

Shifting Landscapes:  
Film and Media in European Context



# Shifting Landscapes: Film and Media in European Context

Edited by

Miyase Christensen and Nezih Erdoğan



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Shifting Landscapes: Film and Media in European Context, Edited by Miyase Christensen  
and Nezhir Erdoğan

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To Mükerrerem, Ömer, Elif and our colleagues



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## PREFACE

Organising an international conference that addresses key issues in the realms of both film *and* media had been on our agenda since we started working together in 2004. There are quite a few media conferences and a sizeable number of film conferences each year organised by various institutions in Istanbul. What we thought we could contribute to this lively scene was a conference that cuts across both film and media studies and from the perspectives of both humanistic and social scientific research. Our aim was inspired by various factors such as medium-related shifts that have necessitated a fresh outlook (and generated a rich body of research), changes in production and reception practices, the changing face of Europe vis-à-vis its film and media, the conundrum of identity (in all its articulations), the social shaping of film and media vistas, and the deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation of constituencies, to name but a few. The fact that one of us deals with media and communication systems primarily while the other is a scholar rooted in film studies has been a practical advantage in this process. We wanted to put together an annual event that would attract a diverse group of colleagues—academics *and* practitioners—from around the world to consider and discuss some of the challenging questions, from digitisation to policy convergence to film funding schemes, that mark contemporary film and media in fundamental ways. The title of the first conference, *Shifting Landscapes: Media and Film in European Context* came out of our aspiration to contextualise the ever-changing, ever-more elusive, shapes media and film take in a European framework. The current volume, bearing the same title as the first conference that took place in Istanbul in June 2006, was born out of the conference theme but went well beyond its scope by bringing together a rich body of research, each scrutinising various aspects of film and media.

First and foremost, we would like to thank our colleagues who put much valuable time and effort into the chapters that make up this book. Our thanks to them for collaborating with us at every stage of the editorial process. In addition, both our conference and this book benefited immensely from dialogue with, and advice from, a circle of friends and colleagues who have generously supported and contributed—in various ways—to our efforts. We would especially like to thank our colleague and

dear friend Özge Özyılmaz, with whom we have worked for many years and who has provided enormous support in the process of conference organisation and during the period we were completing this book. We are truly grateful to her. We would also like to thank all our colleagues at Bilgi and Karlstad who took part in organising the conferences; our universities for supporting our efforts; and, the Swedish Consulate General in Istanbul, the Goethe Institute in Istanbul and the French Cultural Centre in Istanbul for their much-appreciated support. Our friends and colleagues Dina Iordanova, Mahmut Mutman and Peter Krämer have not only contributed to this book by way of very interesting essays, but also given us constructive suggestions. Another person who deserves very special thanks is friend and colleague Christian Christensen, from whose ideas and generous critique both the conferences and the book benefited immensely.

Since we first met in Istanbul in 2003, and in the course of organising two conferences and a book project, our lives and careers have also been shifting. One of us took a new position at Istanbul Bilgi University while the other moved to Karlstad University in Sweden. And in 2007, we held the second *Shifting Landscapes of Media and Film* conference in Istanbul, this time with the cooperation of our two universities. We wish to continue these efforts in the coming years and hope to offer a modest contribution to the multidimensional realms of film and media studies and surrounding debates.

Miyase Christensen, Karlstad 2007

Nezih Erdoğan, Istanbul 2007

## INTRODUCTION

### THE MANY FACES OF FILM AND MEDIA IN EUROPE

MIYASE CHRISTENSEN & NEZIH ERDOĞAN

The twentieth century is on film. It's the filmed century. You have to ask yourself if there is anything about us more important than the fact that we're constantly on film, constantly watching ourselves. The whole world is on film, all the time. Spy satellites, microscopic scanners, pictures of the uterus, embryos, sex, war, assassinations, everything.<sup>1</sup>  
—Don DeLillo

Over the past two decades the European audiovisual domain has encountered new opportunities and challenges due to the macro processes of political, cultural and economic globalisation, international migration, as well as the gradual rise of the European Union as a new political-economic and cultural power bloc. The “official” Europe—bordered within the EU territory—is today home to almost 500 million people and a multitude of film and media industries. If we add to this mix those nations yet to have received the official seal of “Europeanness”—such as Turkey, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Croatia—this is a Europe radically different to the one that existed only a decade ago. In the midst of these structural transformations and an ever-increasing rate of human and capital mobility, another element, digitisation, has become a *force majeure*, altering the production, distribution and exhibition of media in unprecedented ways. With terrestrial broadcasting no longer the

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<sup>1</sup> DeLillo, *The Names*, 200.

norm and vast numbers of digital channels available, broadcasting has been losing ground to narrowcasting—and to what is commonly referred to as “new media”—for quite some time now. Finally, the movie theatres of the arcades were long ago replaced by the multiplexes of shopping malls, turning spectatorship into a new experience, with the screen extending beyond the domain of the theatre and into the realm of a multitude of other spectacles: from shop windows to LCD screens to game consoles to cell phones.

