Queer European cinema

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Queer European Cinema: Queering Cinematic Time and Space

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‘Queer European Cinema’, the theme of this Studies in European Cinema special issue, combines two complex constructs: Europe and Queer. Attempts to define ‘Europe’ are fraught with complexity, particularly when linked to identity, such as citizenship. ‘Queer’, too, is - intentionally - difficult to define. The word first entered the English language in the sixteenth century to mean strange or eccentric and by the 20th century was used as a derogatory term, especially to describe men perceived as ‘effeminate’, ‘manly’ women, and gay people in general. In the 1980s, in the midst of the AIDS crisis, the term was reclaimed and used either neutrally or positively as an umbrella term by some lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) people, who came together - in a way they never had before and have not done since - in order to care for those who were HIV+ and to protest against their treatment, particularly by the Reagan administration in the USA.

From this grass-roots political reclamation, queer was then picked up in the academy: a seminal work in what came to be known as queer theory is Judith Butler’s Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990), in which Butler argues that gender is constructed through the repetition of the dominant conventions of gender so that they appear to be inherent or natural, which she terms ‘gender performativity’ and later distinguishes from the ‘bounded act’ of performance (1993: 234). Although gender performativity is a ‘doing’ rather than a ‘being’, Butler
contests the idea of a ‘doer’ behind the ‘deed’ (1990: 25). Where queer theory originally focussed on gender and sexuality, a noteworthy trend in the past decade is that of queer temporality, with a focus on non-normative life schedules, rather than queer gender or sexuality. Although queer space has been discussed and theorized by numerous scholars in recent years, notably J. Jack Halberstam and José Esteban Muñoz, it is the focus on queer temporalities, rather than space, both of which were highlighted in Halberstam’s A Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives (2005) that has really been trending in queer scholarship, including work by Lee Edelman (2004), Elizabeth Freeman (2007) and José Esteban Muñoz (2009) to name just a few of many scholars who have contributed significantly to this area.

Furthermore, queer is frequently used not only as an adjective or a noun, but also a verb: to queer can mean to read against the grain e.g. highlighting homoerotic or queer elements in film that is otherwise perceived as straight and is a technique long used by LGBT cinema-goers in order to identify more identities like, or similar to, their own, particularly in times when there was a dearth of homosexuality onscreen, and, more recently, by academics whose queer readings aim to subvert a text.

Before considering the queer films of Europe and beyond analysed in this special issue, let us step back to reflect on the brief - due to space constraints - history of LGBTQ film in countries and cinemas of the five articles contained here, which both outlines examples of the aforementioned subversive against the grain queering as well as more obvious depictions of LGBTQ subjects. This introduction does, therefore, not only identify dominant trends and overlaps both within and
across countries and time periods, creating somewhat of a queer time and space in itself, but also framing the series of issues on Queer European Cinema that I am co-/editing, of which this is the first issue. While onscreen space is examined here, the next issue in this collection will focus on the significance of queer space both onscreen and off: queer film festivals.

The Dickinson Experimental Sound Film (William Kennedy, 1895), from the USA, has been read as the first depiction of homosexuality in film as it features two men dancing together, which certainly can be read as homoerotic or queer, regardless of sexuality. Cross-dressing, too, featured in relatively early film, but gender bending by actors as well known as Charlie Chaplin, Fatty Arbuckle, and Katharine Hepburn was halted by the introduction of the Motion Picture Code, commonly known as the Hays Code, in 1930. Indeed social and political reality majorly influenced the big screen. During wartime, notably the Second World War, queer characters were often represented as anti-social, criminal, or mentally ill by Hollywood, meaning they were frequently pursued by authorities, with Rope (Alfred Hitchcock, 1948) a prime example of the latter. With the Hays Code still in place, the 1950s and 1960s saw the increasing use of innuendo to hint at LGBT sexualities, before Andy Warhol’s transgressive independent cinema helped to create more complex queer characters in films such as My Hustler (1965) and Bike Boy (1967).

