I’m pretty sure the first film festival I ever attended was the third New York Film Festival, at age 22 in fall 1965, to see *Alphaville*. In 1963, I probably would have attended the first New York Film Festival if I hadn’t transferred from Washington Square College to Bard College, two hours up the Hudson, about half a year earlier. Later that same year, I took over the Friday night film series at Bard, but every once in a while I’d forego one of my own selections in order to take a weekend trip to New York and see something new I was especially curious about; my first looks at *Muriel* and *Dr. Strangelove* were during two such excursions. And my curiosity about what Jean-Luc Godard would do with science fiction was enough to persuade me to hop on the train or catch a ride with a classmate. As it turned out, I found the film silly, not really understanding most of its allusions to contemporary Paris or German expressionist cinema. Taking the movie as ‘straight’ SF, or at least trying to, made me only slightly more appreciative than John Simon would have been, and I emerged from the screening thinking it was something akin to warmed-over Huxley or Orwell.

On the other hand, this was my first visit to the recently built Lincoln Center, and the way that Alice Tully Hall’s lobbies and stairways reflected some of the movie’s creepier and glossier architecture momentarily left a
more favorable impression. (It wasn’t until a few years later, while watching an English-dubbed version of the film on late-night TV, while stoned on grass with a friend, that I started to appreciate the movie in earnest, sensually as well as intellectually.)

In fact, the only film festival I can recall attending in the 1960s was the annual one at the Lincoln Center. Over the next couple of years, while suffering through the pedantic rituals of graduate school on Long Island in order to continue my draft-dodging, I even did some festival coverage for the college newspaper in order to get press credentials, reviewing, among other things, Godard’s *Masculine Feminine* and *Made in USA*, Rossellini’s *The Rise of Louis XIV*, Skolimowski’s *Le départ*, and the multiple-authored *Far from Vietnam* (a particular *cause célèbre* which in some ways made the strongest impression – though it’s barely remembered today except as a period curiosity).

As I subsequently discovered in 1968 and 1969, when I didn’t write any festival reviews, getting press accreditation for the New York Film Festival in those days was a fairly simple and straightforward matter. By this time, I was already edging my way out of graduate school, now that being both 25 and from Alabama (where enlistments in the military were relatively common) enabled me to feel safer from the threat of being drafted. I was also beginning to become more professionally involved with film criticism because an entrepreneurial friend had hired me to edit a collection called *Film Masters* (a book that led me to postpone some of the work on my second novel for the better part of a year, though like both my novels it never wound up in print). And being part of the festival’s freebie crowd at press screenings gave me a pleasant sense of belonging that I tended to take for granted back then.
The same thing was true at the Cannes Film Festival the first time I attended, in May 1970 – having by then moved to Paris from New York the previous fall. All I had to do to get a press card was use some printed stationery belonging to a nonexistent publisher produced by a New York friend for other purposes – the same friend who’d hired me to edit Film Masters and then had sold it as a package to McGraw-Hill – and invent a magazine I’d supposedly be writing my coverage for. The following year, however, the Cannes press office was onto my deception and demanded something more real and verifiable. Fortunately, I’d already started to write for the Village Voice by then, about my brief adventures as an extra on Robert Bresson’s Four Nights of a Dreamer, and wound up doing my coverage for them the next two years in a row, after which I managed to write about the festival for Film Comment and London’s Time Out in 1973. (The only glitch in 1971 was that Amos Vogel got the same assignment from a different Voice editor. Once we discovered that neither of us had an exclusive beat, we sorted out the films between us and wrote separate articles.)

Mythically and practically, my first year at the Cannes festival was what finally edged me into the outer edges of the Paris film world, because I wound up meeting more people there in ten days than I’d met in Paris during half a year. One of the first of these was Carlos Clarens, a Cuban film critic whom I immediately recognised on the Croisette from having seen him play himself in Agnès Varda’s Lions Love – a mixture of documentary and fiction about Hollywood hippies that I’d seen at the New York Film Festival in 1969. When I introduced myself, I believe he was en route to his second viewing of Woodstock that day, having already attended a press screening that morning.