All of these factors, and the shape they take, point to the need for a continuous redefinition of the various landscapes—physical, virtual, mental and metaphorical—we inhabit, be it our national borders, urban scapes, or our increasingly mediated lived experiences. What is happening on the digital front is truly mind-boggling. We conquered outer space in a variety of ways in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and as Don DeLillo eloquently expresses, we watched everything from the most mundane to the most extraordinary incidents on film (including incidents deemed extraordinary merely *because* they were on film), bestowing eminence upon them in our collective memory. It seems that we topped ourselves in 2006 and re-conquered space, this time digitally. In 2006 alone, we produced enough digital information—including mobile calls, emails, blogs, photographs, TV signals, etc—to fill an array of books (or the equivalent of 161 billion iPod Shuffles full of digital “stuff”) stretching from the Earth to the Sun, with almost three-quarters of it coming from the US and Europe. A large part of this information explosion was due to downloading and exchanging audiovisual material online, and to new global phenomena such as YouTube, Myspace, Facebook, e-mail, blogging and more.<sup>2</sup> In fact, YouTube became so popular and influential that in recognition of changing communication practices the EU launched its “EUTube” channel in June of 2007 with the slogan “Sharing the Sights and Sounds of Europe”. The site contains informative video on a variety of issues ranging from agricultural policies to the film support program MEDIA and clips from European audiovisual works. The most watched has been the short video entitled “Film Lovers will Love This,” promoting the MEDIA program, with love scenes from European films which got over 4 million hits since its launch.

Macro changes on the socioeconomic, cultural and political fronts, combined with the technological dimension, should spur those of us who *work with* and do *research on* film and media to continuously re-explore and reconsider Europe in relation to its audiovisual landscapes. European

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<sup>2</sup> Wray, “One Year’s Digital Output Would Fill 161bn iPods”, 19.

film and media have often been portrayed and understood as the antithesis of American media: American blockbusters versus European art-house, or American commercial TV versus European public broadcasting. American culture, no doubt, has become a global accent over the last century and still has the upper hand commercially. Drawing up the lines of a “European culture” has proven to be much more complicated in comparison. The EU’s efforts to motivate a supranational identity (via the media sphere) within its own borders does not seem to have materialised into much beyond a recognition or symbolic avowal of its most banal fixtures: the flag with the stars or the passport design. Yet, with American art-television and European commercial filmmaking on the rise, simplistic dichotomies are no longer adequate to capture the particularities and complexities inherent in the audiovisual sphere. The European art film tradition—if one prefers to maintain the popular vs. art dichotomy—is still alive and well, displaying more diversity than ever with new directors emerging from within European immigrant communities and from Europe’s distant borders, bringing with them a fresh air of transgression against the backdrop of traditional notions of European cinema. The “Europeanness” of writers, artists and film-makers coming from the diaspora—and their capacity to represent either Europe or home, or both—becomes an even more complicated issue when their “home” is perceived as non-European terrain. Film directors such as Fatih Akin and Neco Çelik subvert traditional binaries such as European vs. non-European in a multitude of ways. As “others within,” these directors present their audiences (both in Europe and elsewhere) with an experience of inversion in identificatory processes.

A shift in emphasis toward producing a larger volume of films with commercial and international box office potential is also more discernable than ever. On the whole, in Europe, bigger funds for bigger productions are available for those interested in making co-productions. Yet, commercially successful co-productions in general tend to be films in English with easily accessible filmic language and plots. We could say that the same competitive logic poses challenges for public service broadcasters in Europe. Long considered to be the guarantors of a European non-commercial media sphere, public service broadcasters have had to learn to coexist with commercial systems for almost two decades now. Open questioning of whether public service broadcasting is needed anymore is nothing unusual, even in countries such as Sweden, where the public service tradition is a deeply rooted element of the larger social structure, and decreasing audience ratings for public service broadcasting channels is often used as an argument by those who are in favour of

reducing public funding for PSBs. Viewership patterns for all sorts of media have been changing as well with audiovisual content continuously migrating into new media (e.g. Video on Demand and DVDs), leading to the emergence of diverse modes of viewing experiences. And these are only a few of the changes that imply shifts in the grounds upon which film and media rest.

