EAST, WEST and CENTRE

REFRAMING POST-1989 EUROPEAN CINEMA

Edited by MICHAEL GOTT and TODD HERZOG
East, West and Centre
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INTRODUCTION

East, West and Centre: ‘Mapping Post–1989 European Cinema’

Michael Gott and Todd Herzog

Eastern and Western Europe Twenty-five Years after the Fall of the Wall

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent expansion of the European Union and creation of the Schengen Zone opened the gates for what have been termed ‘new migrations’ (Mazierska and Rascaroli, 140). By 1994, an estimated four million people had migrated across the newly opened borders – and this number does not even include the millions who fled war in the former Yugoslavia or the one million Poles who headed west in the three years that followed their nation’s 2004 entry into the European Union (Castles and Miller, 116). Though political borders between Eastern and Western Europe have become much more open and fluid, mental borders still divide the continent along the old Cold War lines. Despite their newly gained access to Western Europe, ‘Eastern’ Europeans have been relegated at times to a second-class status in Western Europe, as the ‘Polish Plumber’ rhetoric so prevalent during the 2005 French referendum on the EU Constitution demonstrates (Raissiguier, Skrodzka 2011, Gott 2013c). As we approach the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and an entire post-Wall generation has entered adulthood, it is an appropriate time to assess the ways in which notions of an Eastern and Western Europe still exist as well as the ways in which a new/old notion of Central Europe has re-entered public discourse and the popular imagination. More recently, factors such as the economic crisis in Europe have underscored increasingly visible north–south fault lines.

To pursue this investigation, this volume turns to European cinema which has been a vibrant space in which to understand and work through notions of and beyond national borders. The fact that a new journal, with the title Studies in Eastern European Cinema, was launched in 2010 demonstrates that more than twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the ‘Eastern’ label continues to be a valid paradigm. And given that a
new journal with the title *Studies in Western European Cinema* would be inconceivable today indicates that the East remains in many ways Western Europe’s ‘other’. In one line of thinking, Western Europe is Europe, while Eastern Europe finds itself in uncertain ground that is not quite European. The East/West fault line, however, has been exerting enormous pressure on the political, geographical and cultural parameters of Europe and prompting an evaluation of what it means to be ‘European’. These pressing questions are being worked out in the political and economic realms but also in the realm of culture. This volume situates itself at these constantly renegotiated borders between East and West, politics and culture, past and present, and asks what is East, what is West and what is Centre a quarter of a century after the (re)opening of the borders between Eastern and Western Europe?

In a special thematic issue of the *Journal of Cultural Geography*, entitled ‘Twenty years after the Wall: geographical imaginaries of “Europe” during European Union enlargement’, Sellar, Staddon and Young suggest that the term ‘New Europe’

itself highlights the willingness of former Eastern European governments and their publics to embrace a new, ‘European’ and capitalist identity to overcome the Cold War era distinction between ‘East’ and ‘West’ Europe. This gives rise to new cultural geographies emerging alongside the institutional and economic changes brought by EU enlargement. The process of imagining the ‘New Europe’ is an important rhetorical tool which is being used to sanction a new equilibrium and new power relations within Europe. (255)

The special issue proposes to answer a question based on a provocative premise: how do we define Europe when ‘its original historico-geographical origins in the oppositions between East and West, between Capitalist and Communist, between Catholic/Protestant and Orthodox have been largely if not completely erased’ (Sellar, Staddon and Young 255, our emphasis)? *East, West and Centre* does not aim to argue that the oppositions that date back to the very origins of the idea of Europe and, more recently, politically and geographically ordered the continent’s post-World War II, twentieth-century experience have been completely or even largely erased. But they clearly have been altered. While the experience under Communism and the lingering imbalance/inequities within Europe – and European cinema – cannot be ignored, a quarter of a century has passed since the fall of the Iron Curtain and a decade after the first wave of former communist states in the Baltics and Central Europe joined the EU. This is therefore an opportune time to assess what European cinemas on both sides of the old divide have in common. Tim Bergfelder argues that

explorations of contemporary European cinema must be predicated on the ‘fluidity of identities’ and the avoidance of ‘containment’ (329). This collection arises from the need to examine Europe and European cinema from a new vantage point, one that is outside the traditional parameters of academic discourse that have kept ‘West’ segregated from ‘East’ (and ‘Central’). One can both acknowledge historical, cultural and economic distinctions within the current parameters of the EU and also explore the points of connection that bind nations and cultures on both sides of the convoluted East/West dividing line. The chapters in this volume attest to the increasingly uncertain and convoluted divisions between East and West, as well as the continuation of historical divisions between East and West.

Étienne Balibar has theorised that European citizenship is a ‘citizenship of borders’ (2003: 6), of which the old East/West divide is but one. We shall argue in this introduction that cinema is at the forefront of the mapping of the ‘new cultural geographies’ Sellar, Staddon and Young suggest are appearing in Europe (255). European cinema has increasingly crossed, and otherwise called into question, the borders and vestiges of borders that continue to divide the politics and economics of Europe – before, during and after the Cold War divided Europe politically. Alain Badiou has argued that the fall of the Berlin Wall was supposed to have ushered in a ‘single world of freedom and democracy’ (Badiou 2008: 38). Instead, he asserts that walls have simply shifted: rather than demarcating the boundary between East and West, walls divide ‘the rich capitalist North from the poor and devastated South’ (Badiou 2008: 38). Indeed, new fault lines have emerged, marking divisions within Europe and between Europe and the ‘East’ that lies beyond ‘Eastern Europe’. The economic crisis and Eurozone meltdown has also thrust the divisions between southern and northern Europe into sharper relief. Much of the southern portion of ‘Western Europe’ is now looking, to German eyes in particular, considerably less (Western) European. Greek doubts about their nation’s European-ness in the wake of the financial crisis have been theorised to be a driving force behind the films comprising a so-called New Greek Wave (which Jun Okada addresses in Chapter 10 of this volume) that has garnered considerable attention on festival circuits since 2009.