The Stonewall riots in New York City in 1969, in which gay voices made themselves heard,

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1 From 1930 to 1968 this Code made clear what was acceptable, and unacceptable, content for films intended to be screened publically in the United States of America.
meant Hollywood considered marketing film to gay people, targeting what came to be known as the pink pound via gay male protagonists in *The Boys in the Band* (William Friedkin, 1970), although the film adhered to negative stereotypes of gay men, and following up with *Fortune and Men’s Eyes* (Harvey Hart, 1971), a gay man’s prison drama, and the much-celebrated *Cabaret* (Bob Fosse, 1972), starring Liza Minnelli. Later, independent film *Parting Glances* (Bill Sherwood, 1986) drew attention to the AIDS crisis that the government tried to ignore, before the first mainstream Hollywood film about the pandemic, *Longtime Companion* (Norman René, 1989), which would be followed by Tom Hanks’ HIV+ protagonist in Academy Award-winning *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993). Despite these characters being considered ‘other’ within the mainstream due to their HIV status and homosexuality, they were still otherwise respectable, wealthy, and white.

New Queer Cinema, coined by B. Ruby Rich in her eponymous *Sight and Sound* article (1992), is a movement comprising films with a wide variety of themes and styles, although all have one thing in common: queer films made by queers and with a freedom from previous conventions such as the demand for positive imagery of lesbians and gay men, as advocated by the Gay Liberation movement of the 1970s and 1980s.\(^2\) Many of the films belonging to New Queer Cinema were made in North America, particularly the US including *Poison* (Todd Haynes, 1991), *My Own Private Idaho* (Gus Van Sant, 1991), *The Living End* (Gregg Araki, 1992), *Go Fish* (Rose Troche, 1994) and *The Watermelon Woman* (Cheryl Dunye, 1996), with the latter two explicitly

dealing with lesbianism and Dunye’s film often acknowledged as the first ever feature to be directed by a black lesbian. However, some films by European filmmakers have been read as part of New Queer Cinema, including *Edward II* (1991) and *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) by British filmmakers Derek Jarman and Stephen Frears, respectively, and work by German-born filmmaker Monika Treut, who is discussed in more detail shortly.³ *Boys Don’t Cry* (Kimberly Peirce, 1999), examined in Dawson’s article, achieved such critical and mainstream success that is was said to sound the death knoll for New Queer Cinema.

Recent years have seen numerous depictions of both LBGT characters and queerness on the Hollywood screen, such as *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, 1994), *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* (Beeban Kidron, 1995), *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005) - the latter an Academy Award-winner directed by a heterosexual cis man that has been criticised for capitalising on the momentum of New Queer Cinema’s queer film by queers - *Monster* (Patty Jenkins, 2003), *Transamerica* (Duncan Tucker, 2005), *Milk* (Gus Van Sant, 2008), *Black Swan* (Darren Aronofsky, 2010), *The Kids are Alright* (Lisa Cholodenko, 2010), and *Freeheld* (Peter Sollett, 2015), with many well-known actors desperate to show their versatility through playing LGBTQ roles and frequent recognition for these roles in major awards ceremonies.

Moving in time and space to step back and queer film history across the Atlantic, Alice A. Kuzniar explains in *The Queer German Cinema* that German films produced since the Weimar era have ‘played a leading, innovative role in the annals of gay and lesbian film, with the tantalizing sexual
intelligibility and gender instability of figures from the 1920s screen anticipating the queer sensibilities of the 1990s’ and New Queer Cinema in particular (2000:1). Examples include silent films Michael (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1924), Sex in Chains (William Dieterle, 1928), and Pandora’s Box (1929) by Austrian director, G.W. Pabst, which includes a sub-plot featuring a masculine lesbian in a tuxedo. The tuxedo-wearing woman is an image perhaps best recalled via the iconic cinematic figure of Marlene Dietrich, who rose to fame in one of the first-ever talkies, or sound films, The Blue Angel (Josef Von Sternberg, 1930), which was shot simultaneously in German and English and featured Dietrich as cabaret performer Lola Lola leading a man to his downfall in a range of boundary-pushing outfits including a top hat. Her genderqueer performance continued in Morocco (Josef Von Sternberg, 1930) after she located to the USA to work with Sternberg and Paramount Pictures and to escape the National Socialist regime, highlighting the link between cinematic output and politics that continues throughout the articles in this issue. Morocco once again saw Dietrich play a cabaret singer, Amy Jolly, who dons a top hat, tuxedo, and white bow-tie, but progresses from the heterosexuality coupled with gender play of The Blue Angel to a queer gender and sexuality when she kisses a female audience member while wearing a tuxedo.