Needless to say, no single book can address every question under the sun: addressing all of the factors that play into the many peaks and valleys of European film and media topographies is certainly beyond what this volume can accomplish. Yet, every anthology is a constellation of diverse minds, and as such each volume constitutes a landscape of its own, providing us with another glimpse of the big picture. The current collection, and the conference that gave birth to it, is a humble step in that direction. Our aim has been to offer a rubric, a framework in which different ideas and approaches can feel at home, and the chapters presented here take account of a variety of theoretical currents/streams in contemporary media and film studies. With media and communication research being so fertile, producing so many examples of excellent scholarship, and with so many books and anthologies each year trying to expand our understanding of the questions some of which we attempt to explore with this volume, we are in good company.

We construe “film and media landscapes” broadly in order to take into account not just what happens *within* the textual spheres of film and media (i.e. content and form) and in relation to audience experiences, but also what happens *around* them (i.e. social, political, cultural, economic, medium-related, and contextual/conjunctural factors). Altogether, this collection of works covers a wide variety of approaches across disciplinary bounds. Parallel to questions raised by various macro and micro shifts, our analytical tools (methodologies, concepts, paradigms) are in a state of dynamic flux and always in need of critical reflection. The works that constitute this book provide research-based accounts of developments in the realms of media and film accompanied with critical reflection, with each raising crucial questions and bringing a unique voice. Some contributors also tackle a number of historical, political and ideological questions in relation to academic knowledge traditions/power matrices and the ways in which certain perspectives dominate, thereby generating certain structures of thinking.

The chapters are grouped into three categories. This division does not indicate definite, hygienic, demarcations along the lines of disciplinary, theoretical or methodological difference. Rather, in our effort to present a comprehensible and accessible account of a multitude of questions, we

aimed at providing the reader with self-sufficient clusters of chapters, grouped according to broad themes and focus areas. With contributors from countries such as Germany, Turkey, Cyprus, The Netherlands, the UK and the US, we hope to offer a glimpse of the complexities and continuities/discontinuities in the global, regional and national landscapes of film and media in the European context of today. And, as such, we hope to have put together a volume that can be of use to fellow researchers, students, professionals and anyone who takes an interest in film and media across Europe and beyond.

The book opens with the section entitled, “Identities, Borders, Industries.” Thomas Elsaesser, in his article “Real Location, Fantasy Space, Performative Place: Double Occupancy and Mutual Interference in European Cinema”, takes the problematic political term of “interference” in the internal affairs of a sovereign state as the starting point for a new definition of cultural identity, beyond the comfortable assumptions of both multi-culturalism and cultural diversity. Elsaesser directs our attention to the possibility that the “violence” of bodily confrontation, and the “fantasy spaces” of a culture of embodiment and the senses have become the recto and verso of each other, outlining the twin boundaries of what some philosophers have termed the contemporary control societies and their post-subject identities. He calls for a new identity-politics that can address a couple of major shifts in social space and the public sphere: first, the increasing porosity of the traditional division between “private” and “public”, their mutual interference and increasing interpenetration; and second, the role of the media (talk shows and reality television), and of technological gadgets like the mobile phone, in obliging us to develop new rhetorics of intimacy and new etiquettes of intersubjectivity. And he raises the question: what can cinema contribute to an understanding of the present crisis in the European Union?

Hamid Dabashi’s chapter, “The Sublime and the Beautiful in the Time of Terror”, departs from his observation that Turkey as an idea and Istanbul as a cosmopolis embodies the shifting landscape of a global reconfiguration of power and politics. The chapter discusses how Turkey is in a state of transcontinental shift, with the Turkish political circles pushing the landscape towards Europe while the European sentiments that Valéry Giscard d’Estaing represents is pushing it away. The crucial questions Dabashi raises in this chapter centre around the notions of the sublime and the beautiful in Kantian aesthetics and, what Dabashi deems, the blind Eurocentrism inherent therein; and a globalised neo-liberalism that continues to draw up boundaries without knowing why it does so.

In the chapter titled “Jagged Narratives and Discerning Remembrance in Balkan Cinema”, Dina Iordanova surveys recent cinematic output from across the Balkan region, looking into the cinemas of countries such as Greece, Macedonia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Albania, and Bosnia. Covering themes such as the cinema of post-communism, cross-cultural representations, and collaborations in the realm of film production, Iordanova adopts a transnational approach in highlighting certain themes and shared concerns and outlining the discourse that characterises recent films from this dynamic part of Europe.

