

History of a Journal: the *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1981 Through a Programme at the Cinémathèque. Interview with Jean Narboni

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ABSTRACT

Jean Narboni considers a film programme that took place at the Cinémathèque Française in 1981 and which commemorated the 30th anniversary of the film journal *Cahiers du cinéma*, of which he was editor-in-chief from 1964 to 1972. The programme enables him to trace the history of the journal in relation to the social and political context in France: the creation of the Auteur theory, the increasing political radicalisation of the 1960s and 70s, and the progressive end of this era, marked by the film programme here discussed. In the programme, Narboni identifies the main ideological and critical tendencies that characterised the journal and the changes in critical value and interpretation throughout this period. The author discusses the critical interpretation of Antonioni, Eisenstein or Chaplin in the programme, as well as the confluence of new cinemas, the politicisation of cinema, and the late films by classical directors. According to Narboni, who was also the editor of Langlois's writings, thanks to this project the film critics associated with the journal discovered that programming is a form of montage based on these conceptual or formal associations established between films.

KEYWORDS

Cahiers du cinéma, film criticism, Auteur theory, programming, montage, Henri Langlois, political cinema, Jean-Luc Godard, new cinemas, Cinémathèque Française.

In 1964 Jean Narboni joins, together with Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean-André Fieschi, the editorial team of *Cahiers du cinéma*, then led by Jacques Rivette. Later on, he will become, together with Comolli, co-editor in chief of the journal. In the early 1970s the political radicalisation of the journal leads to what has been called ‘the years Mao’. During this period, images are no longer used, the reviews of invisible films abound and the amount of theory and political commitment multiply. Narboni’s tenure coincides with the most agitated and changing period of the journal since its foundation in 1951. Later on, Narboni would also have a key role in the history of the journal via the edition of books. Many of them are compilations of texts of former members of the editorial team (from André Bazin to Jean-Claude Biette and Éric Rohmer). Amongst the many books edited by Narboni, there is a compilation of writings by Henri Langlois, *Trois cent ans de cinéma*. Over the next pages, Narboni traces a precise itinerary about the evolution of the journal, and the impact of Langlois therein, taking as a point of departure a programme organised by *Cahiers*, and led by Narboni, that took place at the Cinémathèque Française in 1981.

In 1981 you organised the programme ‘30 ans d’une revue : les Cahiers du Cinéma’ (‘30 Years of a Journal: Cahiers du Cinéma’). We are very interested in the fact that this is conceived as a collective programme since it’s not attributed, even if you were in fact the only person behind the programme. We also find it surprising that the first part of the programme, screened in April 1981, focused on the 1950s and the films shown were mostly desperate, passionate and bitter films... It is not by chance that the programme opens with *Anatohan* (Josef von Sternberg, 1953).

Please allow me to go back to the genesis of the project. *Cahiers du cinéma* was born in 1951. In 1981, it was its 30th anniversary. I chose the films for that programme totally alone, and I proposed this programme to the Cinémathèque Française

in my role as a representative of the journal. Several factors had a key role in the selection of films. The first and most important was the taste of *Cahiers*. Regardless of the succession of editorial teams, the changes in direction, political orientation, there has always been a permanent thread in *Cahiers* that imposed itself over and above everything else. Therefore I couldn’t allow myself not to include a film by Jean Renoir, Roberto Rossellini, Howard Hawks, Fritz Lang, Alfred Hitchcock... To mention the classical filmmakers. The first aspect, so to speak, had to do with Auteur theory. That is the thread of *Cahiers*’s taste. On the other hand, the second factor was to select films that weren’t necessarily the most well-known, celebrated or seen by these authors. For instance, I decided to show *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Orson Welles, 1942) instead of *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), but I could also have chosen *The Lady from Shanghai* (Orson Welles, 1947). The third factor had to do with a personal view. I selected the films I felt personally inclined towards.

The case of Michelangelo Antonioni is very singular. He was a film-maker who had so far been left aside *Cahiers*’s Auteur theory, even detested by important members of the journal, such as Jean Douchet or Luc Moullet. The articles on Antonioni were often written by writers who didn’t mark the main editorial line of the journal. Before Rivette’s arrival to the journal – since I arrived with him – Antonioni wasn’t part of those selected few. It was often André S. Labarthe, and others like him, who used to write about him. With Rivette’s directorship there was a turn, a change in direction in relation to Antonioni; he gained a more prominent role. Godard said he detested Antonioni but then he had a sudden revelation, akin to the one Paul Claudel felt when visiting the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris: he saw *Red Desert* (*Il deserto rosso*, Michelangelo Antonioni, 1964) in Venice and entered in a state of *shock*. He even interviewed Antonioni. Therefore he went on from having very little interest in Antonioni to becoming completely fascinated by him – and I would also add by his persona. The position of the