As indicated in Dawson’s article, which opens this special issue, the USA and Germany have long collaborated cinematically, with those directors and actors fleeing to the US to escape the National Socialist regime profoundly influencing Hollywood and beyond. Somewhat overshadowed by Dietrich in The Blue Angel, the first German-language sound film with a pro-lesbian storyline, the Weimar Republic’s Girls in Uniform (Leontine Sagan, 1931), also makes use of cross dressing and the staged performance to explore lesbian themes and has gone on to inspire numerous lesbian boarding school films, and works of literature, on both sides of the
Atlantic, including musical comedy *Viktor and Viktoria* (Reinhold Schnüzel, 1933) about a cis woman pretending to be a man impersonating a woman. While the inter-war period saw a flourishing homosexual subculture in Berlin, with gay people socialising in specialist bars and cafes, the rise of National Socialism, World War Two, and the aftermath of the Holocaust meant a dearth of German LGBTQ cinema.

During the New German Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, filmmakers wanted to make a break from what had gone before, both artistically and politically, with many of them signing the Oberhausen manifesto, which declared ‘the old cinema is dead, we believe in the new cinema’.4 One of whom, Volker Schlöndorff, directed *Young Törless* (1966) a homoerotic story about sadistic boys at an Austrian boarding school. The co-founder of Schlöndorff’s film production company, Hallelujah Film, in 1969, was Peter Fleischmann, who directed *Hunting Scenes from Bavaria* (1969), about a man suspected of being gay and was West Germany’s official submission to the Best Foreign Language Film category of the Academy Awards, but was not nominated. An ally of the Oberhausen Manifesto and New German Cinema’s most infamous filmmaker, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who at times declared himself both bisexual and gay, pushed boundaries relating to gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, with some of his more notable works including *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (1972), about an abusive lesbian relationship between a fashion designer and a model, *Fox and His Friends* (1975), following a working-class gay carnival worker from his lottery win to his untimely death, and *In a Year of 13 Moons* (1978)

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4 This is the most widely used translation of the original German, ‘Der alte Film ist tot. Wir glauben an den neuen’.
which focuses on the difficulties of a trans character, Elvira. His final film, *Querelle* (1982), is based on the work of Jean Genet, whose cinematic output I address shortly.

Meanwhile, *Christiane F* (Uli Edel, 1981), about the eponymous real-life teenager, caused controversy and gained cult status with its portrayal of hard drug use and prostitution, gay and straight, in West Germany. That same year, autobiographical *Taxi zum Klo* (Taxi to the Toilet) (Frank Ripploh) juxtaposed the respectable life of a popular schoolteacher with his cruising and anonymous sexual encounters. East Germany, too, made queer film in the 1980s, with award-winning *Coming Out* (Heiner Carow, 1989) showing the protagonist admitting his homosexuality to himself and others. The film premiered on the night the Berlin Wall fell.

Throughout these historically turbulent and cinematically varied periods, Rosa von Praunheim made film with LGBT themes, including *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives* (1971), following a gay man’s move to the big city of Berlin, which not only pushed boundaries with regard to homosexual content at that time, but also in terms of style for the experimental film features non-syncronised sound and image. Praunheim later made *Horror Vacui* (1984) about a gay couple living in Berlin where one of them, Frankie, becomes involved with a cult led by Madame C, a former Nazi who, along with male and female cult members, rapes Frankie upon discovering he is gay. Praunheim’s *I Am My Own Woman* (1992) also revolves around queerness and Naziism, following Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, a trans woman who lived through Nazi persecution and who later played a role in the gay liberation movement. Controversially, Praunheim’s documentary, *Men, Heroes, and Gay Nazis* (2005) investigates gay
men who have extreme right-wing and Nazi beliefs. Keen to address difficult topics, Praunheim had made *A Virus Knows No Morals* (1986), a dark comedy about the AIDS epidemic and, often considering the intersection of history and sexuality, went on to create *The Einstein of Sex: Life and Work of Dr. M. Hirschfeld* (1999), a work blending fiction with the reality of the eponymous Jewish sexologist. Behind the camera for *The Einstein of Sex* was Elfi Mikesch who, along with filmmaker Monika Treut, has significantly pushed boundaries both within and beyond German cinema.