Peter Krämer, in “The Spectre of History in the Age of Globalisation: Notes on German Hit Movies and Hit Makers at Home and in the US” questions the “Americanness” of Hollywood, a cinema (ill) reputed for its hegemony over the world cinemas. Krämer points to an alternative perspective which enables us to see how Hollywood may have created a space, a space within, for non-Americans—in this case Germans—to communicate not only how they relate to their past, but even sentiments such as patriotism, a sensitive issue for Germans. Relying heavily on empirical data obtained from box office figures of films made or (co-) produced by Germans, Krämer suggests that Hollywood’s exploitation of local markets and resources is not a one-way process.

In his “Your Focus is Your Truth: Turkish Cinema, ‘Alluvionic’ Film-makers and International Acceptance”, Derviş Zaim, a film director himself, gives a first-hand account of the experiences that Turkish film-makers go through in the international arena of film business. Concentrating on the 2000s, Zaim draws attention to the shortcomings of the terms such as “new”, “young” or “independent” attributed to the new generation of Turkish/Turkish-Cypriot film-makers. Instead, he adopts a geographical term, “alluvionic”, to signify what is common to this group of directors: that they flow in the same direction, yet generate diverse forms and content. In this chapter, Zaim offers a critical evaluation of “orientalism” and “self-orientalism”, notions internalised and reiterated by certain institutional mechanisms. Zaim carefully maps out these mechanisms and points to a number of problems *and* possibilities that are of concern to not only Turkish film-makers but also Western audiences.

The part closes with a chapter titled “Rethinking European Media Landscapes: *D’où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous?*” by Miyase Christensen. This chapter addresses issues related with the audiovisual policy environment of the EU and a number of recent decisions in the light of the transformations taking place globally. At the institutional level, the EU’s desire to increase the competitiveness of its audiovisual sector combined with the growing popularity of new media

services translate into new policies and regulatory re-adaptation, with the new Audiovisual Media Services Directive that went into force in late 2007 signalling one big policy convergence. As illustrated in the chapter, in the EU context, audiovisual media and new communication technologies are attributed an increasingly greater economic and social role in the creation of economic growth and jobs, cultural dialogue, supranational identity and a unified sense of citizenship across the region. Based on a number of examples taken up in the chapter, the author offers a critical reflection on this dual role ascribed to media and communication systems in the EU policy realm in enabling the achievement of such ambitious and equally ambiguous social and economic goals.

Part II, “Migration, Space, Transnationality” has seven chapters. The notions of migration and transnationality—both factually and figuratively as they are embodied textually in filmic narration—and questions pertaining to space, place and territory run through the chapters constituting this part. In “A Cinema of Migrations: Ziad Doueiri’s *West Beyrouth* (1998)”, Sharon Willis examines Ziad Doueiri’s 1998 film *West Beyrouth* and *Lila dit ça* he made in 2004. As a migrant himself, Doueiri’s films, Willis argues, are marked by the director’s transnational trajectory from their funding sources to their popular culture references to their cinematic strategies. Through an examination of *West Beyrouth*’s view of the outbreak of civil war and its violent remapping of urban space, this chapter explores its visual strategies as they constitute a form of transnational address. Both films Willis analyses offer an examination of partitioned urban spaces and the communities that inhabit them through narratives of adolescent desire and sexuality across difference.

Focusing on the orchestral interludes in Fatih Akın’s award-winning film *Gegen die Wand* (2003), “Sound Bridges: Transnational Mobility as Ironic Melodrama” investigates how the representation of transnational mobility, space, and cross-border traffic is underscored by ironic strategies of interruption and distancing, which are discussed in relation to traditions of melodrama. In this chapter, Deniz Göktürk focuses on the performances of the orchestra in *Gegen die Wand* and Akın’s later musical documentary about Istanbul, *Crossing the Bridge* (2005). Göktürk’s analysis of how the Roma performers are employed in both films problematises designations of ethnicity and authenticity in transnational cinema and raises questions such as: how does cinema participate in the construction of locality within globalisation, and what is the role of music in this context? Can multilocal, multilingual productions destabilise the polarisation of diasporic vs. indigenous identities through acting and staging? How useful are concepts

such as migrant or diasporic cinema (in relation to world cinema and national cinemas)?

