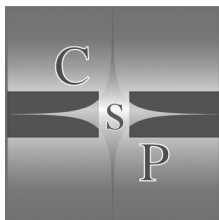


Zoom in, Zoom out

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Crossing Borders in Contemporary European
Cinema

Edited by

Sandra Barriales-Bouche and Marjorie Attignol
Salvodon



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*WE DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO ALL THE PEOPLE WHO CROSS BORDERS EVERY DAY,
AND WHO ARE CONSTANTLY NEGOTIATING THE SHIFTING BORDERS OF IDENTITY*

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INTRODUCTION

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According to Patricia M. Goff (2000), it is preferable to focus on “the ways in which borders are made meaningful in Europe,” than on “whether borders continue to be meaningful” (534). This means that the cultural, historical, and political factors that have influenced the proliferation, shape, and nature of borders in contemporary Europe are central. Borders have marked historical periods, geographical spaces, and ideological positions. They are “double-edged” in that they remain instrumental in both opening up Europe to new possibilities (European Union) and revealing Europe’s centuries-old conflicts and divisions (inter-European wars).¹ How does one think about this apparent dichotomy of European borders as both hopeful and ominous? In studying the varied discourses that have influenced the making of borders in Europe in this essay, we discuss the porosity of borders across space and time through the historical events, ideas, and political realities that constitute Europe. We focus on key foundational myths related to the democratic ideal, religious identities, and transitional epochs in Europe, exploring how significant twentieth century events, such as World War I and World War II, the wars in Yugoslavia, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the recent history of extra-European immigration, have turned Europe’s seemingly “stable” borders into “porous” ones. Though European borders are often imagined as “stable,” many scholars have recently shown this idea to be a myth—an idea that we are going to discuss in the next section of this chapter.

¹ By inter-European wars, we refer to the major wars that have taken place in Europe in the twentieth century, that is to say, World War I (1914-1918), World War II (1939-1945), and the wars of Yugoslavia (1991-1999).

Europe's Porous Borders: Myth and Realities

Mirrors reflect and refract images. In Josep Fontana's book on Europe and the myths subtending European history, *The Distorted Past: A Reinterpretation of Europe*, he uses the metaphor of the mirror to offer new interpretations of ideas that have influenced how we think about European history (Fontana 1995). Fontana's first chapter, "The Barbarian Mirror," calls into question the egalitarian ideals of the Greek *polis*, which effectively counter the values that succeeding generations have attributed to Greek democracy: "The overworked image of a Greek *polis* inhabited by free citizens who collectively participated in government is a mirage" (5). Indeed, according to Fontana, the legacy of European history merits a critical engagement. It is not a matter of replacing one set of myths with another set of myths, rather it is a matter of embracing a new vision of European history. He writes, for instance:

It serves no purpose to demythologize the Greek miracle in order to replace it by other myths: Indo-European, Egyptian, Phoenician or Minoan. What we must do is replace the notion of a single creative people—as well as the Carthaginians, Etruscans, Celts, etc.—which made possible the evolution based on the whole mass of their contributions, of a culture which embraced many shared elements (8).

This view shifts the traditional perspectives that have come to define European history.² Fontana uses the concept of the "barbarian" in this analysis of a Europe constructed from varied origins and contributions of many different peoples to undo the dichotomy separating "us" and "them," or Europe and the rest of the world.³ Fontana compels us to examine the implications of imagining European history not as a series of fixed and stable events understood by unchanging notions. He suggests that European history is engendered from contributions from a multitude of places, interests, and peoples. The much-touted Greek origin

² *The Distorted Past* is part of a series, entitled "The Making of Europe," that defines Europe in a context of exchange and interaction. The Series Editor, Jacques Le Goff, writes: "Europe is bordered by the Atlantic, Asia, and Africa, its history and geography inextricably entwined, and its past comprehensible only within the context of the world at large. The territory retains the name given it by the Ancient Greeks, and the roots of its heritage may be traced far into prehistory. It is on this foundation – rich and creative, united yet diverse – that Europe's future will be built" (Fontana 1995, vi).

³ Fontana reminds us of the meaning of the word "barbarian," writing that "the word "barbarian" originally designated the individual who was incapable of expressing himself fluently in Greek: the word was simply an onomatopoeic formation to echo the articulatory difficulties of a person who cannot speak well and stammers (a common element in the xenophobic myths of all races)" (4).

of democracy, then, is one element, among many, in contemporary configurations of democracy in Europe.⁴

Furthermore, Fontana's chapter on religion and religious identity in Europe, "The Christian Mirror," also disavows any notion of an uncomplicated European religious heritage. Reminding us that "the first enemy against whom the crusade was preached was Islam" (Fontana 1995, 54), he invokes the notion of "frontiers" in the evolution of Christendom:

When there is talk of the great awakening of the year 1000, it is forgotten that the period was also one of social and religious conflict thus leading to the fixing of new frontiers: external frontiers which would separate Europe from the Muslims and from eastern Christianity, but also other internal frontiers, which would mark off a part of society itself.