Prolific lesbian feminist filmmaker, Treut has been linked to the aforementioned New Queer Cinema with her explorations of queer genders and sexualities in films such as *Gendernauts* (2000), a documentary focusing on trans, non-binary, and genderqueer subjects in the San Francisco area. Along with Mikesch, she made *Seduction: The Cruel Woman* (1985), about a female dominatrix’ sado-masochistic relationships with men and women and inspired by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’s novella, *Venus in Furs* (1870). After an exploration of other minority ad outsider identities, Treut returned to a focus on lesbian sexuality with both *Ghosted* (2009) and *Of Girls and Horses* (2014).⁵

German heritage cinema, too, has shown a marked interest in queer subject matters, such as Max Färberböck’s *Aimée & Jaguar* (1999) about a lesbian relationship between a Jew passing as gentile and her lover, an Aryan, married mother-of-four in war-torn Berlin.⁶ The Berlin School has

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⁵ For an overview of Treut’s career, see Dawson, L and Treut M. ‘Filmmakers are Hikers on the Globe and Create Globalisation from Below’ in Dawson, L. (ed.) *The Other: Gender, Sexuality and Ethnicity in European Cinema and Beyond*, January 2015. Pp. 155 - 169.
also been queered, with director Christian Petzold’s *Ghosts* (2005) featuring female protagonists who have a sexual relationship, while both coming-of-age drama *Summer Storm* (Marco Kreuzpainter, 2004) and *Free Fall* (Stephan Lacant, 2013) somewhat normalize same-sex relations. The latter recounts the gay relationship between two male police officers, one of whom has a pregnant girlfriend, and has been compared to *Brokeback Mountain*.

Queer cinema has played a role in shaping the recent horror trend. Films from 2006, such as *Cannibal* (Marian Dora, 2006) and *Grimm Love* (Martin Weisz) were clearly inspired by cannibal killer Oliver Hartwin’s internet search for a willing victim to be eaten and the young man who volunteers. The popular lesbian vampire story is retold in *We Are the Night* (Dennis Gansel, 2010), which explores lesbian separatist ideas promoted by Valerie Solanas’, she who shot Andy Warhol, and is the latest in a long line of lesbian vampire stories, such as *Vampyros Lesbos* (Jesús Franco, 1971), a West German-Spanish horror film made in Turkey. One of the most popular representations of lesbianism, I will return to trend for conflating lesbianism and vampirism onscreen throughout this introduction.

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7 I identified this trend for normalization and examine it further in my forthcoming monograph.

8 Directors considered to belong to Berlin School include Thomas Arslan and Angela Schanelec, the first generation, who started filmmaking at beginning of 1990s, and Christoph Hochhäusler, Benjamin Heisenberg, Sebastian Kutzli, part of the second generation. The *Berliner Schule* received critical acclaim in 2004 when Schanelec’s film, *Marseille* was shown at the Cannes Film Festival and the French press called it the ‘Nouvelle Vague Allemande’ (German new wave) after the French nouvelle vague/new wave of 1960s. The German press coined ‘Berliner Schule’ as a marketing label for the range of diverse films and counter-cinema. Although most directors studied at Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie, Berlin (DFFB), not all films or filmmakers are Berlin-specific. Many of the films focus on a search for new identities in times of societal change, bourgeois melancholia, aimless flaneurs, capitalism and crime, the everyday, and they aim to advance the aesthetics of cinema, while featuring slow, sparse dialogue.