In the ninth chapter, “Deterritorialised Spaces and Anomalous Bodies: New Corporeal Cartographies in Hungarian Cinema”, Michael Goddard sets out to examine the articulation of bodies and spaces in three contemporary Hungarian films, *Kontrol* (2003), *Herminafield: Apparitions* (2005) and *Taxidermia* (2005). Goddard argues that these three very different films all respond, in their own particular way, to the shifting landscape of Eastern Europe and specifically of Hungary in relation to both the present of European integration and the memory of communism, also contributing to the imagination of other possible futures. The analyses of the three films in this chapter draw on both recent currents of East European film criticism and cultural theories, and the author points to the need to expand the analytical tools of European film and media studies beyond the usual questions of representation and national identity.

The 1960s and 1970s in Turkey were marked by the migration of large numbers of Turkish guest workers to Germany. These were also times when Turkey started to voice its intentions to become a member of the European common market (European Economic Community). “Kezban goes to Rome and then to Paris: European Twists in the Turkish Family Plot” focuses on a well-known plot of Turkish melodrama and examines the ways in which the family is used here to represent the society in transition. In this chapter, Nezi̇h Erdođan presents an analysis of how Turkish popular cinema constructs narratives that point to the complexification of the societal structure by way of utilising a series of binaries: tradition vs. modernisation, East vs. West, rural vs. urban, local vs. Europe. Erdođan argues that the plot of Kezban films legitimises the conflicts and contradictions that are at work in the transition process.

Gemma San Cornelio, in her “Live Cities: Film and Media Approaches to European Cities”, gives an account of how European cities have been portrayed by film and media in recent years. Cornelio takes up six films by directors as diverse as Jose Luis Guerin, Wenders and Angelopoulos, and relying on social theories on spatial practices—key concepts from Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre, in particular—seeks to map out the visibility of the European city. Working with concepts such as flaneur/walker, absolute space/abstract space, Cornelio provides an analysis of European space as represented in cinema.

Christian Christensen, in his chapter, “Defending, Representing or Branding? *Gringo* Magazine and Swedish Multiculturalism” examines mediated debates in Sweden surrounding questions of immigration, multiculturalism, language and identity politics. In particular, he takes a

look at *Gringo*, a magazine founded in 2004 that was intended to question and subvert mainstream media stereotypes about immigrant youth, culture and urban life. The case of *Gringo* is particularly interesting as not only did the magazine generate a great deal of media debate on topics related to Swedish multiculturalism, but also because it raised questions about who has the "right" to speak for minority groups, and how such representation could fall into the trap of becoming no more than the "branding" of hip, urban culture.

In the last chapter of this part, "Shifting Cultural Landscapes, Shifting Boundaries: Diasporic Media in Europe," Myria Georgiou, discusses diasporic (mediated) communication practices and their role in constructing and reconstructing meaning and a sense of belonging in and across local and transnational spaces. The chapter employs results from research conducted across Europe and in particular urban locations in European cities, such as London and Athens. As demonstrated by Georgiou, diasporic media and urban communication practices become central systems for imagining and living in transnational, national and local spaces, for living and imagining European cultural landscapes. The author challenges the academic and policy accounts, which assume that cultural difference leads to the compartmentalisation of society into closed communities of ethnic particularity. On the contrary, Georgiou argues that inherent in the emergence of transnational cultural landscapes is the potential for more inclusive, democratic and creative spaces of belonging through mediated imagination.

PART III, "Telling Stories: Medium, Form, Message and Beyond" contains five chapters. Jan Olsson's chapter titled "Postmodern High Noon: *24* and the Shifting Landscape of Television" on the globally popular American TV series *24* addresses a number of gripping questions about narrativity and spatiality vis-à-vis the role of various convergences of traditional and digital media and in the wake of terror attacks. As such, Olsson's chapter is also very closely linked with spatial aspects, and hence with Part II. Olsson identifies a shift in spatial representation in scripted American television, evidenced by *24*, following 9/11. His detailed analysis of this popular TV series points to *24* as a "media production residing at the apex of a post-millennium spatial conundrum." Olsson also observes, in media research, a growing interest in the ways in which moving images and their sensations affect bodies in space and how visual technologies position our practices and identities in front of all kinds of screens. The media-embedded narration employed in *24* and cartographically abstract representations of space, as Olsson illustrates, represent convergence and globalisation. One of the crucial questions this

chapter addresses is: has Jack Bauer's instrumental meandering in a Los Angeles hooked-up to the world at large, which can be readily transferred to Bauer's palm, taken Walter Benjamin's metaphor of the cinematic mechanism as an explosive device to a new level of dispersal or mediated tacility?