journal vis-à-vis Antonioni is therefore fluctuating, but I wanted to include a film by him because, in any case I consider him an important film-maker, also for *Cahiers*. However, instead of selecting *L'avventura* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1960) or *La notte* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1961), I chose to include *Il grido* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1957), because it is a film that I always liked very much. It was one of the first I saw by Antonioni, and hence in this case there is a personal component. I believe it to be a magnificent film. The actor, Steve Cochran, was also extraordinary. It has often been said that Antonioni only made films about great bourgeois ladies at leisure, unable to choose amongst their lovers, but *Il grido* is a film about a proletarian, which grants it a very interesting aspect about the spaces where it was filmed, so grey and foggy. On the other hand, this film had received very sectarian attacks, guided by questions of social class. The leftist Italian critique, of communist leanings, had decided that the film was bad, roughly because a proletarian could not have a nervous depression due to a love affair; it just wasn't politically correct. However I found it very beautiful that Antonioni showed a man abandoned by his wife, travelling across different zones in Italy without knowing where to settle – he meets different women and thinks to settle with each of them, but never succeeds. Finally he returns to the place where he met the first woman and finds her with another man and a child. There seems to be no other escape but to let himself fall from the top of the factory where he used to work at the beginning of the film. For me, he is a melancholic character, unable to cope with the mourning. This is why I was so terrorised by the sectarian critiques coming from Italy, reproaching that nervous depression was something exclusive of the bourgeois world, as if a worker had to be able to get over something like this. These are the reasons that led me to chose *Il grido*.

In relation to the other question, I insist that I assume the responsibility for all the decisions made in the programme, since I conceived it on my own. But we decided not to state any names

– the same goes for the introduction text, which I also wrote – because at that time we were at the end of the political period of the journal. At that time of transition we were still working with that idea of the collective, of the 'we'. We were at the end of the 1970s. Names had to be deleted.

This programme took place at the Cinémathèque Française, the place where your vocation was born, watching and desiring to show films. It is also the place where many of the members of the editorial board of *Cahiers* would perceive a series of ideas that would later influence the journal. All of this could be perhaps summed up in one fact: Langlois generated, with his programmes, cinematographic thought.

Yes, hence my contribution to the publication of the book later on, which I organised in close collaboration with Bernard Eisenschitz and Catherine Ficat, *Trois cent ans de cinéma*. For me, Langlois was not only a great film curator of tremendous wit, a great preservationist or pioneer, as it is so often repeated, but also an excellent critic. The texts he produced – or presented – often concise but always robust, were often admirable critical texts. I said to myself that the texts already available we could make a book. At the Cinémathèque everyone told me that we had to wait, since more texts would appear later on. I wouldn't say there was an opposition to my proposal, but it didn't provoke great enthusiasm. They always said we had to wait, but in my opinion there was no need to wait for 20 years: we already had enough texts to publish a book. And the fact is that there haven't been many compilations of articles by Langlois discovered after the publication of our book. I was very aware that the book was being edited in a provisional state in relation to his writings, but Bernard and I preferred to do it anyway rather than wait to be tempted with youth poems, novels or laundry notes in the form of poetry signed by his sublime had...

The fluency of your programme also brings Langlois to mind. And, to a certain extent, one could argue that it could have been conceived, at least partially, within other periods of *Cahiers*.

The fourth fundamental aspect, which I failed to mention before, was the movements within the journal itself. These movements provoked that not all the members of the editorial team could completely identify with each of the periods of the journal. The first ten films of the programme, for instance, find a perfect equivalence in the chronology of the 1950s at *Cahiers*, that is, with the establishment of the Auteur theory. And this is valid for André Bazin as well as for Éric Rohmer, for instance. *Stromboli, Terra di Dio* (Roberto Rossellini, 1950) is one of the films discussed by Rohmer in an interview that I did with him for *Le Goût de la beauté* (ROHMER, 1984: 15). It is needless to justify Hitchcock or Renoir's presence. Orson Welles was also one of the film-makers that was most written about under Rohmer's tenure. The case of Marcel Pagnol is different, since he was considered a bad film-maker for a long time, as was the case with Sacha Guitry. In the mid-1960s when Jean-Louis Comolli and myself took over the editorial leadership at *Cahiers*, we conceived the special issue 'Sacha Guitry et Marcel Pagnol' (*Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 173, December 1965), which claimed the currency of Pagnol. That is, since his films are included in the programme, we are already contradicting the claim that the first part of the programme could have been made by the members of *Cahiers* of the 1950s. *The Big Sky* (Howard Hawks, 1952) obviously referred to the 'hitchcock-hawksism' of Rohmer and others. Likewise, Otto Preminger's *Angel Face* (1952), is related to Rivette, as much as *Lola Montes* (Max Ophüls, 1955) is mainly related to François Truffaut. Lubitsch is also a particular case, since it was only in the 1960s when *Cahiers* realised a special issue on his work ('Ernest Lubitsch', *Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 198, February 1968), which I then reedited and completed together with Eisenschitz in 1985. But if Lubitsch could be seen in relation to Truffaut, this was also a contribution of the team at *Cahiers* during my time. With regards to *Bitter*

Victory (Nicholas Ray, 1957), it can be considered par of the common ground of the journal: both Godard and I count it amongst our favourite films of all times.

As for *Limelight* (Charles Chaplin, 1952) it wasn't an obvious decision. It could respond to Bazin's criteria, the great *Chaplinist*, but I would also like to remind that Rohmer – as opposed to Godard – didn't value his feature-length films, except for *A Countess from Hong Kong* (Charles Chaplin, 1962). He certainly liked Charlot, but he rather leaned towards Buster Keaton. If I finally decided to include Chaplin instead of Keaton – whom I also consider a genius – is because he is not as well known as one would think. I confirmed this intuition a couple of years ago, when I decided to write a book on *The Great Dictator* (Charles Chaplin, 1940). However, there is a great continuity in the programme in contrast with the different editorial lines. Even during the period when Comolli and I directed *Cahiers* (1964–73), regardless of our political position, including the Maoist vertigo of the last years, Lang, Renoir or Hitchcock were always untouchable film-makers, so to speak. There was never an attack against their work in the name of militant film-making.

