. However, Chang Dong’s screenwriting ability regarding *Poetry* (2010) was not rendered secondary or a loss. In this particular case, the terms screenplay or screenwriting were never discredited. *Poetry* was one of the highest regarded films that year, and the award-winning for its screenplay was never read as evidence that the film was not as good as other films in The Competition, or other films by Chang-dong, but as evidence of the film’s worth. That is, Cannes’ social agents are somewhat granting the writing of screenplays minor value when they

organise awards hierarchically and they question the worth of some screenplay award-winning films, but this idea has not proved true for every film. What this demonstrates, nevertheless, is that the meaning and worth of Cannes' Best Screenplay Award is not decided by the institution or the juries and that it is not fixed. Further research regarding differences between awards and award-winning films would be very useful to better understand not only these dynamics, but also the importance of the screenwriting ability in the construction of different author personas.

While some have claimed that the neglect of screenwriters is a consequence of budget constraints, my analysis of Cannes' Best Screenplay Award signals that neglecting non-directing writers is a significant act of discourse. It is not about ontology or legitimacy, a director's/author's signature is being constantly constructed and reinforced in the practices and statements of Cannes' social agents. Since the author signature is a principle reinforced by all the groups of agents studied, from the press to the institution, from the directors to the sales agents, the question we should ask is what are the interests behind it? The answer is to be found, I argue, in Bourdieu's charismatic ideology of the author and also in mere branding strategies. Behind the reification of the charismatic ideology of the author what we find is the works of a system concealing *their* efforts to generate and appropriate symbolic capital. The category author cinema is given meaning and value through their practices because each and all of them gain and sustain *their own prestige* based on the prestige of the category. This process has, of course, historical roots (which I have not studied) but it is also constantly re-enacted. We have observed much agreement and little confrontation in the practices and statements of the top positioned field agents studied. Almost none denied or criticised the prestige of Cannes, or the importance of diversity or the charisma of film authors; at most they criticised one film or film director, but they did so relying on those same themes. To be precise, what we have seen is critics claiming that such a

film did not deserve an award, or was not a good “author film”, or that a certain awarding decision was betraying the principles of author cinema, but almost never that author cinema was worthless, or a discursive construct. There have however been some exceptions to this, such as Roxborough and Kemp’s article for *The Hollywood Reporter* cited in chapter 2. Nonetheless, we can claim that the historical and the social construction of the cultural value of author cinema rely on a series of principles which are so widely shared that they have mostly become natural/objective (in as much as agreement is never one hundred percent absolute). In this light, the screenplay award serves to drive the attention towards *a film which has been made and is going to be read as an author film*, notwithstanding how many people are involved in its material fabrication or in the fabrication of its symbolic capital. What I am arguing is that the construction of meaning around those films does not take place in film reception, but in an ongoing process that includes the material and symbolic fabrication of author cinema films.

Moreover, since cinema is a highly industrialised form of “art” it is easy to see how this approach becomes a branding strategy. In this light, the Festival de Cannes as an event and an institution appropriates prestige from the category author cinema, and from the films and filmmakers that make this category. But second, the festival serves to reify the principles of this category. Accordingly I propose that we may understand that the Festival de Cannes is a delegate institution whose purpose is to defend the principles of the network that sustains it. Therefore the Festival de Cannes serves to promote the category author cinema, to reify its principles and, as a result of this, to facilitate the branding of each new product (be it an author, a film or a star).

In sum, the Cannes’ network is composed of many agents who benefit from the festival having a strong identity. This network is coherent in constructing author cinema as a product, and questioning the individual author signature of Cannes’ films seems of no benefit for them. Therefore, giving out a screenplay award at Cannes and recognizing