My own first look at Woodstock, a memorable experience, was in the festival’s Grand Palais, which was then directly across the street from the Hotel Carlton. Michael Wadleigh, the hippie director – a tall, commanding figure dressed in suede – dedicated the film to the four students killed by National Guardsmen at Kent State only five days earlier, and to ‘the many deaths to come’, I recall he added. When the screening was over, he stood by the exit and calmly handed out black arm bands to anyone who wanted one. I wore one myself for a day or two, but Warner Bros. was giving out Woodstock buttons at the same time, and after a while it began to seem that the arm bands
and the buttons were virtually interchangeable; after all, this was Cannes. Then, by the end of the week, as if to prove the point, some boutiques in Cannes started selling black arm bands.

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Virtually all film festivals can be placed in two functional categories – those that mainly exist in order to facilitate seeing movies and those that mainly exist in order to facilitate selling movies – and New York and Cannes offered me respective paradigmatic examples of each. It doesn’t follow from this, however, that those dedicated more to seeing films are necessarily any more sophisticated in terms of either their press or their audiences. If I had to single out two festivals where the herdlike reactions of both reviewers and the public tend to be the most philistine, New York and Cannes could easily fit the bill. The only time in my life when I’ve ever heard a Robert Breer animated short booed was at a New York Film Festival press screening, and Manny Farber and Patricia Patterson have made apt sport (in their piece about the 1975 New York Film Festival) of the kind of hostility routinely provoked there by ‘difficult’ films. (“Is it Ms. Duras’ intention to bore the audience, and, if so, does she feel she has succeeded?”) And the noisy, petulant walkouts I recall in Cannes during screenings of Dead Man and The Neon Bible in the 1990s – or the standing ovations at Cannes that greeted certain moments in Electra Glide in Blue in 1973 – are no less emblematic. And sometimes the herdlike behavior of the press at Cannes was merely a matter of what everyone chose to see. I recall being somewhat taken aback in 1973 that I was the only one I knew who decided to attend a low-profile screening – apparently the first in the West – of Teinosuke Kinugasa’s recently rediscovered and mind-boggling A Page of Madness from 1926 rather than a Palais screening of John Frankheimer’s Impossible Object.

I can no longer remember which years in Cannes I first met Todd McCarthy and David Overbey, two important early contacts. But I do recall that this happened in Todd’s case during his junior year abroad at Stanford, when he was based somewhere in England, and that David, a former English professor, by this time had already moved to Paris from California, where he was living with one of his former students, who worked for UNESCO. This
was before Todd went to work for Variety (after a similar but briefer stint at The Hollywood Reporter) and David became a programmer for what was then called the Toronto Festival of Festivals, both of which occurred in the mid-1970s. These friendships were characteristic of the kinds of links with fellow cinephiles that could be forged at Cannes. (Another key meeting was a casual conversation with Susan Sontag, whom I’d already known since her Partisan Review days in the early 1960s, that sparked the only script conference I’ve ever attended [in Paris, a short time afterwards] – when she showed some momentary interest in directing a screenplay based on J. G. Ballard’s The Crystal World that I was then writing for a Paris producer, Edith Cottrell.)

