

# *Code Unknown*: European Identity in Cinema

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A review of recent scholarly writing on European cinema suggests that the two most significant developments in European cinema in the last couple of decades -- the trend to national and cultural fragmentation, on the one hand, and to pan-Europeanization on the other hand -- have shifted the debate from the question, "*What is the identity of European cinema?*" (i.e. how does it differ from other cinemas, particularly from Hollywood) to the question, "*What is European identity in cinema?*" and, more specifically, "*What identities are represented in European cinema?*" (Petrie, 1992: 3). [\[1\]](#) This rephrasing is significant because it reorients the whole discussion of European cinema from a predominantly *formal* analysis (the "identity" of European cinema is a matter of its formal or stylistic differences from Hollywood cinema, differences that are more or less immediately recognizable and often self-consciously foregrounded by European filmmakers themselves) to a predominantly *material* analysis (European cinema is examined in terms of the different identities in Europe it represents and the common experiences these identities share). That the New European Cinema is increasingly defined by a shared subject matter -- stories of marginalization, displacement, and exile -- rather than by shared formal or stylistic features can be attributed to the widely recognized necessity to develop a strong pan-European film industry, which demands the production of films exploring shared European experiences rather than formally and stylistically experimental films less easily exportable in the larger European market (insofar as audiences identify with *particular types of stories* rather than with *particular film styles*). At the same time, however, the redefinition of European cinema is part of a more general re-evaluation of "the cultural turn" in the humanities and social sciences (Wayne, 2002: 105).

One of the consequences of "the cultural turn" was an excessive emphasis on "difference" within the discourse of multiculturalism, which tended to blur the distinction between "realistic" cinema and "representative" cinema, a type of cinema defined by the assumption that certain identities in Europe are *in need of being represented*. Formerly marginalized identities were elevated into a "criterion" of film realism in an attempt to make up (in fact, overcompensate) for all past "evil" grand narratives, "the nation state", "national identity" and "national cinema" being the usual culprits. Not only was the marginal invested with the potential to give us access to the real, but the real itself was defined by its degree of unfamiliarity and Otherness, in a word by its *difference*. As Mike Wayne observes, however, stories about the margins of Europe were too often "little" stories trying to get extra mileage from their alleged resistance to grand, essentializing narratives:

Yet there is often a sense in which telling 'smaller stories' gets conflated with telling rather inconsequential stories [?] There is also the danger that the small story, while it has the chance to focus in on [?] the specificities of culture,

must also guard against a tendency [?] to emphasize cultural eccentricity which risks becoming?a kind of cosmopolitan whimsy. (Wayne, 2002: 22)

Although cultural theory construed difference positively, its prioritization of difference deemphasized experiences shared by all Europeans and ignored the formation of a pan-European cinema. In opposition to cultural theory's fetishization of "difference", Marxist-oriented critics argue that "what European cinemas share is a set of common problems and needs rather than a common culture" (Wayne, 2002: 27). Abandoning the purely formal principle of multiculturalism as useless in defining the identity of new European cinema, the materialist critique of the cultural turn emphasizes the fact that in the post-Cold War period the fate of all European nations is determined by the same variable -- the flow of capital -- which means that the conflicts, inequalities and injustices brought about by capital create the most immediate conditions for a shared European experience. [2] A truly pan-European cinema -- one that would be a viable competitor in the on-going resistance to American cultural imperialism -- is more likely to be built on *identification* (stories that all Europeans can identify with) rather than on mere *recognition* (what I have called here "representative" cinema, whose main purpose is, more often than not, to merely *recognize* the existence of various marginalized groups in Europe). The simultaneous globalization and localization of culture and identity -- the waning of the national as a result of the rise of transnational powers like the American Free Trade Agreement and the European Union, and the simultaneous increasing importance of micro-identities resisting the homogenizing effects of globalization -- has made it imperative to abandon the naive, vague notion of multiculturalism with its hollow celebration of "difference" in favor of the notion of a migrant, polycentric, hybrid and diasporic identity. Insofar as European cinema's double-voiced, multi-leveled or polyphonic discourse -- a discourse that becomes especially palpable in contemporary migrant and diasporic European cinema -- has served to distinguish it from Hollywood's dramatic or monologic discourse, which is "by its very nature alien to genuine polyphony" (Bakhtin, 1984: 34), European filmmakers' increasing preoccupation with subjects such as immigration, cross-border travel, language displacement, the experiences of various racial, ethnic and class minorities, poverty, crime and urban violence has been welcome as a "return" to European cinema's traditional commitment to realism. [3]

Migrant and diasporic European cinema attempts to provide the basis for constituting audiences "horizontally" across national boundaries rather than vertically along national lines. Migrant and diasporic films differ from the other three types of films produced by national cinemas within a global context. Unlike low-budget films targeting the local market and dealing with unexportable cultural material, migrant and diasporic films explore a subject that cuts across national and cultural borders, namely the very subject of borders (real and metaphorical). Unlike national cinema targeting international markets and reifying national identity into familiar national stereotypes (e.g. British heritage films or German Heimat films), migrant and diasporic films dramatize the weakening of the national and the increasing importance of micro-identities as resistances to the homogenizing effects of globalization. Finally, unlike cross-border films, whose travelogue-type narrative structure too often exoticizes other national cultures by subordinating them to a Western or Westernized traveler's gaze (e.g. Theo Angelopoulos' *Ulysses' Gaze*), migrant and diasporic films remain grounded in the specific social, political and cultural dynamics of a particular nation even as they challenge both the "perennialist" and the "modernist" theory of the nation.

Perennialists define the "nation" in cultural terms as a "people" linked to a particular ancestral territory or "homeland" and held together by a collective memory, which gives rise, over

time, to "ethno-history" (Smith, 2001: 9-31). The perennialist notion of the nation, which depends on the atmospheric evocation of myths, symbols, traditions, national costumes and memories, emphasizes a nation's embeddedness in history: the *primary* concern of the nation is not with modernity but with identity and history. "Ethnoscapes" play an especially important role in linking generations and constructing the idea of "home" in agrarian societies where the relatively low levels of mobility render migration a particularly painful experience. A national cinema rooted in a perennialist notion of the nation often reproduces "ethnoscapes" with the greatest possible verisimilitude or authenticity, which, however, is poetic and popular rather than merely factual (Smith, 2000: 45-61). The perennialist theory of the nation has become obsolete in the age of globalization as migration is increasingly becoming the norm rather than the exception and as the process of industrialization is speeded up everywhere, including in formerly predominantly agrarian societies (e.g. in Balkan states).

