"The old tart has been spruced up again, once more resplendent in its late Victorian era and suger suppression at the same time, an antiladylike manifestation of the vulgarity of the past two weeks — regrettable, but oh so financially remunerative — by all that stuff indiffered, and the Carlton Hotel is free once more to pursue its more refined, if equally mercerious, way of life. All of which is proof irrefutable that the 35th annual Cannes Film Festival is now a thing of the past."

"Perhaps it is the end of an era as well, for next year the old Festival Palace will lose its status of central show case to a mammoth new Festival Centre, which, almost completed, already is a blight on the Vieux Port of this beautiful city, its concrete-and-glass ugliness — yet one more monument to contemporary architecture's descent into utilitarian barbarism — decimating the surrounding sea and mountain landscape."

"Will this affect the spirit perhaps the very nature, of a Festival which continues to dominate the world scene, or will?.. Time alone will tell, for the Cannes Film Festival has no equal in its ability to adapt, to turn everything to its own profit. If one thing is clear from this year's event, it is that, far from betraying any signs of fading away, the Festival is gearing itself for another thirty-five years of frenetic activity."

"These words were penned over a month ago as an intro to his 1982 Festival report by the present dedicated scribe, who then had to quit, finally succumbing to the effects of flu and anti-biotics; as conscientiously reported, bien sur, by Bruce Pittman and this magazine's editors last issue. But why sacrifice such fervid stylistic stuff, since it still more or less applies, and especially since I have had to work through the creation of seventeen intros to seventeen reports for Cinema Canada and its predecessors these last seventeen years."

"Fervid stuff, and that seemed to be what was in store for us this year, because Cannes the Festival was supposed to be in deep trouble. The obscenely high prices, the destructive competition from the American Film Market held in Los Angeles, the big controversy in France itself over the official French selections — on and on went the refrain about a possible demise. And for a Canadian, well, nobody from Canada was going right? L.A.'s where the action is.

"The party's over, the reports are in, and, of course, the reality is something else. As a matter of fact, most folks consider 1982 a vintage Cannes year — or prequel. There were more journalists (than ever, we are told a mixed blessing, to be sure). And the crowds have not diminished. Moreover, the film market, far from succumbing to the L.A. challenge, had as many films on display as ever before we are equally told. Finally, the quality of the films in the official selection was deemed by more than a few as among the best in years. — More about that later."

"One can take all of this with a weeny grain of salt, to be sure. Nonetheless, the Cannes Film Festival this past May was, after all, a success. If less bloated, and therefore more comfortable than it was a few years ago, Cannes '82 showed no signs of significant decline. Once again served as a matchless microcosm of the larger film life spread around our global village."

"The entire global village, that is, with the notable exception of Canada. As a matter of fact, one is tempted to ask if Canada really was at Cannes this May 1982. What kind of show did our film community put on, how does our country's production stack up against the rest, where does it seem headed, etc.? To begin with the very brief good news: there was, of course, Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, a filmmaker who is invited to Cannes every two or three years, usually as part of the prestigious Directors' Fortnight (La quinzaine des réalisateurs). Lefebvre is a remarkable man, doggedly creating his own cinema artistically his own way, against every dictate of the present feature film system dominating Canada. He is too old still to be considered an enfant terrible (our Jean-Pierre, it happens to all of us), but Lefebvre retains his peculiar mixture of hip sophistication and naive/naive/passion, pouring himself into each of his movies, expressing the way he feels about life at whatever stage of his own personal evolution he may be experiencing. Undaunted, and against staggering odds, he goes on struggling for a truly national cinema in his own understanding of the term; and far from succumbing to discouragement or bitterness, he actually seems to be arriving at some kind of mature plateau, a new awareness of certain simple human values with serenity just a step away.

"His feature Les fleurs sauvages, was well received, winning the international critics' FIPRESCI award. And so, by all indications, Lefebvre will labor on, working with tiny budgets, creating his own audience, with a cinema that is ever young, "difficult" in its refusal of easy commercial film language — and finding a positive response in many parts of the world."

"Ted Baryluk's Grocery, a lovely and well appreciated study of Winnipeg ethnic life by John Paskievich and Mike Mierus, was part of the official selection for short films; and naturally furnished yet one more example of the National Film Board's high standards. Another aspect of Canada's developing film id is the indefatigable Serge Losique's presentation of a program of shorts films by students from his own Canadian Film Students Film Festival — surely a first for Cannes — within the context of the Directors' Fortnight."

