EUROPEAN VISIONS
Small Cinemas in Transition
Edited by Janelle Blankenship and Tobias Nagl
This volume examines the challenges cinemas in small European countries have faced since 1989. It explores how notions of scale and «small cinemas» relate to questions of territory, transnational media flows, and globalization. Employing a variety of approaches from industry analysis to Deleuze & Guattari’s concept of the «minor», contributions address the relationship of small cinemas to Hollywood, the role of history and memory, and the politics of place in post-Socialist cinemas.

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Screening Small European Nations: A Discursive Pre-History

In *The Cinema of Small Nations* Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie note that some of the small nations they feature in their volume “have been producing films since the silent era, but the idea of a specifically national cinema gained currency across the world in the 1970s and 1980s as part of the wider transformations that have refashioned global relations over the last thirty years.” Approaches to small cinemas rarely give the concept and practice a pre-history. For the purposes of introducing this volume (whose focus is primarily post-1989 European cinemas), we would like to argue that it was first in the silent era when the seeds of a discourse on European small cinemas were planted. In the first section of this introduction, we unearth some of these earlier debates in film history, situating the discourse on small cinemas and small nations within a longer history of market research, language strategies, and European film theory. Similar concerns often resurface in some of the contemporary discussions of policies and strategies used in European filmmaking today.

Debates on cinematic production, scale and nation-building in the age of Empire were often refractured through the lens of power imbalances, orientalist gestures and imperialist ideologies. It should come as no surprise that the cultural production of small nations, from the early 20th century onward, was also read through a colonialist framework. As early as 1924, journals such as *Visual Education* introduced a double standard for the cultural production of small nations. Educators, for example, argued that the “mean level of culture in all small nations” was higher than in the larger nation-states. Of course, in a grand colonial gesture such educators were also quick to state that this did not hold true for “backwards small nations.” Smallness here is not simply introduced as exceptional “other” to the imagined norm (of averaged-sized nation-states); smallness is also inscribed on the temporal axis in a manner that anthropologist Johannes Fabian has described as “allochronistic.” Such forms of political and
cultural “backwardness” exclude certain small nations from the present and shared discursive space of Western nationhood and place them on an earlier, pre-historical stage in the unfolding teleology of the modern nation-form.

In the imperialist logic of the late 19th century, the European colonies were often depicted as “small nations,” either frightfully dependent on the greater nations or in danger of being engulfed by their might. In an 1895 issue of The National and English Review (the year that saw the premiere of both the Lumière Cinematographe and the Skladanowsky Bioscop in Europe), a British writer poignantly used a moving picture metaphor to illustrate this power imbalance. Drawing a parallel to the projected power of magic lantern animation, the author argued that “each colony is in itself a small nation, which, if it stood alone could be swallowed up by the mere capacity for devouring which many larger and older nations possess,” a power imbalance that is comparable “to the marvels of the magic lantern – that of an unhappy blood-worm wriggling in the jaws of a water-tiger.”

The visual entertainment evoked here is a magic lantern exhibition on the marvels of the microscope. During the Victorian era showmen frequently used the lantern to animate and magnify miniscule animalcules such as “water-tigers” and “blood worms.” These popular larvae (*dytiscus marginalis* and *chironomus plumosus*) often appeared in Victorian treatises in descriptions of vernacular science displays involving animalcule tanks, compound microscopes, water cabinets and aquariums. The lantern with its power to animate and enlarge is not only an apt metaphor for colonialist displays; in the late 19th century the apparatus was also used as a propaganda device to spread the imperialist “light of culture.” Interweaving fantasy and reality, in some instances itinerant magic lantern showmen in Europe even created an imaginary imperialist cartography, (con-)fusing the European continent, Africa and the Indo-Australian archipelago.

As documented in magic lantern manuals and guides to early projection devices, microcinematography – magnifying animalia on the screen – could even be used in the *fin-de-siècle* period to illustrate the dangers of reverse colonialism to an awe-struck public. William K.L. and Antonia Dickson’s kinetoscope manual of 1895 waxes poetic about the horror of screening a magnified mosquito, a “monstrous Afrite” that could leave “a torrent of appalling impressions” upon the mind (“super-sensitive brain”) and body of the “sensitive” spectator:

An unseen enemy is usually voted to be particularly undesirable, but who would not close their eyes to the unimaginable horrors which micro-photography reveals in connection with the kinetoscope? Who would not prefer the mosquito as we know him, a brace of gossamer wings, a tiny bugler in the insectiferous ranks of creation, to this monstrous Afrite with its hungry and innumerable eyes, its ribbed and bat-like pinions, and its formidable arsenal of weapons? [...] What will be the effect of this torrent of appalling impressions upon the mental and physical tissues? Imagine a super-sensitive brain transported from these enlarged monstrosities to the magnifying lenses of dreamland. What howls of mortal
anguish one may expect [...]. our globe is likely to be peopled by singular modifications of existing types, engendered by the frightful scientific discoveries of the day, so that we may confidently look forward to a race of beings before which the twin horrors of Sicily, the Chimeras, the Cyclops and Centaurs, the triple-headed dogs and seven-headed serpents of ancient Greece are respectable and humdrum characters.  

In this spectatorial fantasy, there is the fear that the tiny or miniscule Other could grow monstrous, insidiously infecting or poisoning Empire. This is a game of Lilliputian proportions, one that informs the discourse on small nations from the late 19th century to the 1920s and 1930s. As Tom Nairn writes in *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited*: “Monaco and Liechtenstein existed then as today, exasperatingly small pebbles in the otherwise perfectly fitting shoe of viability’s conventional wisdom. But the League (of Nations) viewed them as unworthy nuisances, feudal vestiges capable only of provoking conflicts among serious nation-states.” Although Nairn argues that after the 1997 election of “New Labour” conditions shifted in ways that are highly favorable for the small nation-states or even microstates, he finds public opinion on such microstates still unfavorable: “Tiny states are jokes, rarely referred to in the metropolitan media except in terms of quaint happenings and uniforms – the equivalent of the ‘feudal vestiges’ or ‘left-overs’ theory [...] the sole alternative to this seems to be the reprobates theory, which views them essentially as disgraceful and probably germ-laden fleas of the world order [...] tax-havens, unseemly focuses of conspicuous or super-rich consumption (Monaco), or vulgar pustules of duty-free commerce (Andorra).” Nairn concludes that it was the collapse of the British Empire that “bequeathed most microstates to the New International Order or Disorder.”

Within the context of fin-de-siècle moving picture modernity one finds further instances of late 19th century magic lantern metaphors conjured up in popular accounts to demonstrate the frailty of small nations and the perceived need for such nations to be linked to an imperial order. The Belgian economist Baron Émile Louis Victor de Laveleye traveling through the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the late 1880s provides one illustrative example. He recalls a conversation with a member of parliament in Liechtenstein who in professing his allegiance to the Austrian Empire evoked the magic lantern practice of dissolving views (using a pair of lanterns, a showman slowly dissolves from one image or slide into the next) to introduce the fear that if the Empire’s strength is weakened, smaller countries like Liechtenstein could fade from view, become a fragmented and nebulous collection of dissolving views. In his popular travel narrative entitled *The Balkan Peninsula* (1887), de Laveleye poetically recalls the distressed comment of this older, influential member of parliament and member of the conservative party in Liechtenstein: “I am an Austrian of the old block, a pure black and yellow, what in your strange Liberal tongue you call a reactionary. My attachment to the Imperial family is absolute, because it is the common center of all parts of the empire. I am attached to Count Taaffe, because he represents the Conservative party, but
I deplore his Federalist policy, which is leading to the disintegration of Austria [...] Our good friends the Italians reproach him with having said that Italy was only a geographical expression, but our empire, which he made so powerful and so happy, will no longer remain so if it is constantly broken up into fragments, smaller and smaller every day. It will no more be a State, but a kaleidoscope, a collection of dissolving views.”

The distracting and disorienting image of the kaleidoscope effectively situates small nationalities within an anchorless space of modernity. If such early discourses screen small nations as fragmented, disorienting images, it is perhaps not surprising that later discourses involving small nations and moving picture modernity displace such disorientation and distraction onto the sonic dimension. The sound of modern Europe, as Fredric Jameson suggested in June 1991 at the “Screening Europe” conference, is still synonymous with the “dilemma of Babel”, an idea that one can trace back to Rudolf Arnheim and early film theorists’ account of the transition to sound in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In a reading of Godard’s Passion, Jameson argued that “the European idea has to negotiate the impossible situation of multiple languages in which no new lingua franca or transcendental Joycean pidgin is available. This is already registered in Passion (1982), where all the characters have this or that speech defect: stuttering, coughing, ‘multisme,’ heavy accents and so on, and all of this very pointedly in the absence of English as such.” In his conference response, Jameson viewed Isaac Julien’s Young Soul Rebels (1991) as the most successful model of contemporary European filmmaking, heralding its “vision of a counter-Europe, a Europe of the federated lumpens and marginal, that is called on to out-trump and cancel the official image of Common Market Europe.” Yet what “vision(s) of a counter-Europe” exist today for European filmmakers? Are there new funding schemes or aesthetic strategies that would allow for a more successful negotiation of the “Babel” dilemma? Two decades after the “Screening Europe” conference such questions still seem prescient and timely.