What seems moving about the programme is to see how from that continuity, frictions included, that characterised the programme for the first month could emerge, almost as an ejaculation, the films of the Nouvelle Vague, screened over the second month.

Yes, it is evident that the first month of the programme traces the history of *Cahiers*, but if we pay attention to the end, we find *The Hole* (*Le Trou*, 1960), by Jacques Becker, who was like an older brother for the Nouvelle Vague, and with *The Testament of Orpheus* (*Le Testament d'Orphée*, 1959), by Jean Cocteau, a father or a guardian angel to them. From there, we go directly to *La Pointe Courte* (1955), by Agnès Varda, whose work was written up by Bazin (BAZIN, 1955: 36), so that we can then go straight into the films by Pierre Kast, Rivette or Doniol-Valcroze.

I would like to hear about the exceptions over this second month. In my view, even if the radicalisation of *Cahiers* enabled the entrance of a more avant-gardist cinema, I have the impression that, from then onwards, it became more difficult to write in depth about classical film-makers.

Luis Buñuel was not appreciated by certain people at *Cahiers*, such as Rohmer or Douchet, but they completely changed their minds, to the point that Rohmer (ROHMER, 1984: 157-158) wrote on *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz* (*Ensayo de un crimen*, Luis Buñuel, 1955). He was a bit like Antonioni: he was defended by the writers who didn't decide on the main editorial line of the journal, in this case Labarthe and, most importantly, Moulet, who wrote an article (MOULLET, 1961: 55-58) on *The Young One* (Luis Buñuel, 1960), a film shown within the programme amongst films of the Nouvelle Vague.

As for Jerry Lewis, whose film *The Ladies Man* (1961) was also included in the programme, he was a very important film-maker for our period. We also edited a special issue on his work (*Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 197, December 1967/January 1968), in the midst of the Nouvelle Vague. This is why it was important to introduce his work amongst these films. But perhaps the most interesting inclusion of the programme was John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939). His work had been excluded from *Cahiers*'s pantheon for a long time. Roger Leenhardt, Bazin's mentor, proclaimed: 'Down with Ford, up with Wyler!' Bazin, in a famous article, placed Wyler at the same level as Welles, but he was wrong with Wyler. He had a certain idea about his films, about the sequence shot or the depth of field, but we now know that in his place there should have been Kenji Mizoguchi, for instance. Labarthe, Moulet or Louis Marcorelles defended him, even though, again, they didn't decide on the main editorial line of the journal. Truffaut had reserves about Ford for a long time. The turnaround arrives when Rivette took over *Cahiers*. It was during a John Ford retrospective at the Cinémathèque we realised that we realised

that he was extraordinary, whilst up to that point, in the editorial team we preferred Howard Hawks. However, and in contrast to Buñuel, I decided not to show his films together with those of the Nouvelle Vague. Instead, I situated him later in the programme, and also in the chronology. In the midst of the marxist and 'hyper-theoretical' period at the journal, we wrote a long collective text on *Young Mr. Lincoln*, unattributed (*Cahiers du cinéma*, no.223, August 1970). This is why it is placed between *The Grim Reaper* (*La commare secca*, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1962) and *Sotto il segno dello scorpione* (Paolo Taviani and Vittorio Taviani, 1969).

Things are intertwined. In the mid- and end 1960s we lived a unique moment in the history of cinema. Something like this will never happen again. I don't mean to say that the past is always better, but rather that this is a historical question. During those years, if it was possible to make a cut in time, as one does in geology, one would find diverse temporal layers. It was then when were premiered the last great films by the classical film-makers, often marvellous: *Gertrud* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1965), *A Distant Trumpet* (Raoul Walsh, 1964) or *Seven Women* (John Ford, 1966), which was only defended by *Cahiers*, even though it is one of the most beautiful films ever made. We published two articles, one by Comolli (COMOLLI, 1966: 16-20) and the other written by me (NARBONI, 1966: 20-25). Not even Ford's fans supported the film.

It was around that same time when the third and fourth films by the film-makers of the Nouvelle Vague were made. For instance, *Les Carabiniers* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963), or *L'Amour fou* (Jacques Rivette, 1969). The first works by the film-makers of the New Cinemas – such as Jerzy Skolimowski, Marco Bellocchio or Bernardo Bertolucci – and the latest works by *postclassical* film-makers such as Luis Buñuel or Michelangelo Antonioni, were also made at the same time. Within the same month, one could see a film by Skolimowski, Pasolini, Bertolucci, Godard and the most recent Ford. This will never happen again, because the first of

the layers, that of the great classics, is over, they passed away. And, thanks to a historical chance, we found ourselves in a place where the fourth dimensions had to be kept at the same time. In one and the same issue, we had to defend *Seven Women, Uccellacci e uccellini* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1966), *Walkover* (Jerzy Skolimowski, 1965) or *Les Carabiniers...* This is why a lineal succession can't be established. It happened just as in music, we had to find a counterpoint or a fugue in which two voices entered, then three, later four... We were very lucky to live in a period in which this fugue counted five different voices.