I also can recall my amusement at sometimes seeing the entire selection committee of the New York Film Festival at certain Cannes screenings – a group that typically consisted of Richard Roud, Andrew Sarris, Molly Haskell, Susan Sontag, and/or one or two others – walk out of the films in question en masse, as if they all had not only identical tastes but also precisely the same burnout points. (Part of the amusement I felt, rightly or wrongly, was at the way some of these people, New Yorkers especially, seemed to cling to one another compulsively at Cannes in mutually protective ways.) There was something mysterious and inscrutable to me back then about some of their taste-making decisions, and it wasn’t until I became a member of this committee myself in the years 1994–97, thereby allowing me to resume my attendance at Cannes, that I started to understand some of the practical logistics of that group. During the early 1970s, I was usually dismayed to discover that the committee seemed to opt for selecting films that already had US distributors; it was only during the 1990s that I discovered that I was sometimes mistaken about the chronology – that many of these films on the contrary acquired US distributors because they’d been selected by the New York Film Festival. Also, though I don’t recall ever sitting together with all the other committee members at any Cannes screenings, I did become more aware of some of the everyday teamlike duties and processes – such as the fact that we all stayed at the Splendid, a small but relatively deluxe hotel that was conveniently close to the newer version of the Palais (a few blocks down the Croisette from the old one), and often had breakfast meetings together there at 7:15 am before attending the first press screenings at 7:45. I also became aware that the more difficult part of the selection
process was the marathon viewing sessions held in New York in early August. (My hotel room, virtually across the street from The Lincoln Center, always had a VCR, and typically – after a twelve-hour stint of watching films, interrupted only by a leisurely lunch – I’d be given a few videos to take back to my room as ‘homework’. After a while, it became easier for me to perceive how the New York Film Festival could have passed – or subsequently would pass – on such major masterpieces as *A Brighter Summer Day*, *The Aesthenic Sydrome* and *Inquietude*, as well as apparently all the features of such major filmmakers as Pere Portabella and Pedro Costa. Working in such conditions of daily sensory and intellectual overload, the surprising thing was that committee members were able to function critically at all.)

One cherished memory I have of Cannes during the 1970s was a movie theatre called Le Français that no longer exists today, where the films of the Directors’ Fortnight were shown. This was a series that, if I’m not mistaken, was launched in 1969 as a kind of alternative venue to the festival’s main events in the Palais, and in those days this was still a distinction that meant a great deal. Relatively ‘noncommercial’ films at the Palais were few and far between – a rare exception was Jean Eustache’s 210-minute *La maman et la putain* in 1973 – so most of the edgier fare that I saw there in that period was at Le Français, including such items as *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, *Brother Carl*, *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchmen*, *Othon*, *Punishment Park*, *Valparaiso*, *Valparaiso!*, *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, and two particular oddball favorites, *Vampir-Cuadacuc* and *Some Call It Loving*. Best of all, there was a bar in this cinema with a large plate-glass window enabling me to glimpse random samples of a film while eating a sandwich and thereby determine whether to return to see the whole thing later.

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Apart from New York and Cannes, I can almost count the other film festivals I attended during the 1970s on one hand: San Sébastian in 1972; London in 1974–76 (after moving to London to work for the British Film Institute, as assistant editor of the *Monthly Film Bulletin*); Edinburgh in 1975 and 1976 (which I covered both years for *Sight and Sound*); Filmex in Los Angeles in 1977–78 (after I moved from London to San Diego, to teach film at the
University of California); the Toronto Festival of Festivals, thanks to David Overbey, in 1978; and Venice, to attend a three-day conference called ‘The Cinema in the 80s’, in 1979.

The San Sébastian bash, held back then in July, was by far the glitziest – an event that incorporated not only a good many midnight banquets at country clubs, but also a trip to Pamplona to attend the bullfight, with Howard Hawks – the festival’s guest of honour, head juror and the focus of the festival’s retrospective – holding court. This was of course during the Franco period – I can recall buying the *International Herald Tribune* there daily, and discovering on occasion that articles had been scissored out of every copy. And the degree to which the festival hospitality served as propaganda for a repressive regime – which was already evident when I had to pass through a ridiculously lavish spectacle on the grand stairway of an old opera house on my way out of the gala screenings, all the other exit doors being locked – became most apparent to me on the last day of the festival, when my passport was stolen (a frequent occurrence, I heard, due to San Sébastian’s relative proximity to the French border). This actually proved to be a stroke of good fortune for me, because during the day it took me to acquire a replacement passport at the US embassy in Bilbao, the sweetness of the festival staff in helping me out included at least two or three trips to the local police station, where I wound up getting to witness a lot of what the festival for the previous ten days had successfully strived to keep invisible. (In all fairness, though, I should note that the festival’s hospitality was no less lavish when I returned there in 1987, a dozen years after Franco’s death.)