But before we move on to the post-1989 era, let us open up a brief parenthesis here to magnify this moment of early sonic disorientation on the small European screen. For, indeed, we would be remiss if we did not note that already in the age of intertitles, in the silent film era, spectators were at times confronted with a Babel-like din or cacophony of voices. Although European film critics bemoaned the loss of the “internationalism” of the silent cinema era in the early sound era, specific language strategies were already in place in the silent era to cater to movie-going minorities and thus speak to a more diverse European market (yet as European film critic Béla Balázs has argued, the words or intertitles were always secondary to the more universal gestures of the silent screen). Early cinema was international, but cinematic operators in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in metropoles such as Prague, for example, still translated films for minority audiences, often using a magic lantern to throw translations of German intertitles in the languages of smaller European minorities (such as Yiddish or Czech) onto the screen. Yet if there was an error with projection the translated
titles were sometimes superimposed, the act of translation itself transformed into miscommunication, an act of “Cinema Babel.” In addition, the exhibition space of the silent film theater (especially true for immigrant audiences) often contained a distracting cacophony of interpretations and interpellations, not only diverse tongues and minority languages, but also guffaws and grunts.16

Perhaps one can consider such boisterous bursts of laughter and mistranslations (and the collective exhibition space in which the body received such translations) as the beginning of a “minor cinema” experience in the silent film era. For certainly, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s theory of a “minor literature” reminds us, small nations were paramount in Kafka’s mind when he writes that “minor literatures, ‘in the small nations,’ ought to supplement a ‘national consciousness which is often inert and always in process of disintegration’.”17 For a “people to come,” before it expresses itself collectively, has to reinvent the past, as David Rodowick writes: “This is a historical image that invents a future by creatively transforming occluded elements of the past.”18 In a small cinema vein, Luisa Rivi similarly writes: “Identification with ‘Europe’ would not be as much about a common past as about the shaping of a common future, however elusive and frail this might appear.”19 If a “minor cinema” or “minor enunciation” could usher in a productive re-appropriation of the fragmented, disjunctive speech of the (Cinema) Babel era, European film critics in the late 1920s and early 1930s in their statements mourning the loss of the international “Esperanto” of silent cinema were quick to argue that subtitling and translation strategies provoked not political awareness or heightened consciousness, but dumb misunderstandings. After the introduction of sound, theorists such as Rudolf Arnheim in Intercine, the journal of the International Educational Cinematographic Institute, decried the assertion of national distinctions and national boundaries that seemed to rear their head with the “lost internationalism of the silent cinema’s ‘illustrated Esperanto.’”20 As G. Moulan in Intercine similarly argued, the “precious universality of late silent cinema was replaced by talk, by the misunderstandings too often produced by translation, and by the reassertion of national distinctions and national boundaries.”21 With the coming of sound, critics argued that film, which had been an “international language,” became an “international problem.”22

Although sound film introduced new opportunities to cater to diverse cultures and thus could be made productive for small national cinemas, it also introduced significant risks or “problems”: not only the Babel effect, but also the return of an American hegemony. As Nino Frank wrote in his essay “Babel-on-Seine” on the Paramount studio in Paris, “one would have thought that the ‘100% talkies’ by establishing cinematiec national borders, would demolish the American penetration of our studios. Well, rather the opposite: we are the new Eldorado. The Americans are upon us, loaded with millions of dollars, and they merrily start reorganizing French production.”23 According to German critic Helmuth Ortmann, in one short decade “Film Europe” had itself “shrunk” and become a small nation or a “colony” of “Film America”: “In a ridiculously short time span, hardly one decade, Film
Europe has become a colony of Film America. The once (just several years ago!) prosperous industries of France, Italy and Scandinavia have shrunk to complete insignificance.”24 Even Edward G. Lowry, MPPDA (Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America) European representative, felt compelled to speak up on behalf of the citizens of Europe: “We have a right to make our own national pictures but we can’t have them unless this powerful foreigner is in check. If we are to see our own national life in pictures, the American imports must be held down.”25

Similar to Eurimages and the MEDIA program initiatives and funding strategies today, from the mid-1920s to the early 1930s the “Film Europe” movement attempted to suppress American imports and support the distribution and production of European film. The “Film Europe” movement also sought to increase the circulation of European films through enhanced cooperative measures and strategies such as distribution contracts and quota laws. As Kristen Thompson writes in “The Rise and Fall of Film Europe,” due to a number of factors including the introduction of sound, the Depression, political upheavals in the USSR and Europe and increased consolidation within national film industries, this idea of a “Film Europe” collapsed in the 1930s. However, as Thompson suggests, film researchers today should see “Film Europe” as more than just a fleeting moment. She persuasively argues that the movement was decisive in developing co-production strategies (using multi-national casts and crews, for example) and founding institutions and international film festivals which continued to wield important influence in subsequent decades (indeed, many of these same strategies are in use today).26

Across the Atlantic, the introduction of sound also set into motion specific language distribution strategies and studies of small European film markets. In fact, it was only after the introduction of sound that market researchers in Hollywood start to take note of small European nations’ movie-going habits and needs. In an article written in 1930 on adapting films into multiple languages (which takes into consideration not only the number of foreign language copies or number of negatives and master prints, but also “the number of languages into which film could be adapted”),27 George Romauld Canty of the US Department of Commerce Motion Picture Association differentiated between two film markets in Europe – the markets of smaller European countries and the film markets of the larger European nations.28 Although the trade commissioner recommended English, Spanish, German and French as the principal languages for sound film (he believed this would cover most of Europe), smaller European countries that did not speak these languages also gave Canty pause. As Lisa Jarvina notes in her seminal study The Rise of Spanish-Language Filmmaking: Out from Hollywood’s Shadow 1929-1939, Canty in his market report of 1930 created two different categories for these smaller European countries – “those too small to merit direct productions in their own language, but unlikely to accept films in one of the ‘major’ languages (such as Sweden or Italy), and small countries that might accept
sound films in a second language (such as Portugal, which would show Spanish-language films).”

Although Canty in 1930 was trying to establish criteria for foreign language subtitling that would work for smaller European countries, gesturing towards the need to recognize more diverse European markets (even if he does recommend English, German, French and Spanish for most of Europe), his survey of market conditions was still primarily concerned with finding a way around smaller countries’ native tongues. In a different context and on a different continent, the European film theorist Béla Balázs makes a similar point regarding language and small nations when considering translation strategies prompted by the second wave of sound film in the 1940s. In a section (with the provocative title “Why Language Dubbing is Impossible?”) of his The Theory of Film, first published in 1945, Balázs addresses the language issue Canty examined in the context of small nations. Balázs, similar to Canty, argues that some countries simply “don’t have the population to merit production in their own language”:

One of the most acute problems of film production today is the question of exports to areas speaking a foreign language. This problem affects especially small nations very seriously. The inner market is insufficient to pay for production costs and the great nations who can satisfy the demand of their own inner market by their own production, very seldom buy films, the foreign dialogue of which has to be conveyed to the public by means of titles.

Balázs continues his meditation to state that he finds dubbing disorienting or “impossible” precisely because it does not reinforce what he sees as the “national character” of the film image. He argues that the more sophisticated sound film public of the 1940s recognizes the disjunct between dubbed speech and image, thus refusing to believe in the “synchronized” play of word and gesture. Sound film, he claims, has finally evolved to a higher stage and “has educated the public to see and hear the profound connection between speech and facial expression”.

For Balázs dubbing films into a foreign language violates the national character of the facial expression or bodily gesture (the sound-gesture that accompanies speech), creating what one could see as a “secondary cacophony” for the viewer:

The public today understands not only the meaning of the spoken word but also the sound-gesture that goes with it (which was discussed in the preceding chapter) and can hear in it the parallel to gesture and facial expression. A thus sophisticated public immediately feels the contradiction between, say, French facial expression and an English voice subsequently dubbed on to it. In the old days when we as yet paid attention only to the conceptual meaning of the dialogue, it was conceivable that someone in a film should say in English with an English calm, cool intonation “I love you” and accompany the words with passionate Italian gestures. It strikes the present-day public as irresistibly funny if it notices – and it does notice – a discrepancy of temperament between word and gesture.
Yet this cataloguing of the “Babel effect,” of disorienting sounds and gestures, is only one of the many concerns that surface in the discourses on sound film and small European nations in the 1930s and 1940s. Economic questions regarding film financing and international export, but also concerns regarding cultural and aesthetic matters, cultivating national characteristics and promoting film “quality” loomed large during this time period. Characteristic in this regard is a slim publication edited by the Commission of the Swiss Film Archive in 1947 entitled *The Film: Its Economic, Social and Artistic Problems*. The book is based on a film exhibit first held in the Gewerbemuseum in Basel “Film gestern und heute (Film Yesterday and Today)” in October 1943, on the occasion of the founding of the Swiss Film Archive. The exhibit was later also shown at the Film Festival in Brussels in 1945 and in Zurich in 1947. Of particular interest to scholars committed to the study of small cinemas are the two pages in a section on finance devoted to “The Film of Small Nations (Example: Swiss Film).” This short section contains a lengthy paragraph on the dangers and opportunities of small-nation filmmaking. In the prose paragraph delineating the challenges to small-nation filmmaking, the authors make it clear that the “films of small nations” face two dangers or risks: an “over-pronounced nationalism” and the “lack of an international market” or international interest. On the facing page, a fragmented text on the filmmaking of small nations (almost identical to the prose paragraph) is followed by statistics on film financing and film production in Switzerland. The editors not only repeat the dangers already emphasized in their first paragraph; in addition, they add that maintaining national characteristics does not mean a digression into “folklore.” The archivists also positively mention the Swedish film and Czech film as two small national cinemas that successfully negotiate national characteristics. Roger Manvell of the British Film Academy in his notes to the English edition writes that “While adopting very necessarily a world view of their subject, the Swiss authors of this volume did not forget that their first readers were to be the Swiss themselves. To my mind the occasional appearance of this national view of what is primarily an international subject gives reality as well as perspective to the arguments […].” It is worth quoting the “Film of Small Nations” passage (in Manvell’s words, a “national view of an international subject”) at length:

*The Film of Small Nations (Example: the Swiss Film)*

With the necessity for an international market the problem of the film production of small nations is introduced.