It can be argued that that generation found a 'montage' between the different films at the cinemas themselves. The programme seems to preserve those clashes; for instance, when we go from *La Concentration* (Philippe Garrel, 1968) to *Playtime* (Jacques Tati, 1967), and then to the film by Jerry Lewis.

This is exact. And, at the same time, we preserve the chronological correspondence. At the same time that we were discovering the first films by Garrel, we could suddenly see *Playtime*, a film that had a huge impact on us. I remember that André Fieschi and I called Jacques Tati. He invited us to his house – he lived in the outskirts of Paris – and organised a long interview with him (FIESCHI and NARBONI, 1968: 6-21). We dedicated an important part of that issue to *Playtime* (*Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 199, March 1968). It was a poorly received film. It even ruined him, since after that he was no longer able to make a film like the previous ones. But for us it was evident, as it happened with *Seven Women* or *Gertrud*; when we saw it we had no doubts: we had to interview him and write several texts on the film.

If we analyse the situation in musical terms, we can notice something very contemporary going on between that film and *La Concentration*. There was no problem to go from *Walkover* to *L'Amour fou* or *Play Time*, it was like a pentagram. Music seems to be the most adequate comparison to speak about these different strata. The motives follow each

other, creating links and illuminations between them. It is like Godard's idea, mentioned during his conference on Cinémathèques (GODARD, 1979: 286-291).

Since you mention Godard, I'd like to add that the relationship between *Vent d'Est* (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Gérard Martin, Grupo Dziga Vertov, 1970) and *Enthusiasm* (*Entuziazm: Simfoniya Donbassa*, Dziga Vertov, 1931) may seem evident, but not so much the fact that the latter is followed by *The Old and the New* (*Staroye i novoye*, Serguei M. Eisenstein y Grigori Aleksandrov, 1929).

From *La comare secca* onwards, the programme clearly relates to the political period in *Cahiers*. We had very much liked the first films by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, which I haven't seen since. At that time, we start watching the cinema of Robert Kramer. *Ice* (Robert Kramer, 1970) was the leftist film at the time – dealing with urban guerrillas, terrorism. He is the film-maker of the moment. From that film we move on to the Group Dziga Vertov, with *Vent de l'Est*, and so I obviously programmed it alongside a film by Vertov. But at that time we had prepared two great special issues in *Cahiers*, with the great collaboration of Bernard Eisenschitz, mainly on Soviet film. One of them focused on Russia during the 1920s (*Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 220–221, May–June 1970); the other, which in fact extended across several issues, was solely focused on Eisenstein (*Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 208–226/227, January 1969–January/February 1971). Thus for us both Vertov and Eisenstein went alongside each other. The selection of *The Old and the New* was a very personal one. This film was screened again in cinemas in Paris in the 1970s, and I wrote a text about it (NARBONI, 1976: 14-21), as did Pascal Bonitzer (BONITZER, 1976: 22-25), even if we didn't at all develop the same position on the film. François Albera, a Marxist and specialist on the avant-gardes, had written a reply in the form of a letter to the journal (ALBERA, 1978: 10-16), where he discussed our respective positions. Therefore it was a very

relevant film at the time. Bonitzer developed the idea of the artist against power, but that wasn't my position: *The Old and the New* seemed interesting because it was uber-revolutionary and I think this was precisely why it was seen so fearfully from the people in power, to go too far away – and too madly – into that direction with a sort of political eroticism – hence the sprinkling of milk – whereas they were kolkozoes who liked their tractor. It was a Deleuze/Guattari of sorts *avant la lettre*.

Since you mention Deleuze, we are in the same period when Deleuze was preparing his books on cinema, *L'image-mouvement* and *L'image-temps*. Soon before that, he had been invited to write for *Cahiers*, where he published «Trois questions sur *Six fois deux*» (*Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 271, November 1976). As far as we know, you were the ones sending him the films and this may therefore be understood as a form of personal programming for a philosopher.

Yes, he wrote on *Six fois deux / Sur et sous la communication* (Jean-Luc Godard and Anne Marie Miéville, 1976), with a counterfeit and fascinating interview with himself (DELEUZE, 1976: 5-12). We both worked at the University of Vincennes and often chatted together. Later on, Carmelo Bene brought us together – we could also talk about those who were absent from the programme, such as Bene or Otar Iosseliani. Once Deleuze had conceived this project in his mind, I helped him with the list of films and indications in the texts, but he also had many other people around him who advised him, such as Claire Parnet, someone very close to Caroline Champetier. In fact, I didn't need to wait to send him the films, but I was part of a group of people who talked with him a lot about cinema over that couple of years.

Even so, that need to send him films is interesting. In a certain way, and in the case

of *Cahiers* in particular, it seems obvious that selecting the films was a form of critique, even of a form of making cinema, of creating a way of thinking based on associations and confrontations, which is what the Auteur theory was based on. In fact this continued to be Godard's creative process as a film-maker. Didn't Langlois fulfil a similarly fundamental role in this critical dispositif?