artistic merit in a film's screenplay does not bring to question the idea that an author's film is an individual creation because that would dissolve the brand's identity. As to how my thesis could become meaningful for screenwriting practitioners, I would propose that they focus on the advantages of bringing into the picture the idea of *the screenplay* if not necessarily the screenwriter. We have seen that screenplay awards and screenplay award-winning films are surrounded by certain (minor) discussion on the film's screenplay, which signals that *screenwriting and screenplays are important* for this network. I argue that following "a referential illusion", the terms screenplay and screenwriting in film promotion and film reception build a bridge from the film text to the filmmaking processes. It is important to bear in mind that the discourses I have analyzed always came from people who had good knowledge on how films are made, such as the film directors or film actors in the juries, the specialized film critics, or the executives of the Cannes' institution, all of them with rather long career tracks in cinema. Therefore, they can easily share the illusion of being able to refer back to the filmmaking process only on the basis of having seen the films. For instance, in studying *Vol'ner* we saw that the creative sources and even the writing processes repeatedly appeared in the reviews of the film. The relationship between the screenplay award and the creative processes occurring before the shooting was also evident in the study of *Lorna's Silence*, and in the study of *Spring Fever*. Actually, in this last case the meaning of the award could even be interpreted as a means of offering recognition for the film director, the producers (including the French producers) and all the other team members for having had the courage *to make* such a film. This backwards reference to how films are made also emerged in the discourses studied around *Leviathan* (Andrei Zvyagintsev, 2014), where the conflict between the film's plot and Russian state cinema funds kept emerging. Consequently, the screenplay award is a secondary award but also one that opens the Festival de Cannes and The Competition films to certain discussions about funding, development and production processes; maybe these

discussions could be reinforced without bringing to question *the magic of authorship* that greatly sustains *the branding agency* of this film festival.

### **The magic of a brand**

According to my research, one should consider film festivals' lists of winners rather than isolated awards. I propose this because I have observed that, as a secondary award, Cannes' Best Screenplay Award serves to reinforce the network of people and films which sustain the festival. A festival's identity is necessarily built through collaboration, since it relies on the people who attend it, the films it screens, the parties and ceremonies it hosts, the entities that fund it, etcetera. That is, film festivals depend on the participation of many films and film people who are not paid for their attendance, so giving out several awards to different films somehow serves to even out recognition across the network. We saw, to begin with, that Pedro Almodóvar is a *Cannes' favourite* although he has not ever won a Palme d'Or. Therefore, the idea, in the eyes of many, that this festival loves Almodóvar only comes from his premieres and his secondary awards at Cannes; then in 2017 he was the president of the jury, further reinforcing the relationship of mutual recognition. In a similar line, the films *Poetry* and *Lorna's Silence* were promoted as *loved by Cannes*, despite the fact that these films had not won a Palme d'Or. Moreover, since major competitive film festivals require films which are internationally premiered at them, it follows that if a film competes at Cannes it cannot compete at another similar festival. So when *Volter*, *Poetry* or *Lorna's Silence* became major international author cinema successes they contributed to the visibility of the Festival de Cannes and to reassure its place in the festival circuit and in the geopolitics of cinema. Therefore the Festival de Cannes, in rewarding a film and a film author, appropriates them. These relationships are not immutable or lifelong, but built year after year and film after film. Thus secondary awards, such as (but not only) the screenplay award, contribute to building long term relationships between the festival and its content

providers: from authors to producers and sales agencies. In sum, as much as the Cannes' network is vast, the providers of content for The Competition are a relatively small group and it is to the interest of both the festival and the content providers to build relations of mutual recognition; my research could be used as a basis for further research on those relationships.

However, while the Cannes' network can be inclusive in the lower ranks, membership status is regulated following hierarchies and secondary awards are helpful to maintain such hierarchies and they regulate access to top positions. Just as one cannot buy tickets for festival screenings (and there are also invitation only events), because it is the Festival de Cannes' institution that regulates access, the institution regulates other membership hierarchies as well. Accordingly, it is the festival's institution that decides in which different competing section each shortlisted film belongs and, to an extent, they can greatly influence the career path of a film director. For instance, Michel Franco won the best screenplay award for his film *Chronic*, and, in receiving the award he said: "this is a Cannes' story".<sup>115</sup> The writer-director unpacks that claim by explaining that he put the award-winning film together at a previous Festival de Cannes' celebration; he revealed that it had been conceived when he met Tim Roth at Cannes, as he is the leading actor and one of the main producers of this screenplay award-winning film. But Michel Franco's history at Cannes started in 1974 as an actor, and it is a good example of how the different sections and awards serve to escalate positions in the field. He received support from Cannes' *Cinéfondation* early in his career and in 1983 he participated in the *Un Certain Regard* selection, a competition he eventually won in 2012. Finally, in 2015 he presented *Chronic* and it was shortlisted for The Competition. Moreover, this film was handled by Wild Bunch, and Wild Bunch is, as we have seen, one of the *not so many* sales agencies that usually provide films for