The film of small nations, exactly like the film of all other nations, can only survive with an international market, i.e. by obtaining international interest. This does not mean the abandonment of national characteristics; Swedish and Czech films for instance prove the contrary. However, a forced, over-pronounced nationalism is not less dangerous than a forced internationalism. Between these two dangers the films of small nations have only
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one chance: quality. Hollywood can successfully throw films of a poor quality on the world market: the film of small nations can only count on international interest through especially high human and artistic qualities.

The frightening discrepancy between the income of a Swiss film from the home market and its cost of production illustrates the situation strikingly. The entirely national success of the only film produced in 1937, Füsliwer Wipf, made it the first successful Swiss film; it was supported by the awakening national self-consciousness of the pre-war years. On the basis of this success production increased rapidly to fifteen films in 1942. However, the market was already saturated, even over-saturated, and the crisis began. In the following years only very few films were made. But of those, one film of 1944 (Marie-Louise), as well as the only film of 1945 (The Last Chance) succeeded abroad because of their quality.

The Film of Small Nations

The film of small nations
can only survive with an international market
this means: with international interest.
International interest does not mean:
abandonment of national characteristics.
Maintenance of national characteristics does not mean:
folklore. 37

The Swiss archive seamlessly blurs the distinction between the idea of a small country that produces films and the idea of a country that produces a small number of films, offering a more expansive notion of small European cinemas. Yet despite this unique promotional effort, in the 1950s the Swiss film industry was still struggling. The government was still concerned about the fate of the country’s small national cinema. A publication on foreign policy characteristically complained that other small countries were ahead of Switzerland in this vital area: “Die Möglichkeiten, seine Interessen im Völkerkonzert zu wahren, sind für einen Kleinstaat beschränkt [...] Ein Sorgenkind ist der Film. Andere Staaten – auch Kleinstaaten – sind der Schweiz auf diesem Gebiet voraus (The opportunities to preserve one’s voice in the concerto of peoples are limited for a small nation [...] One problem child is the film. Other countries – also small nations – are far ahead of Switzerland in this area.)” 38

Certainly the development of a film archive and exhibits on the filmmaking of small nations are important first steps for any small country trying to promote their own film culture and industry. In this context it is worth noting that archivists today in Switzerland are actively looking for new strategies to try to preserve and publicize their audiovisual heritage. One such strategy is aptly entitled “Memoriav, the network for the preservation of the audiovisual heritage of Switzerland.” In describing the Memoriav “archival impulse” in a public
statement, director Kurt Deggeler emphasizes the need to negotiate multiple languages and the cultural autonomy of Switzerland's small cantons. He writes that it is easier to understand “the organization founded in Switzerland with the aim of improving the preservation and communication of its audiovisual heritage [...] if one is aware that this small country with 7.4 million inhabitants is divided in 26 cantons, whose cultural sovereignty is as anchored into the constitution as well as the existence of its four language regions.”

As Hjort and Petrie write in their introduction to *A Cinema of Small Nations*, “an important feature of the literature on small nations, and particularly of those writings produced by members of small nations, is to call attention not only to the challenges of small nationhood, but also, potentially, to the opportunities.”

The Swiss publication *The Film: Its Economic, Social and Artistic Problems* and the Memoriav mission statement remind us that historically speaking, it has often been the role of archivists (alongside film theorists, educators and critics) to consider such challenges and opportunities. As Thomas Ballhausen and Janelle Blankenship point out in their contribution on the “European Film Gateway” project in this volume, digitalization efforts among EU archive members today are forging new ground in making the film production of small European countries (past and present) accessible to a larger audience.

**Small European Cinemas at a Crossroads**

to quote Hjort who in 2011 in an article entitled “Small Cinemas: How They Thrive and Why They Matter” writes “there are many travelers at this point [...] it almost makes sense to start talking about ‘small cinema studies.’”

Following Hjort and others, the editors of this volume construe small European cinemas broadly using four primary criteria: 1) small nationhood as a relational phenomenon (some small European nations are marked by a history of colonial rule, but this doesn’t hold true for all small European countries) 2) geographical scale 3) the gross national product (GNP) and size of the internal market and 4) population size. Perhaps equally important, however, are linguistic factors (minority languages, translation) and per capita film production. As we support a more expansive notion of small cinemas, the contributions in this volume include both microstates relatively new to the European Union such as Malta and larger ones such as Poland. In addition, a transnational turn also provides a crucial economic and socio-cultural context for many of the film cultures examined in this volume. Despite linguistic challenges and risks (as Björn Nordfjörd notes, the Icelandic language sometimes “hampers co-productions and foreign distribution”), Icelandic cinema, for example, has experienced a “transnational turn” since the 1990s, having seen an unparalleled number of co-productions produced with funding from the European Community’s MEDIA program and the European Council’s Eurimages network. (Interestingly, Jar City, the Icelandic film discussed in Nordfjörd’s essay, is not a co-production). In this volume, the term “in transition” is used to depict this transnational turn, but also to describe the break-up of the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc, the rapid transformation of the Baltic States and accession of small countries to the European Union.

As numerous contributions in this volume demonstrate, festivals, film prizes and funding strategies are important to consider in this transnational context. Alongside the establishment of national film institutions and EU funding initiatives such as the Eurimages fund, the MEDIA program, the Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production, the European Film Academy, and the Europa Cinemas network, contemporary European film festivals, awards and digital archives also play an increasingly important role in shaping and interpreting the cultural messages and motifs of small European cinemas. Veit Helmer’s experimental feature film Tuvalu (1999), for example, one of the “critic-friendly,” transnational art films we discuss in this volume, won the Ghent International Film Festival FIPRESCI Prize “for its harmonic view on a diversity of cultures, for the quality of its photography and for the burlesque humor with which it talks about the actual evolution of Europe.”

The LUX European Film Prize awarded by the European Parliament is another prize established more recently (in 2007) to support cultural diversity and build a common “European identity.” The European parliament film prize actively supports a wider European distribution of European films, subtitling the award-winning entry into the 24 official languages of the European Union. The European Parliament claims that it will thus “break down the language
barriers for distributing European films that have no borders.” Numerous small European cinemas have been selected for this award including entries from Greece, Belgium, Romania, Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Portugal, and Austria. The trophy itself and logo of the LUX Prize created by the Belgian artist Jocelyne Coster resembles a celluloid spiral, which could be read as a reference to the Tower of Babel. This symbol is used by the European Parliament not as a sign of a disorienting cacophony, however, but rather as a sign of multilingualism and cultural diversity. According to the LUX organizers, the motif of a celluloid reel spiraling upwards symbolizes not fragmentation and disorientation, but a shared European identity; “linguistic plurality and cultural diversity brought together in one and the same place and with one and the same ambition.” The films selected for the award should thus “illustrate the European integration process, topical European issues or cultural diversity in the Union.” Equally important, the organizers of the LUX prize argue that the award should give European film a chance to reach a wider European market:

Compared with the largely unified North American market, Europe faces huge organizational and economic difficulties which are worsened by language barriers. The LUX prize winner will be subtitled by the parliament into the 24 official languages of the EU, including an adaptation of the original version for the visually or hearing-impaired. It also funds the production of a 35mm print for each member state. The last winning film, Die Fremde, for example, was screened in 34 EU cities. Europeans were able to exchange their views on a topic that touches their own reality.