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I estimate that up through the fall of 2007, I’ve attended roughly 165 film festivals in 41 separate venues. But during the 1980s, I was still mainly getting my feet wet. Apart from my second visit to San Sébastian, this mainly included starting to attend the Toronto festival on an annual basis in 1981 (when I was invited to programme a then-regular sidebar called ‘Buried Treasures’, which included that year the North American premieres of the director’s cuts of Fritz Lang’s Indian films and Elaine May’s *Mikey and Nicky*); visits to the Denver Film Festival in 1983 and 1989 (initially to promote
my book *Film: The Front Line*, published by the Denver-based Arden Press); starting to attend the Rotterdam Film Festival on an almost-annual basis in 1984; starting to attend the Chicago International Film Festival regularly in 1987 (shortly after I moved to Chicago from Santa Barbara to start reviewing films for the *Chicago Reader*, where Chicago film festival coverage was a major part of my job); the San Francisco Film Festival for the first time in 1988; and both the US Film Festival (as a juror) in Dallas and Berlin (for the first of three times) in 1989.

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I’m proud to say that I was the first member of the American press ever invited to the Rotterdam festival, and I owe this privilege to the friendly intervention of Sara Driver and Jim Jarmusch, whom I’d known ever since I devoted a chapter of my *Film: The Front Line* to Sara. At that time, practically the entire event was held in a building called the Lantaren (which still functions today as one of the festival venues), where I recall attending press conferences with Joseph L. Mankiewicz (who was receiving the Erasmus Award that year), Raúl Ruiz (whose films I was seeing for the first time) and Philippe Garrel (who was showing *Liberté, la nuit*). This was a festival that soon became my overall favourite – at least until it was briefly supplanted by the Buenos Aires Festival of Independent Film during the four years (2001–04) it was directed by the film critic Eduardo Antin (better known as Quintín), about which I’ll have more to say a bit later.

Part of what was special about Rotterdam was its semi-clandestine atmosphere – undoubtedly linked in part to the awful winter climate in late January and early February (the damp chill, often accompanied by rain and/or fog) as well as to the off-the-beaten-track nature of many of its films, not to mention other factors, such as the fact that one of the main festival hotels, the Centraal, had served as Gestapo headquarters during the Nazi occupation, or the fact that it was relatively easy to get stoned on grass before some screenings (a practice I’d already cultivated as a cinephile in New York during the 1960s and Cannes during the 1970s).

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My first encounters with many countries have come about through accepting invitations to film festivals, and this has many clear advantages as well as certain drawbacks in getting acquainted with foreign cultures. My first visit to Asia, for instance, was as a juror at the Asian Pacific Film Festival, held each year in a separate country. The year I went, 1991, it was in Taipei, and I wound up as the only non-Asian member of a jury that included, if memory serves, three Taiwanese members (including critic Peggy Chiao, the head of the jury) as well as Stephen Teo (a specialist in Hong Kong cinema) and Aruna Vasudev (the India-based editor of *Cinemaya*). This alone provided a kind of crash course in Taiwanese culture that I very much appreciated; it often meant often going out to dinners where Mandarin was the only language spoken apart from a few occasional English remarks addressed to me and/or Aruna, which had the advantage of making me feel like I wasn’t a tourist.