"And that was just about the extent of the Canadian story at Cannes this year, or at least its positive side. The other aspect, the Market Place, where some three or four hundred feature films are displayed annually, and where Canada has expended so much effort these last years, was strictly no show. Few or no Canadian features, plus a few repeats from the past presented by their American distributors and (not as Canadian films, but American), plus a few promos and video cassettes — such was Cannes '82 as far as Canada was concerned."

"This was probably the quietest, least visible Canadian presence I have encountered in all these blessed seventeen years at Cannes. Gone, of course, was the hoopla of a few years ago. Gone, too, were most of the occasions for Canadians and others to meet Canadian journalists, who in evidence, and so were various federal and provincial agencies; but where were the producers, a few, the actors, the directors, the rest of the film community?"

"The saddest Canadian casualty in all of this was the drastically reduced Cinema Canada — not the magazine, but the Secretary of State's official Canadian office headed by Jean Lefebvre and Jacqueline Brodie. For years the best organized and most popular of all national film offices in Cannes, Cinema Canada was itself reduced from four or five rooms at the Carlton to one. Its only official activity, in addition to being of service to Canadian journalists, centered on the few films mentioned above representing Canada in

"..."
any of the official selections or manifestations.

And so this year the nerve centre (one is tempted to say the heart of the Canadian community was non-existent, and so much expertise, experience, and good will languished relatively unexploited in the radically reduced role that is now Cinema Canada's. The commercial side of Canadian features was handled instead by the Canadian Film Development Corporation's CPDC Film Canada, which occupied a stand on the second floor of the Festival Palace - a sort of return to Canada's way of life some dozen years ago.

The result was typically Canadian (to put it charitably): two reduced areas, a divided presence, no centre. This becomes particularly bewildering when one compares the magnificent Australian presence, or the Scandinavian, or even the New Zealand, or...

Without returning to some of the hype aspects so criticized by (some) Canadian journalists in the past, surely the Canadian agencies need not go all the way in giving the impression that Canadian film is all but extinct? If it is worth going to Cannes at all, it is worth giving a positive and vital image of this country's feature filmmaking. Otherwise, our official presence at this, the Festival Palace - a sort of return to cinema Canada's way of life some dozen years ago, of the Festivals Bureau (Cinema Canada) and of the CFDC (Film Canada) - who or what is best for our image at this time? And what chance do Canadian independent distributors have when the game belongs to the Hollywood-and-its-Canadian-brand-plants mentality, how can Canadian independents buy "other" films if the U.S. is both our sole supplier and unique distributor?

I am caricaturing over-simplifying and exaggerating - to a certain extent. But many fear that certain very powerful sectors both at the policy-making and the production levels are hell-bent on control. They are not perhaps realizing the consequences of such a process.

Or to repeat what has become a tragic cliché for those who believe that there should be an independent Canadian feature film production: a country that does not control its own distribution and exhibition cannot control its own filmmaking. .

Comments such as the above can easily be distorted into some sort of self-serving, or silly nationalist, narrow-mindedness exces. An excess which finds little reflection in world cinema - or at least so it would seem judging from Cannes '82.

For one thing, the filmmaker's national identity often in no way corresponds to the country he represents or in which he shoots his film. Here for example was Werner Herzog representing Germany with a film shot in Peru about one Brian Stewart. The two grand prize winners, Vol and Missing, one directed by a Turk (Yilmaz Guney) for Switzerland and France, the other by a Greek living in France (Costa-Gavras) for the U.S. Further attest to this phenomenon. Poland's Jerzy Skolimovsky represented Britain with Moonlighting, and Germany's Wim Wenders (Hammett) and Britain's Alan Parker (Shout the Moon) were other foreigners flying the American flag.

At a deeper level, too, nationalism, or should one say ideology, found little exposure on Cannes' screens. Even "political" films such as Vol and Missing were more of an outcry against injustice and totalitarian regimes than special pleading for this or that political orientation; and the Taviani brothers, those convinced advocates for the Italian left, were far more interested in the people living through The Night of San Lorenzo than in any ideas advocating Marxism. It was as if all ideologies, be they of the right or of the left, have been so discredited by their proponents in recent history that serious filmmakers simply can no longer find validity in commitment to any of them. Moreover, if a few major directors such as Godard and Antonioni seem to have given up on the human condition, it is within a political vacuum that they have given up their own (ultimately) personal demons of alienation or whatever. Most of the films, on the contrary, are reaching out hopefully, positively, rejecting the madness of the arms race and the butchery of local wars, in favour of a simple way of life, an ability to live with oneself and others. Very simple, basic stuff.