The way I started watching films was very wild. I didn't live in Paris as a teenager; I grew up in Algeria, and only came to Paris every once on a while. Later on, the Cinémathèque Française, triggered my voracious appetite to discover cinema. For instance, all that which I had heard about in the cine-clubs of Argel. In any case, we very soon realised that Langlois was a great editor, as well as Godard would also become one. The idea of montage is similar in both instances: to bring together two or more films without an apparent relationship, hoping that something new will emerge from that clash. This idea was taken rather literally – and this is something up for discussion – from Eisenstein, that is, that from the clash between two images a third one will be created in the spectator's mind. This notion of montage is part of the 'golden thread' of all those who became close to Langlois. His screenings could play in all directions, at times based on national or chronological relationship, others just on a word from the title, or much more subtle associations. The principle of montage was constantly mutable, but the foundational idea was a constant throughout his work. This is also how it was taken up again by Godard: montage never ceased being his *beau souci*¹ – one only needs to watch his most recent *Film Socialisme* (Jean-Luc Godard, 2010). And this not only affects images but also his texts, up to the point that throughout these last years he has stopped writing at all in his films. In *Film Socialisme* he edits texts by Hölderlin with others by Rilke or Marx. Some such as Dominique

du cinéma, n° 65, December 1956.

1. This is a reference to the well-known article 'Montage, mon beau souci', by Jean-Luc Godard, published in *Cahiers*

Païni have taken up again and developed that theory using the idea of the ‘exhibited cinema’. But all who had their rites of initiation at the Cinémathèque were very much influenced by Langlois’s idea on montage. Godard is the most pure inheritor.

How was the 1968 period and the momentarily destitution of Langlois as director of the Cinémathèque, experienced at the journal?

Leaving aside any modesty at all, I will say that I believe it has been one of the richest periods in the history of *Cahiers*. From 1966 to 1968 not only did we achieve to keep the different temporalities I mentioned – we didn’t miss the films of Skolimowski, Bellocchio, Glauber Rocha or Gilles Groulx. We had all the national cinemas. We had both Garrel and Eustache... In my opinion, we did a good job in that sense. Even if we did miss certain things, we achieved our mission. But we were also in the fire lines of other episodes, in a very concrete way. The first was the ban of *La Religieuse* (Jacques Rivette, 1966), which triggered a very acute fight. After that came the ‘case Langlois’, wherein the offices of *Cahiers* became the general quarter where everyone met, from within and without the journal, to discuss the issue. Then arrived the États Généraux du Cinéma, pushed by *Cahiers*, in May 68. And, most importantly, the ‘Conseil des Dix’ (‘Board of Ten’)² was suppressed. At that time, we had the chance to see in many different places films that didn’t arrive to Paris. The ‘Conseil des Dix’ only considered Parisian premieres, which we thought was not enough, and which we replaced with the title ‘A voir absolument (si possible)’ (‘To See Absolutely [If Possible]’). In that section we considered any film that we thought was interesting, regardless of whether it had premiered in Paris or not. With this gesture, we were trying to tell readers and spectators that they had to try to see – and also make – the films themselves. That ‘if possible’ needed to be made real.

2. Traditionally the issues of *Cahiers du cinéma* finished with a page where, under the title ‘Conseil des dix’ (‘Council of

For a period of time, the theoretical and practical articulation in *Cahiers* was very direct. The banning of *La Religieuse* meant a true struggle in reality rather than in writing. The ‘affaire Langlois’ was also a real fight; as was to get readers ‘to act’ in order to be able to see *La Concentration*, or any other Canadian or Czech film. In my view, those two years were the most active period in the history of the journal as far as the articulation between real and aesthetic struggles is concerned. And this is not about us being better, but about Langlois being dismissed at that moment, and May 68 also happening then. It wasn’t invented by us. And the same happened with the banning of Rivette’s film.

As far as aesthetics are concerned, it was obvious that something was happening at the time. And all of this was related to the political movements of the 1960s and 70s, and the revolts that were taking place across the globe. All the uprisings, which gave currency to the idea of revolution, were for us related to the question ‘what could be a free cinema’, independent from what Godard called to the pair Hollywood/Mosfilm. What would facilitate that form of independent cinema? Our answer was the creation of its own conditions of production and dissemination, escaping the influence of the major and monumental institutions of the time. We knew very well that that was the end of a certain cinema made in Hollywood: *Cleopatra* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1963) itself set the alarm bells ringing (even if a part of American cinema was reborn in the 1970s). All of this was part of a period when, given the relationship between those new ‘national’ cinemas and the global revolutionary and protest movements, there was a hope in the tenuous and capillary dissemination of cinema, enabled by a series of subterranean links. For instance, the Festival of Young Cinema in Pesaro was very important because there one could see films by Eustache, Garrel, Straub and Huillet, Moullet... The axis Italy/Brazil/France also had

Ten’), ten of its critics voted, with stars, on the films on view at the cinemas.

an important weight... This was very much in the air at the time: the wind from the East carries the wind from the West. The articulation of aesthetics and politics marked *Cahiers's* editorials at the time; it was also then that the 'Semaine des *Cahiers du cinéma*' was created. I remember this because we went back to it in the film that I have recently made with Jean-Louis Comolli and Ginette Lavigne, *À voir absolument (si possible). Dix ans aux Cahiers du cinéma, 1963-1973* (Jean-Louis Comolli, Ginette Lavigne y Jean Narboni, 2011). The first 'Semaine' wasn't bad at all: the programme included *Le Chat dans le sac* (Gilles Groulx, 1964), *Not Reconciled (Nicht versöhnt oder Es hilft nur Gewalt wo Gewalt herrscht*, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, 1965), *Brigitte et Brigitte* (Luc Moullet, 1966), *Skolimowski's first film* (Rysopis, 1965), *Before the Revolution (Prima della rivoluzione*, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1964), *The Death (A falecida*, Leon Hirszman, 1965) and *Fists in the Pocket (I pugni in tasca*, Marco Bellocchio, 1965). I find it a very appropriate programme for the first 'Semaine des Cahiers'.