Turning to the divide between Europe and the less-developed world, migrants attempting to reach the continent from the ‘Global South’ – whether Africa or Asia – have been increasingly visible both in cinema and in public discourse. Eastern and Central European nations have, since 1989, also become destinations for migrants. While encounters between the ‘two Easts’ – one of Europe and one beyond – are still relatively rare in
cinema, they serve to remind us of the relativity of the very notion of ‘East’ (see Chapter 2, Chapter 9 and, in particular, Chapter 6 by Alexandra Ludewig). Actual and cinematic migrants from Turkey, Iraq and other eastern points also find themselves in Eastern or Central Europe en route to points further west, as is the case in films such as Výlet /Some Secrets (Alice Nellis, 2002, Czech Republic/Slovakia), Nulle part terre promise/Nowhere promised land (Emanuel Finkiel, 2008, France) and Kalandorok/Adventurers (Béla Paczolay, 2008, Hungary). Spare Parts/Rezervni deli (Damjan Kozole, 2003, Slovenia) and Indignados (Tony Gatlif, 2012, France) place African migrants attempting to cross into Western Europe from the Balkans. The presence of migrants from the global south marks ‘New Europe’ as both a gateway to Western Europe and a reasonable facsimile of it, as the recurring trope of migrants being dropped off before the destination they paid to reach attests.

Among all the factors under consideration in the following chapters – from co-production practices to market transformations – migration has unquestionably had a singular impact on the ‘centre’ of Europe and is one of the most visible themes in European cinema since 1989. Berghahn and Sternberg observe that, as a consequence

of proliferating migrations, European cultures and societies have witnessed a hitherto inconceivable diversification, fragmentation and hybridization. This is reflected in a growing number of films made by migrant and diasporic filmmakers, which challenge a traditional understanding of national identity and what it means to be European. (2)

New understandings and updated mappings of post-Berlin Wall Europe must involve not simply assessments of lateral East/West connections but require a broader, multidirectional analysis of the new borders, orientations, challenges and links that define the fluctuating geography of Europe. Just as the tragedies off the coast of Lampedusa in 2013 have had policy implications for all of the EU, from Italy to nations whose borders do not flank the Mediterranean directly, such as Germany, France – and French cinema – have witnessed a proliferation of clandestine migrants. On one level, this is nothing new. As a nation with a history of immigration on a large scale dating to the nineteenth century, France represents a European exception. The twenty-first century saw waves of immigrants arrive in France from Poland and Armenia as well as from Italy, Spain, Portugal and the former colonial empire. By 1991, one in four people residing in France was an immigrant or had immigrant parents or grandparents (Hargreaves, 6). One updated feature of post-1989 population shifts is the fact that these voyagers often do not intend to stay in France
but are charting a course through Fortress Europe en route to Britain. Such (cinematic) migrants are typically Kurdish, as in Welcome (Philippe Lioret, France, 2009), Eden à l’Ouest/Eden is West (Costa-Gavras, France/Greece/Italy, 2009), Inguélézi (François Dupeyron, France, 2004) and Bleu, le ciel (Dominique Bocarossa, France, 2001). More permanent new migrants or immigrants include a Georgian doctor working on a construction site in France which inspired Depuis qu’Otar est parti/Since Otar Left (France/Belgium/Georgia, 2003), by Julie Bertuccelli, and a family of Chechens in Les mains en l’air/Hands in the Air (Romain Goupil, France, 2010). Switzerland, as discussed in Chapter 2, has a tradition of welcoming refugees, whose stories are told in Das Fräulein/Fraulein (Andrea Staka, 2006, Switzerland/Germany) and Tout un hiver sans feu/A Long Winter without Fire, by Greg Zglinski (2004, Switzerland/Belgium). In both cases, the immigrants fled war in the former Yugoslavia. Looking beyond the continent’s ‘centre’, even Spain has been affected by East to West migrations. Some 10 per cent of the 191 victims of the March, 2004 Madrid train bombings are from Eastern or Central Europe (most notably from Romania but also Poland and Ukraine). The affected trains originated in Alcalá de Henares, ‘home to sizeable Latin American and Eastern European communities made up of predominantly blue collar workers and day labourers who commute to Madrid’ (Amago, 11). While Eastern European migration to Spain remains a relatively unexplored theme in Spanish cinema – Los novios búlgaros/Bulgarian Lovers (Eloy de la Iglesia, 2003, Spain) representing a notable exception – the topic is addressed in our volume from a Romanian perspective in Chapter 9 (by Lucian Georgescu). The juxtaposition of migrants from the East with workers from the global south has been represented in a growing number of films, from Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne’s La promesse/The Promise (1996, Belgium/France/Luxembourg) to Lištičky/Foxes (2009, Ireland/Czech Republic/Slovakia), by Slovakian director Mira Fornay.