Most of our work was carried out over eleven days in a private screening room – the public screenings only started after we made our selections, coinciding more or less with the Golden Horse Awards – and to save time we were often presented with Taiwanese takeout lunches to eat in the dark, during which I could neither see nor identify most of what I was eating. There were also some wonderful touristic outings to Buddhist temples and the Royal Palace Museum as well as other memorable experiences – including a special screening of *Banana Republic* arranged for me by Peggy (specifically for its insights into the existential dilemmas of being exiled from mainland China), as well as a proper Chinese banquet attended by everyone from Chen Kaige to Wong Kar-wai, a late-night meeting with John Berry and Pierre Rissient at a jazz disco called the Blue Note, and an all-night party with cognac and karaoke thrown by Hou Hsiao-hsien at another club. My point, really, is that all these experiences made me feel I was learning something about the culture of the country I was visiting – unlike the usual circumstances attending most film festivals, which virtually guarantee being shut out of most aspects of everyday life and remaining inside a relatively autonomous dream bubble. But perhaps the biggest lesson of all, involving the highly interactive nature of the global Chinese diaspora and how quickly information could be exchanged within this network – something that became no less evident via fax machines during the Tiananmen Square demonstrations a few years later – came about a week after I returned to
Chicago from Taipei. A waiter at a Chinese restaurant asked me if I’d attended the Golden Horse Awards; when I asked him in stupefied response how he could have possibly known that, he explained that he’d just seen me appear briefly in a video distributed in Chicago’s Chinatown.

I luckily visited Taipei at a peak time for Chinese and Taiwanese art cinema; among the films I saw there for the first time were the long versions of *A Brighter Summer Day* and *Actress* (both of which were, I believe, receiving their world premieres at the Golden Horse) as well as *Days of Being Wild*. But I could cite a few other festivals that I was often happier to attend for where they were located than for what they were showing: those held in Austin (South by Southwest, 2001–02 and 2005; Cinematexas, 2001), Dallas (the USA Film Festival, 1989), Hong Kong (2000), Honolulu (1990), Savannah (2001–03), Tehran (the Fajr Film Festival, 2001) and Valdivia, Chile (2007).

If memory serves, during the four or so pleasant and friendly days I spent at the Thessaloniki International Film Festival in 1993, I found I had to devote more of my time to tracing the bureaucratic steps needed to acquire my return ticket to Chicago than I was able to spend seeing any films, including those at the Jules Dassin retrospective being held there that year.

Serving as a jury member in Tehran and Valdivia, I didn’t get to sight-see quite as much as I would have liked, but I still found certain ways to get tastes of Iranian and Chilean culture. Curiously, I found that I was repeatedly asked the same question by locals at each festival. In Tehran, the question was, more or less, with a few variations, ‘Is the reason why Americans like Iranian films so much because they show so many poor people, which is the way they like to view Iranians?’ After awhile, I developed a boiler-plate response: ‘Maybe it’s true that Iranian films show too many poor people. But American films show too many rich people, so you’re getting just as distorted a picture of my country as I’m getting of yours.’

In Valdivia, the question was much simpler and asked without much variation, and this one I found virtually impossible to answer: ‘What do you think of the Chilean film industry?’ (For me, this was tantamount to asking a Chilean who was visiting Chicago, ‘What do you think of the American postal system?’)

When I visited Tehran, Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa, with whom I was co-authoring a book on Abbas Kiarostami at the time, was also visiting from
Chicago. It turned out that we both had only one opportunity to see a work print of Kiarostami’s latest film, *ABC Africa*, at his own home, along with a few others, around 6 pm, near the end of the festival, almost immediately after my jury was supposed to complete its deliberations (i.e., by around 5 pm – it often takes about an hour to drive anywhere in Tehran). The potential problem with this plan, however, was that one of my fellow jurors, the Hungarian filmmaker Béla Tarr – an anti-cinephile with a vengeance, and also a friend – didn’t like any of the films we saw, and found reasons to object to every film proposed for a prize. And even though our meeting started around ten in the morning, by around 4 pm it was beginning to look like I wouldn’t make the screening of *ABC Africa* unless I could think up some radical ruse for preventing Béla from continuing his filibuster. So, when Béla left the room briefly for the toilet, I seized the opportunity by proposing that we vote right away on a slate of prizes – basically a list that granted some recognition of the favourite film of each juror (apart from Béla) – and my motion passed before he returned. The most interesting consequence of this was that, if memory serves, Béla wasn’t even irritated by my ruse, which suggested that he may have been as trapped by his intransigence as the rest of us were.