How did it work? Did a different editor take responsibly for the programme each time? Was there any relationship between some of the 'Semaines'?

No, we were very much in dialogue with each other when we conceived them. But what we did have in mind was the need of a continuity and of a link between various 'Semaines'. This is why we were close to certain national cinematographies. I remember well the Office National du Film del Quebec; Pierre Perrault, for instance, was very close to *Cahiers*, as were Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, Michel Brault, Groulx... The 'Semaines' were linked to the work that we developed in *Cahiers*, they were *active* events, with the goal of showing unseen films. As in the other examples, it was a work realised 'in reality' not only within the frame of the journal – I won't say that it wasn't related to writing because writing is part of reality. It was about being militant, not so much politically as aesthetically. We fought to show the films that were difficult to see.

Where do you think that motivation to 'go into action' came from?

I don't know. Before, in *Cahiers*, there were other forms of being militant: being committed to the Auteur theory was one of them. But I don't know where the idea to organise the 'Semaine des Cahiers' came from exactly. We simply wanted to show a series of films out of distribution. We got in touch with distributors, got hold of the copies and screened them.

Langlois also helped young film-makers. He could programme a film by the Lumière and then one by Garrel or by a film-maker from another country that had arrived with the films under the arm. In a way, he made 'The Year of the Cinémathèque' every year. But he never locked himself up in the past, Garrel speaks very eloquently about this. In any case, we didn't expect his dismissal, we were very surprised. Perhaps it was less of a surprise to the people who were closer to the institution. He always said that the fact of being alone 'against everyone' entailed a certain idea of danger, of threat, of a besieged fortress. And we got used to it, so that by the time his dismissal arrived we were really taken by surprise. Even so, the response was immediate.

Just before this season, you published the lists of best films of the 1970s according to *Cahiers*. We are very interested in this turning point from a decade to the next in relation to these groupings of films, because we have the impression that it anticipates an idea of a hinge.

In that list, it is obvious that Godard and Kramer hold a central position. We discovered *Two-Lane Blacktop* (Monte Hellman, 1971), which occupies the second position, with a certain delay. Marguerite Duras, who holds the sixth position, had already been interviewed by Rivette and myself (NARBONI and RIVETTE, 1969: 45-57) at the time of *La Música* (Marguerite Duras and Paul Sabin, 1967). However, even if Rainer Werner Fassbinder was on that list, he is

a film-maker that completely escaped us, I must admit it. We ignored him for too long. As far as Adolpho Arrietta or Garrel are concerned, they were defended in *Cahiers* before than in any other place.

Regarding the idea of the hinge, for me the 1981 programme marked the end of a cycle. At that time I was unaware of this, but it signalled the end of something. When the season began, Giscard d'Estaing still ruled France, and by the end, the Left and François Mitterrand seize power. *Cahiers's* 30 years close a period. The 1980s bring in an institutional left, defined by the interests of the parties, of the government, that doesn't have anything to do with May 68 and its aftermath. In contrast, the programme included all the periods of *Cahiers*, including May 68. This is the beginning of a decade that I hate. In the cinema, we lived the great movement of restauration and the attempt to bury the Nouvelle Vague. We also witnessed the return of the cinema made by film studios, of the beautiful image. I don't have anything against him –either personally or as a human being – but this is what Luc Besson symbolises. We felt like Walter Benjamin's angel of history: we looked back. We didn't know what would happen politically but we were witnessing the end of the Left, the end of revolutionary ideas, of the great discourses about identification, as well as the arrival of another left (everyone was, of course, very happy). As I said, it was the arrival of party politics and a left that opened things up for a couple of years and then closed them back straight away. And with it, money arrived. We had a social-democracy and the left that we had known completely disappeared; perhaps it had been dead since the mid-1970s.

That programme was a the end of the party. Hence perhaps the gloomy character that you mentioned at the beginning of the conversation. *Le Pont du nord* (Jacques Rivette, 1981) shows very well that

3. Jean Narboni makes a pun around the film *Wind from the East*, the foundational manifesto of the Group Dziga Vertov. Alongside counting on the collaboration of

moment. The film was shot very soon before Mitterrand's arrival to power. The relationship between the mother and the daughter in real life (between Bulle and Pascale Ogier) marks the split between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s.

The programme took into account each period of *Cahiers*, from the 1950s until the present, but mainly the part when we were most *active*, the end of the 1960s. Even if there had existed differences and political changes, the 'red thread' of taste was pretty much the same, as the programme shows, and we were even attacked by rank-and-file leftists because we defended *Othon*, *Les yeux ne veulent pas en tout temps se fermer, ou Peut-être qu'un jour Rome se permettra de choisir à son tour* (Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, 1970), or *Wind from the East*³. For them, what counted were the 'factory films', the films about the struggles, whereas for us *Othon* was a revolutionary/materialist cinema, not to mention *The Young Lincoln...* The leftist movement was aesthetically hostile or alien to the taste of *Cahiers*. If there was ever a rapprochement to the Communist Party, it was through the members of the Communist party-founded journal *La Nouvelle Critique*, where two members of *Cahiers* also participated: Fieschi and Eisenschitz. The journal was similar to *Les Lettres Françaises* when it was directed by Louis Aragon, because they liked Godard. The only journals that published anything positive at all about *Othon* were *Cahiers* and *La Nouvelle Critique*. At that time, there was a rapprochement at a cultural level. But for the rest, all the movements from the left were populist, in aesthetic terms. They no interest whatsoever on the cinema of Straub and Huillet.