In highlighting the diverse origins of the group of believers in Europe, Fontana questions the traditional conceptualization of Christendom. If Islam was the first enemy designated by the Crusades, Jews were the "internal enemy" (Fontana 1995, 72) whom the Church targeted to blame for any "collective misfortune." The religious inheritance of Europe, then, is one of great complexity and rife with conflict; the borders created around different religious groups sustain the separation between peoples and their religious identities.

Borders of identity in Europe—whether they are political, religious, or geographical—are reinforced during pivotal moments, such as the Crusades, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment. These times of transition have heralded innovative ideas, new practices, and alternative systems of thought. They have occasioned both liberating and repressive changes. Many scholars, for instance, have debated the "underside" of the European Enlightenment in regards to slavery, women's roles, and the limits of progressive thinking in eighteenth-century Europe.⁵ In this light, Jacques Derrida's call for a "new Enlightenment" is significant: "A Europe that can show another politics is possible, that can imagine a political and ethical

⁴ Jacques Derrida (1996) accentuates the arbitrariness of identity: "Je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne" ('I have one language and it's not mine') seems confusing but, in fact, it is an eloquent response to a complex historical reality for Algerian Jews living in Algeria, a country the French colonized from 1830 until 1962. As an Algerian Jew, Derrida may be considered a person dispossessed of French identity twice: he acquired French citizenship by decree, because the Crémieux doctrine granted citizenship to all Jews living in Algeria in 1870, forty years after France colonized Algeria, while later experiencing the withdrawal of his French citizenship by law, under the Vichy government in France during World War II. The idea of "origin" is complicated by historical circumstances for individuals like Derrida, and for continents like Europe.

⁵ See Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (1997) and Louis Sala-Molins (1987).

reflection that is heir to the Enlightenment tradition, but that can also be the portent of a new Enlightenment, able to challenge binary distinctions and high moral pronouncements” (Derrida 2004, 3). A critical engagement with the foundational myths of Europe requires an acknowledgement that “a construction and re-creation of myth is part of the making of a collective consciousness” (García 1993, 5). Indeed, the borders of identity in European history have revealed the conventional nature of borders and the different European historical contexts that have witnessed their creation. Any work must consider the totality of European history, which is powerfully summarized in Peter Bugge’s concise statement that “Heritage must be all-inclusive: the Acropolis as well as Auschwitz and everything in between” (Bugge 2003, 73). As we have seen, the existence of European borders depends on ubiquitous Others: for the Renaissance thinkers, the Other represents the Middle Ages (popularly referred to as “the Dark Ages”); for the Crusaders, the Other is the non-Christian, non-believer; for the adherents to Western democracy, the Other represents those who deviate from the values embodied in the Western European democratic model. Historically speaking, the relationship to the Other is fraught with prejudice, myths, and ignorance; in discussing the meanings of borders in Europe today, we accept that Europe is still in the process of becoming, as it engages with its complex history.

In *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, Tony Judt’s sweeping history of Europe after the end of World War II, he examines the experiences, events, and ideas that have molded Europe historically (Judt 2005, 753). European borders, as the contrasts between the map in the frontispiece of his book and the one in the back reveal, have been in constant flux over the past six decades. Inter-European wars, decolonization, extra-European immigration, and the collapse of the Iron Curtain are all events that have shaped the social, political, ideological, and cultural borders of contemporary Europe. Judt’s assertion that Europe’s geography is not “absolute” but rather “relative” reflects the reconfiguration of European borders in the twentieth century. The relativity of borders is echoed in Anssi Paasi’s article, in which he states that “[...] boundaries do not embody any eternal truths of places. Rather they are socially constructed and power relations are decisive for their constitution” (Paasi 2001, 23). War and immigration are two prime examples of complex sociological phenomena that have further complicated the nature of borders in Europe. And in the twentieth century, Paasi reminds us, “more than 60% of Europe’s present boundaries have been drawn during the 20th century” (22). Though distinct in origin and nature, the wars of ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, the rising immigration from Europe’s former colonies to European capitals and the ensuing xenophobia, as well as religious and cultural intolerance in Europe, have all raised challenging questions about the meaning of borders in European

history. Can the social, cultural, religious, and geographical divisions within Europe be transcended? Will the reconfiguration of borders by immigration inspire a more fluid understanding of European history, especially as it relates to immigration from the proverbial “jewels” of Europe’s colonial crown? Will the European Union’s mission to create pan-European unity succeed over time, thereby transforming the very nature of borders?