According to the modernist theory of nationalism, nations are a relatively recent -- dating back to the eighteenth century -- and specifically European phenomenon. Modernist theory -- represented, for instance, by Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* -- applies social communication theory to the debates around nationalism, positing mediated communication as central to the formation of a sense of national identity. This argument privileges what is internal to the communicative community over what lies outside it. However, as Philip Schlesinger has argued, the functionalism of social communication theory, on which studies of national cinemas are based, tends to produce an image of a strongly bounded communicative community, an image that has been increasingly challenged by the globalization of communication (Schlesinger, 2000: 19-32). The "imagined community" argument -- the idea that the nation is constituted through certain rituals of mass communication, which supposedly help a dispersed collective imagine itself as a national collectivity -- does not take into consideration the instability or contingency of the national and, instead, privileges films which narrate the nation as a tightly-knit, homogeneous collectivity, a finite, closed-off space impervious to other identities besides national ones (Higson, 2000: 63-75). [4] The modernist theory of the nation is not an appropriate model for studying migrant and diasporic films, because it is still premised on the idea of "belonging" -- as well as its complementary idea of "exclusion" -- even if belonging is no longer conceived as inherited but as constructed.

The most appropriate model for discussing migrant and diasporic cinema, a model that attempts to bypass the notion of "belonging" underlying both the sentimentalism of the perennialist theory of the nation and the functionalism of the modernist theory of the nation, is Balibar's theory of a type of community that is not premised on the idea of belonging but instead seeks to separate "citizenship" from "nationhood." In his book *We, the People of Europe?: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* Balibar challenges the two dominant theories of the nation by analyzing one particular experience shared by all Europeans today, the experience of borders. Borders, argues Balibar, "are no longer entirely situated at the outer limit of territories; they are dispersed a little everywhere, wherever the movement of information, people, and things is happening and is controlled" (2004: 1-2). The movement of borders from the edge to the center of the public sphere is the first step toward the decoupling of citizenship from nationality and the establishment of "a citizenship without community", not "European citizenship" but "citizenship in Europe", the shared construction of citizenship by the diverse inhabitants of Europe" (Ibid: 177). A "citizenship without community" demands the desacralization of borders, which does not mean their literal opening but rather their deterritorialization: if currency and information are no longer linked to territory and to

the nation-state, citizens -- and their rights -- ought to be equally deterritorialized. Balibar's notion of a "citizenship in Europe" rather than a "European citizenship" is premised on a reconceptualization of the accepted notion of "community" or "belonging" that defines the nation-state. Nationalism, as Balibar understands it, is

[T]he organic ideology that corresponds to the national institution, and this institution rests upon the formulation of a rule of exclusion, of visible and invisible "borders" materialized in laws and practices. Exclusion -- or at least unequal ("preferential") access to particular goods and rights depending on whether one is a national or a foreigner, or belongs to the community or not -- is thus the very essence of the nation-form (Ibid: 23).

It is precisely the assumption that community is predicated on a rule of exclusion that Balibar questions, trying instead to think of citizenship "without" or "beyond" community. There is nothing "natural" or "self-evident" in the idea of community based on exclusion; rather, this is just a logic "founded on the formal schema of all or nothing (either belonging or else non-belonging)" (Ibid: 67). For one thing, it is not even clear that a generic -- i.e. common -- notion of "the common" or of "community" exists. Drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy's book *The Inoperative Community*, specifically on the notion of a "community without community," Balibar agrees with Nancy that "it is not exclusion that forms the deepest level of social alienation but, in a certain way, inclusion insofar as it goes hand in hand with a normative fetishization of being-in-common" (Ibid: 69).

Balibar's work is helpful in illuminating a subtle but crucial difference between the construction of marginal identities as Other, even when this is done with the "good intention" of recognizing their existence, their dignity, and their human and civil rights, and, on the other hand, the construction of marginal identities as autonomous identities "capable" (where "capable" signifies a kind of "negative freedom") of self-marginalization, self-exoticization, and self-victimization. Once we reject the idea of the nation as an "imagined community" based on the complementary principles of belonging and exclusion, the very meaning of "marginal" is reversed: margins reveal their own potential to differ from themselves, rather than differing only from (i.e. being objectified only by) the center.

As an alternative to the risks of objectification inherent in cultural theory's notion of identity, the concept of "migrant" or "diasporic" identity has been central to the redefinition of European identity in European cinema of the post-Cold War period. [5] "Migrant" signifies the literal displacement of various marginal groups, e.g. legal or illegal immigrants, first or second generation immigrants, various subcultures within these migrant communities. In recent migrant and diasporic films marginal identities are not merely "recognized" as "different" or "marginal"; instead, they are represented as differing from themselves, producing their own "underothers" against which they define themselves as "authentic". *Code Unknown: Incomplete Tales of Several Journeys* (2000), *Head-On* (2004), *Inch' Allah Dimanche* (2001), *Chaos* (2001), *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), *Lola and Billy the Kid* (1999), *Gadjo Dilo* (1997), *100% Arabica* (1997), *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002), *Flowers from Another World* (1999) and *Up and Down* (2004) do not merely advocate the recognition and inclusion of the margins or the marginalization of the centre. Rather than focusing on the most obvious or "visible" conflicts/differences between the center and the periphery, between nationals and foreigners, these films demonstrate that margins create their own margins. Further, they deterritorialize nationality by deterritorializing the notion of the "border", not by opening up

borders but by redrawing them along transnational -- social, class, gender, political and generational -- lines.

