Film festivals: history and theory of a European phenomenon that became a global network

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Acknowledgements

I have always liked reading academic acknowledgements. They allow a peep look in the research process, add a personal touch and bring the author down to the reassuring level of an ordinary person struggling to complete a demanding task. Most acknowledgements are in fact unabashedly generic. They meet the reader’s dramatic expectations by turning the process into a mythical quest and the author into a heroic – albeit humble and humane – protagonist who has only been able to overcome adversities and fulfil his/her mission thanks to the support of a legion of family, friends and colleagues. Each one of the “helpers” in its turn is properly acknowledged with a couple of warm words. Cleary, the pleasure of reading acknowledgements is related to redundancy, to teleology and to the emotional impact of the address.

Writing acknowledgments, however, is nothing like reading them. The same formulaic structure that always gives me pleasure in reading now obstructs my writing. It seems weird to have spent more than 200 pages deconstructing among other things the primacy of human agency, only to make a quick U-turn when it comes to the acknowledgments. Did Latour not teach me not to distinguish between subjects and objects? Ought I not extend this lesson to my acknowledgements as well? One thing is sure, the actors that have made my network successful the past four years are many and include all the usual suspects as well as less conventional entities. So let me start by thanking my red dress that lifted my spirits at numerous festival parties, acknowledge the soothing effect of riding my bike through picturesque Amsterdam, and mention all those chance encounters with wonderful people who energized and amazed me. Let me begin by thanking seizing the moment.

Having said that, I’ll stop trying to be original, stop being academic about my need to overcome redundancy and teleology, and let my emotions take the better of me.

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Marijke de Valck
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