At the end of the day, your programme is about how *Cahiers* understand cinema and about *Cahiers* itself. In order to reflect on this, a film programme is perhaps more illustrative, fertile, generous and pertinent than writing.

Brazilian film-maker Glauber Rocha, any of the members of the technical and artistic team of the film were Italian.

Of course, because taste remains. However, regarding the lists of the 1970s one must distinguish the claims in the present tense from the ones that were picked up later on. *Number Two* (*Numéro deux*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1975) was defended when it was made, but not *The Merchant of Four Seasons* (*Händler der vier Jahreszeiten*, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1971): it is a later 'reconstruction' because the film was defended

afterwards, not during its own time. In fact, Daney published very mitigated articles at the time. The list reflects some of the films that were defended contemporarily, but they appear next to later embellishments, such as is the case with Fassbinder. By way of contrast, the programme I organised in 1981 tried to reflect the films to which *Cahiers* arrived on time. ●

«30 ans d'une revue : les Cahiers du Cinéma». April-May, 1981. Cinémathèque Française.

April, 1981

- 7 April. *Anataban* (Josef von Sternberg, 1953)
- 8 April. *Stromboli, Terra di Dio* (Roberto Rossellini, 1950)
- 9 April. *The Wrong Man* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1956)
- 10 April. *The Woman on The Beach* (Jean Renoir, 1947)
- 10 April. *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Orson Welles, 1942)
- 11 April. *Manon of the Spring* (*Manon des sources*, Marcel Pagnol, 1952)
- 12 April. *The Scream* (*Il grido*, Michelangelo Antonioni, 1957)
- 13 April. *The Big Sky* (Howard Hawks, 1952)
- 14 April. *Angel Face* (Otto Preminger, 1952)
- 15 April. *Lola Montes* (Max Ophuls, 1955)
- 16 April. *Design for Living* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1933)
- 17 April. *While the City Sleeps* (Fritz Lang, 1956)
- 17 April. *Bitter Victory* (Nicholas Ray, 1957)
- 18 April. *Limelight* (Charles Chaplin, 1952)
- 19 April. *Utamaro and the Five Women* (*Utamaro o meguru gonin no onna*, Kenji Mizoguchi, 1946)
- 19 April. *Towards Happiness* (*Till Gladje*, Ingmar Bergman, 1950)
- 20 April. *The Quiet American* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1958)
- 22 April. *The Fighter and the Clown* (*Borets i kloun*, Boris Barnet, 1957)
- 23 April. *A Time For Dying* (Budd Boetticher, 1969)
- 23 April. *Pickup on South Street* (Samuel Fuller, 1953)
- 25 April. *Moi, un noir* (Jean Rouch, 1958)
- 26 April. *La Tête contre les murs* (Georges Franju, 1959)
- 26 April. *The Passion of Jean of Arck* (*La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, Carl Th. Dreyer, 1928)
- 28 April. *The Nightwatch* (*Le Trou*, Jacques Becker, 1960)
- 29 April. *The Testament of Orpheus* (*Le Testament d'Orphée*, Jean Cocteau, 1960)
- 30 April. *La Pointe-courte* (Agnès Varda, 1955)

May, 1981

- 1 May. *Le Bel age* (Pierre Kast, 1960)
- 2 May. *Paris Belongs to Us* (*Paris nous appartient*, Jacques Rivette, 1961)

- 2 May. *L'Eau à la bouche* (Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, 1960)
- 3 May. *Tirez sur le pianiste* (François Truffaut, 1960)
- 3 May. *Le signe du lion* (Eric Rohmer, 1959)
- 4 May. *Ophelia* (*Ophélie*, Claude Chabrol, 1963)
- 5 May. *Muriel* (*Muriel ou le temps d'un retour*, Alain Resnais, 1963)
- 6 May. *Adieu Philippine* (Jacques Rozier, 1962)
- 7 May. *Lola* (Jacques Demy, 1961)
- 8 May. *A Woman is a Woman* (*Une femme est une femme*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1961)
- 9 May. *Not Reconciled* (*Nicht versöhnt oder Es hilft nur Gewalt wo Gewalt herrscht*, Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1965)
- 9 May. *Le père Noël a les yeux bleus* (Jean Eustache, 1969)
- 10 May. *The Young one* (Luis Buñuel, 1960)
- 10 May. *The Barrier* (*Bariera*, Jerzy Skolimowski, 1966)
- 11 May. *Hawks and Sparrows* (*Uccellacci e ucellini*, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1966)
- 12 May. *La Concentration* (Philippe Garrel, 1968)
- 13 May. *Playtime* (Jacques Tati, 1967)
- 14 May. *The Ladies Man* (Jerry Lewis, 1961)
- 15 May. *The Grim Reaper* (*La commare secca*, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1961)
- 16 May. *Young Mr. Lincoln* (John Ford, 1939)
- 16 May. *Sotto il segno dello scorpione* (Vittorio Taviani and Paolo Taviani, 1969)
- 17 May. *Ice* (Robert Kramer, 1970)
- 17 May. *Wind from the East* (*Vent d'Est*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1970)
- 18 May. *Enthusiasm* (*Entuzjazm: Simfoniya Donbassa*, Dziga Vertov, 1930)
- 18 May. *The Old and the New* (*Staroye i novoye*, Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1929)
- 19 May. *Safrana ou Le Droit à la parole* (Sydney Sokhona, 1978)
- 19 May. *Anatomie d'un rapport* (Luc Mollet, 1975)
- 20 May. *Détruire, dit elle* (Marguerite Duras, 1969)
- 20 May. *The Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting & Dogs' Dialogue* (*L'Hypothèse du tableau volé & Dialogue de chiens*, Raoul Ruiz, 1979 & 1977)