Pointing back to the 1920s dream of a “Film Europe,” the LUX European Film Prize stresses both the unity of a common “European vision” or spirit and the need to maintain and support cultural diversity. Eligibility criteria number four for the film prize is to “help celebrate the universal reach of European values, illustrate the diversity of European traditions, shed light on the process of European integration and provide insights into the building of Europe.” In this context, one can understand the subtitling initiative of the LUX European Film Prize as relational once again, an attempt to overturn Hollywood’s hegemony. The award effectively tries to overrule the verdict that there were some smaller European countries that were, as Canty wrote in 1930, “too small to merit production in their own language.” It is worth noting, however, that not all European languages are included in the LUX language strategy. Norwegian, Luxembourgish, Icelandic, Catalan, Basque, Galician, Scottish, Gaelic, Turkish and Welsh are not official languages of the EU and thus are not included in the 24 subtitling languages for the LUX European Film Prize. Co-productions under the MEDIA program which are produced or co-produced in a European Union country or in Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland are, however, eligible for the prize. The first film to receive the LUX European Film Prize was a German-Turkish-Italian co-production The Edge of Heaven (Auf der anderen Seite, 2007) by Fatih Akin. In
a 2007 press release on the official LUX film prize website, the Turkish-German director issued a personal statement: “The LUX Prize is the most innovative award for European cinema. The sponsored subtitles enabling the laureate to present his film all around Europe is a great idea, and the election process draws attention to foreign productions from Babylonic Europe which otherwise would have remained unknown. Hopefully the European Parliament will continue to promote our diverse and rich cinematographic culture through the LUX Prize.” The organizers in the press release herald Akin’s film as “a German-Turkish cross-cultural tale of loss, mourning and forgiveness.” 52

Although Björn Norðfjörð’s critique of Andrew Higson’s famous “consumption thesis” correctly points to the limitations of thinking about small national cinemas purely in terms of reception,53 one could argue that the establishment of the LUX film prize and other initiatives offers a new space for rethinking the reception, distribution and marketing of locally-produced European films. The LUX film prize not only challenges Hollywood’s hegemonic position by translating the award-winning European film into 24 different EU languages.54 The organizers also provide European partner archives a 35mm print of each film; thus ensuring the safe-keeping of this title in the future. The LUX subtitling initiative and archival mission seeks to minimize the risk of European filmmaking and guarantee a wider reception, ensuring that key films stay on the map, in local archives and on screen in numerous European countries.

As Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong provocatively points out in her 2011 study Film Festivals: Culture, Power and the Global Screen, festival organizers and the people in this circuit of exhibition also “shape alternative cinema and its subsequent readings and trajectories.”55 Wong productively sees the contemporary film festival as a transnational public sphere that pushes the “boundaries of cinema.”56 However, like Randall Halle in his seminal essay “ Offering Tales They Want to Hear: Transnational European Film Funding as Neo-Orientalism,” Wong also cautions that film festivals, like the co-productions financed by MEDIA and Eurimages, could also breed a new form of orientalism in line with European political images.57 Of particular interest to scholars researching small cinemas, Wong notes that “there is a niche for countries that are somewhat less ‘European’ than the powerful European North, where the Balkans, Spain, and Ireland can be seen with a domestic inter-regional orientalist gaze.”58

On first glance, some of the films of the young German director Veit Helmer, winner of the FIPRESCI Prize at the Ghent International Film Festival in 1999, might seem to perpetuate such a neo-orientalizing gaze. Consider, for example, how Helmer replied to the government officials who objected to the title of his 2008 feature film shot in Azerbaijan (co-produced with funds from one of their cell phone providers, Bakcell), Absurdistan. The government officials from Azerbaijan felt that Helmer was mocking the small former Soviet country with his title. Helmer’s reaction was as follows: “Azerbaijan had some trouble with the title. They thought I was mocking them ... I like the title and I don’t want to
change it just because the ambassador of Azerbaijan asked me to change it. So I kept the title. Azerbaijan is a post-Socialist country with a president who passed on his position to his son.” Yet, as we demonstrate in our essay on Helmer’s experimental feature film Tuvalu in this volume, Helmer’s films also provide the international market with poignant “counter-visions” of a New Europe. The dry steppe or de-industrialized, derelict landscape of the East in Helmer’s films is easily converted into a utopic space of slapstick anachronicity, non-identity, transitory non-places, haptic sensations and untranslatable foreign tongues. Such international co-productions (shot in Bulgaria, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, among others), as Veit Helmer pointed out in an interview, entail a great degree of danger and uncertainty: “My projects always involve a certain risk. A high degree of risk.”

In “The Risk Environment of Small-Nation Filmmaking,” Mette Hjort returns to this theme to suggest a conceptual framework to further develop her exploration into the specific local and global conditions and possibilities of filmmaking in small nations at a crucial moment of global economic and political transition. Drawing on the modernization theory of German sociologist Ulrich Beck, Hjort argues that film production in small nations is both “risk diverse” and “risk intensive” and that the “risk environment” of small-nation filmmaking has changed in the course of three broad historical periods: the early silent film era (with its absence of language barriers), the post-World War II period (marked by the emergence of state-centered subsidy systems) and the post-1989 era (characterized by the collapse of state-funded film industries in the East and the expansion of transnational funding schemes). While some of these risks are the effect of certain policies and thus best described as systemic (such as the danger of being dependent on a singular filmmaker, wasting or losing expensively trained talent, or the conformist recycling of established patterns), others must be understood as risk positions to which individual actors within a small-nation context are likely to be exposed as a result of the specificity of their circumstances (such as gender, class background, institutional affiliations, etc.). Building on her interest in “creativity under constraint” (e.g. the self-imposed “Vow of Chastity” by the group of Dogma directors in Denmark), Hjort stresses that “apparent obstacles can be reframed as creative opportunities.” One of the key questions emerging from this line of reasoning, according to Hjort, is whether and how small cinemas can assume a more agenda-setting role in reducing global power imbalances and creating “opportunities for constructive and responsible creative practices.”

Charlie Cauchi in her essay “Maltese Cinema? Politics and Identity on Screen from Independence to EU Accession” takes up questions of scale in relation to the possibility of the emergence of an indigenous film industry by focusing on one of the smallest European nations: with a size of 316 km² and a population of only 0.4 million Malta, like Luxembourg, certainly qualifies as a European “microstate.” Even members of the Malta Film Commission do not hesitate to openly admit
that Maltese cinema as such is “virtually non-existent,” although there is an active film-servicing sector for international productions which use Malta as a location. It would be wrong however, as Cauchi cautions us, to attribute this unique situation to questions of geographical or economic size alone: Catholic censorship practices, the monopolization of film exhibition and the (socio-)linguistic divide between Maltese (a Semitic European language) and English also play a role. Looking at two cinematic texts made after Maltese independence in 1964, Mario Philip Azzopardi’s oppositional Gaġġa (“The Cage,” 1971) and Mario Busietta’s commercial TV spin-off Anġli: The Movie (“Angels: The Movie,” 2005), Cauchi elucidates the “constraints and opportunities” for filmmaking that a nation like Malta affords.

Gérard Kraus in his essay on Luxembourgish film in this volume discusses how local film industry policies have sought to nurture such creative filmmaking opportunities for a country that can rightly be called a microstate: the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, nestled between Germany, France and Belgium, possesses a population of around 536,000 inhabitants and a territory of 2,586 km². This small scale (both in terms of population and territory), as Kraus points out, has had a profound effect on the development (or non-development) of a native film industry: between 1921 and 1959 only 62 films were made in Luxembourg, all of them almost exclusively “cultural heritage” documentaries with a runtime between 6 and 28 minutes. In his essay “Luxembourg’s Film Finance Model, Andy Bausch, and Cultural Identity,” Kraus traces the economic development of indigenous and international film production in Luxembourg from the 1960s and 1970s erotic films to the debates surrounding Prime Minister Jacques Santer’s 1988 proposed bill to establish a temporary financial scheme to issue tax-sheltered “audio-visual investment certificates.” He also examines the effects of the recent liberalization of the European broadcasting legislation on Luxembourg’s television and the creation of a national film fund. At the same time, Kraus points to the historical importance of self-taught director Andy Bausch, who in the late 1970s began making 8mm and 16mm underground films, later gained success with a series of German TV movies and returned to local film production (and local socio-political concerns) with films such as The Unemployment Club (Le Club des chômeurs) and La Revanche (“The Revenge,” 2004), which portray unemployment and the former factory towns of the deindustrialized South of Luxembourg in a vein similar to The Full Monty (1997) and Brassed Off (1996).

Heather Macdougall in her essay “The Best of Both Worlds: Taking Advantage of Two Linguistic Traditions in Irish Film” foregrounds the linguistic aspects of the small nation status, taking the complex and “unique bilingual situation” of Ireland as a jumping-off point for an analysis of the Irish film industry’s attempts to reach both a local and a global audience. For a variety of complex historical and cultural reasons, the Irish film industry for many years remained one of the least developed in Europe. It was not until the 1990s that a commercially viable Irish film industry emerged. During this decade, the newly reconstituted Irish
Film Board (IFB) kick-started the industry, raising the annual production from three Irish Films (in 1992) to over fifty (in 1997). As in the case of Welsh cinema, another key player behind the resurgence of an indigenous film production was television: In 1996 the Irish-language TV channel TG4 began broadcasting and in 1998 teamed up with the Irish Film Board to launch a funding scheme for Irish-language short films such as Daniel O’Hara’s celebrated, bilingual comedy *My Name is Yu Ming Dom* (*Yu Ming is Ainm*, 2003). As Macdougall notes, the Irish Film Board’s Irish-language funding scheme was often accused of being tokenistic, and it perhaps does not come as a surprise that Irish-language short film productions suffered a significant drop when the Irish Film Board changed its language policy and discontinued funding schemes that privileged Irish-language submissions. For Macdougall, it is the self-reflexive bilingual language games in films such as Tom Collins’ multi-award-winning immigration drama *Kings* (2007), the first Irish-language feature film submission to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science for consideration for the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar, that indicate that “two languages can have a productive relationship within a cohesive national cinema.”