To restate Patricia M. Goff’s expression, the ways in which borders are made meaningful in Europe are crucial for understanding how Europe, European identity, and the nature of borders have been reconfigured in the twentieth century. Europe is now facing itself in the mirror; Europe is now addressing the limitations of its foundational myths of democracy, religious identity, and ideals because the wars in Yugoslavia, extra-European immigration, and the fall of the Berlin Wall have all reconfirmed the instability of borders in Europe. Etienne Balibar evokes the idea that the “[...] Balkan War manifests the impasse and impossibility of European unification” (Balibar 2002, 73), and sounds the bells of Euro-pessimism. Yet the German writer, Peter Schneider (2005), when describing the socio-cultural borders and the ensuing conflicts for those people negotiating Turkish-German identity, calls for Muslim integration in German society. This idea expresses absolute confidence in Germany and the likelihood that it will easily survive the divisive borders of cultural identity, race, and religious difference that mark its current socio-political landscape. As European borders continue to shift, the distance between Balibar’s Euro-pessimism and Schneider’s Euro-confidence may be bridged with the emergence of new conceptualizations of identity. The meanings created by the multi-layered and transversal dimension of European borders show the significance of borders at different historical moments, during large-scale conflicts such as war, and in the midst of transitional periods, when the signals for a new era can no longer be ignored. By addressing its foundational myths, Europe may begin to see the “Other” reflected in itself, its own mirror, and begin to shift the traditional ways of imagining European history and European identity as a stable, fixed and permanent entity.

The Question of Borders in European Film

Throughout the centuries —most drastically during the twentieth century— Europe has witnessed the shifting and provisional nature of its borders. The instability of geographical borders in the continent has run parallel to the crisis of European identity. European identity, like the geographical borders of Europe, is in the process of being redefined. The boundaries of European subjectivity are less clear than they seemed in the past. As Wendy Everett (2005) explains,

Contemporary Europe and its multiple identities are perhaps best envisioned as a form of fractal geometry, pattered by chaos, with national and regional differences endlessly breaking down into ever more complex sub-divisions that reflect differences such as gender, sexuality and ethnicity (5).

Realizing that a monolithic sense of European identity has been a historical mirage only increases the uncertainty that Europeans experience during recent troubling contexts such as the tension between nationalist dispersion and unification or globalization. If the borders that demarcate Europe have become porous, that porosity also calls into question the very same concepts of border and identity, which now demand a more complex approach than the one structured in binary terms of in/out or us/them. There has been a change in the European mentality that can be easily identifiable as a new conceptualization of Europe as a fluctuating signifier.

We inquire into the transcendence of this new vision of Europe in European cinema or, in other words, we ask whether the porosity of European borders has had an impact on European film and how deep this impact has been. Judging from the most recent studies on European cinema, it is evident that all the confusion, instability and uncertainty conveyed by the term “Europe” is retained in the label “European cinema.” The limits and borders of European cinema seem to be as porous as those of Europe. Scholars of European cinema have confessed their insecurity when identifying what films can fit the label “European cinema” or what makes, in the end, a film “European.” As Tim Bergfelder (2005) says, European cinema, like Europe itself, is in transition or in a state of “indeterminacy or ‘in-between-ness’” (320). European cinema is in the process of questioning not only the borders of Europe but also its own borders.

In the era of globalization, in which the project of “one Europe” seems more achievable than ever, European cinema is, like Europe itself, at an impasse between two opposite forces: homogenization and preservation of diversity. One important question seems to be whether it is possible to integrate the variety of national European cinemas at a supra-national European level and to have cinema reflect the changes proposed at the political level for Europe: taking as a starting point a supposedly common European heritage, to create a supra-national European cinema that becomes, in its unification, a strong global player. As desirable as this project seems, it raises concerns about the role of those European countries that are not members of the EU in such an integration.

If we analyze the emphasis that the European Union has put on supra-national European film initiatives, we would have to conclude that EU politicians see European cinema playing an important role not only in any future integration of the nations included in the Union, but also in the awaited success of European cultural exports in intra-European and global markets. Politicians

see great potential for cinema to promote a cultural idea of Europe and to increase European commercial competitiveness internationally. The decision of European authorities to celebrate the centenary of cinema in 1995-1996 as a pan-European commemoration shows not only their pride in the European films of the past, but also their faith in the performative power of cinema for the Europe of the future.

There have been many attempts to create a pan-European film industry recently, and the attitude towards old initiatives, like co-productions, has changed. As Thomas Elsaesser (2005) explains, while in previous decades European authorities disdained co-productions for being “Europuddings,” more recent co-productions have earned legitimacy and are now considered a crucial part of European integration (506). The MEDIA programmes and Eurimages are considered the most important initiatives towards a borderless European film industry in a borderless Europe, also capable of crossing the boundaries of international markets. When measuring the success of those programs, some critics are more approving than others, but all agree that MEDIA II is less respectful of linguistic and cultural diversity than MEDIA I, paying more attention to commercial competitiveness than to multiculturalism. Regarding Eurimages, critics acknowledge its commitment to the formation of European identity, but they also criticize its lack of “economic muscle and cultural political agenda” (Wayne 2002, 29) and the vagueness in its definition of Europe’s identity “beyond general references to diversity and common cultural heritage” (Jäckel 2003, 76). Contemporary supra-national European film projects face at least two challenges: on the one hand, films need to keep a balanced combination of European commonalities and European social, historical, and cultural heterogeneity; on the other hand, films need to keep their European idiosyncrasy while being competitive enough to succeed in global markets. But some projects have revealed the impasse in which EU film industries find themselves. While some European representatives at the GATT conversations in Uruguay in 1993 opposed the treatment of cinema as any other commercial good and justified their position by defending film as a cultural product, some European authorities do not mind approving the omission of cultural distinctiveness in certain large-scale pan-European film projects if this transformation enables them to compete in global markets. The second and more pragmatic approach makes the European film industry fall into the globalization paradox, since it relies on the use of English and Americanized formulas in order to survive or to obtain the funds that later will support more “authentic” European or national films.⁶

⁶ See Martine Danan (2002) for an analysis of this paradox in the case of French cinema.