Michael Haneke's films reflect the contradictory nature of the process of globalization. On the one hand, the effects of globalization can be described in terms of expansion, inclusion, dispersal and multiplication manifested, for example, in the increasing interest in stories featuring multiple protagonists from different social classes, ethnic and racial groups, or nations. However, when the movement of large numbers of people across national borders becomes a universal phenomenon -- especially in a territory as small as that of Europe -- the likelihood of encounters and, more importantly, conflicts between various displaced people and the residents of the territories in which they are displaced, increases dramatically. Under these circumstances, what earlier might have appeared as abstract problems (migration and diaspora) become an intimate part of everyone's life i.e., they become localized. The structure of Haneke's *Code Unknown* dramatizes this dialectic between the global and the local: the story unfolds by means of dispersal and expansion, including characters from diverse ethnic, racial, social and national backgrounds while refraining from privileging a single, regulating point of view, but, at the same time, this expansion/dispersal turns every moment and every space into a potential site of conflict. The different protagonists in the film, who have nothing "in common", are brought together by the sheer force of accident (Jean throws a piece of scrap paper in Maria's lap thereby provoking Amadou's indignation). Like Balibar, Haneke is interested in encounters between people who have nothing in common because it is precisely such conflicts that force people to question accepted ideas of "community" and to think through the just distribution of human and civil rights.

It is not only on the level of subject matter that Haneke's film can be said to raise questions of "community," "humanity" and "nationhood"; rather, these questions are implicit in the fragmentary structure of the film, thereby assigning a moral and political function to the fragment. The fragmentary structure of *Code Unknown* should not, however, be seen as merely enacting the failure of communication that constitutes the film's subject matter. Such a reading casts Haneke in the role of a romantic pessimist who longs after an ideal of community he knows perfectly well is unattainable. On the contrary, the fragmentary structure undermines the utopian idea of a community premised on a vague, and thus problematic, notion of the "common". In the "community without community" that Haneke envisions (after Balibar) the principles of democracy are tested on a daily basis rather than taken for granted. From this point of view, the conflicts Haneke's characters stumble upon in their daily routine are not merely "proof" of the failure of the idea of "community"; rather, conflicts are absolutely essential to the preservation of justice and democracy not as abstract principles but as living, concrete problems that demand our immediate attention and response.

*Code Unknown* (like all of Haneke's films) explores the victim/victimizer dialectic that was also a major concern of Fassbinder's cinema. Both Haneke and Fassbinder (in films like *Katzelmacher*, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, and *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*) reject the simplistic, binary view of oppression that automatically assigns the blame to empowered characters, thereby ruling out any chance for subjective agency among disempowered characters. In *Code Unknown*, everyone is both guilty and wronged. For instance, while the likable and fragile Anne easily wins our sympathy, it is not entirely clear that she is free of racial biases (the film accommodates both interpretations). In the subway scene she is accosted by two Arab teenagers who accuse her of being a beautiful, arrogant woman who doesn't want to mix with commoners, let alone Arabs like them. Just as in an earlier scene she

fails to react to the cries of a neighboring child abused by its parents, she once again fails to act and simply moves to another seat, though we can't tell if she is really guilty of the arrogance the two Arabs attribute to her or is merely trying to avoid a direct confrontation. Conversely, the scene can also be read as an instance of reverse racism, with the two Arabs incorrectly assuming that Anne is a racist just because she is white.

Even as Haneke seeks to expose and condemn the principles of exclusion underlying various forms of oppression and victimization -- personal, ethnic, and national -- he does not point the finger at those occupying privileged positions of power and thus most likely to perpetuate established strategies of exclusion; instead, he shows that the principles of exclusion and marginalization operate in exactly the same way among both the powerful and the powerless. Marginalization and exclusion from the community (regardless of how that community is defined: the family, the ethnic group, the race, or the nation) is an abstract principle that transcends particular historical or political circumstances. If *Code Unknown* is a film about social alienation and the failure of communication, this failure is by no means presented simply in terms of "the victimizers" failing to understand "the victimized" or vice versa. There are (at least) two scenes in the film that suggest that just the opposite is the case i.e., that marginalization and the failure of communication happen "within" the margins as well.

The opening and closing scenes of the film show a group of deaf children, whose "deafness" is usually constructed as "marginal" from the perspective of those with an unaffected sense of hearing. However, as the scenes make painfully clear, even those who are supposed to possess the specific "technical competence" required for decoding the messages of other members of their "community" (the "community of the deaf") prove incapable of decoding the messages they receive. Later in the film, the Romanian character, Maria, is extradited back to Romania after the French authorities establish her illegal status in France, and we see her break down in front of another Romanian woman. Maria confesses that she once gave money to a gypsy beggar and when she saw how dirty the gypsy was, she ran to wash her hands. Thus the film exposes the analogy between Western Europeans' exclusion of East Europeans from the "European community" on the one hand (Maria recalls a day when a well dressed man on Boulevard St. Germain threw money in her lap, obviously disgusted with her), and Eastern Europeans' exclusion of gypsies both from their respective "national communities" and, more generally, from the "community of humans".

Fatih Akin's film *Head-On* differs from such obvious predecessors as *Katzelmacher* or *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. Unlike Fassbinder, Akin does not present a conflict between Germans and foreigners (Turks) but explores conflicts within Turkish immigrant identity. In contrast to Fassbinder's films, in which the positions of "victim" and "victimizer" are preset and it's only a question of the characters taking turns occupying each position, in *Head-On* the coordinates of the margins are not predetermined by nationality but depend on a more complex set of highly particular circumstances, while the "center" is visibly absent: German characters occupy a secondary place in the narrative and in terms of screen time they are barely visible.

In *Head-On*, Sibel, a young second-generation Turkish-German woman, regularly driven to vain suicide attempts to assert her independence from her oppressively traditional family, marries a complete stranger, Cahit, in order to move out of her parents' home. Just when the two of them realize they are actually in love, in a fit of jealousy provoked by the ethnic and sexist slurs of one of Sibel's casual German lovers, Cahit murders him and is sent to jail. Sibel's family renounces her and she is forced to return to Turkey where she wanders aimlessly, looks for drugs, and is eventually shot in the street by a gang of Turkish men.

Upon his release from jail, Cahit returns to Turkey in search of Sibel, who is now married and has a child. Following a passionate reunion, Cahit convinces Sibel to leave her husband and accompany him to the village where he was born. However, on the day they are supposed to leave together she fails to show up at the bus station.