Since the onset of the 2008 economic crisis, many Western Europeans are themselves migrating in search of economic opportunity. This suggests that Europe’s post-1989 cultural, economic and, indeed, political parameters – as the 2014 events in Ukraine also demonstrate – are still under negotiation. While this volume aims to contest lingering, static East/West dichotomies, it does not present a vision of Europe as a settled and monolithic construction representing a union of pre-1989 East and West. We concur with Mireille Rosello’s assessment that, though walls and borders have not disappeared, ‘we are in the presence of changing forms of language and artistic visions generated by the fact that territories are now as “uncertain” (Boer 2006) as the way in which we/they are
supposed to inhabit them’ (7). Such uncertainty is manifested in cinema at times as what our contributors term ‘de-centring’, at other times by the questioning of one’s relationship to (Western) Europe and occasionally by the search for new geographic alignments.

Mapping the New Europe through Cinema

This volume considers the ways in which notions of East and West, national and transnational, central and marginal, are being rethought and reframed in contemporary European cinema. Some of the world’s leading scholars in the field assemble in this volume to assess the state of contemporary European cinema, from (co-)production and reception trends to filmic depictions of migration patterns, economic transformations and sociopolitical debates over the past and the present. This volume intentionally looks beyond the handful of national cinemas that receive the most attention in both popular and academic discourse. Contributions address recent films from or about Armenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Switzerland and the former Yugoslavia, and the complex and often contradictory notions of East and West that they employ. The volume also looks beyond the dominant linguistic taxonomies of cinema into Germanic, Francophone and Slavic groups. Instead of working within traditional groupings, this volume is divided into three sections which engage with efforts to map Europe in post-Berlin Wall cinema, each organised around an outlook on, or level of, post-Wall European connectivity. These mapping endeavours might encompass filmic narratives, production and reception patterns, and commonly include actual maps either as props or symbols. Each of these elements plays a central role in what Klaus Eder terms the ‘narrative construction of the boundaries of Europe’ (Eder), a process that concerns the evolution of Europe’s internal and external borders. Eder’s formulation is particularly well suited to be applied to cinema because it relates to the ‘stories that people tell each other, thus creating a space of narrative fidelity. Telling stories implies a social relationship and implies a space within which such stories circulate. This symbolic space is bordered by “shared stories”’ (Eder, 256).

Films are the stories Europeans tell each other and, in addition to what these shared stories say about the makeup of contemporary Europe, implicit in any notion of cinematic ‘narrative construction’ is the issue of who is telling these stories to whom and who is producing and financing them. Thus, while the primary focus of this collection is to assess the way Europe is being mapped in these stories, several of our chapters will focus
introduction

on the production and distribution sides of the equation. The image that adorns the cover of this volume is from *Svetat e golyam i spasenie debne otvzyakade/The World is Big and Salvation Lurks Around the Corner*, by Bulgarian director Stephan Komandarev and co-produced by Bulgaria, Germany, Slovenia and Hungary. Komandarev’s film is apt not only because it is discussed in Chapter 8, by Temenuga Trifonova, but also because it represents a multinational co-production that weaves a complex web of cultural identities and affinities. The film stages a return from Germany to Bulgaria by Alexander, whose family left their native land for political reasons when he was young. After a car accident takes the life of his father and mother and leaves Alexander with amnesia, his grandfather, who stayed in Bulgaria, comes to Germany to take his grandson on a return trip. The hope is that retracing the steps involved in the family’s earlier migration, including an internment camp for refugees in Austria, will allow Alexander to reconstruct his memories and rediscover his identity. While he does eventually ‘remember’ his Bulgarian self, the film avoids essentialising ethnic and cultural roots by also painting the young man as a transnational European citizen. When, en route to Bulgaria, Alexander meets his future girlfriend at a coastal campsite in Slovenia, they introduce themselves in English before switching to German after they learn that, while they are from other places (Hungary in her case), they both live in Germany. The films analysed in the following chapters represent these new mappings of Europe narratively, linguistically, culturally, sometimes musically, and, in many cases, in their production, distribution and reception. Despite the breadth of this volume, a certain number of films which are not covered in the subsequent chapters merit mention here as they are particularly representative of the ways that cinema – in productive and narrative terms – has been ahead of the curve in new mappings of Europe. These examples underscore the increasingly uncontainable, uncertain nature of contemporary European cinema. A common thread in an ever-expanding list of films is the way in which conceptions of East and West are relativised. These films engage with ‘borders’ within Europe which, in a variety of different ways, have been displaced from the continent’s margins to various points within. As Balibar argues, it is at these very borders, the putative frontiers, where the very central task of forging European citizenship is undertaken. It is the border areas that are ‘at the centre’ of the building of a European public sphere (Balibar 2003: 1–2).