The chapter that follows, "*Time Code* and the Cinematics of Supplementarity" by Terry Rowden, takes stock of a crucial development in the audiovisual domain: digital technology. Rowden also discusses the impact of digital technology on the narrative, focusing on film. More specifically, the chapter concerns itself with the British director Mike Figgis' *Time Code* (2000) as an example of both the possibilities and the problems digital technology in the form of supplementary DVD material pose. Rowden surmises that in addition to the capacity of digital technology to make possible the storage and preservation of films in an unprecedented way, it also potentially destabilizes the film as a linear, conventional story. He suggests that the extra material available almost on all DVD releases changes the viewing experience fundamentally as it is unlikely that any two viewers who access these extras will experience or sequence the package in exactly the same way. Another issue taken up in the chapter is the potential inherent in digital technology for contributing to the establishing of a pan-European media culture on account of multilingual and multicultural appropriability of DVD technology.

Turkish journalism has become a lively communicative space where cultural and political questions are taken up in relation to the new period in Turkish modernisation policy. Erkan Saka, in his chapter "*Yol vs. Kapı: Journalistic Metaphors in Understanding EU-Turkey Relations*", departs from the idea that the EU portrays itself essentially as an enlightenment project, and Turkey is a self-declared model of the most successful modernisation project among the Muslim nations. Saka discusses how acquiring full membership of the EU is a project Turkey aspires to achieve after more than a century of modernisation and westernisation process. Against this backdrop, the chapter focuses on a particular day, October 4, 2005, the start of Turkey's full membership negotiations and demonstrates this historic moment was treated in the Turkish press with journalists utilising a number of metaphors to refer to the incident, particularly on the first pages of major Turkish dailies.

Mahmut Mutman's is another chapter that offers a rich examination of *Gegen Die Wand*, but from a distinct angle. In "Up Against the Wall of the Signifier: *Gegen die Wand*", Mutman departs from a number of culturalist and identitarian readings of Akin's masterpiece *Gegen die Wand*, which applaud the film as a hybrid, multicultural achievement. Following precise

theoretical elaborations, Mutman argues that contrary to the common perception perpetuated by such familiar rhetoric of hegemonic culture, the logic of cultural/racial/ethnic signifier (in articulation with the sexual one) is precisely what *Gegen die Wand* problematises. The author argues that the film shows how the new forces of deterritorialisation represented by the second generation immigrants is blocked by a regime of cultural signifier which pulls them into a black hole.

The last chapter in this part is “‘Du Deutscher, Toi Français, You English: Beautiful!’-The Polyglot Film as a Genre” by Chris Wahl. Wahl develops his own concept of a polyglot film genre based on a number of film genre theories earlier by Rick Altman and Barry Keith Grant and he delineates several subgenres of the polyglot film, such as the globalisation film, the fraternisation film, the immigrant film and the existential film. It is argued in the chapter that polyglot film is mainly a European genre, and thus has significance in the broader context of European cinema as some of the social questions Europe faces today are present, symbolically, in polyglot film.

The sum of all eighteen chapters brought together in this book is a multifarious image bound to change hue as global, regional and national dynamics themselves incessantly transform. Europe today, in addition to being a contested geographic and political compilation of old and new states, of self-declaredly more European and assumedly less European cultures, of individuals and publics, is an idea, an ideal, a project, and perhaps in its most accurate form, a spatial and temporal conundrum depending on whose subjectivity it is imagined from. In an effort to produce a clear picture pertaining to the whole and the constituents of Europe in relation to film and media, probably the closest one could come to arresting a true portrayal is in terms of a realisation that such an exposé itself is on the shift and can be as diverse and elusive as Europe itself.

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**PART I:**  
**IDENTITIES, BORDERS, INDUSTRIES**

## CHAPTER ONE

# REAL LOCATION, FANTASY SPACE, PERFORMATIVE PLACE: DOUBLE OCCUPANCY AND MUTUAL INTERFERENCE IN EUROPEAN CINEMA

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### **Introduction**

The new Europe is the old Europe of geopolitics. It once more matters – as it hardly did in the time of the Cold War, when two power-blocks divided the continent and dominated its peripheries, and “international” was the natural adjective of dissidence and counter-culture – where you are from (as an individual) and what is your geographical location (as a country, a nation, a people). Europe is rediscovering its roots, its regions, and with its local customs, ethnic identities, religious, cultural and culinary specifics.