Sibel's identity is continuously interrogated, both in the first part of the film during which we see her in Germany and in the second when she crosses the border to go back to Turkey. Although on the surface Sibel appears to renounce the traditional role of a Turkish woman, it gradually becomes clear that underneath her westernized image and her relaxed sexuality (which has more to do with her age than with her nationality) she still identifies as Turkish and, predictably, falls in love with a Turkish man rather than with any of her German casual lovers. Her traditional beliefs resurface in the first intimate scene with Cahit when she warns him that if they actually have intercourse, their fake marriage will become real.

The most striking change in Sibel's conflicted search for identity happens in Istanbul, where she suddenly "loses" the typically feminine clothes she wore in Germany and dons men's clothes and mannerisms. The queering of her identity underscores the sense of displacement she feels in her home country: in Germany she refuses to identify as Turkish, even as her Turkish beliefs resurface on many occasions, and in Turkey she refuses to identify as Turkish, even though, ultimately, she acts in accordance with tradition (she does not dishonor her new husband and child by leaving them). Her identity is constantly called into question on both sides of the border and by the specific contexts in which she finds herself.

Rather than emphasizing Sibel's difference or marginality as a second-generation Turkish-German woman, i.e. rather than contrasting Germans and Turkish-Germans, the film contrasts Sibel's internally divided identity -- which is figured as "authentic" -- with the unproblematized identity of her workaholic cousin, a successful business woman still living in Turkey, whom Sibel scorns. Sibel is presented with two kinds of identities, both of which she rejects: she does not identify with the traditional image of a Turkish woman her own family seeks to impose on her, but neither does she identify with her Turkish cousin's Western work ethic, business ambition, and entrepreneurial spirit i.e. she refuses to be either a Turkish woman living in Germany or a westernized Turk living in Turkey.

*Gadjo Dilo (The Crazy Stranger)*, a film by Tony Gatlif, a filmmaker of Gypsy and Algerian descent but of French nationality, is set on the poor outskirts of a Romanian village, with no visual references to France where the protagonist comes from. As Dina Iordanova points out in her Editorial for the 44.2 issue of *Framework* devoted entirely to screen images of "Romanies", the representation of gypsies "has repeatedly raised questions of authenticity versus stylization, and of patronisation and exoticisation, in a context marked by overwhelming ignorance of the true nature of Romani culture and heritage." (Iordanova, 2003) The danger of exoticisation is not limited to Romani culture, of course: Kusturitzza's films have been criticized for participating in a similar kind of "reverse racism which celebrates the exotic authenticity of the Balkan Other" (Zizek, 2000: 5). Iordanova's editorial is exemplary of the danger of defining realism in terms of marginalization, of identifying the real with the marginal. Having criticized the tendency to exoticize gypsy culture, she continues:

It is important to acknowledge, however, that lately there is a tendency to make socially conscious feature dramas that are genuinely concerned with the Romani predicament. With varying degrees of success, some recent films have attempted to substitute *traditional Gypsy*

*plots' excessive exoticism with rough realism. ? 'Gypsy exotica' and 'Romani predicament'* type of films will most likely continue to coexist side by side. Two other genres -- documentary and ethnographic film -- have put out a growing number of 'Romani'-themed films. Documentaries are largely attempting to *'correct the record' by featuring poverty, discrimination, and racism in realistic, socially truthful depictions of Romani lives.* ? For now it is highly unlikely that the image of the captivating singing and dancing Gypsy temptress would be replaced in popular imagination by *the image of a muddy and hungry Romani child.* (2003, my emphasis)

Realism is here identified with specific themes -- poverty, discrimination -- and even specific images (the muddy and hungry Romani child, which, however, is as clichéd and exotic as the image of the dancing, happy gypsy). The "rough realism" Jordanova contrasts with "excessive exoticism" is simply a self-effacing exoticism: it does not immediately strike us as exotic merely because it defines itself negatively (as a reaction to, and a "critique" of, exoticism).

Although the original title of the film (in Romany) together with the plot, which figures the Frenchman, Stéphane, as an outsider ("crazy stranger"), seem to simply reverse the relationship between "center" and "margins", such suspiciously perfect symmetry is kept in check by the central conflict in the film, which, significantly, is not that between the gypsies and the Frenchman, but rather between the gypsies, often regarded as the quintessential marginalized group in Europe, and the Romanians, another "outsider" nation. The film draws an analogy between the exclusionary politics that operate both on the larger scale of the E.U. and its margins, and on the lower scale, within the margins.

The film fragments viewer identification by complicating the "recognition" (i.e. objectification) of the Other. In earlier scenes, through editing and camera placement we are invited to observe, from a detached position, the colorfulness of gypsy culture: on many occasions the camera shows gypsies dancing, followed by reaction shots of Stéphane, who looks alternatively perplexed, charmed or awed by their customs, songs, dances, and drinking habits. Gradually, such reaction shots become rarer as Stéphane is integrated into the gypsy community, abandoning the detached stance of an ethnographer. In fact, his identity is represented as nomadic from the very beginning. The first time we see him, he is traveling on foot, in the middle of winter, on some out of the way country road in Romania. Later, we learn that his father was a nomad too and that his favorite song, in search of which his son has set out, was a song by the gypsy singer Nora Loca. In an early scene, when he wakes up in old Izidor's house, after a night of heavy drinking, the gypsies lined up outside his window note his torn shoes and his strange language and conclude scornfully that he is a bum, a crazy stranger. Thus, even before Stéphane or the viewer have had the time to identify *them* as "crazy strangers", the gypsies steal this Othering gesture. It is namely Stéphane's initial marginalization that eventually makes his "gypsyfication" convincing: having listened with awe and appreciation, but with no understanding, to gypsy songs, in the last scene Stéphane digs a small grave in which he buries the fruits of his "ethnographic research" and with them the stereotypes of the childlike, dancing, singing gypsy.