The stalled post-communist road movie *Bolse vita* (Ibolya Fekete, 1995, Hungary) is a European ‘mapping’ film of reference, in which the director credits the events of 1989 as a ‘sudden flash’ that opened her eyes to new possibilities which transcended what was seen as the choice for
Hungarian directors at the time: to embrace the national at the expense of an international audience or vice versa (Waller, 21–2). Fekete’s film, which has the distinction of being a Hungarian production with almost no Hungarian characters and virtually without dialogue in the Hungarian language (Waller, 26), would foretell a new direction taken in European cinema. *Bolse vita* posits that Budapest, situated between a collapsing USSR, a West eager to seek out new markets, and a Yugoslavia on the verge of breaking apart at the seams, might be the middle of sorts of a newly realigned Europe, if only for a fleeting moment. The characters include Russians, who start the film on Russia’s east coast, pointing out that they could go in either direction to get to the ‘West’. They eventually make their way west to Budapest where their paths cross with a Welsh woman and a Texan who have headed ‘East’ in search of adventure and opportunity. The babble of languages and pell-mell adoption of capitalism represent a compelling vignette of life on the border zone in a continent where everything has come apart. If the film does not seem to be able to propose a coherent and clear path to putting things back together, it does serve as a memorable precursor to subsequent films that stage continental crossings or narrate the previously unthinkable comings together which result from those displacements. Several chapters, including 7 and 9, will discuss films set in or traversing the Hungarian–Romanian borderlands.

Chief among those films is *Im Juli/In Juli* (Fatih Akin, 2000, Germany), the subject of Chapter 5 by Berna Gueneli and a road movie that, unlike *Bolse vita*, follows its protagonists across the continent while also positioning Budapest at the middle of a Europe defined by shifting borders and linguistic chaos. No fewer than six languages – from East and West – are spoken in *In July* but films need not display linguistic profusion to be representative of shifting parameters of European cinema.

*Mirek n’est pas parti* (Bojena Horackova, 1996, Czech Republic/France) is set in Paris and made by a Paris-based Czech director but features only Czech actors, primarily speaking Czech. *Morgen* (Mirian Crisan, 2010, Romania/France/Hungary), a film discussed in Chapter 9, follows a Turkish migrant attempting to cross the Hungarian–Romanian border. Despite the German title, there is no German dialogue to speak of beside that word, uttered as a promise of a crossing that may never come. The director of *Marussia* (Eva Pervolovici, 2013, France/Russia) is a Romanian based in Paris who studied cinema in Edinburgh, and its producer a Croatian who set up shop in the French capital. The two protagonists and virtually all the secondary characters are Russian. Indeed, as in *Mirek n’est pas parti*, despite the setting in the French capital, the film contains almost no French dialogue. *Une Estonienne à Paris/A Lady*
in Paris (2012, France/Belgium/Estonia), by Estonian director Ilmar Raag, departs from this template. The French cinema icon Jeanne Moreau plays an elderly Estonian living in Paris who has entirely lost touch with her Estonian side and speaks exclusively French even within a coterie of fellow exiles and with a newly arrived Estonian woman who was brought to care for her. A different twist on a lingua franca is audible in Transylvania (Tony Gatlif, 2006, France), a French film set exclusively in Romania and featuring primarily dialogue in English, the language used in the exchanges between the two stars: German-Turkish actor Birol Ünel and Italian actress Asia Argento. Gatlif compensates for the loss of linguistic particularity by revelling in the traditional music of Transylvania that drives the film forward (Gott 2013c: 13). Despite its official status as a solely French production, Gatlif’s film troubles the very notions of national cinema and national identity. Contemporary European cinema’s resistance to compartmentalisation is on display in a multiplicity of East/West cinematic encounters narrated in English in films such as Prag/Prague (Ole Christian Madsen, 2006, Denmark), 2 Sunny Days (Ognjen Svilicic, 2010, Croatia/France), Dvojina/Dual (Nejc Gazvoda, 2013, Slovenia/Croatia/Denmark) and the aforementioned The World is Big and Salvation Lurks Around the Corner.

Transylvania also reminds us that the new map of Europe (and of European cinemas) is not simply the result of an East to West movement, a ‘(re)joining’ of the continent’s Eastern borderlands with its Western ‘centre’. ‘Western’ European directors with Central European origins or orientations have highlighted the fact that the ground is shifting in ‘Old Europe’ creating increasingly disoriented subjects for whom mobility is equated not with liberty but with loss, as is the case in films such as Code inconnu/Code Unknown (Michael Haneke, 2000, France/Germany/Romania), which is under discussion in Chapter 3, and Finkiel’s Nowhere Promised Land. The latter also reminds viewers in France, a nation that tended to see East to West migrations framed in terms of ‘invasion’ in political discourse, that there are other trajectories in post-1989 Europe. Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli read Code Unknown as a film that calls into question the very notion of ‘home’; whether Romanian or French, the protagonists are unmoored and lack a permanent hub (Mazierska and Rascaroli, 142).

While this is but a small sample of films that are undertaking a remapping of post-1989 European space, our list would seem to suffice as a demonstration of the transnational and boundary-crossing tendencies of contemporary European cinema. Even beyond the well-documented practice of multinational co-productions, contemporary European cinema...
is weaving an interconnected web that calls into question not only the category of national cinema but also the compartmentalisation of films within discrete East and West frameworks.

Film is an inherently collaborative medium. This volume is also highly collaborative; it assembles a diverse set of scholars from points all around the globe to assess the state of European cinema and the stories it tells about Europe today. The eighteen chapters contained here are divided into three main topical sections, each of which combines discussions of films from various places united under common themes. The first section looks at the blurred lines between Eastern and Western Europe in the twenty-first century. The second section examines threshold spaces and marginal spaces, especially as they apply to transnational markets. The third section examines the lingering spectres of the East that continue to haunt Europe through the lens of both sides of the former East/West divide.