The dilemma of European cinema, like that of Europe itself, is whether or not to reflect national borders. Although some of the measures proposed to invigorate European cinema—education of children’s appreciation of European cinema in schools, creation of one TV channel dedicated exclusively to the screening of European films (Jäckel 2003, 146)—emulate the ones used by European countries to maintain their own national cinemas, European cinema needs to decide whether to keep the boundaries of the nation at a supra-national level or cross the stable borders of national cinemas towards a post-national era. Rosalind Galt (2006) sees the ethical dilemma of European cinema in the challenge of “how to become European—as opposed to simply continuing an older model of national cinemas—without degenerating into the filmic correlative of Brussels bureaucracy, the Europudding” (2). European cinema is in an unstable position between the national and the global, as if it were trying to reach the difficult balance that Gerard Delanty (2005) envisions for what he calls “cosmopolitan Europe”:

It is possible to conceive of European identity as a cosmopolitan identity based on a cultural logic of self-transformation rather than as a supranational identity or an official EU identity that is in a relation of tension with national identities. As a cosmopolitan identity, European identity is a form of post-national self-understanding that expresses itself within, as much as beyond, national identities (405).

Stuart Hall (1992) explained that European movies from the late 1980s and early 1990s revealed the collapse of borders in Europe (46). While acknowledging the collapse of borders provoked a shock back then, today’s filmmakers seem to have accepted such a collapse just as the way Europe and the world are and will be for a while. Contemporary European cinema shows Europe as a space demarcated within porous borders by exploring the interconnections between geographic, historical, and cultural boundaries as well as the contact zones between local, regional, national, and global borders. European films question the borders of Europe and, in the end, the feasibility of a traditional conceptualization of borders. European cinema shows Europe as a space that needs to be redefined and at the same time as an entity that challenges any easy definition. Rather than reconfirming a stable and fixed sense of European identity and providing answers, European cinema shows the tensions and contradictions that undermine Europe today, and raises questions about the limits of European identity. If we follow critics like Everett (2005), who considers the critical gaze a feature of European cinema (11), then we would have to conclude that the self-awareness and the “in-between-ness” present in contemporary European films make them more European than ever.

Contemporary European cinema invites us to cross the traditional borders of Europe, European identity, and European cinema and this call is also a crucial responsibility for those who create the theoretical and critical discourse on European cinema. If we accept Catherine Fowler's statement (2002) about how European cinema is an invention of the critics (1), it is urgent for critics and scholars to trespass the traditional theoretical borders with which they have demarcated the field of "European Film." It is very important to acknowledge that the apparently pure and stable borders of European cinema have always been a convention used by critics to distinguish European cinema from its Others, specifically Hollywood cinema. The narrative of "European cinema" has been constructed upon binary categories, but the identification of European film with a particular cinematic tradition, such as auteur or art movies is no longer realistic or useful. For instance, Elsaesser (2005) invites us to go beyond a negative vision of Hollywood and construct a more comprehensive history of the connections between Hollywood and European cinema to prove their interdependence in a global world.

Contemporary European cinema demands a more complex framework that can acknowledge the porous nature of its borders. Ian Aitkin (2005) proposes globalization as the new theoretical framework to analyze European film. Elsaesser and Aitkin are not the only critics to suggest that we abandon the framework of national borders and embrace a transnational perspective in our analysis of European cinema. Bergfelder (2005) proposes the creation of "an alternative history of European cinema" that would "avoid narratives and discourses of containment, replacing these with critical travelogues, charting the fluidity of identities, and tracing the brief encounters between films and shifting audience formations" (329). It is also time for European Film Studies to acknowledge in its analysis the period of transition in which European films find themselves. In the context of the transformations that Europe is undertaking, *Zoom in, Zoom out: Crossing Borders in Contemporary European Cinema* attempts to serve as a testimony to the multiple ways in which filmmakers are questioning the many borders of the continent and its cinema. Most other volumes that deal with European film still present a sum of articles on particular national cinemas without attaining a pan-national perspective. In this book "European" does not mean a juxtaposition of individual countries from the same continent, but rather it refers to the post-national perspective in films made in Europe during the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century that question European borders.