Recalling some of the strategies of postcolonial cinema (particularly the tropicalist phase of Cinema Novo characterized by a carnivalesque inversion of established hierarchies, as in Nelson Pereira dos Santos' 1971 *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman* and Carlos Diegues' 1976 *Xica da Silva*), *Gadjo Dilo* has its gypsy protagonist Izidor adopt a paternalistic stance toward the Frenchman, continuously referring to him as "my Frenchman" and effectively defending Stéphane's rights before the Romanian villagers who, in another gesture of

inversion of center and margins, suspect the Frenchman of stealing their chickens and determine to drive him out of their village.

In line with both *Head-On* and *Gadjo Dilo*'s representation of the margins as producing their own margins, in *Inch' Allah Dimanche*, Yamina Benguigui (born in France to Algerian immigrants) tells the story of Zouina who leaves Algeria along with her children and her intransigent mother-in-law to join her husband in France. The film is based on real events of the mid 1970s when the French government, which had recruited men from North Africa after the end of World War II, relaxed its immigration policy and allowed the families of Algerian men to join them. Locked up in her new home in a strange country, constantly criticized by her conservative and strongly religious mother-in-law, beaten up or ignored by her husband, Zouina's only friend is her French neighbor Nicole and a French bus driver infatuated with her. Although the plot synopsis on the back of the DVD introduces the film as "a memoir of the sense of isolation and vulnerability that the immigrant family experienced upon arrival in France at the time when racial integration was virtually non-existent," the central conflict in the film is actually not between the Algerian immigrants and the French. With the exception of her immediate neighbors, Zouina is welcomed by the neighborhood -- the local grocery store lets her buy food on credit, her friend Nicole buys her presents, the French widow, whose husband was killed in Algeria, helps her establish contact with another Algerian family.

As in *Head-On*, the conflict here is that between Zouina and her mother-in-law's rigid traditional beliefs and, even more importantly, between Zouina and Malika, another Algerian immigrant. While Zouina is intrigued by the French radio shows she listens to, and by Nicole's feminist beliefs, Malika, who has immigrated to France 15 years ago, is appalled by Zouina's "untraditional" desires. There is a strong parallel here between, on one hand, the opposition between the older immigrant who insists possessively on her "pure" Algerian identity and the more recent immigrant whose conflicted, divided identity is figured as more authentic, and, on the other hand, the opposition between Sibel's cousin who never left her country but is more westernized than Sibel, who was born in Germany. To continue with the similarities between the two films, the queering of Sibel's identity in Istanbul is echoed in Zouina's sexual liberation and gender emancipation: becoming French is implicitly equated with becoming an independent woman, while being stuck in one's old, traditional ways is associated with self-imposed gender marginalization and martyrdom. Thus, the film redraws the borders not along national but along gender lines.

While *Inch' Allah Dimanche* follows the emancipation of an Algerian woman through her friendship with a French woman, Coline Serreau's *Chaos* (2001) presents the opposite scenario: an Algerian immigrant's struggle for independence provokes the "awakening" of a white middle-class French woman who rebels against her traditional role as mother and wife. The story revolves around a middle-class French family (Helene, Paul, and their son Fabrice) and their accidental but momentous encounter with a young woman of Algerian descent, Noemie/Malika. The premise of the film is similar to that of *Code Unknown*, namely that self-absorbed, middle-class Western Europeans have only random encounters to count on if they are to break through the cocoon of privilege in which they have ensconced themselves. *Chaos* begins with a young Algerian prostitute, who calls herself Noemie but whose real name is Malika, being pursued by her ruthless French pimps in the streets of Paris. She throws herself in front of a car and pleads for help but the pimps catch up with her and beat her senseless. Helene and Paul, who happen to be sitting in the car, react to what's happening differently: Helene expresses concern for the young woman while Paul, worried about

possible problems with the police, quickly washes the blood off of the windshield and drives away. The rest of the film follows Helene as she takes care of Malika in the hospital, helps her get back on her feet, protects her from the pimps who go after her, and eventually helps her expose the prostitution ring of which she herself is a victim. [6]

Malika's is a story about gender rather than about national identity: the film places a greater emphasis on Malika's conflict with her tyrannical, patriarchal, fundamentalist family than on her status as an Algerian immigrant in France. [7] Her problems proceed not from her failure to adapt to a new culture but from her own culture, which she condemns as rigid, intolerant and hypocritical. For instance, when Malika looks for help from a "fight against racism" organization, the Algerian man she speaks to refuses to help because she has "disgraced Islam". Malika's family disowns her for disgracing Islam but all their religiousness melts away when she sends them presents bought with the money she makes as a prostitute. They do not reject the "godless" capitalist system but gladly exploit it: for example, Malika's father does not seek to marry her to an Algerian man because of a commitment to act in strict accordance with his own religious beliefs but because he knows he will profit from her marriage. In this film, the already unequal status of women in Muslim society lends itself to being exploited by the capitalist system, which evaluates everything on the basis of its exchange value.

However, it is important to note that Malika is not merely a victim of the system she criticizes; she is smart enough to exploit it for her own purposes. She learns to play the game of her enemies (playing the stock market, laundering money) i.e. her independence is bound up with sheer opportunism. In fact, her relationship with the dying old millionaire borders on pre-meditated murder: she plans his seduction very carefully, forces him to leave her all of his money, and indirectly contributes to his heart attack. She also tells her sister Zora to get her diploma but then to run away from her family, suggesting that Malika believes Zora and herself have a good chance of making it on their own provided they are given an equal start (money and education) outside of the family. In the end Malika chooses capitalism over adherence to family or culture.

Like *Inch' Allah Dimanche* and *Chaos*, Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach*, which explores a day in the life of a group of Indian women living in Birmingham, subordinates the problem of national identity to that of gender. The film depicts the conflict between nationals and non-nationals as an instance of the patriarchal exploitation of women and, within that framework, exposes racism and intolerance within the community of immigrants as well as in the interactions between two groups of immigrants (Indian and Jamaican). A group of Indian women who have emigrated to Birmingham a long time ago, gather for a day on the beach to escape family problems defined as the results of patriarchy: one married Indian woman takes her son and runs away from her abusive husband because she refuses to obey his traditional family. When the husband tries to get his son back the women defend her and scare him away; another, a young Indian woman tries to decide whether to keep the baby she has just found out she is carrying while her family turn against her when they find out the father is Jamaican; the Jamaican man is advised by his friends to abandon his Indian girlfriend; two Indian teenage girls rebel against traditional upbringing and pursue a couple of young British men. Even the scene that supposedly dramatizes the exclusion of Indian women from the nation -- a scene in which a group of British young men abuse the women verbally with racial slurs -- constructs nationalism in terms of patriarchy rather than nationality. The British characters in the film are secondary to the plot and represented in two extreme, stereotypical ways: the racist lower-class waitress at the coffee shop and the patronizing British gentleman

who courts one of the Indian women and whose smug belief that he is contributing to her sexual awakening is mocked in a Bollywood-style song-and-dance sequence.