**Redrawing the Lines**

During the Cold War, the dividing line between Eastern and Western Europe ran through the city of Berlin. The breaching of that division on the night of 9 November 1989 remains the symbolic end of that division, even as the political process of (re)integrating Europe continues to this day. Because of the centrality of Berlin to Europe – East, West, and Central; Old and New – the first section of this volume, ‘Redrawing the Lines: De/Recentring Europe’, takes Berlin as its geographic and thematic starting point. Chapter 1, Jenny Stümer’s ‘The Berlin Wall revisited: Reframing historical space between East and West in Cynthia Beatts’s *Cycling the Frame* (1988), *The Invisible Frame* (2009) and Bartosz Konopka’s *Rabbit à la Berlin* (2009)’ explores the meaning of the Berlin Wall as an imaginary and as a concrete space at the heart of ‘New Europe’ in three documentary films. Subsequent chapters in the opening section remain conscious of how the ‘wall in the head’ continues to inform views of Europe while examining films that trouble East/West divisions by narrating connections and voyages made possible by the new alignments on the continent. The chapters and the films they discuss present a vision of a remapped and recentred – or decentred, from a Western European perspective – Europe from a variety of vantage points on the East, West and Centre spectrum. This section questions the common notion of a ‘road to Europe’ and the ensuing discourse that implies an East to West trajectory. Rather, it paints a picture of a ‘New Europe’ that is not defined as such simply owing to expansion on its Eastern frontier. Each chapter analyses cinematic voyages from and to points that could arguably be

considered the cultural, economic and geographic centres of Europe: France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Hungary and Poland.

Examined together, these films ‘queer’ the cultural and geographic parameters of ‘central’ Europe in the broadest sense of the term, understood by Daniela Berghahn as fundamentally about resisting containment within clearly demarcated spaces and categories: ‘[q]ueerness therefore implies transgression, subversion and dissent, and is often conceived of as a state of “in-between-ness”’ (Berghahn 2011: 133). Kris Van Heuckelom’s chapter ‘Changing Sides: East/West Travesties in Lionel Baier’s *Comme des voleurs (à l’est)*’ opens the door to this reading through its discussion of a film in which the ‘return’ to distant origins by a gay Swiss protagonist quite literally presents a queer vision of Switzerland and the Swiss ‘fortress’ at the heart of Europe, and by extension subjects the idea of being (Western) European to the same process of radical reassessment. Where Van Heuckelom approaches a Swiss film from the perspective of a scholar of Poland and Polish cinema, Alison Rice’s Chapter 3, ‘Dubbing and Doubling Over: The Disorientation of France in the Films of Michael Haneke and Krzysztof Kieślowski’, considers very similar questions from the angle of a specialist of Francophone cultures. Rice argues that the portrayal of migration and exile in films by Haneke and Kieślowski stimulates seemingly contradictory reactions in viewers. ‘Doubling over’ refers to both the pain and the laughter that inspired and is documented by these transnational directors’ work. Rice’s essay examines how these films ‘resituate and reorient’ France and Western Europe in relation to the East.

Nikhil Sathe turns to the resurgent and famously bleak world of New Austrian Film in Chapter 4, ‘Redirecting the Gaze: Western Perceptions of Eastern Europe in Ulrich Seidl’s *Import Export* (2007)’. His close examination of the act of looking in Ulrich Seidl’s *Import Export* reveals a clear power division between East and West that is reflected in sexual and gender constellations. By foregrounding the act of looking, he argues, Seidl forces viewers to recognise and reflect upon power hierarchies and the ways in which they are manifested through the gaze. Berna Gueneli argues in Chapter 5, ‘Fatih Akin’s Filmic Visions of a New Europe: Spatial and Aural Constructions of Europe in *Im Juli/In July* (2000, Germany)’, that the celebrated Turkish-German director also implicitly addresses contemporary sociopolitical issues and, through his use of spatial and aural cues, imagines an open and cosmopolitan Europe that can transcend social, geographic and political divisions.

Iranian-German director Ali Samadi Ahadi’s broad comedy *Salami Aleikum* is stylistically a long way from Seidl’s neo-neorealist film. But, in
Chapter 6, ‘Salami Aleikum – The “Near East” meets the “Middle East” in Central Europe’, Alexandra Ludewig demonstrates that this seemingly unambitious comic strip-style film harbours a profound metapoetical reflection on feelings of loss, and comments on the mythologies through which people build a sense of home and community in the diaspora.

Together these contributions paint a picture of a ‘New Europe’ in which barriers have fallen and in which mobility has become the norm, as Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli suggest in their study of European road films (Mazierska and Rascaroli, 1). The final chapter of the section, however, Aga Skrodzka’s ‘Cinematic Fairy Tales of Mobility in Post-Wall Europe: Hanna v. Mona’, furnishes a warning against overly euphoric readings of mobility as an inherently liberatory process. Skrodzka’s assessment of two films which represent female itineraries across contemporary Europe – one moving from North to South, the other from East to West – emphasises the notion that travel and trafficking are two sides of the same coin in ‘borderless’ Europe. Both films employ fantasy and, in turn, romanticise and exoticise their protagonists, and, when considered together, Skrodzka contends that they ‘provide an accurate and quite realistic depiction of the bifurcated nature of transnational mobility in the unifying Europe’. Given the ‘traditional pejorative link between femininity and mobility’ (Mazierska and Rascaroli, 186), it is not by chance that films about females travelling through New Europe offer the best opportunity to problematise the reading of post-Wall mobility as synonymous with progress. Nor, Skrodzka argues, should female migration on East/West or South/North axes be unquestioningly and exclusively linked to received notions of trafficking and exploitation.