List of best films of the 1970s according to *Cahiers du cinéma* (n° 308, February, 1980):

1. *Numéro deux* (Jean-Luc Godard & Anne-Marie Miéville, 1975)
2. *Milestones* (Robert Kramer & John Douglas, 1975)
3. *Tristana* (Luis Buñuel, 1970)
4. *Two-Lane Blacktop* (Monte Hellman, 1971)
5. *Nous ne vieillirons pas ensemble* (Maurice Pialat, 1972)
6. *Des journées entières dans les arbres* (Marguerite Duras, 1976)
7. *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975)
8. *Professione: Reporter* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1975)
9. *Hitler - ein Film aus Deutschland* (Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, 1977)
10. *Deux fois* (Jackie Raynal, 1968)
11. *Dodeskaden* (Akira Kurosawa, 1970)
12. *Ici et ailleurs* (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Anne-Marie Miéville, 1976)
13. *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* (Paul Newman, 1972)
14. *Femmes femmes* (Paul Vecchiali, 1974)
15. *Trafic* (Jacques Tati, 1971)
16. *Film About a Woman Who...* (Yvonne Rainer, 1974)
17. *Anatomie d'un rapport* (Luc Moullet, Antonietta Pizzorno, 1976)
18. *Dalla nube alla resistenza* (Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1979)
19. *Geschichtsunterricht* (Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1972)
20. *Out 1: Spectre* (Jacques Rivette, 1974)
21. *Quatre nuits d'un rêveur* (Robert Bresson, 1971)
22. *Amarcord* (Federico Fellini, 1973)
23. *La Maman et la putain* (Jean Eustache, 1973)
24. *Cet obscur objet du désir* (Luis Buñuel, 1977)
25. *Hindered* (Stephen Dwoskin, 1974)
26. *Parade* (Jacques Tati, 1974)
27. *L'ultima donna* (Marco Ferreri, 1976)
28. *Nationalité immigré* (Sidney Sokhona, 1975)
29. *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* (John Cassavetes, 1976)
30. *Händler der vier Jahreszeiten* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1971)
31. *Le Théâtre des matières* (Jean-Claude Biette, 1977)
32. *Six fois deux/ Sur et sous la communication* (Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville, 1976)
33. *Im Lauf der Zeit* (Wim Wenders, 1976)
34. *L'innocente* (Luchino Visconti, 1976)
35. *Avanti!* (Billy Wilder, 1972)
36. *Husbands* (John Cassavetes, 1970)
37. *Einleitung zu Arnold Schoenbergs Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene* (Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1973)
38. *Eugénie de Franval* (Louis Skorecki, 1974)
39. *Nathalie Granger* (Marguerite Duras, 1972)
40. *Amor de Perdição* (Manoel de Oliveira, 1979)
41. *Cabaret* (Bob Fosse, 1972)
42. *Les Intrigues de Sylvia Cosseki* (Adolfo Arrieta, 1974)
43. *Petit à petit* (Jean Rouch, 1970)
44. *Video 50* (Robert Wilson, 1978)
45. *Chromaticité I* (Patrice Kirchner, 1977)
46. *Coatti* (Stavros Tornes, 1977)
47. *Déjeuner du matin* (Patrick Bokanowski, 1974)
48. *Je, tu, il, elle* (Chantal Akerman, 1976)
49. *Morte a Venezia* (Luchino Visconti, 1971)
50. *Człowiek z marmuru* (Andrzej Wajda, 1977)
51. *La Marquise d'O* (Éric Rohmer, 1976)
52. *Perceval le Gallois* (Éric Rohmer, 1978)
53. *Mean Streets* (Martin Scorsese, 1973)
54. *Le Diable, probablement* (Robert Bresson, 1977)
55. *Ludwig - Requiem für einen jungfräulichen König* (Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, 1972)
56. *Moses und Aron* (Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1975)
57. *Shonen* (Nagisa Ôshima, 1969)
58. *New York, New York* (Martin Scorsese, 1977)
59. *India Song* (Marguerite Duras, 1975)
60. *Ai-no corrida* (Nagisa Ôshima, 1976)
61. *Gruppo di famiglia in un interno* (Luchino Visconti, 1974)
62. *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977)
63. *L'Hypothèse du tableau volé* (Raoul Ruiz, 1979)
64. *La Région centrale* (Michael Snow, 1971)
65. *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (Martin Scorsese, 1974)
66. *Fortini/Canis* (Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1976)
67. *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (Luigi Comencini, 1972)
68. *Sinai Field Mission* (Frederick Wiseman, 1978)
69. *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979)
70. *Alice in den Städten* (Wim Wenders, 1974)
71. *Lancelot du lac* (Robert Bresson, 1974)
72. *Monsieur Klein* (Joseph Losey, 1976)

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