E. Kutlug Ataman's film *Lola and Billy the Kid* explores a Turkish immigrant subculture in Berlin through the eyes of Murat, a Turkish-German adolescent. The film introduces us to a group of Turkish men making a living in Berlin's underground as macho hustlers, transvestite night club performers, pimps and male prostitutes. Among them are the transvestite Lola and her macho man lover Billy the Kid. Lola, we learn, is Murat's brother though Murat has never met him because their older brother, Osman, had thrown her out in the street upon finding out about Lola's homosexuality and moved with Murat and their mother to Germany. As the relationship between Lola and Billy the Kid goes sour, Lola runs away only to be murdered by a gang of Neo-Nazis. Murat and Billy the Kid set out to avenge Lola's murder. Billy castrates one of the Germans responsible for Lola's death and is shot to death himself. Eventually Murat finds out that his older brother Osman is responsible for Lola's murder: Osman, it turns out, is a repressed homosexual.

Although on the surface *Lola and Billy the Kid* appears to be about the conflict between Turkish immigrants and Germans (the film is, indeed, peppered with racial slurs) the deeper issue here is the intolerance for, and the repression of, homosexuality by *both* Germans and Turkish-Germans alike. Billy, who is supposedly in love with Lola, demands that she undergo a sex change operation because he cannot reconcile himself with the idea that he, Billy, the macho man who charges others for oral sex with him, is in love with a man. The sexually repressed Osman turns his own shame into hatred for all homosexuals. The Germans' racist attacks are couched in sexual terms: from their point of view, all Turks are perverted homosexuals, and vice versa. When the German gang attempts to initiate its youngest member into their cleansing project, he goes along with it not because he hates Turks but because he is afraid to admit his own homosexual leanings. Like *Inch' Allah Dimanche*, which relates the Algerian immigrant's experience as a story of gender emancipation and sexual liberation, *Lola and Billy the Kid* conveys the experience of Turkish immigrants in Berlin as a story of sexual prejudice, lending it a transnational appeal. And like *Head-On* and *Gadjo Dilo*, Ataman's film explores the logic of exclusion within the margins by focusing on a subculture (transvestites, homosexuals) within the margins (Turkish immigrants) and locating intolerance and prejudice both in the "center" and in the "margins".

Mahmoud Zemmouri's *100% Arabica* explores the conflicts within the margins (in this case Algerian immigrants living -- some legally and others not -- in a poverty-stricken neighborhood on the outskirts of Paris known by the nickname "100% Arabica") rather than the clashes between the French Arabs and the French. The French are largely absent from the story -- all of which takes place in this neighborhood -- with the exception of a fake rent collector and the mayor of Paris who pays off Slimane, the imam of the local mosque, to reduce the amount of crime in the area by keeping people off the street and inside the mosque. The younger Muslims, however, are more interested in Algerian Rai music (the stars of the movie, Khaled and Cheb Mami, are well-known Rai singers) than in either a life of crime or a life devoted to Allah. [8] As the imam becomes increasingly concerned that the craze for Rap Oriental will cost him his subsidy, he attempts to reestablish his authority by arguing that music is a heresy (he makes this one up) and by threatening to inform on everyone who is illegally in France. Although there is a subplot revolving around the love between Muslim and non-Muslim French, the thrust of the film is the conflict *within* the French-Arab community, between the corrupt conservative imam and his cohorts, on one hand, and the hip young fans of Rai music, on the other hand.

Stephen Frears' *Dirty Pretty Things*, a "manifesto of the oppressed", introduces us, through an ensemble cast of legal and illegal immigrants in London, to an underground organ donor business, whereby immigrants sell their organs in return for a fake foreign passport. The film focuses on the stories of non-nationals, the only British characters being the two Immigration Authority officers, the clients of the organ donor business, seen sporadically, and a young prostitute. The story revolves around a young Turkish woman, Senay, who works as a chambermaid in a swanky West London hotel, all of whose employees are foreigners, including the Spanish hotel manager, Sneaky Juan, and the stereotypically large, good-humored and lascivious Slavic hotel porter. Senay dreams of getting an Italian passport and going to New York. She becomes involved with an illegal Nigerian immigrant, Okwe, who works as a cab driver and hotel receptionist.

The most prominent borders in the film are not drawn between the British and the non-British but between social classes and, within the "community" of non-nationals, between legal and illegal immigrants. Thus, the film points up the solidarity between the British prostitute Juliette and Senay, both equally disenfranchised, while, on the other hand, it draws an analogy between the sleek, unscrupulous Juan, who manipulates Senay into selling him her liver and sleeping with him in return for an Italian passport, and the Indian owner of a sewing business, who exploits his privileged legal status to force Senay, who is on the run from the Immigration Authorities, to perform sexual favors for him. Legal immigrants occupy the privileged status of the white West-European and employ the same strategies of exploitation to affirm their privileged status over the *sans-papiers*. The new redrawing of the borders along social, class and legal lines is made explicit in one of the most openly didactic scenes in the film, in which a rich, anonymous British client arrives at the hotel to collect the organ he has bought. Surprised that he is not met by the hotel manager with whom he usually does business, the client asks the group of foreigners who are delivering the organ to him in the middle of the hotel parking lot: "How come I have never seen you people?" Okwe replies: "Because we are the ones you don't see. We clean your rooms, drive your cabs and suck your cocks." The film constructs immigrants as the new European proletariat, the invisible labor force that drives the West-European market economy. Interestingly, although the film centers on the struggles of immigrants in London, America is idealized (through verbal references only, never visually) as the new frontier of freedom, a fairy tale-land where "they put Christmas lights in the trees and policemen ride on white horses in the park," the model for a classless, free society, the opposite of the prejudiced, hypocritical, class-determined West-European society.