The Road to and from Europe

Though many of the films covered in this volume narrate literal travel, the symbolic ‘road to Europe’ (Mazierska 2013: 151) discourse that gained currency after 1989 encompasses a variety of issues that are also considered here. For our purposes, the ‘road to Europe’ is a multidirectional process that involves literal and economic mobility, political and cultural shifts and the production and distribution of films which were highlighted above. The post-communist transition has typically been framed as a movement ‘towards’ Europe. Without so much as leaving their home, residents of some places of the former ‘Eastern Europe’ were to become ‘Central Europeans’ and then ‘New Europeans’ (Iordanova 2005: 237).

Building on the complex trajectories and problematic female mobility addressed in Skrodzka’s chapter, the second section paints a more
muddled picture of a decentred Europe by focusing on the ‘other’ Europe(s). The films in this section could be seen as examples of what has been theorised as ‘the cinema of small nations’ (Hjort and Petrie) or as ‘cinema at the periphery’ (Iordanova, Martin-Jones and Vidal). While the geographically – and commonly culturally and economically – marginal spaces addressed by our contributors have generally been either overlooked or geographically segregated in English-language scholarship, they are central to this collection. The contributions which make up ‘Border Spaces, Eastern Margins and Eastern Markets: Belonging and the “Road to/from Europe”’ widen our lens to include the (Eastern) geographic perimeters of the continent, though by taking an approach which transcends the commonplace geopolitically derived West/East binary. From the Balkans to the Baltics, these chapters home in on some arguably successful examples of transition in societies and inter-European co-operation in film industries, with a focus on the lingering legacy of the ‘wall in the mind’ and economic and cultural imbalances that remain. Nonetheless, these chapters underline just as many points of contact and European continuity as they do inequities, as signalled by the success of the Romanian post-communist film industry on the European festival circuit starting in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the casting of French actors to play the roles of ‘marginal’ Balkan Europeans in two films under consideration (in chapters by Jun Okada and Danica Jenkins and Kati Tonkin), and the growing practice of co-production between Baltic and ‘Western’ European industries. Add to this the success in the ‘West’ of co-productions by directors such as Šarūnas Bartas of Lithuania, whose films are addressed in Šukaitytė’s chapter, and a picture emerges of European cinema as a conduit for East/West rapprochement or at least collaboration.

The casting of French actors in the roles of European ‘others’ represents a thread linking this section to chapters by Van Heuckelom, Jun Okada and Alison Rice in the previous section and by Joseph Mai in the final section. While the casting of (Western) foreign actors sometimes is done for marketing purposes, in the films analysed in this collection, this casting gesture always brings to bear an ideological agenda. The potentially ‘hidden’ otherness of Western European actors serves as a reminder that East/West points of contact are not new; France, in particular, has a long tradition of intellectual and working-class immigration from points across Europe. ‘Return’ films are addressed in each section. This prevalent category of contemporary European cinema engages directly with the post-1989 parameters of the continent, retracing voyages by (often young) people to the place of their birth or to the site of family roots that go back a
generation or more. Frequently travelling across East/West demarcation lines, these films use the trope of individual or family identity exploration actively to reconfigure the parameters of Europe by simultaneously crossing newly opened ‘hard borders’ and by engaging with new ‘soft borders’ (Eder).

Chapter 8, ‘Contemporary Bulgarian Cinema: From Allegorical Expressionism to Declined National Cinema’, by Temenuga Trifonova, opens this discussion with an exploration of Bulgaria’s cinematic ambivalence between inward-looking ‘allegorical expressionism’ and outward-oriented ‘declined national cinema’ (Rivi). Trifonova offers an overview of immigration and internal migration in Bulgarian communist and post-communist cinema in order to examine the gradual post-1989 evolution in the ways by which Bulgaria films demarcate the border separating the self from ‘the Other.’ As a director who also teaches screenwriting and cinema theory in Bucharest, the author of Chapter 9, Lucian Georgescu, writes from a perspective within Romanian cinema. His contention is that cinema provides a privileged vantage point to explore issues of identity in post-communist Romania. Like the previous chapter, ‘The Point of No Return: From Great Expectations to Great Desperation in New Romanian Cinema’, also explores a variety of films depicting immigration or attempts to emigrate. Georgescu suggests that the New Romanian Cinema, which emerged on the global stage in 2005, paints a rather bleak portrait of life in contemporary Romania, where disillusioned citizens are heading towards Western Europe en masse. The cinematic productions under discussion, however, demonstrate that Romanian cinema has successfully reached a broad European and, indeed, global audience. The Romanian film industry represents a global success story both in reception terms and through its engagement with ‘effective co-production circuits, involving German, French or Swiss financing sources’ (Nasta 155, 202). The next chapter, by Jun Okada, ‘“Weirdness”, Modernity and the Other Europe in Attenberg (2010, Athina Rachel Tsangari)’, also draws on the context of a cinematic ‘wave’ to examine the question of how a Balkan nation sees itself in relation to Europe. The Greek ‘weird wave’ has been theorised as a response to that nation’s financial crisis but, as Okada suggests, this is just the latest episode in which Greece’s problematic inclusion in (Western) Europe has been called into question.