Zooming in and out in Contemporary European Cinema

Zoom in, Zoom out: Crossing Borders in Contemporary European Cinema treats the phenomenon of ‘crossing borders’ in European cinema as a symptom reflecting the ongoing challenges that Europe is urgently confronting. European films have become a vital cultural space where the relationship between borders and identity is being renegotiated. This volume examines the performative dimension of European cinema in the reformulation of European identity: a significant number of films not only attempt to describe the current transformation of Europe, they also aim to guide the process. The films discussed here self-consciously address the question of European identity while overtly crossing geographic, cultural, linguistic and aesthetic borders. While making the crossing of borders in Contemporary European films the common subject of all the articles, we maintain diverse themes and perspectives as subtopics. We have included articles not only about films that deal thematically with border-crossings, but also articles that examine movies that cross borders in relation to genres, techniques, or aesthetic approaches. The articles have different theoretical approaches (Film Theory, Cultural Studies, History, Sociology, Philosophy, and Psychoanalysis) and cover films from a variety of cinematic traditions (French, German, Greek, Irish, Italian, Spanish, and Yugoslavian).

This book is divided in three sections. The first section, *IMAGINING AN(OTHER) EUROPE: UNSETTLED BORDERS AND RE-NEGOTIATED IDENTITIES*, includes three articles on films by three of the most important filmmakers in Europe today: Cédric Klapisch, Fatih Akin, and Jean-Luc Godard. In all of these films, the unsettled nature of borders mirrors many of the urgent cultural, political, and economic challenges that Europe is currently facing. The three directors coincide in offering films that directly acknowledge the fluctuating nature of European borders. Mireille Rosello’s article discusses the notion of a “chaotic border” through “the visual construction of a self-ironic allegory that both invents and mocks a disorganized, messy, inarticulate, rudimentary, and yet dynamic and optimistically chaotic European subject” in the two most recent films by Klapisch: *L’Auberge espagnole/Pot Luck* (2002) and *Les Poupées russes/The Russian Dolls* (2005). Rosello analyzes the interconnections between the redrawing of administrative borders (around states, countries, cities or new supranational entities) and the redrawing of the conventionally erected borders of storytelling practices and units of cultural information. According to Rosello, *L’Auberge espagnole* self-consciously addresses the fractal structure of Europe and the European subject by offering a metanarrative that, far from being closed, is still “becoming” and needs “to be continued.” Janis Solomon’s article analyzes three films by Akin, one that

involves crossing ethnic borders within Germany (*Kurz und schmerzlos/Short Sharp Shock* [1998]) and two others that deal with geographic border crossings from Germany to Istanbul (*Im Juli /In July* [2000] and *Gegen die Wand/Head-On* [2004]). Solomon explores the transnational imaginary that is being proposed in Akin's films, in which literal and figurative borders are constantly renegotiated. Solomon's analysis confirms the crucial role, that according to Elsaesser, cinema plays for the "hyphenated" members of the European nations (119). Akin, a Turkish-German director, uses his films to bridge differences between the two cultures to which he belongs. Solomon's article shows how his work locates itself geographically as well as culturally, artistically, and politically in multiple frames of reference that transcend the national. Jehanne-Marie Gavarini's article examines the "borderless" quality of Godard's *Notre Musique* (2005), a film modeled after one European literary masterpiece: Dante's *Divine Comedy*. According to Gavarini, far from reinforcing any canonical vision of Europe, the movie questions European unity and moral standards in the aftermath of Sarajevo's siege and in the context of globalization. The article analyzes all the different borders that *Notre Musique* trespasses: geo-political (reflecting the doubts and questions that Godard has about a utopian vision of Europe), philosophical (refuting binary structures), narrative (taking the audience on a circular ride), artistic (self-consciously playing between reality and fiction), and linguistic (exploring the fragile condition of translation).

The second section, *MAPPING NEW BORDERS: GENRE, CO-PRODUCTIONS, AND TECHNOLOGY*, comprises three chapters on films that explore the interdependence between the transformation of European borders and the reformulation of genre frames, co-productions, and new technologies in contemporary European cinema. After studying the formula, constitutive elements, and borders of the Balkan road movie as genre, Nevena Daković's article explores how the real border-crossings shown in Balkan road movies convey more abstract journeys that expose Balkan identity also as a border-crossing between the past and the present, the Balkans and Europe, the official and mythical history, and among different social groupings. Daković's analysis of two opposite paradigmatic films (Sotiris Goritsas' film *Balkanisateur* [1998] and Milcho Manchevski's *Dust* [2001]) shows that the instabilities of the Balkan road movie and Balkan identity are interdependent. Daković defines the Balkan road movie as a multilayered genre that reflects the floating quality of Balkanness by representing both the Europeanization of the Balkans and the Balkanization of the world. Alejandro Pardo's article focuses on a crucial dimension of today's European Cinema: the reinvigoration of co-productions and their role as promoters of a common European culture and identity. Taking as a case study the proliferation of Spanish co-productions in particular, Pardo examines the

economic, cultural, and political motivations underlying European collective film projects. The new typology Pardo proposes to classify Spanish co-productions reflects that, far from making European integration the main goal of the European collective projects, economic motivations prevail over cultural ones most of the time. Pardo's article shows a significant contrast: in the co-productions in which Spain chooses Latin American countries as its partners the cultural interests prevail in opposition to the more financial-oriented co-productions in which Spain chooses other European countries as its allies. Olivier Asselin's article examines the impact of the digital revolution on the discourse of European national cinemas, by analyzing how the database model has become a cultural category that puts an end to narratives' domination in contemporary culture. Asselin's main question is whether the digital revolution has had an impact on the representation of national histories, which have been transmitted in a narrative form, or, in other words, whether the crossing of narrative borders onto digital ones in recent historical films imply an erosion of the traditional limits of national history. Asselin's analysis of a recent historical film (Sokurov's *The Russian Ark* [2002]) and Peter Greenaway's most ambitious project *The Tulse Luper Suitcases: A Personal History of Uranium* [2003], shows that, despite the different digital experimentations the directors undertake in their works, historical continuity and cultural totality persist as artistic goals in a trend that Asselin considers "defensive and perhaps reactionary."