The first point to note about this new Europe is to beware of hyphenation: whether it is the “old” political hyphenation of the two founding nations of the European Union, whose stability and prosperity, it is said, still rests on the “entente Franco-Allemande.” Or whether it is the now politically correct hyphenation of more recent nationals in Europe, such as French-Arab, Dutch-Moroccan or German-Turkish. In both cases, it may turn out that hyphenation is a mis-attribution and when considered as the solution to Europe’s current identity crisis, merely compounding the problem it is supposed to solve. The filmmaker Fatih Akın, for instance, apparently detests the hyphenated label Turkish-German. If he cannot be Fatih Akın, he is supposed to have said, he’d rather be known as the German Martin Scorsese.

But the second point I want to make is that we should welcome hyphenation, or rather, the idea of an “always-already” state of (semantic) occupation, as a kind of counter-metaphor to the metaphor of “identity”, whether individual, cultural or national. Such an “always-already” occupation (which includes as its crucial dimension an overdetermined, that is to say: non-binary, a-symmetrical “self-other” relation) suggests that there may be no space in the “fortress” of selfhood and identity – and especially no space in the Fortress Europe, which can be defended against an “outside” of which “I” or “we” are the “inside”.

There is no-one in Europe (or for that matter, no-one in the Mediterranean), who is not diasporic or displaced, I would argue, in relation to some marker of difference: be it ethnic, regional, religious, linguistic, and whose identity is not always already split or hyphenated. I am thinking of the many European sites where the fiction of the fortress, the paranoid dream of a tabula rasa, of cleansing, of purity and exclusion has led, or still continues to lead to bloody conflict, such as in Bosnia, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, the Basque country, Cyprus, and further afield, in Israel and Palestine. But I am also thinking of the fact that even outside the internationally notorious territories of overlapping identity-claims and inter-ethnic war-zones just mentioned, it is clear that Europe – however one wants to draw either the geographical reach (south: the Mediterranean, east: the Urals) or the historical boundaries (encompassing, colonised and self-colonised by the Mesopotamian, the Phoenician, the Greek, the Roman, the Ottoman or the Holy Roman Empires) – has always been a continent settled and traversed by very disparate and mostly feuding ethnic entities. We tend to forget how relatively recent are the nation-states of Europe, and how many of them are the result of forcibly tethering together a patchwork quilt of tribes, of clans, of culturally and linguistically distinct groupings.

Those identified with a specific region have seen a belated acknowledgement of their distinctiveness within the European Union under the slogan of “the Europe of the regions”, but even this opening up of different spaces of identity (Catalan, Brittany, Lombard, Bavarian or Cumbrian) does not cover the current layered-ness of ethnic Europe. One need only to think of the Sinti and Romas, the perpetual “others” of Europe, who because they have neither territory nor do they claim one, resist any of the conventional classifications, being inside the territorial boundaries of a dozen or so European countries, but finding themselves outside all of these countries’ national imaginaries.

To these histories of contested territories, the European Union – founded, let us remember, initially to ensure that France and Germany

would never again go to war with each other over Alsace-Lorraine – has in some – rather few – cases provided a shift in the frames of reference, at first economic and then political, by which the conflicting demands of nationality, sovereignty, ethnic identity, victim-hood and statehood, solidarity and self-determination could be renegotiated. This at least has been the declared aim of the political elites in the European Union, often enough repeated: that these conflicts can eventually be solved, by being given different frameworks of articulation and expression (as well as lots of tax-payers' money), in the hope that it will lead to an eventual political settlement, where residual antagonisms can be neutralised, or at least channelled into the sort of festival-ritual nationalism we see at the Eurovision song-contest or, as recently in Germany, in the over-heated, but otherwise harmless, because largely commodified World Cup football nationalism. Indeed, I imagine, these re-articulations of ancient conflicts and more recent tensions are also the hope of those in Turkey who currently do their utmost to maintain the secular state and are willing to change national laws or sacrifice old customs, in order to make them acceptable for accession-talks with the European Union.

## Cultural Identity

But how useful in these processes is the insistence on the idea of identity? And what can it tell us about the current state of European cinema? Over the past twenty years, perhaps as a consequence of the decline of auteurism and national cinemas, we have become used to discussing European cinema and media in terms of cultural identity, made up of the various struggles over representation – of ethnicity, gender, religion – and less frequently, class-identity. Looking at the call for papers for this conference<sup>1</sup>, I noticed a certain skepticism regarding this emphasis on identity. And it is true that even within the mainstream political discourse, identity-politics has given way to concerns with multiculturalism, a term favoured by UNESCO and by other international or transnational organisations. Yet as most of us are only too aware of, multiculturalism has also come under scrutiny and attack. The endless debates over "integration" and "assimilation" versus "cultural autonomy" and "separate development" regarding ethnic or religious minorities within the