Jab Hrebejk's absurdist comedy *Horem pádem (Up and Down, 2005)* opens with two truck drivers smuggling illegal immigrants from the Middle East into the Czech Republic, from where they plan to enter Germany. When the drivers forget the baby of one of the women they are smuggling in the back of the truck, they set out, from the video store that serves as a cover up for their black market for West-European electric appliances, to find a client who would buy the baby. Luckily, Miluska, the childless wife of Frantisek, a security guard and Sparta (soccer team) fan, who has been unsuccessfully stealing babies from the local amusement park, is a willing buyer. When Frantisek's Sparta "godfather" finds out that the baby is "black," he ostracizes his "godson" and delivers a long speech about what it means to be Czech and why, given that the "niggers" have spread to all corners of the world, he is entitled to insisting on keeping his little country, the Czech Republic, free of "niggers". A parallel story revolves around the family reunion of college professor Horecky, who has a heart attack in the middle of one of his classes on Migration, Immigration and Diaspora. The family reunion brings together his future second wife Hana, working at the Center for

Democracy and a refugee center, his first wife Vera, a former Russian-Czech translator who in many ways embodies the hidden and unself-conscious racism of the past communist regime and the passive-aggressive resentment toward the sophisticated, westernized post-communist second wife, and their son Martin, who emigrated to Australia during the communist regime, where he started a family of his own, marrying an aboriginal and keeping it a secret from his mother because of her racist views.

Like the other films discussed here, *Horem pádem* does not draw the borders simply between nationals and non-nationals but situates these borders within a political context, juxtaposing the nationalistic ideology of communism (which usually remains hidden, the most common assumption about communism being that it constructs, and enforces, a shared identity along class rather than national lines) with the liberalist, free-market ideology of post-communism where "anything goes" (babies are sold like cell phones and tape players in the back of a local video store). The family reunion dinner reveals the nationalistic perversion of communist ideology as Vera complains about the flooding of her old neighborhood with dirty and noisy gypsies, blacks and other foreigners from the "armpits of Europe." She does express a little more tolerance for the Vietnamese on account of their being "so quiet and hardworking." When Martin remarks that he is an immigrant himself, she replies at least he has adjusted to his new culture, but then blames him for adjusting too well i.e. becoming vegetarian and, thus, "less Czech". Vera's racism and intolerance are universal attitudes rather than personal idiosyncrasies: the small time crooks managing the "video store" cannot distinguish Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese people, because they all look the same to them, and they discuss with disgust and derision the Albanians, Romanians, Gypsies, Arabs and other foreigners, who, they argue, have taken over whole neighborhoods of Prague, making the Czech feel like an ethnic minority in their own country.

The film exposes and mocks Czech nationalism through the fanatic soccer fans to which it keeps returning again and again. At the end of the film, when the stolen baby is returned to his real mother, Frantisek is accepted back into the fold of the only "family" he knows, the soccer patriots. In a scene that presents their collectively watching of a soccer game as visually analogous to a Nazi mass rally, clapping hands, casting racial slurs at the black soccer players on the field, beating their chests and declaring their national pride, the film ridicules the construction of a superficial, artificial, primitive, patriarchal and racist sense of national unity. Significantly, this last scene is intercut with idyllic scenes of Martin, back in Australia, playing soccer with his half-aboriginal son, wearing a Sparta t-shirt, on a beautiful beach. Just as America is evoked as a model of tolerance in *Dirty Pretty Things*, here another country, geographically even further from Europe, across another ocean, serves as an example (or, rather, myth) of national harmony that is still out of reach for narrow-minded Europeans.

In his film *Flores de otro mundo* (*Flowers from Another World*, 1999), Spanish director Iciar Bollaín uses another strategy to redraw the borders between nationals and non-nationals: instead of focusing on the single story of an illegal Cuban immigrant who marries a Spanish farmer in order to acquire legal status in Spain, the director juxtaposes three parallel stories (involving two Cuban women and one Spanish woman) which are brought together by universal subjects -- romantic relationships, generational conflicts, and the differences between the life in the city and life on the periphery (a small village in the southern part of Spain) -- rather than by the issue of national identity. The question of national belonging which operates through inclusion/exclusion does come up in the derogatory attitude of the locals toward the two Cuban women. However, this problem is not the single central issue in

the film and the borders it establishes are complicated by redrawing/multiplying the lines of belonging/non-belonging across geographical (city/country), generational, and gender lines, and by leaving the endings of two of the stories open (the younger Cuban woman leaves her older Spanish husband, unwilling to settle down in the small village in return for legal immigrant status, and heads for Italy to be with her younger Italian lover, while the Spanish woman from the city decides she is unwilling to move to the village in order to pursue her relationship with a farmer).

The current interest in cross-border films and narratives of displacement is complemented by another equally significant thematic innovation: films obsessed with fate, destiny, chance and coincidence, for instance Krzysztof Kieslowski's *No End, Blind Chance, The Double Life of Veronique, A Short Film About Killing, A Short Film About Love, Trois Couleurs* and Tom Tykwer's *Winter Sleepers, Princess and the Warrior, Run Lola Run* and *Heaven*. Kieslowski's and Tykwer's films function within a kind of magical or metaphysical causality that lends random events the uncanny feel of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The associational (or hyper-associational) rather than dramatic narrative structure of these films lends support to Kracauer's conviction that film has an inherent affinity for the indeterminate, for "chance meetings, strange overlappings, and fabulous coincidences" (1997: 19). Films built around multiple intersecting stories and involving some kind of spatial displacement are cinematic, argues Kracauer, because they draw attention to "the solidarity of the universe" (Ibid: 64) revealed, for example, in the representation of things and events co-existing in different spaces. Thus, it is not only migrant and diasporic films that, through their exploration of Europeans' shared experience of borders, open up the possibility "to make comparisons, make links, forge solidarities" (Ibid: 23); Kieslowski's and Tykwer's "metaphysics of parallel worlds" (Orr, 2004: 313) also participates in this process of making connections and forging solidarities.