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<sup>115</sup> I have not chosen to analyse the 2015, 2016 and 2017 celebration in detail, but I have read it in the light of my thesis model to confirm that the model made sense when applied to recent Cannes' events.

The Competition. That is, *Chronic* is certainly a *Cannes' story*: a story that won a best screenplay award, which is a good indicator that the director and the film belong in the Cannes' network. Through this prism, giving out secondary awards to Pedro Almodóvar, Christian Mungiu, Lee Chang-dong, Lou Ye, the Dardenne brothers, Jia Zhangke, Andrei Zvyagintsev or Michel Franco contributes to establishing them as international authors, as well as attaching them to Cannes. Further study on how the hierarchy of awards serves to regulate access and organise hierarchies (each year, and year after year) within the Cannes' network would be of major interest.

This appropriation of film and authors sustains the festival's centrality in author cinema but, more interestingly, it also animates certain industrial practices. Nevertheless, we have also seen that the Best Screenplay Award may not change the promotion or reception discourses around little appreciated award-winning films. Thus, when I conclude that secondary awards serve to reinforce the festival's network and its cultural capital, in some cases the benefit may emerge precisely from the inclusion of not so appreciated films. These films contribute to sustain the festival as a site of discovery, debate or freedom and, very importantly, the idea that an author's film is the unique work of an unrestrained individual.<sup>116</sup> In sum the role of Cannes' secondary awards is not so much to give prestige to a film but to tighten the relationships that sustain its network, be those physical or economic relationships or the very important naturalisation of shared principles. I propose that we could consider those principles brand values and investigate, for example, whether such values are important for the consumer or the extent to which consumption is actually based on the longstanding relationships that I have addressed.

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<sup>116</sup> It must be acknowledged that in 2014-2015 the definition of The Competition on the Cannes' website changed from *author* cinema with a wide audience appeal to *art house* cinema with a wide audience appeal; it would probably be interesting to study the tensions behind this change of terms but it is beyond the scope of my present research.



In this light, when Christopher Lambert, closing the Cannes 2015 Festival, asks guests to: “open your eyes to the world, to its realities, to its injustices and the logical and announced catastrophes to come, because that is what cinema opens us to” (Awards Ceremony 0:03, in [festival-cannes.com/eng](http://festival-cannes.com/eng)) he was making an identity or branding statement. Similarly, *Beyond the Hills*, *Lorna's Silence*, *A Touch of Sin* and *Leviathan*, were read as giving visibility to the oppressed or marginal members of contemporary societies, reinforcing the idea that the Festival de Cannes is committed to denouncing the injustices of this world (an idea we have often found in the discourses analysed). Another theme that has emerged around screenplay award-winning films was political commitment and freedom of speech. This surfaced clearly in the study of *Spring Fever*, *A Touch of Sin* and *Leviathan*. In these three cases, the screenplay award sanctioned films which were alleged to challenge the political regimes of their countries of origin, because they were alleged to stand against censorship. In as much as they claim to be an *apolitical no man's land*, Cannes' discourses seem willing to reinforce certain commitments in relation to the world's *realities and injustices*, which they take and reinforce as a natural principle in cinema. Such discourses want to make the Festival de Cannes a champion of freedom of speech in film and serve to separate this field of cinema from “uncommitted” cinema production; therefore building brand values.