The final section, *EUROPEAN FILM AND ITS OTHER BORDERS: CROSS-CULTURAL, NATIONAL, AND TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES*, contains three chapters focused on films that defy socio-political borders in subtle yet provocative ways through the image of the traveller and the immigrant. The articles in this section underscore the ways in which the use of the travel motif and of different journeys in European cinema is inextricably linked to the cross-cultural and transnational impulses impacting the limits of Europe and the European nations. After contextualizing Italy's relationship to internal immigration in the context its reunification in the nineteenth century and in its struggle to define a sense of national identity after World War II, Claudio Mazzola's article considers the main differences between the first generation of Italian filmmakers who reacted to the phenomenon of Eastern-European immigration in their films during the early nineties and the second generation of directors who are making films on the same topic during the first years of the new millennium. In order to show the differences between the two generations, Mazzola compares Gianni Amelio's *Lamerica* (1993) and Marco Tullio Giordana's *Quando sei nato non ti puoi più nascondere* (2005). He shows that the second generation of filmmakers is more willing to accept the porosity of borders between "us" and "them" and therefore to question older perceptions of

immigration and Italian identity in the context of globalization. Ruth Barton's article examines the motif of the stranger throughout the history of Irish cinema to analyze the ways in which the "outsider" has enabled the "insider" to better understand himself/herself and her/his relationship to Ireland. Barton's article also explores how the motif of the traveller has been transformed in the most recent Irish films to represent Ireland's relationship with mainland Europe or with the countries that now contribute to the new immigrant culture in Ireland. In recent films such as *Yu Ming is My Name* (2003), *Adam and Paul* (2004), and the *The Traveller Girl* (2005), Barton assesses the ways in which the borders of contemporary Irish immigrant identity are being crossed. For John Davidson, the "new Europe" found in German-language cinema reveals the connections between the local and the global. He discusses German identity in relation to language and place in a new era he defines as post-national. Through the juxtaposition of two distinct contexts, identities, and histories—the Southern United States and Germany—Davidson discusses *Schultze Gets the Blues* (2003) at length to situate difference in post-national Europe. By examining the borders of cultural identification and belonging, Davidson accentuates the multiple contradictions at work in German-language film through the interplay of local, national, and transnational identities. As a whole, the essays in *Zoom in, Zoom out: Crossing Borders in Contemporary European Cinema* frame the self-conscious gesture by European filmmakers to define European cinema as a work-in-progress, or at the very least, as a project that, like Europe itself, raises as many questions as it answers.

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PART I:

**IMAGINING AN(OTHER) EUROPE:
UNSETTLED BORDERS AND RE-NEGOTIATED
IDENTITIES**

CHAPTER ONE

IMAGINING EUROPEAN SUBJECTS AS CHAOTIC BORDERS: CÉDRIC KLAPISCH'S *POT LUCK* AND *THE RUSSIAN DOLLS*

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In this chapter, I propose to test the notion of a “chaotic border” by focusing on the visual construction of a self-ironic allegory that both invents and mocks a disorganized, messy, inarticulate, rudimentary and yet dynamic and optimistically chaotic European subject, in two films by French director Cédric Klapisch: *L'Auberge espagnole* or *Pot Luck* (2002) and its sequel, *Les Poupées russes* or *The Russian Dolls* (2005).

Klapisch, who studied film in Paris and at NYU in the 1980s, became highly visible in 1996-7, which was a turning point for him as a filmmaker and as a public voice. Two films, *Chacun cherche son chat* (1996) (*When the Cat's Away*) and *Un Air de famille* (1996) (*Family Resemblances*) established him as a sensitive reader of contemporary culture. The first one is a collective portrait of one of the most popular Parisian neighborhoods and *Un Air de famille*, awarded three Césars, is an adaptation of a play by the famous screenwriting team Agnès Jaoui and Jean Pierre Bacri. Both films became spectacular box office hits.

At the same period, the director (who had already put his camera at the service of his political agenda in 1994, when AIDS was the most urgent public health issue)¹ became a visible public figure. Along with 66 French filmmakers who advocated civil disobedience, he signed the well-publicized manifesto when the so-called “loi Debré,” a series of anti-immigration measures, was discussed at the National Assembly. The bill was concocted as a response to the “affaire des sans-papiers de Saint-Bernard,” one of the very first movements organized by undocumented migrants who refused to continue living invisible and clandestine lives in France. Klapisch is very much a contemporary public intellectual whose deliberately unpretentious but thoughtful interventions are not

¹ In 1994, he had already participated in the “3000 scenarios against AIDS” campaign, directing two short films, *La Chambre* and *Poisson rouge*.

so much the equivalent of the 19th century Stendhalian realist mirror but rather a self-conscious and self-referential attempt at participating in the construction of contemporary Europe.