One final anecdote, about the festival’s closing-night ceremony. As someone who tends to dress up as infrequently as I can manage to (I had a black suit made while I was in Taipei that I’ve tended to use ever since), I hastily packed black dress shoes for this occasion, only to discover a couple of hours before it was time to put them on that I had somehow managed to pack two right shoes and no left one. So I was faced with a difficult choice: either wear the yellow Nikes I’d also brought along to Tehran or limp through the evening on two right shoes. I opted for the former, and later was told that no one objected; it was assumed that wearing tennis shoes to a formal event was a quaint American custom, regarded as chic in the US.

What was special about Quintín’s four years of running BAFICI, which started a decade later, was the front-and-centre importance film criticism was made to have in almost every aspect of the planning, including the programming. I had already become friends with Quintín and his part-
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ner Flavia de la Fuente during my first visit to Buenos Aires the previous September, when the local chapter of FIPRESCI (the international film critics organisation) had invited me to give a series of lectures and Quintín and Flavia had hosted much of my stay, and helped arrange a lengthy interview for the local film magazine *El amante cine*. Then, after Quintín had been appointed director of this relatively new (and city-run) festival in December, he decided to commission and publish a Spanish translation of my latest book, *Movie Wars*, which had only just appeared in English — a somewhat radical decision insofar as I found a copy of *Les Guerras del Cine* in my hands when I arrived at the festival, where I was also serving on the competition jury, only four months later. (When a subsequent Chilean edition was brought out in Valdivia in 2007 — again with an index, and with a substitution of certain Chilean idioms and film titles for the Argentinian equivalents — this took little more than a month from initial proposal to a copy of the book in my hands, thereby giving the lie to all those bureaucratic American university presses that insist they need a year to carry our comparable projects.)

There were lots of experimental notions about festival programming being floated by Quintín during his four-year reign — not only lectures of various kinds (including ones where I presented, at various times, Forough Farrokhzad’s *The House is Black* and Lewis Milestone’s eccentric Depression musical *Hallelujah, I’m a Bum!* — the latter in an effort to engage with Argentina’s then-ongoing Depression), clusters of films in various thematic categories, and an unusually large number of revivals of rare classics (most of them coming directly from the Paris Cinémathèque), but also a few notions that he never got around to trying out. (Perhaps the wildest of these was to hold all the jury’s discussions and deliberations about the competition films in public, on a stage.) No less striking was his recognition of how crucial the social aspects of a film festival were by arranging to have a central ‘meeting point’, a café, at the location where most of the screenings were — a huge shopping mall named Abasto (the former site of the city’s outdoor market), where one could often expect to find friends between films, and where various panels were also frequently held.

It was in the spirit of such principles that I proposed during my second year at the festival (when they published a Spanish edition of another
book I was associated with – in this case a preliminary edition of an international collection I was co-editing called *Movie Mutations* – an annual programme, which I wound up presenting over the next couple of years, called ‘Lost Cinema’ (or, in Spanish, ‘El club de las películas perdidas’). This consisted of inviting various filmmakers, critics and programmers to select a film that was virtually impossible to see, and sometimes even illegal to show, screening it in a video format and then discussing it with the audience. The screenings were free and the selections weren’t mentioned by title in the festival catalogue (I encouraged the programmers to write descriptive hints about the films instead – and, in some cases, to convey the film’s title to interested parties strictly by word of mouth). The basic idea was to try to approximate the conditions of showing rare works to your friends in your living room. And even though Quintin was initially somewhat skeptical of the whole idea, he let me try it out, and the results were pretty successful (even if the settings used each year – a screening room at Abasto and an auditorium at a nearby arts centre – were, by necessity, more institutional than I would have liked). The participants, apart from myself both years, were Michael Almereyda, Thom Andersen, Frédéric Bonnaud, Eduardo de Gregorio, Sara Driver, John Gianvito (whose first feature, *The Mad Songs of Fernanda Hussein* – which I’d initially seen at South by Southwest – won the first prize the year I was on the jury), Hans Hurch (director of the Viennale), Kent Jones, Ron Mann, Adrian Martin, David Oubiña and Mark Peranson.