That, it would seem, was by far the most commonly shared message at Cannes this year in a Festival that by and large strayed very little from tried and true aesthetic paths. Even from names made glamorous or controversial in the recent or not so recent past (Antonioni, Anderson, Godard, Costa-Gavras, Scorsese, Herzog, the Taviani brothers, Skolimowski), there were few radical departures, no exciting new developments, nothing that made this festival truly memorable. Rather, a series of quality movies confirming the trends of recent years, and witnessing to the fact that film techniques and technology are now pretty universally mastered, was enrolled on the screen of the Festival Palace. But dazzling novel, poetic inspiration? Not this year.

A few comments, then - the fruit, naturally, of one's preferences, or special interests, or above all the limitations caused by having to choose from among four-hundred movies:

France, the host country, went for new faces this year, without much success - even though three old nouvelle vague names were available. Alone of the three Jean-Luc Godard was invited. Sad to say, his Passion merely confirmed that Godard is still trapped in a self-created impasse. Each film continues the perpetual unmasking of film art, the destruction of whatever it is he is creating on the screen. One is left with nothing - no spontaneity, wit, humour, humanity, not even his old but now discarded Maoist ranting. As the Godard film unrolls, it's a bit like watching a snake devouring its own tail - without the attendant horror. Boredom is all.

Of the other two nouvelle vague efforts that might have better served the Festival and its audiences, Eric Rohmer's Le beau mariage I must admit after a Paris viewing is very minor Rohmer indeed, too redundant of uninspired deja vu. Chabrol's Les fantomes du chapelier, on the other hand, is marvelously crafted, a sort of inner Hitchcock without the tricks and scred among Chabrol's finest efforts.

Italy, as usual, had too many films at Cannes. Ettore Scola's The Night in Venet,es is self-indulgent pretentiousness, and offers further proof that the energetic Signor Scola is one of world Cinema's most over-rated directors. Much more interesting is the Michelangelo Antonioni case. Antonioni, one realizes with astonishment, will be
Australia: The Australian story goes on, still serving as a marvel in a world where the Australian cinema could be considered dead. Mind you, the Australians can match Canadians any time when it comes to putting themselves down. Predictably, therefore, the advance reports from Australia were anything but promising. After all, the recently implemented tax write-offs were too good to be true (150% over two years, plus profits up to one-half of the investment), and everyone knows what happened to Canada and its write-off created boom.

True, there was no Australian film in the official selection – thanks to the Festival’s time-honoured and shameless favouring of France (understandable), Italy (gross), the U.S., and, to a lesser extent, Britain. But the bad news ends there. The Aussies produced some features last year, about 20 of which they brought to the Cannes Market. This did not include their most popular film, The Man from Snowy River – an epic created from Banjo Paterson’s classic boy’s poem (starring Jack Thompson and Kirk Douglas), which is breaking box office records Down Under – or even its Australian equivalent, The Man from an Australian River. However, it is the australian-Canadian industry that stands in the image of Fassbinder’s work – and three of its films in Cannes were of particular and peculiar interest.

Obviously the Germans are still grappling with their Nazi-shattered national psyche. Perhaps that is why old myths or desperation genres or crazy stories found such favour with their director this year. Wagner’s Parsifal, in less, filled the Palais screen for over four hours with Hans Jürgen Syberberg’s mystical images. Werner Herzog went a step further in the bizarre and the opulent: his Fitzcarraldo, about the story of one man’s obsessive determination to bring opera to the jungles of Peru, even if it means crossing a mountain with a ship – which is exactly what both the hero of the story, and Herzog himself, succeeded in doing while taking four years to complete his film. This is a trite expression, but there was, of the weird and wonderful Mr. Herzog, Fitzcarraldo is enchanting with its glowing, haunting background of Peru’s rivers and mountains and forests.

Finally, in another obsession, this time for producer Francis Ford Coppola. With Maltese Falcon in-jokes and a profoundly self-conscious sense of social and philosophical malaise. (Whew.)

Eastern Europe: Unquestionably the most daring political film shown at Cannes this year was Michael Winner’s Lease, was also one of the finest. The sensitive treatment of a love affair between two women serves as the pretext for an unrelenting attack on the authoritarian, and perhaps the magnificent regime – but done with delicacy, nuance, understanding, and the aesthetic richness that characterizes so much of the work of this methodological parable. Moonlighting, by Poland’s Jerzy Skolimovsky, and shot in England during Poland’s recent agony, centers on two students, with the improbable activities of ‘illegal’ Polish carpenters in London. At once funny, tough, and tragic. Moonlighting signals a minor breakthrough in an otherwise much needed-simply to Skolimovsky’s work, completing his habitual Kafkaesque humour, his sadistic sense of absurdity and despair.

Festival