I suggest that his own interventions on behalf of undocumented migrants participate in the construction of what I am here calling a “chaotic border,” here within his own work rather than within or around Europe. The supranational border around what is now called “Fortress Europe” has already been described and denounced as the walls of a medieval castle, a sort of reinforced xenophobic super state-line.² I argue that the chaotic phenomena that *L’Auberge espagnole* and *Les Poupées russes* focus on are both radically different but also inseparable from the type of issues that Klapisch and other directors confronted in 1996. Seen by more than 3 million spectators in France, the two films address European borders as they exist today and how they may exist tomorrow, with Klapisch exploring what he sees as the future the enlarged community of nations.³

² From that point of view, historically speaking, European 21st century productions can be seen as catching up with many 20th century postcolonial novels and films that were grappling with the issue of diglossia, multilingualism and creolization as early as the 1950s and 60s. Caribbean artists wishing to embrace their Creole culture, African writers worrying about the weight of Europhone languages, Maghrebi authors who experienced the process of “Arabisation” after 1962, and children of immigrants whose parents speak a different tongue from the one they study at school (French or English or German) have already exposed the limits of an ideology that presupposes that everyone’s mother tongue is the same as the national tongue. Twenty-first century Europe is facing an even more complicated problem, as one strong gravitational pull goes in the direction of preserving the diversity of language while another force seems to be at work to create a pecking order between languages.

³ Klapisch explains in an interview that *Les Poupées russes* is part of his most recent reflection on the relationship between Europe and globalization: “Aujourd’hui les questions actuelles sont: la Russie, la Turquie ou la Hongrie vont-elles faire partie de l’Europe ? Et plus largement, pour moi, la question est de savoir si l’on veut être citoyen du monde. Mon opinion est qu’il faut se forcer à ne pas penser les choses d’une façon nationale. L’Europe n’est qu’une première étape. L’apprentissage de base de l’être humain doit être d’apprendre à découvrir les autres” (Today, the relevant questions are: will Russia, Turkey and Hungary be part of Europe? And for me, the larger issue is whether we want to be citizens of the world. My sense is that we should make an effort not to think nationally. Europe is only the first stage. The main educational project of each human being should be to learn how to discover others) (Tourné 2005). He suggests elsewhere that he is also commenting on the Turkish issue which is at the core of any discussion about the future enlargement of “l’Europe des 25”: “Avant de choisir la Russie, j’avais pensé à la Turquie: l’idée était la même, parler de l’Europe dans ce qu’elle n’est pas encore...” (Before opting for Russia, I had thought of Turkey: the idea was the same, to talk about what Europe is not yet...) (Ferenczi 2005).

Depending on which reading we privilege, *L'Auberge espagnole* might be summarized in two very different ways. Adapting Gérard Genette's famous account of the whole of Proust's *La Recherche*, we could say that this exuberant and deliberately non-linear narrative tells the story of how "Xavier devient écrivain" (Xavier, the hero, becomes a writer).⁴ And from that point of view, it is important to keep in mind that the element of becoming, of experimenting is just as important when we study the narrative techniques that he is using within the story (this is the work of a beginner who hesitates and often rewrites the narrative) as when we look at what his plot and autobiographical trajectory tell us about the emergence of a European subject/map. Like Xavier, like the story, Europe is in becoming, unable to totalize, to properly add up what is lost and what is gained.

At the end of *L'Auberge espagnole*, he looks at photographs of all of his new friends, at old pictures of himself including one of the child who dreamed of being a writer (to write books), he replaces the old Rimbaudian "I is an other" (je est un autre) by a chaotic assemblage where "I" and others, his nationality and that of his housemates, but also aspects of his own personality are either embraced or discarded. The result is not only chaos but what Xavier calls "a vrai bordel" (a right mess). "Je ne suis pas ça, ni ça, ni ça ... je ne suis plus ça ... Je suis lui, et lui, et lui aussi et lui. Je suis elle, je suis Français, Espagnol, Anglais et Danois; je ne suis pas un mais plusieurs" (I am not this, nor that, nor that, I am no longer that... I am he, and he, and he too. I am she, I am French, Spanish, English and Dan... I am not one but many). In the background, the spectator hears echoes of barely audible noises, something that hesitates between a cacophony and a polyphonic ensemble. "Je suis comme l'Europe, Xavier concludes, je suis tout ça, je suis un vrai bordel" (I am like Europe, I am all of this, I am a real mess). Xavier has crossed borders but also become a chaotic border himself. The camera work reflects the chaotic multitude that he has become: layers of past identities are superimposed, each new identity photograph that he shows to the camera lingers a little after he chooses another one, creating a ghostly effect. Photos of the past come alive then become still again. A mosaic of small quadrangles then divides the screen into equal fragments, with the meaning remaining unclear. Voices, his and others, repeat bits of sentences. He is the writer who both secretes and reflects the reality of his new subjectivity, by dint of trials and errors, a messy and unfinished process that the spectators can read as an intuition rather than a proposal. Moreover, this occurs in the 14th and last chapter of the film but characteristically, Xavier's voice acknowledges that that process of creation is the "beginning," what gave birth to the story that we have just enjoyed. Xavier has become a writer.