Another “split screen,” the cinema of Belgium – due to the country’s small size, the shortage of funds, and the ethno-linguistic divide – has also often remained largely artisanal in its mode of production and relatively unknown beyond Belgian national borders. Philip Mosley’s essay “Anxiety, Memory, and Place in Belgian Cinema” examines the way “national and subnational anxieties” are articulated in a variety of Belgian films which are all deeply rooted in a specific sense of place and function as “powerful transmitters of aspects of social memory.” Travelling, so to speak, through Wallonia, Brussels, and Flanders, the three semi-autonomous regions of Belgium, Mosley focuses on four films which are all the result of a significant kind of creative cooperation: *The Promise* (*La promesse*, 1996) and *Rosetta* (1999) by Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne, *Brussels Transit* (*Bruxelles-Transit*, 1980) by Samy Szlingerbaum, and *Woman in a Twilight Garden* (*Een vrouw tussen hond en wolf*, 1979) by André Delvaux. While the Dardennes and Szlingerbaum deal with issues of displacement, immigration, and unemployment, Delvaux engages with Flemish collaboration during World War II.

Since smallness is a characterization that is always – yet not always explicitly – relational, Paul Coates proposes to make the role of this relation visible by pairing two films which on first sight seem unlikely bedfellows: Ingmar Bergman’s art film *Persona* (1966) and Maciej Drygas’ documentary *Hear My Cry* (*Usłyszcie mój krzyk*, 1991). What both of these films share, however, is not only the fact that they were made in languages that are not globally dominant; they also share a set of modernist tropes (such as enigmatic opening shots that turn out to be flash-forwards, repetition, etc.), powerful images of a burning body and their subject matter: both films are films about human suffering and the limits of language. By tracing aesthetic filiations that link Drygas’ reconstruction of the 1968 self-immolation of a man named Ryszard Siwiec (who set himself on fire on
8 September 1968 in Warsaw to protest Poland’s participation in the occupation of Czechoslovakia) to Bergman’s minimalist chamber drama, Coates in his essay “Varieties of Smallness: A Swedish Art Film (Persona), a Polish Documentary (Hear My Cry)” raises the “question of the degree to which suffering can be articulated at all” and how trauma can “contaminate its representation.” Coates’ essay importantly notes how Drygas returns to a fleeting moment of archival footage to document Siwiec’s protest against an oppressive regime. In 2003, researchers at the Polish Institute of National Remembrance found new film recordings of Siwiec’s self-immolation taken by the Polish secret police. Yet it is through Drygas’ film that Siwiec’s protest first became known in Poland and abroad.

In “At the Crossroads of Time: Memoirs and Becoming in Benone Todica’s Documentary Our Journey” by Lenuta Giukin, questions of memory, mourning and nostalgia in contemporary Romanian cinema take center stage. In stark contrast to the post-socialist Romanian movies exhibited to great acclaim at European or North American festivals which painted a rather dark view of the last years of Ceaușescu’s regime and reaffirmed the superiority of Western capitalist ideology (such as The Death of Mr. Lazarescu [Moartea domnului Lăzărescu, 2005], Four Months, Three Weeks and Two Days [4 luni, 3 săptămâni și 2 zile, 2007] or The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu [Autobiografia lui Nicolae Ceaușescu, 2010]), Giukin is interested in local forms of nostalgia for the past and “expressions of loss” which resemble what in the case of former East Germany has been described as “Ostalgie” (nostalgia for the east). Using a documentary about the abandoned Uranium mine in Ciodanovita and its inhabitants by Romanian-Australian writer, director and journalist Ben Todica (Our Journey [Drumul nostrum, 2008-2009]) as a case study, Giurkin argues that post-socialist forms of nostalgia should be understood as complex and collective forms of counter-memory which are driven by the affective and emotive insight that “something is missing” and that the capitalist “present does not live up to the past.”

Since scholarship on European cinema stands and falls with the access to film history documents and artifacts, Thomas Ballhausen of Filmarchiv Austria and Janelle Blankenship recapitulate the motivations behind the creation of the European Film Gateway Project, which in its first phase ran from 2008 to 2011 and united 16 European film archives and cinémathèques. In their essay “The Archival Impulse and the Digitization of European Film History: The European Film Gateway Project,” Ballhausen and Blankenship address some of the issues that emerged in the course of this landmark project to develop a portal that provides digital access to over 555,000 film-related objects. Using the Austrian newsreel (digitized for the EFG portal) as an example, they also discuss visual pedagogy and historical representation, now filtered through the “second digital life” of archival objects.

Maria Ioniță in her contribution “Framed by Definitions: Corneliu Porumboiu and the Dismantling of Realism” takes issue with what has been branded, on the international film festival circuit, the “new wave of Romanian cinema” (even if
the directors themselves have rejected the suggestions of such a programmatic kinship and associated with a distinct, auteur-driven brand of (neo-)realism: long-takes, occasionally hand-held camera work, direct sound and minimal editing are some of the stylistic features that contribute to an almost “Dogma-like austerity.” While the films of Corneliu Porumboiu, a comparatively late addition to this “new wave,” on first sight seem to resemble the Bazinian aesthetics of directors such as Cristi Puiu, Cristian Mungiu, Radu Muntean or Răzvan Rădulescu, it seems more productive, as Ioniţă argues in her Deleuzian analysis of 12:08, East of Bucharest (A fost sau n-a fost?, 2007) and Police, Adjective (Poliţist, Adjectiv, 2009), to understand his work rather as “deliberate explorations of the limits of cinematic realism and a polemical engagement with cinema’s ability to present an objective snapshot of the real.”

Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu in his incisive and poetic essay “In the Country of Panpan: Romanian Dark Fun Cinema in and out of Focus” discusses the subversive role humor and the telling of jokes has played in Romanian society and culture under communism and how this tradition has been taken up and transformed since the “year zero” of Romanian Cinema in 2000 (when not one single feature film was made in Romania – thus, in a sense, marking the gap out of which the “new” Romanian cinema emerged). Film, as Mihăilescu notes about the role of cinema during the Ceauşescu regime, was “meant to be the visual arm of the one party”, but it was at the same time “surrounded by and hit at by oral culture.” Employing Lacanian art historian Georges Didi-Huberman’s notion of the “patch” (or pan in French), Mihăilescu reflects on the ways in which films such as Corneliu Porumboiu’s 12:08, East of Bucharest (2007) counter the “self-naturalizing” tendencies of contemporary Romanian media by employing a culturally specific dead-pan humor on the one hand and by ceasing to be “representative” or mimetic on the other, opening a space for expression and reflection. Mihăilescu’s essay also implicitly links the “pan” as a counter detail to a more complex politics of scale, for example referring the reader to the “neo-neorealist” amateur aesthetics of Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică’s Videograms of a Revolution (1992). In a poignant moment in this film the voice-over meditates on amateur video of protesters in Timișoara moving towards the center of the city, poetically suggesting that the frame is divided according to two different temporalities. Although the hidden camera tries to get as close as possible, the empty time and desolate cityscapes of Ceauşescu’s rule still dominate the foreground of the screen, while the world-shaking, revolutionary events take place in the “background,” so remote they could almost be overlooked.

One of the central experiences of historical trauma that has haunted Romanian society before and after 1989 perhaps more than any other Eastern European nation is its poverty and the pressure of a seemingly permanent economic crisis. To illustrate how even the post-communist present is perceived by many Romanians as an “inherited trauma,” Rodica Ieta in her essay “A Decade with the New Romanian Cinema: Stories of Life in an Extramoral Sense” addresses how
the “new” Romanian cinema has depicted the West as a land of opportunity and “measure of prosperity and value” and how such fantasy scenarios of economic mobility are translated into an existentialist, rather than analytical language. Using Cristian Mungiu’s *Occident* (2002), Bobby Păunescu’s *Francesca* (2009) and Călin Peter Nemetz’s *Medal of Honor* (*Medalia de onoare*, 2010) as case studies, Ieta highlights how generational conflicts issuing from Romania’s communist past are represented, arguing that these films are motivated by the underpinning proposition that besides communism, the West (and its promise of welfare and a better life) is now also “the past” and equally needs to be revised in the national imagination.