*Beyond the Hills* was read as part of a national cinema wave, performing the idea that the author films competing at Cannes are attached to their respective nationalities; a *Touch of Sin*, and *Spring Fever* also acquired most of their meaning as products from their respective nationalities. As we know the Festival de Cannes wants to be perceived as an *international celebration of cinema's diversity*, thus, it is important to give out awards to films from different *nationalities* (neglecting the pervading transnational dimension of The Competition films and the Palme d'Or's inclination towards Western productions). In this light, the screenplay award reinforces Cannes' image of representing

*internationality* and *diversity*, consequently working to separate this cinema from “global” productions; again generating differentiated brand values.

According to my thesis, diversity, freedom of speech and commitment to reality are important values regarding the Festival de Cannes and they serve to ease the circulation of certain cinema products, building a shared identity but differentiating them from other cinema products. However it must be stressed that all the cases studied related to a screenplay award; thence, Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award contributes to associate the festival with certain moral and/or political values which can be taken as screenplay values when reading award-winning films. When I first started my research, I thought that by the end of my thesis I would be in a position to claim that there was something like a screenplay model, which could be defined as a result of studying this award - just like Linda Seger claimed for Hollywood’s Best Screenplay Oscar (2008). Since I do not even allege that the Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award is bestowed to a film’s screenplay, I could not possibly manage (or intend) to synthesize a screenplay model from the award-winning films. And yet, I claim that there are patterns of discourse which perform like genre guidelines and that the term ‘screenplay’ serves to bring to the fore a referential illusion according to which the gap between the film text, its making and meaning may be bridged. Thence, at Cannes, author cinema and author cinema screenwriting is closely related to a series of values which are sustained in the discourses of promotion and reception at and beyond the festival, but which may appeal to the processes of funding, development and making of films. Consequently, we can speak of a Cannes’ cinema brand which is associated with certain values from the production to the commercialization of films.

In my research I wanted to investigate how Cannes’ Best Screenplay Award could relate to Dina Iordanova’s (and others) argument that film festivals, and specially the Festival de Cannes,

establish guides for the genrification of films (as reviewed previously in these conclusions). I have concluded that such guides are performed in cooperation with institutional members, guests, content providers, and commentators at the Festival de Cannes or even outside the festival. First, the social agents that I have studied benefit from defining and reinforcing the prestige of the Festival de Cannes to the extent that it also sustains their own prestige. Second, as Bourdieu explains, the position of a social agent within a field is only as high as he/she has interiorised the principles that legitimise the field. Consequently, the establishment of certain genre guidelines results from shared habitus rather than from intentional practices and yet it is useful for the festival's institution and the social agents that surround the festival, at least those occupying top positions.

Furthermore, since we have seen that films in The Competition are once and again received as, or labelled as, “author cinema”, I understand that my thesis helps us better understand the establishment of guides for the genrification of author cinema, and how these become operative and why. Since Cannes often seems to be the festival that other major international film festivals look up to, and it is also, most often, the window preferred by the producers, sellers and buyers of author cinema with a wide audience appeal, it can be considered that Cannes’ discourses contribute to the values and identity of author cinema beyond the festival. This becomes more interesting if, following Harbord 2002, we consider that the values attached to *a film product* relate the film’s text to how it is commercialised and consumed. Thence we must bear in mind the commercial dimension of such guides for the genrification of films. The benefit of building a brand with solid values is that, through the brand, producers, mediators and consumers establish longstanding relationships which surpass any given product and which ease the flow of any new, but branded, product into the market. It is on that basis that I claim that the establishment of guides for the genrification of films and the naturalisation of certain cinema principles around the Festival de

Cannes should be understood as a cooperative branding undertaking. This work engages professionals in charge of the material fabrication of the object as well as professionals in charge of the symbolic fabrication of the object's prestige, the mediators (consecrators and commentators). I have only investigated the Festival de Cannes but it is my hope that the ideas I have been presenting about this festival could be applied to the study of other film festivals or cultural mediators who also use the notion and principles of author cinema in their practices of mediation. That is, I am inviting consideration of the idea that Cannes' brand values can affect certain cinema beyond Cannes; but this is an opportunity for future research, since my current focus has been to expose the "magic" of the Cannes' Best Screenplay Award.

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(Since there is no film-text analysis I do not cite them here)