⁴ See Genette's *Figures III*. Paris: Seuil, 1972.

But we do not have, naturally, to take Xavier's point of view for granted and a "reading for the plot," as Peter Brooks would say (Brooks 1984), would yield the following result. The film is a collective portrait of a group of students who cross borders as they arrive in Barcelona on the Erasmus exchange program that has linked universities from France, Germany, Denmark, Italy, and England. They have all come to the same city in order to study in Spanish. Due to financial constraints and a lack of administrative superstructure that is very comically and creatively filmed when Xavier explains the application process, they are more or less forced to share a house. This experiment in international cohabitation is the Spanish Inn of the title, a place of friction, messiness, constant mistranslation where each character constantly remains at a level of linguistic and cultural semi-incompetence that makes dialogues both difficult and fruitful.⁵ The border between languages becomes as chaotic as the borders between nations and what they represent.

This multidimensional narrative experiment suggests that the chaotic movement pulls in two simultaneous and sometimes antagonistic directions: one the one hand, new European experiences teach Klapisch's main character, Xavier, how to tell stories in a different (more chaotic) way and on the other hand, the way in which he tells the chaotic story of his Europe gives a chaotic aspect both to Europe and to his own European subjectivity. In other words, I am not reading the group of students as Klapisch's allegory of what currently constitutes "Europe" and "Europeans," I am reading the film itself as an attempt to make us consider what would be the elements and the storytelling practices that would be required for us to construct such an allegory, and also what the consequences of such a pedagogical approach would be. Klapisch's story stages, in the realm of visual fiction, some of the theoretical problems that philosophers, social and political scientists have been writing about.

One of the most obvious proposals is this performative description of a chaotic zone of turbulence that replaces the way in which we used to represent national borders. Stories themselves are affected because borders are not simply redrawn, moved from one place to another (for example from around states to around the new supranational entity) but redefined as borders. The way in which individuals imagine crossing a border or living in what Mary-Louise Pratt called a contact zone is also evolving rapidly (Pratt 1992). The two processes go hand in hand even if they have a slightly different impact on the cultural categories that visual narratives such as films invite us to mobilize. The re-

⁵ The title of both films creates interesting problems of translation: Klapisch, as he explains in an interview, toyed with "Europudding," which was thought to be unappealing by his English-speaking team. Eventually, "Pot Luck" was preferred although the phrase only keeps a portion of the French expression, leaving out the allusion to Spain for example (Brooks 2003).

drawing of European borders is officially described as a dismantling of state limits. The fact that people are free to move about within Europe, i.e. across state lines that used to be strong symbolic and practical divisions around countries, means that our narratives of international movement are transformed.

In *L'Auberge espagnole*, the moment when students cross a state-line is completely de-emphasized. Other recent European films deal with the disappearance of the border by making fun of the extinct ritual. For example, in Wim Wenders's *Lisbon Story*, the hero, Philip Winter is a sound engineer who travels from Frankfurt to Portugal's capital city to meet an American director. When he crosses borders, he talks to the non-existent border guards and jokes about what he is smuggling in the trunk of his car or pretend to be surprised not to have to show his passport.⁶

In *L'Auberge espagnole*, the fact that borders no longer function in this way is simply not worth representing. The crossing of the European state-line between France and Spain, for example, is never even represented. What happens, on the other hand, is that the nature and the quality of what constitutes a border, or what constitutes an important moment of passage has changed radically and from that point of view, Klapisch's chaotic representations of a "bordélique" resemble Etienne Balibar's descriptions of "fractal," "incomplete" (*frontière non-entières*) or deterritorialized borders. In *We, the People of Europe?*, he argues that

...sometimes noisily and sometimes sneakily, borders have changed place. Whereas traditionally, and in conformity with both their juridical definitions and "cartographical" representation as incorporated in national memory, they should be at the edge of the territory, marking the point where it ends, it seems that borders and the institutional practices corresponding to them have been transported into the middle of the political space. They can no longer function as simple edges and external limits of democracy that the mass of citizens can see as a barrier protecting their rights and lives without ever really interfering with them (Balibar 2001, 109).

And as John Crowley points out in his review of Balibar's book, the immediate consequence of this type of restructuring is that the way in which one crosses a border becomes a completely different protocol. Rather than being a sort of no-man's land around the city, a vacuum where contact is rare, "Instead, the type of deterritorialized borders whose emergence Balibar is right to

⁶ See Ewa Mazierska's analysis who suggests that "Road films provide an excellent opportunity to explore both the variety and differences of national and regional cultures in Europe, as well as the common 'European identity,' of which migration and traveling are often regarded as an important component" (Mazierska 2001).