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<sup>1</sup> Editors' note: Elsaesser is referring to the conference, "Shifting Landscapes: Film and Media in European Context 2006" where he presented a keynote speech based on this paper. A version of this chapter appears in *European Film Theory*, Temenuga Trifonova (ed) from Routledge, 2008.

nation states in Western Europe seem mostly to have ended in intellectual stalemate, while sapping the energies of the public debates as well as the political decision making processes: fatigue, helplessness and frustration have become difficult to distinguish from each other, with the result that political apathy and populist demagoguery are now the two extremes that touch each other in the debates on minorities in virtually every country of Western Europe.

The European Union, for its part, has practically banned both the term cultural identity and multi-culturalism from its vocabulary, preferring to speak of “multi-cultural competence” as the desirable goal, when trying to renew the social contract, while progressive cultural institutions in the member-states now re-label themselves as promoting (and institutionalising) “diversity”. At the same time, the academic discourses of cultural studies and post-colonialism have introduced locutions such as hybridisation, in-between-ness and Creolisation, but one may wonder whether and for how long these concepts, too, can withstand the deconstructive criticism applied to identity and multi-culturalism. In other words, if the insistence on cultural identity, as that which can most peacefully replace the older, more bloody and divisive nationalisms in Europe, has given way to a range of alternative terms, such labels suffer from either metaphoric blandness (diversity) or metaphoric exoticism (Creolisation), while it is not quite clear what sort of traction they can have on the problems they seek to address (xenophobia, racism, overt and covert forms of exclusion and discrimination). For instance, “diversity” -the European equivalent of the “rainbow coalition” in questions of race in the United States - does not signal either the power-structures in play, or the imbrication of inside and out, self and other that makes inter-ethnic communication and joint community action often so intractably difficult and painful. My scepticism seems to be shared in the following passage from the conference prospectus, which also hints at the difficulties in store:

Although there is a vein of scholarship that situates these [globalising] developments in the more neutral realm of “mixing of cultures”, “hybridisation”, “experiences of border-crossing”, and “new freedoms and deterritorialisation”, it should be noted that a good portion of recent films and other works point to a series of significant social, economic and cultural problems such as: racism, sexism, unemployment, urban bias, etc.

Hence, my choice of the term “double occupancy”, rather than diversity or multi-culturalism, to signal our discursive as well as geopolitical territories as “always already occupied”. It can, I hope, convey right away a concrete European history as well as the need to reflect the

reality of competing claims in the identity- and diversity-wars, while also keeping alive the political and philosophical associations that the term may carry. As far as recent history is concerned, we cannot overlook the fact that there may be good reasons why in some parts of Europe and especially on its current geopolitical borders, the struggle for and recognition of national and cultural identity is still a prerequisite to being able to talk about belonging to a wider community at all, as a consequence of having had to suffer political occupation and cultural colonisation either directly or by proxy - especially when this new community comes in as bureaucratic, hierarchical and remote a guise as the *Communauté européenne*, or EU.

This retrenchment to identity is particularly noticeable in parts of the former Soviet Empire, such as the Ukraine or Belarus, now claimed as their spheres of influence by Russia, the US, as well as by the European Union. But other newly re-emerging nations of Central and Eastern Europe, such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia or the Baltic States that have recently joined the EU show an almost equally obsessive preoccupation with their long-lost, reconstructed or in some cases, “invented” national identities. I think the demands of these peoples and groups, to be given space to express this identity must be taken seriously. To expect diversity and multi-cultural competence, as we lecture them, from our stable political identities, our stable legal systems, our stable currencies and stable welfare systems, on the virtues of hybridity and in-between-ness would be perceived as either naïve or hypocritical, but in any case insensitive to their long memories of oppression and their fears of new, more subtle forms of occupation and control.

### **Double Occupancy as a Political Category**

Hence, my suggestion that hyphenation or “double occupancy” should be regarded as the condition of possibility, as the conditions of entry, even, into the European political space. The term is not the solution. It is merely a place holder, a sort of provocative stumbling block, forcing a reflection on power and politics even in the field of culture, and it may serve as a historical reminder that Europe is a continent, whose two- or three-thousand year history has been, until very recently, a relentless catalogue of migrations, invasions, occupations, conquests, pogroms, expulsion and exterminations.

More precisely, Europe today is doubly occupied, indeed haunted: first by its recent history and historical catastrophes still not worked through or laid to rest (Nazism, the Holocaust and the failure of Socialism), and