**Björn Nordfjörd** in his essay “‘A Typical Icelandic Murder?’ The ‘Criminal’ Adaptation of *Jar City*” focuses on the domestic and international success of Baltasar Kormákur’s crime thriller *Jar City* (*Mýrin*, 2006) as indicative of important changes in both the production and reception of Icelandic films, arguing that they highlight the transformations neoliberalist funding policies have engendered in small European cinemas. Icelandic cinema, as Nordfjörd notes, was established in the 1980s as an “explicitly national institution,” but after a short box-office euphoria it soon became clear that an Icelandic cinema solely catering to its home audience could not survive on its own. Thus, since the early 1990s transnational co-productions through production funds such as Eurimages became the order of the day. These co-productions were motivated by the prospect of international film festival exhibition/distribution and aesthetically influenced by the norms of European art film. Kormákur’s *Jar City* represents an important shift in this development, as it introduced the idea of genre filmmaking to Icelandic cinema and might be considered “the first time that Hollywood could be said to have served as the primary role model.” As a locally produced film shot in Icelandic, *Jar City* did not rely on Icelandic cinema’s strategies to appeal to foreign audiences, basing its narrative on globally intelligible (and marketable) generic models instead. In many respects, *Jar City*, an adaptation of Arnaldur Indridason’s best-selling novel *Mýrin*, resembles what Andrew Nestingen in the context of Scandinavian cinema has called “medium concept films”: films that speak to national or topical concerns while adapting both genre norms and – to a lesser degree in Iceland – also art-film aesthetics. *Jar City* thus exemplifies – and helps us further understand – an entire wave of Icelandic crime films and TV series and the production model behind its local and international success.

The historic relationship between the perceived smallness (and resulting instability) of particular nations and the Western European colonial project, both in its real and textual/ideological variants, is at the heart of Zoran Maric’s discussion of “Balkanism” and post-Yugoslav cinema. Western perceptions of the Balkans, as Maric points out, are based on the notion that the region is caught in a “ceaseless, visceral cycle of violence” and marked by a quasi-mythical and dysfunctional impenetrable otherness. What suchessentializing accounts eclipse, however, are the damaging effects Ottoman imperialism has left on the Balkans.
In his essay “How Corto Maltese Died: Wayfaring Strangers on the Frontiers of Europe in Milcho Manchevski’s Dust,” Maric unpacks the multi-layered temporal structure and self-reflexive references to early cinema in the Macedonian-American director’s “baklava Western” Dust (2001), which connects past and present by transposing an American gunslinger to turn-of-century Macedonia, arguing that the film effectively addresses the “interplay of fiction and fact” in cinematic and historical accounts and uncovers the concealed forces which led to the geopolitical, historical and emotional uncertainty of the Balkans.

The contemporary appropriation of production styles associated with Hollywood such as genre filmmaking in small cinemas is subjected to historical revision in Thomas Ballhausen’s contribution. In his poetic essay “Exposed: A Short History of Austrian Science Fiction Film” Ballhausen reconstructs the surprisingly rich history of Austrian Science Fiction cinema beyond Wolfgang Liebeneiner’s comparatively well-known, state-sponsored 1. April 2000 (1952). Ballhausen’s fascinating historiography not only catalogues rare gems from the silent era – e.g. Ludwig Schaschek’s animated Ideale Filmerzeugung (“Ideal Film Production,” 1913) – it also considers the role of modernity in 1920s techno-fantasies such as Das Kind des Teufels (“The Devil’s Child,” 1919), Enoptria – Der Kampf um die Sonne (“Enoptria – The Battle over the Sun,” 1920) or Parema, das Wesen aus der Sternenwelt (“Parema, The Creature from the Stars,” 1922), documents occasional excursions of the Austrian avant-garde (Valie Export, Johannes Hammel, Mara Mattuschka) and analyses media surveillance and architectural alienation in post-modern sci-fi co-productions such as Silent Resident (Weiße Lilien, 2007) and Manu Luksch’s Faceless (2007). Luksch’s film, created under the conditions of the filmmaker’s CCTV Manifesto, is a prime example of what Hjort in this volume has described as “creativity under constraint.” CCTV footage, snowy data that constantly polices and controls behaviour, is transformed into a poetic reverie on potential lines of escape (one pathway leads the nameless female protagonist to an industrial wasteland), and a fairy tale social fantasy of how one might escape capitalism’s numbing emphasis on the “perpetual present.” In the film, global citizens burdened by the trauma of the past and the anxiety of the future, institute a calendar reform, slipping into the ideological slumber of a “perpetual present.” The reappropriation of CCTV footage and its tiny traces of data might thus be described as what Félix Guattari terms a “molecular alternative practice.” In his unpublished fragmented notes “Towards a Post Media Era,” Guattari writes about new technologies as simultaneously fostering both “efficiency and madness in the same flow.” He writes that “the growing power of software engineering does not necessarily lead to the power of Big Brother. In fact, it is way more cracked than it seems. It can blow up like a windshield under the impact of alternative practices.” In opposing a mass media age – which would emphasize what Nick Dyer-Witheford has aptly summarized in Cyber-Marx as “unidirectional broadcast technologies” – with a post-media age – which would allow communication
technologies to be “reappropriated by a multitude of subject groups,”64 such sci-fi fantasies open up a new vision of a molecular alternative film practice.

Informed by recent approaches to literary adaptations by Robert Stam and others, Jorge Latorre, Antonio Martínez Illán and Oleksandr Pronkevich in their essay “The ‘Quixote’ Myth and the New Eastern Europe: A Hermeneutic Study Based on Film” engage in a collaborative analysis of the career of the Don Quixote character in Russian cinema, both in its Soviet and post-Soviet incarnations. Looking at Grigori Kozintsev’s Don Quixote (Don Kikhot, 1957), Vadim Kurchevsky’s Liberated Don Quixote (Osvobozdennyj Don Kikhot, 1987) and Vasily Livanov’s Don Quixote Returns (Don Kikhot Vozvrascaetsja, 1997), Latorre, Martínez and Pronkevich trace the ideological metamorphoses of Cervantes’ literary archetype. Kozintsev’s version, despite the director’s claim at the Cannes film festival to have created a “faithful” adaptation, abounds in class struggle references yet implicitly critiques the contradictions of Stalinism, while Kurchevsky’s 19-minute animation film in the tradition of Czech director Jiří Trnka can be understood as an attempt to rewrite earlier Soviet history from the perspective of perestroika, and Livanov’s Russian-Bulgarian co-production turns the Romantic hero’s quest into a cautionary tale about the “dangers” of the nostalgia for state communism.

Moving from theorizations of small cinemas to the small screens and “minor” forms of television, Larson Powell makes a strong case for the rediscovery and re-evaluation of Polish director Krzysztof Zanussi, who remains one of the least discussed Polish directors and whose reputation has always been overshadowed by the internationally better-known Andrzej Wajda and Krzysztof Kieślowski. In his essay “The Moral Microhistory of Post-Communism: Zanussi’s Weekend Stories” Powell engages with the eclectic aesthetic, film historical references and role of religion in a series of short films made by Zanussi for Polish television between 1996 and 2000, which can be seen both as a “specifically Polish national answer” to the popularity of Latin American telenovelas and in their “parabolic concentration on moral issues” as a homage to Kieślowski’s Dekalog (1989-1990). Whereas liberal critics such as Stuart Lieberman have registered Zanussi’s catholicism with certain unease and interpreted it as a symptom of Poland’s “anti-modernist backlash,” Powell, informed by Slavoj Žižek and Niklas Luhmann, on the contrary discovers in Zanussi’s religiousness a moral stress on contingency, wordliness and spontaneous face-to-face communication, which can be directly linked to the televisual medium itself, allowing to chronicle the day-to-day survival in post-communist societies without “disciplinary moralizing.”

Similar to Larson Powell’s analysis of the role of TV aesthetics in the work of Krzysztof Zanussi, Iwona Guść in her contribution “Polish Film Culture in Transition: On the ‘Private Films’ of Andrzej Kondratiuk (1985-1996)” looks at the tensions that can arise between the structures of small national cinemas and “small” forms of filmmaking. Taking her cues from Yuri Tsivian’s seminal reflections on technological innovation and changing reception patterns (which seem relevant not only to early cinema but also to the new forms of spectatorship
in the age of YouTube), Guść traces the fascinating career of director Andrzej Kondratiuk who in the second half of the 1980s deliberately turned from being a state filmmaker into an independent filmmaker and developed a radically personal “home movie” aesthetic, using his extended family as actors. Whereas Kondratiuk’s small and personal cinema was initially met with extreme hostility because his aesthetic confused the “ontological status of the characters” and questioned the codified line that separates filmic fact and fiction, the slow acceptance of Kondratiuk into the pantheon of Polish cinema in the 1990s, as Guść explains, points to a fundamental reconfiguration of the private and the public sphere in post-socialist Poland.

The scepticism towards mimetic notions of realism and cinematic renderings of “truth” described by Maria Ioniță in relation to contemporary Romanian cinema, is also a distinguishing feature, as Renata Šukaitytė argues, of the post-socialist “Lithuanian poetic documentary” (as practiced by filmmakers such as Arūnas Matelis, Artūras Jevdokimovas or Valdas Navasaitis) – a mode of production which has internationally become almost synonymous with the cinematic output of this extremely small film industry. In 2011, only one indigenous feature film was released in Lithuania. In her essay “Desires and Memories of a Small Man: The Poetic Documentaries of Lithuanian Filmmaker Audrius Stonys,” Renata Šukaitytė engages with the work by Audrius Stonys, an award-winning filmmaker who has come to be known for his introspective attitude, abstract and metaphorical style and a certain skepticism towards language. Utilizing the “rhetorical” analysis of documentary as developed by Bill Nichols, Michael Renov and others, Šukaitytė elaborates on how different discursive and aesthetic modalities overlap in an often performative manner in Stonys’ approach to the “fuzzy reality” of his subjects.