If the series had continued for a third year, two filmmakers who had already agreed to participate were Claire Denis and Harun Farocki. But I’m happy to report it was later revived, at least in spirit, in Valdivia, when critic Gonzalo Maza proposed that I put on a similar one-shot programme of my own. I wound up showing two scarce Orson Welles items on video, both made around the same time as *Touch of Evil* – his unsold, half-hour TV pilot *The Fountain of Youth* and a fully edited but silent sequence from his *Don Quixote* featuring Patty McCormack, Francisco Reiguera and Akim Tamiroff, set inside a movie theatre.

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Postscript:

The problem with any survey of memories of this kind is that it could be spun out indefinitely. But realising how much I’ve omitted, I’d like to conclude by listing, in chronological order, a dozen more especially vivid snapshot recollections. Over half of these involve meeting people, so I hope I can be forgiven for all the name-dropping.

- Meeting both Julia Solntseva (Alexander Dovzhenko’s widow) and Marie Seton (Eisenstein’s first English-language biographer) at the London Film Festival in 1975. (The latter’s two favourites at the festival, she told me, were *Salo* and *In the Realm of the Senses*.)
- In 1989, getting to see the world premiere of the finished print of Jacques Rivette’s 12-hour *Out 1* (1971) in Rotterdam with only four or five other people, over a series of days, as successive reels arrived from France.
- In 1990, getting to see Japanese films with Japanese audiences at the Honolulu film festival, where all the screenings were free to the public, and overhearing a couple of homeless street people give a rundown of their favourites at the previous year’s festival.
- In 1996, my penultimate year on the selection committee of the New York Film Festival, I was invited by Godard to participate in a panel discussion about his *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in Locarno that would occur roughly halfway through our marathon viewing session in New York, in early August. In deference to Godard, I was kindly allowed to accept the invitation and fly to Locarno for just a weekend – during which time I was also able to see most of the early shorts of Abbas Kiarostami at a retrospective of his work and also see, for the first time, my favourite Iranian film, Farrokhzad’s *The House is Black*. As it turned out, Godard didn’t arrive until a day or so after I left, but the panel itself – which also included Florence Delay, Shigehiko Hasumi and André S. Labarthe – was memorable. (I hadn’t been able to join the other three in Rolle, Switzerland a few days earlier to view an *avant-première* of chapters 3a and 3b, but this ultimately led to an even more exciting experience: a little over a year later, Godard brought both these chapters as well as 4a to the Toronto festival, where he showed all three to me in his hotel room.)
• In 1997, attending the Midnight Sun Film Festival in Sodankyla, Finland, far above the Arctic Circle, where I was present at the renaming of the town’s main street as Samuel Fuller’s Street (he had died the previous fall), and where I subsequently got to meet both Terry Gilliam and Chris Marker.

• A long dinner with Anna Karina and her father-in-law, John Berry, at the Viennale in 1998, with Ben Gazzara and Luc Moullet (among others) seated at the same table.

• A free outdoor concert by Emir Kusturica and the No Smoking Orchestra, Pesaro in 2000.

• In Weisbaden, 2002, a series of private screenings organised by a friend from Munich, Hans Schmid, to select a slate of festival winners, along with (among others) film distributor Margaret Deriaz and film director Mike Hodges.

• Later the same year, serving on the FIPRESCI jury at the Brisbane International Film Festival in Australia, and, immediately after awarding our prize to a particular favourite, Seijun Suzuki’s *Pistol Opera*, going directly to a cybercafé, where I was able to order a DVD of the film from Japan.

• In 2005, meeting Betsy Blair at Il Cinema Ritrovato in Bologna.

• Locarno again, in 2005: after attending a Welles conference held in the middle of a massive Welles retrospective, one of the other participants, magician Abb Dickson, and I found ourselves stranded an extra day before we could fly back to the US, which enabled us to get better acquainted, and afforded me a chance to see several more of his tricks.

• In 2006, my second look at *Out 1*, this time with English subtitles, presented by Mark Peranson in Vancouver, who brought the just-arrived Pedro Costa to greet the two dozen or so survivors as soon as it was over.