The identity of European cinema has often been loosely associated with a certain "European sensibility", a fleeting yet recognizable European "structure of feeling" defined as a mix of nostalgia and narcissism, melancholy and complacency. For instance, Antoine Compagnon diagnoses a fundamental ambivalence at the core of European consciousness, a typically European sense of morbid ennui or spleen" (Compagnon, 1992: 111). John Caughie bestows on "European sensibility" the more noble name of "ironic imagination", which manifests itself through oxymorons such as "serious playfulness", "intimate distance" or "passionate detachment" (Ibid: 41) i.e., through a continuous oscillation between a skeptical and a melodramatic imagination (the latter usually seen as more American than European, though Caughie warns against mapping this distinction geographically). Finally, Ien Ang reads "European sensibility" as a symptom of Europe's refusal to recognize its own colonial guilt, which comes back to haunt it in the form of a self-indulgent, quasi-existential feeling of loss, whose real historical causes remain safely occluded (Ibid: 26). The only way for European cinema to transcend this jaded, moody posture, this manufactured "no-exit" sensibility, is to give voice to the narratives of *dépaysement* told by exiles, expatriates, and migrants and to challenge the cultural essentialism subtending the idea of *Heimat*, an idea that constructs all who deviate from "the heterosexual, white, Anglo-Saxon, Christian credentials of the 'European' citizen" (Petrie, 1992: 2) as "alien others".

## Notes

[1] See Elisabeth Ezra's *European Cinema* (Oxford UP, 2004); Diana Holmes and Alison Smith's *100 Years of European Cinema: Entertainment or Ideology* (Manchester UP, 2000);

Mike Wayne's *The Politics of Contemporary European Cinema: Histories, Borders, Diasporas* (Intellect Books, 2002); Angus Finney's *The State of European Cinema: A New Dose of Reality* (Continuum, 2001); Duncan Petrie's *Screening Europe: Image and Identity in Contemporary European Cinema* (BFI Publishing, 1998); Wendy Everett's *European Identity in Cinema* (Intellect, 2005); Jill Forbes' and Sarah Street's *European Cinema: An Introduction* (Palgrave, 2000).

[2] Julia Dobson engages in the same kind of ideological critique in order to challenge the widely accepted (and value-laden) distinction between (good) European art cinema and (bad) Hollywood cinema by demonstrating how "the logic of patriarchal (Eurocentric) capitalism underlies seemingly different heterogeneous, nomadic texts" like the French films *Nikita* and *Les Diaboliques*, on one hand and their American remakes, on the other. See Julia Dobson, "Transatlantic Crossings: Ideology and the Remake" in Diana Holmes and Alison Smith (eds.) *100 years of European Cinema: Entertainment or Ideology?* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), pp183-194.

[3] The significance of cross-border films to the definition of European cinema is actually not new. As Peter Kramer argues in his article on Hollywood's production and marketing of *Roman Holiday*, cross-border stars (like Audrey Hepburn who was born and raised in several European countries and thus had a transnational identity that appealed to a pan-European audience), Hollywood's search for integrated markets was a significant factor contributing to European integration. See Peter Kramer, "Faith in Relations Between People': Audrey Hepburn, *Roman Holiday* and European Integration." in Diana Holmes and Alison Smith (eds.) *100 years of European Cinema: Entertainment or Ideology?* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), pp195-206.

[4] Higson uses examples from British cinema to make the point that films of the most popular British media events and films -- such as Diana's funeral or *The Full Monty* -- are better understood as transnational rather than as national phenomena. See Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (eds.) *Cinema and Nation* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp 63-75.

[5] Contemporary European films reflect the pervasive weakening of "the national"; however, their promotion of a postmodern "hybrid" and "polycentric" identity might be too vague to tell us anything meaningful about European identity for, after all, one could use the same terms ("hybrid", "diasporic" or "polycentric") to define American identity, Canadian identity or the identity of any other multicultural society. The usefulness of the term "hybrid" is undermined by the two mutually exclusive kinds of relationship to the past it implies: "[T]he notion of hybrid identities tends to downplay history and promote the possibility of remaking oneself, but on the other hand, the notion of hybridity also promotes the idea of the impossibility of mediation thus presenting history and the past as inescapable fate" (Wayne 2002:88). While the hybrid and diasporic notion of identity is more attuned to the present realities of cross-border travel than the old essentialist notion of identity, which viewed diaspora as a corruption of an original "pure" *heimat*, it also carries within it the problems inherent in the postmodern fascination with the continuous "shifting", "drifting" and "proliferation" of meanings and identities.

[6] Although critics praise the film as a cross-over between *Run Lola Run* and *Thelma and Louise*, and although it's not at all difficult to see it as a celebration of female solidarity, there is something rather unsettling about the way in which the two parallel stories -- Helene's

failing marriage and Malika's struggle for independence -- are interwoven. The very title of the film encourages us to regard the intrusion of the Algerian character in the life of the French couple as an exciting adventure that spices up their boring, automated lives and effortlessly navigates both Helene and Paul down the pernicious road toward self-discovery. After showing Helene that marriage enslaves women and that life as a single, tough woman is one never-ending adventure, Noemie/Malika proceeds to seduce Paul and Fabrice, both of whom find her sheer physical presence, and no doubt her exotic looks, maddening. Being the superb judge of character that she is, Noemie/Malika methodically corrects the mistakes other characters have made in their lives. Once she has driven Paul to love despair, she drives him to his mother's country house and effects their reconciliation (proof of which comes in the form of Paul's tears, the first he has shed in a long time). Sure enough, he has learned his lesson: he cannot deny help to a beaten up prostitute of Algerian descent for he might later fall in love with her.

[7] This does not mean, however, that she identifies herself as French: as she tells Helene, it was only when she received a French passport that she learned she was French. Belonging to the nation is not a matter of being a part of an ethno-community but rather a matter of citizenship: being French means being granted the same civil rights as everyone else.

[8] Algerian Rai music has been condemned by fundamentalist Muslims, causing many Rai musicians to immigrate to Paris. Zemmouri himself has been the target of death threats, because of his mockery of Islam and his enthusiasm for Rai music.

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