While it has become customary in theoretizations of small cinemas to invoke Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s famous notion of “minor literatures” as a somewhat related and productive concept, Félix Guattari’s comments on the cinema have long been overshadowed by the prominence Deleuze’s film theory has attained in Film Studies. Gary Genosko in his essay “Félix Guattari and Minor Cinema” elaborates on Guattari’s dispersed writings on the cinema, pointing to the distinctions between the often conflated concepts of the minor and the marginal. Discussing Guattari’s responses to the politically radical cinema in the wake of May 1968 (such as Marin Karmitz’s Blow by Blow [Coup pour coup, 1972] or Jean Schmitdt’s Comme les anges déchus de la planète Saint-Michel [“Fallen Angels from the Planet St. Michel,” 1978]), Genosko exemplifies how Guattari championed an imperfect cinema which through the use of a-signifying fragments (such as color, non-phonic sounds or rhythms) triggers an “affective contamination” in the spectator, allowing him or her to escape the “semiological subjugations of dominant cinematic representations and capitalist modes of production.”

Janelle Blankenship and Tobias Nagl’s contribution “Veit Helmer’s Tuvalu, Cinema Babel, and the (Dis-)location of Europe” focuses on Veit Helmer’s little-known German-Bulgarian co-production Tuvalu (1999), a “surreal dialogue-free
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movie” shot in black and white and selectively tinted (with the final cut printed on color positive). The authors draw upon Deleuze’s category of a non-place to depict the decrepit, dislocated or forgotten Europe depicted in Helmer’s fairy tale topography. A silent film/slapstick aesthetic, derelict or ossified objects and a dislocated European time-space are used to frame a farce or parody of the neoliberal restructuring of Eastern European society according to the logic of capitalism. The authors argue that Helmer’s film also introduces a playful politics of scale, positing an escapist fantasy or what one might call a European “counter-vision,” an escape from Europe in transition, as Helmer carves out a utopic outside and a fantasy travelogue as epilogue to the film – the sailing vessel finally steers away from Bulgaria toward the exotic cartography of another small nation, the Pacific island of Tuvalu.

Situating debates on “minor” and “small” cinemas in the broader framework of a “politics of location”, Angelica Fenner turns to Hamid Naficy’s conceptualization of “accented cinema” and French philosopher Jacques Rancière to investigate the visual essay From Afar (Aus der Ferne, 2006) by Turkish-German director Thomas Arslan, whose works have often been attributed to a contemporary form of minimalist “counter-cinema” that film critics have termed the “Berlin School” or la nouvelle vague allemande. In her essay “At the Crossroads of Genre and Identity: An Aesthetics of Distance in Thomas Arslan’s From Afar,” Fenner reads Arslan’s travelogue, which chronicles the filmmaker’s 2005 journey through Turkey, the birthplace of his father, as an attempt to unsettle generic, aesthetic, and narrative boundaries. The political potential of Arslan’s austere documentary, as Fenner suggests, might be located in his mobilization and foregrounding of film style to generate what Rancière has called “a reconfiguration of the given perceptual forms.” Sidestepping the heated debates about multiculturalism in Germany, From Afar refrains from activating the identificatory politics and interpretative frameworks implicit in first-person filmmaking, forcing the viewer “to establish his or her own conclusions” instead.

Ute Lischke in her essay “National or Transnational German Cinema Post-1989? The Films of Helke Misselwitz and Sibylle Schönemann” explores small forms of filmmaking that have been doubly (or even triply) marginalized: the work of two women (documentary) filmmakers from the former GDR, who after German unification and the collapse of the state-owned DEFA studios found themselves for the most part “isolated from mainstream German, European and global cinema.” Looking at films such as Misselwitz’s Winter adé (“Farewell to Winter,” 1988) and Schönemann’s Verriegelte Zeit (“Locked Up Time,” 1991), Lischke shows how these filmmakers have engaged in an important conversation about gender and national identity and how their films, once a “distinct product of a specific national film culture,” have survived as a “distinctly transnational product” on international film circuits thanks to marketing strategies employed by organizations such as the DEFA Foundation, Progress-Filmverleih or DEFA Film Library in Amherst, Massachusetts.
While industrial concerns and questions of cultural and linguistic identity have figured large in academic discussions of small cinemas, what often remains conspicuously absent in these debates, as Janina Falkowska reminds us, are the links between national sentiments and class, although class identity has become a major issue in some of the more recent films hailing from post-socialist European countries. In her essay “The Cinema of the Abject and the Cinema of Capitalist Fantasy in Poland,” Falkowska utilizes Kasia Adamik’s The Offsiders (Boisko Bezdomnych, 2008) and Ryszard Zatorski’s Just Love Me (Tylko mnie kochaj, 2006) as case studies to trace the emergence of two different cinematic responses to the growing visibility of class disparities which neoliberal policies have effected in Polish society: on the one hand, a concern with the harsh realities of poverty, homelessness and addiction which is often articulated in the minimalist language of contemporary European art cinema (such as the “Berlin School” or the “new Romanian cinema”) and, on the other hand, a naïve and escapist celebration of the life style of the nouveaux riches, which “combines the aesthetics and narratives of soap operas with elements of the fashion show, the music video or comedy.” While Zatorski’s film depicts a “futuristic dreamscape” of luxury high-rises, the plot of Adamik’s “cinema of the abject” involves homeless who dwell in a dark and dilapidated train station, the Central Train Station in Warsaw.

Read together these films poetically depict what in Philip Mosley’s essay is poignantly described as a “double scenography.” Mosley perceptively writes that the characters in the Dardenne Brother’s Rosetta (1999) are haunted by a “double scenography” visible in “every shot, however cursory, of boarded-up windows, grey streets, derelict lots, concrete jungles, and high-rise buildings.” In many small European cinemas represented in this volume one catches glimpses of such a representational strategy. Andy Bausch’s “cinema in transition” catalogues both the personal narratives of the bleak, deindustrialized landscapes of the factories of the South, as well as Luxembourg City’s more anonymous “boardrooms, sleek exteriors and bankers.” The dark Romanian comedy Philanthropy (Filantropica, 2002) also paints a lyrical portrait of the homeless residing in the unfinished high-rise apartment buildings lining the “Boulevard of the Victory of Socialism,” while parodying capitalist fantasies of new toothpaste. Such films suggest that behind every vision of Europe, there is a vivid counter-vision told through a labyrinthine web of private, subjective memories and stories.
"The Film Yesterday and Today": exhibition poster designed by Fritz Butz for the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Zurich (1945)
The Film of Small Nations

The film of small nations can only survive with an international market. This means: with international interest. International interest does not mean: abandonment of national characteristics. Maintenance of national characteristics does not mean: folklore.

Average production costs of a Swiss film (without general expenses and distribution costs): Fr. 120,000.00—

Average income of a Swiss film from the home market: Fr. 80,000.00—

Deficit without possibility of export: Fr. 40,000.00—

Number of films produced in Switzerland

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Notes

5 | For a description of visual entertainment featuring the “water tiger” and “blood worm” larvae, see Shirley Hibberd’s The Book of the Aquarium and Water Cabinet, or Practical Instructions on the Formation, Stocking and Management in all Seasons of Collections of Fresh Water and Marine Life (London: Groombridge and Sons, Paternoster Row, 1856). Also see the account in a New Zealand newspaper of a peasant woman who is unable to differentiate between the enlarged representation of the “water tiger” and reality: “Water Tiger,” Inangahua Times Vol. XXI, Issue 1038 (28 September 1896): 4. Strikingly similar to the myths of audiences fleeing the early theaters fearing the oncoming train (during a
performance of the Lumière Cinematograph), here the “primitive” peasant woman cries out in fear when a “water tiger” magnified to the size of 12 feet is thrown onto the screen: “Water-Tigers: At a magic-lantern entertainment recently, where the wonders of the microscope were to be exhibited, an old countryman and his wife were among the spectators. The various curiosities seemed to please the good woman well, till the animalcule contained in a drop of water came to be shown. These appeared to poor Janet not so pleasant a sight as the others. She sat patiently, however. Till the ‘water-tigers’ magnified to the size of 12 feet, appeared on the sheet, fighting with their usual ferocity. Janet now rose in great trepidation, and cried to her husband – ‘For mercy’s sake, come away, John!’ ‘Sit still, woman,’ said John ‘and see the show.’ ‘See the show! Bless us, man, what would come o’ us if the awful-like brutes wud break out of the water.” (ibid., 4)


8 | William K.L. and Antonia Dickson, History of The Kinetoscope, Kinetograph and Kinetophonograph (1895) facsimile ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art 2000), 45-46. An Afrite is a lower-level demon in Arabic mythology, a gigantic winged demon of fire. In medieval Iranian literature, the word ifrit often denotes an African. In the kinetoscope manual, the spectacle of the monstrous Afrite is imagined as an infiltration of the spectator’s minds and nervous system, leading to a cine-genetic race of beings. “The Rising of the Afrite” in US popular culture was synonymous with racial politics from 1861 onwards. “The Rising of the Afrite” was the name of a cartoon published in Vanity Fair in January 1861 after several Southern States in the US seceded from the Union. The cartoon shows a swarthy, snake-wielding genie with distinctively African features erupting from a bottle labeled “Secession.” See “The Rising of the Afrite,” Vanity Fair, 19 January 1861, 31.