Chapters 11 and 12 shift to the Baltics, another region characterised by East/West ‘geographic in-betweenness’ (Mazierka, et al., 10). Renata Šukaitytė’s chapter, ‘Lithuania Redirected: New Connections, Businesses and Lifestyles in Cinema since 2000’, explores the shifting economic and
social landscape of Lithuania through the optic of (cinematic) characters she labels ‘adventurists’. Offering an examination of communist and early post-communist films before homing in on contemporary case studies, Šukaitytė suggests that a picture emerges in post-Soviet Lithuanian cinema of an uneasy period of transition between East and West, with transnational exchanges becoming commonplace but often involving the black market or otherwise ‘mysterious’ transnational networks. Where Chapter 11 explores Lithuanian’s transition from ‘East’ to ‘West’ through the optic of characters who have adapted to the new neo-liberal system by becoming ‘adventurists’ or transnational gangsters, Eva Näripea’s chapter, ‘Lessons of Neoliberalism: Co-productions and the Changing Image of Estonian Cinema’, explores the practice of co-production between Estonia and the ‘West’. In both cases, through links to Scandinavia, ‘North’ emerges as a potential new social, economic and production framework for Baltic cinemas. Näripea’s case studies point to a profound ‘sense of “liminality” in the collective Estonian psyche, which is torn between a desire to belong to the “advanced North” (in global as well as regional terms) and a persistent spectre of historical “Eastern” subjugation’.

Chapter 13, ‘Decentring Europe from the Fringe: Reimagining Balkan Identities in the Films of the 1990s’, returns to the Balkans to assess how the spectre of past subjugation and of contemporary war has affected cinematic relationships between the states comprising the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Western Europe. Through a comparative analysis of transnational projects by Balkan-born directors, locally produced films and a UK production, Danica Jenkins and Katie Tonkin explore how the Western gaze viewed late twentieth-century Balkan conflict through the prism of orientalism. They argue that, while the films under consideration narrate a causal trajectory of historical Balkan violence against which Western progress and civilisation could be affirmed, by replicating and subverting aspects of these narratives, these films successfully foreground them as ideological constructions and actively participate in their reimaging.

**Spectres of the East**

Whereas the first two sections have sought to avoid containment, the final section engages the most directly with the lingering legacies of Communism in Eastern Europe. ‘Spectres of the East’, while emphasising points of contact across the East/West divide, brings together chapters that acknowledge the different historical experiences that mark Europe’s East and West, all the while seeking ways to transcend the burden of
history and assess how the once taboo past has become a rich source for cinematic inspiration. In this section, chapters by Rimma Garn, Mihaela Petrescu and Nick Hodgin explore cinematic strains of Polish, Romanian and German Ostalgie, with an eye on the role played by communist-era heritage in the cinema industries of those nations. Kalani Michell’s chapter takes a different tack, considering what a documentary film about an East German spy reveals about how the heritage of the ‘East’, and of East-West crossings, is representative of the cinematic climate of post-Wall Germany. In Chapter 14, ‘Through the Lens of Black Humour: A Polish Adam in the Post-Wall World’, Rimma Garn compares two of the films that make up an octology by Marek Koterski on the Polish experience since 1985. Koterski, who directs comedies, has received limited attention in English-language critical circles despite having been championed as Poland’s ‘new national director’ by Ewa Mazierska (2013: 159). Garn argues that Koterski’s post–1989 work suggests that a sense of black humour forged in the tribulations of the past is the ideal approach to the trials of Poland’s post-communist transition. Nick Hodgin argues in Chapter 15, ‘East Germany Revisited, Reimagined, Repositioned: Representing the GDR in Dominik Graf’s Der rote Kakadu (2005) and Christian Petzold’s Barbara (2012)’ that these two twenty-first century films mark an important shift in representations of the German Democratic Republic. Unlike films of the 1990s (such as Das Versprechen/The Promise, Margarethe von Trotta, 1995, Germany), which cast their protagonists as victims of history, both Dominik Graf and Christian Petzold place their characters in a position in which they must choose whether to stay in or leave the GDR. This, in fact, connects them to GDR-era films such as Der Geteilte Himmel/Divided Sky (Konrad Wolf, 1964, GDR). As different as they are from each other, these two films allow for a higher degree of differentiation between representations of the GDR than had previously been the case.

The innovative documentary Barluschke, about a historical secret agent whose story initially seems more like a work of fiction, also takes a markedly different retrospective look at the GDR, as Kalani Michell demonstrates in Chapter 16, ‘Barluschke: Towards an East–West Schizo-History’. Recognising that an ‘objective’ presentation of the history of East and West during the Cold War cannot possibly be achieved, Barluschke instead offers an ultimately inscrutable take on that history which reads it within the context of a schizofrantic family history that parallels the equally schizofrantic East–West history. Mihaela Petrescu’s Chapter 17, ‘The Limits of Nostalgia and (Trans)National Cinema in Cum mi-am petrecut sfârșitul lumii (2006)’, builds on Georgescu’s chapter on migration in Romanian cinema. Petrescu discusses a film
that also addresses indirectly the themes of migration and escape but focuses on the lives of those who stayed in Romania during the final years of the Ceauşescu regime. Analysing Cătălin Mitulescu’s feature film *Cum mi-am petrecut sfârşitul lumii/The Way I Spent the End of the World* (2006), Petrescu contrasts the sometimes nostalgic portrait of youth in communist Romania to the more wistful and less critical German brand of *Ostalgie*. At the same time, this film’s depiction of characters faced with a perplexing decision between staying and leaving brings it very much in line with the retrospective takes on the GDR that Hodgin analyses in his chapter.