10 | Ibid., 146.

11 | Ibid., 147.

12 | Baron Émile Louis Victor de Laveleye, The Balkan Peninsula (London: T. F. Unwin, 1887), 10-12. Although he had a federalist approach, Laveleye took a special interest in the revival and preservation of small nationalities such as Croatia.
Fredric Jameson, “Response,” in *Screening Europe*, 88. Jameson starts his essay with the provocative statement “I’m going to begin with the premise that Europe, and everything associated with it, is not necessarily a good thing, regardless of what one’s feelings are regarding nationalism.” (ibid., 87)

Ibid., 88.

Ibid.

On the significance of the “mistranslations” of international cinema see also Abé Mark Nornes, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).


Ibid., 153.


Ibid. Also see H. G. Knox, “English Gives Way to Babel of Tongues as Foreign Language Film Demand Grows,” *Epigram*, 1 July 1930, 1.


Edward G. Lowry, “Certain Factors and Considerations Affecting the European Market,” internal MPPDA memo, 25 October 1928 (Motion Picture Association of America Archive, New York), 20. This memo is reprinted in “Film Europe” and “Film America,” 353-379.

Kristin Thompson, “The Rise and Fall of Film Europe,” in “Film Europe” and “Film America,” 56-81.


George Romuald Canty was a naturalized US citizen born in Cork, Ireland in 1889. He was appointed trade commissioner of the Motion Picture Section in the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce in 1926. As trade commissioner, he was tasked with “investigating the motion picture markets in Europe.” (See Jens Ulff-Møller, *Hollywood’s Film Wars with France: Film-Trade Diplomacy and the Emergence of the French Quota Policy* [Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001], 63, note 14 and 15)

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31 | Ibid., 228.

32 | Ibid., 228-229.

33 | The Film: Its Economic, Social and Artistic Problems (London: Holbein Publishing Company, 1947). The exhibit “The Film Yesterday and Today” had three primary sections. The first part included 64 panels on the economic, social and artistic problems of the fiction film. The second part focused on the educational film and the amateur film (the Swiss archivists and editors of the volume refer to this as “substandard film”). The third part of the exhibit focused on photographic and projection equipment. New panels on Swiss film were integrated into the exhibit when it traveled after its premiere at the Basel Gewerbemuseum.

34 | Although it is a mainstream publication, the typography and layout of the pages on the film industry echo 1920s and 1930s avant-garde treatises on film by Hans Richter, Moholy-Nagy and others. The archivists also write in their foreword that the pages of the text are meant to have a “poster-like layout, designed to be seen from a distance.”

35 | In Film History: An Introduction, David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson also suggest a “folklore” strategy capitalizing on national themes and landscapes as a primary characteristic of the film output of “smaller producing countries.” See their section of Film History: An Introduction entitled “Smaller Producing Countries,” where they refer to “the strategies of using national subject matter and exploiting picturesque local landscapes” that “have remained common in countries with limited production to the present day.” (David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson, Film History: An Introduction [London: McGraw Hill, 2003], 79)


37 | Ibid., 10. The film industry statistics they publish are as follows: “Average production cost of a Swiss film (without general expenses and distribution costs): Fr. 120–170,000; Average income of a Swiss film from the home market: Fr. 80–130,000; Deficit without possibility of export: Fr. 40,000; Number of films produced in Switzerland Year 1934 (1 Film), 1935 (0 films), 1936 (0 films), 1937 (1 film), 1938 (4 films), 1939 (2 films), 1940 (8 films), 1941 (12 films), 1942 (15 films), 1943 (5 films), 1944 (2 films), 1945 (1 film), 1946 (1 film), 1947 (1 film).”

38 | Carl Doka, Kulturelle Aussenpolitik (Zürich: Verlag Berichthaus, 1956), 333.

39 | Kurt Deggeller (Director of Memoravia), “Memoravia, the network for the preservation of the audio-visual heritage of Switzerland,” available online at http://de.memoriav.ch/dokument/Tagungsberichte/conference_200611_girona_en.pdf


41 | Two follow-up conferences have been organized by colleagues in the US and Romania: The Second Annual Small Cinemas in Transition Conference: Small, Smaller, Smallest (State
Janelle Blankenship and Tobias Nagl

University of New York, Oswego 16-18 September 2011), and Small Cinemas: Promotion and Reception, (Timisoara, Romania, 1-3 June 2012). In 2005 the Huston School of Film and Digital Media organized a conference on New Scottish Cinema entitled Cinema in a Small Nation/Small National Cinemas in the World (National University of Ireland, Galway, 4-5 November 2005).


Eurimages officials, film festival organizers, film producers and distributors and film critics are represented on the LUX Prize 17-member selection panel.
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47 | Ibid.

48 | Pack, “Film Prize is ‘Tool for Building European Identity’.”


51 | The current eligibility criteria for the 2014 LUX European Film Prize is as follows:

1) They are fictions or creative documentaries (may be animated).

2) They have a minimum length of 60 minutes.

3) They result from productions or co-productions eligible under the MEDIA PROGRAMME produced or co-produced in a European Union country or in Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland.

4) They illustrate universality of European values, diversity of cultures or themes raising the public debate on European building process.

5) Films that had their festival premiere/ first release between 31 May 2013 and 30 May 2014.

(See Eligibility Criteria, LUX Prize-European-Parliament website, available online at http://www.luxprize.eu/selection-process)


54 | The organizers also note on numerous websites that the €90,000 prize money is also used to adapt the original film for people with visual or hearing handicaps.


56 | Ibid., 160.

57 | Wong perceptively writes that “film festivals incorporate very contradictory impulses in their texts, audiences, and discussions. On the one hand, most festivals are fairly highbrow and exclusionary. On the other, precisely because of the exclusivity that distances film festivals from the industrial mass cinema, they have the freedom to represent and even debate marginal, sensitive, and difficult subject matters.” (ibid., 164) See also Randall Halle, “Offering Tales They Want to Hear: Transnational European Film Funding as Neo-Orientalism,” in Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories, ed. Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 303-316.

58 | Ibid., 88.

“Meine Projekte bergen immer ein gewisses Risiko. Ein sehr großes Risiko.”

(“Interview mit Veit Helmer: Baikonur,” available online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wU4Ft57R2Qk)

In this context, see also Agata Jakubowska’s discussion of Polish artist Jerzy Bereś. As Jakubowska writes, Bereś has been “dealing with the same forms and topics since the late 1960s. His artistic creation is a reaction to the actual historic events [...] but his main motif – if we may call it that – remains the same. It’s his naked body – one of the most significant elements of his performances. The artist refers to the legacy of Romanticism and to the Christian tradition in which – in the body of Christ exposed to pain in order to bring freedom (or, to use the artist’s exact words, ‘independence’) – he finds his point of reference.” (Agata Jakubowska, “Poljska/Poland,” in Body and the East: From the 1960s to the Present, ed. Zdenka Badovinac [Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press, 1998], 125-126)

In 2013, HBO Europe released the three-part mini-series Burning Bush (Hořící keř), directed by the Academy-award winning Polish director Agnieszka Holland, on the Czech “living torch” Jan Palach, a student who set himself on fire in Wenceslas Square in Prague in 1969. The director has a personal investment in the story, since she was studying at the Prague Film School (FAMU) at the time (see “Agnieszka Holland to shoot story of Czech martyr”, 23 January 2012, available online at http://cineuropa.org/2011/nw.aspx?t=newsdetail&l=en&did=214882).


Here one should also mention the 25 short films on the European Union commissioned by Lars von Trier for his 2004 compilation film Visions of Europe. The compilation includes shorts by directors from Greece, Denmark, Sweden, Estonia, Lithuania, Finland, Belgium, Hungary, Ireland and other small European nations. As Nadja Stamselberg argues in “Visions of Europe: The Ethics Behind the Aesthetics,” Lars von Trier’s DVD compilation portrays a counter-vision of Europe shaped by a “cultural, colonial or neo-colonial dialectic.” She writes that “the Europe portrayed by the Visions of Europe project is increasingly defined by its immigration practices. The new geographies put together by the filmic visions appear to be locked into a fundamentally cultural, colonial or neo-colonial dialectic of appropriation and alienation. Addressing the question of containment in the European Union, they highlight the fact that the discourse of political rights has been re-nationalized [...] Nonetheless, the question posed by Visions of Europe is not that of a just society, but that of a horizon [...] its theoretical position addresses a politics of Otherness that it is not reducible to a politics of presentation.” (Nadja Stamselberg, “Visions of Europe: The Ethics Behind the Aesthetics,” in Breaching Borders: Art, Migrants and the Metaphors of Waste, ed. Julian Steyn and Nadja Stamselberg [London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014], 73-95, 90-91)