Mobility and, by extension, mapping remain essential to this portion of the collection. Petruscu’s chapter presents an example of a recent trend in cinema to address attempts to migrate to the West during the communist period. Joseph Mai’s closing chapter, ‘The Ideal of Ararat: Friendship, Politics and National Origins in Robert Guédiguian’s *Le voyage en Arménie/Armenia*’, continues with both the travel and nostalgia threads, albeit from a very different geographic perspective. His analysis of *Voyage en Arménie/Armenia* (2006) aptly completes the volume by tying back together the Eastern and Western perspectives. Mai argues that the cinematic ‘return’ narrated in the film by French director Robert Guédiguian, whose grandparents migrated to France during the period of the Armenian genocide, not only invites viewers to reassess the place of France in Europe but also expresses a lingering tension about communist ideology in Europe. The film’s protagonist is herself a former communist activist, and Mai’s chapter examines how the film approaches the conflicting discourses on solidarity, friendship and communist legacy in a post-1989 European landscape. In the process of introducing the protagonist – and the viewers – to post-communist Armenia, the film also represents a challenge to exclusionary strains of French identity politics by revealing a long-standing heritage of Eastern ‘otherness’ at the heart of contemporary French identity.

**Parameters and Definitions**

The geographic terms that we have employed in this introduction and that will reappear throughout this volume are not fixed, are often relative, and occasionally overlap. For this reason, our aim here is not to settle on uniform parameters but to sketch out some precedents that should be kept in mind while reading this collection. Western Europe, despite the recent North/South cleavages discussed above, has generally been a relatively uncontroversial term. It is also one that has outlived its use, except when
it is used as a point of comparison to demarcate something to the East as somewhere which is not ‘West’, or perhaps for guidebooks, which must draw geographic lines somewhere. ‘Eastern Europe’, on the other hand, remains a thornier topic. Anikó Imre contends, not without reservation, that there is nothing more accurate than ‘Eastern European’, a classification that avoids the erasure of ‘common regional histories’. Nonetheless, she insists that the region’s ‘shifting boundaries, internal differences and constructed identities’ must be taken into account (Imre, xvii). Other scholars define ‘Eastern Europe’ as the countries that made up, between the solidification of communist rule and the fall of communist regimes in 1989, the Warsaw Pact and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia which are today ‘labelled as postcommunist’ (Mazierska, et al., 1). This comprises nations such as Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic that tend to see themselves, and are often theorised by scholars as, Central European. For some, ‘Eastern Europe’ begins only at Poland’s former eastern border with the Soviet Union (Hames and Portuges, 1). Yet we cannot look to the erstwhile boundaries of the USSR for a definitive solution, for the Baltic states that were annexed by the Soviets in 1940 have ‘perceived themselves natural parts of the West’ (Mazierska, et al., 10). As this volume’s two chapters on Baltic cinema suggest, that region has since 1990 been looking towards the North to forge alignments that transcend East/West dichotomies. A final contentious classification engaged with in the follow pages is the Balkans. Misnamed for a mountain range in the 1800s, it was not until 1878, when Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia gained their independence, that the term ‘Balkan’ became commonplace (Mazower, xxviii). Historian Mark Mazower writes that ‘[f]rom the very start, the Balkans was more than a geographical concept’, one that evoked a series of stereotypes associated with the ‘the wild and lawless countries between the Adriatic and Black Seas’ (Mazower, xxviii). Since 1989, when some of the ‘former Eastern Europeans became Central Europeans’ and later transformed again into ‘new Europeans’, the Balkans have again been relegated to the periphery (Iordanova 2005: 237). Yet, as Dina Iordanova points out, within this problematically European space, often described as ‘Europe’s doorstep’ (see Chapter 13), ‘real exchanges’ have been fostered after the end of communism, resulting in a ‘vibrant and viable cultural space that includes Greece and Turkey as well as the former communist states’ (Iordanova 2005: 238). Thus, despite the fact that the term ‘Balkan’ often designated a space relegated to Europe’s periphery engrained with negative connotations of ‘violence, savagery, primitivism’ (Mazower, xxviii), it also demarcates a vibrant and variable cultural zone that transcends East/West dichotomies. The use of the above terms will vary in
the chapters that follow, as we have elected to allow the authors of each essay to employ the geographic signifiers of their choice.

One final necessary clarification relates the scope of the geographic parameters of this volume. The films under consideration cover European spaces from Spain in the West to Armenia in the East. Those nations, however, are on the fringes of this volume’s scope and we arrived there in only an itinerant fashion, via voyages narrated in a French and in a Romanian film. Our attention is primarily focused on the centre of the continent – a grouping that encompasses nations on both sides of the Cold War divide – and the ‘East’. For the purposes of this volume, our Eastern boundary corresponds to the border of the European Union. As with any endeavour of this nature, it was impossible to include everything we would have liked to, and certain nations were left out.