9 For more information about the lesbian vampire and the influence of Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*, see Dawson (2010).
Despite the recent trend for Transnational Film Studies within the academy, cinema has long been transnational, with cast and crew moving around the globe to work on film.\textsuperscript{10} However, the rise of social media and increasingly transnational practices of film production, distribution, and funding, including crowdfunding campaigns, have been of considerable benefit to queer filmmakers and queer communities around the globe, for whom the blurring of boundaries and the crossing of borders may be very significant for both identity and cultural production. Older transnational film includes some of Dietrich’s work, as well as more recent films from before the rise of the digital age, such as the English and German-language \textit{Salmonberries} (Percy Adlon, 1991), starring k.d. lang as an androgynous Alaskan woman and her relationship with a female East German immigrant. Even more recently, \textit{A Little Bit of Freedom} (2003) by Kurdish director Yüksel Yavuz follows the friendship turned romantic relationship between two illegal immigrant boys in Germany, while \textit{My Friend from Faro} (Nana Neul, 2008) focuses on teenage tomboy Mel who assumes the identity of a Portuguese boy. The relationship between a Turkish asylum seeker and her lesbian lover is explored in Fatih Akin’s \textit{The Edge of Heaven} (2007). Furthermore, there has been a marked shift from immigrants represented as unhappy victims by German directors in the 1980s, to more playful and parodic representations of immigrants by Turkish, and other, directors working and/or living in Germany. Turkish Kutluğ Ataman’s film, \textit{Lola+Bilidikid} (1999),

\textsuperscript{10} Transnational cinema is oft disputed, but research on this includes: 1) film’s production, distribution, and exhibition (ie ‘the movement of films and film-makers across national borders and the reception of films by local audiences outside of their indigenous sites of production’); 2) film as a regional phenomenon, which examines ‘film cultures-national cinemas which invest in a shared cultural heritage and/or geo-political boundary’; 3) work on ‘diasporic, exilic and postcolonial cinemas, which aims, through its analysis of the cinematic representation of cultural identity, to challenge the western (neocolonial) construct of nation and national culture and, by extension, national cinema as Eurocentric in its ideological norms as well as its narrative and aesthetic formations’ (Higbee and Lim 2010: 9)
revolving around bilingual - German and Turkish - trans subjects, drag queens, and rent boys in Berlin is one such example.

This Turkish interjection is interesting with regard to - much less prolific - LGBTQ representation in Turkish cinema. Artist and filmmaker Ataman is a key name in Turkish queer cinema and part of his oeuvre are Never My Soul (2001) about a Turkish trans woman living in Switzerland and working as a prostitute, and 2 Girls (2005), a homoerotic story of two teenagers. Earlier Turkish film includes Köçek (Nejat Saydam, 1975), translated as Dancing Boy, about an androgynous boy abducted by a gang and forced to dress like a woman, before undergoing gender reassignment and working as a belly dancer. Both the move towards the new millennium and the noughties have seen a rise in Turkish queer film in Turkey, such as Istanbul Beneath My Wings (Mustafa Altioklar, 1996), I Saw the Sun (Mahsun Kirmizgül, 2009), The Queen is in the Factory (Ali Kemal Güven, 2008), and Other Angels (Emre Yalgun, 2010).

While much Turkish cinema has failed to receive significant international attention, French film Blue is the Warmest Colour (Abdellatif Kechiche, 2013) made a huge impact when it won the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2013, the same year that gay marriage was legalised in France. Traditionally, France has been seen as one of the most liberal countries in the world, with the civil solidarity pact or PACS (pacte civil de solidarité), offering some legal status and rights to same-sex couples, since 1999. In terms of culture, lesbianism has long been represented on the French screen with many instances of same-sex female desire in the interwar period, such as Club de Femmes (Jacques Deval, 1936), about women in a Parisian boarding house, and La Garçonner
(Jean de Limur, 1936), featuring Arletty and Edith Piaf, with the latter’s character indulging in a lesbian affair.

In the post-war years of the 1950s, France was pushing filmic boundaries in a way seldom seen elsewhere at that time. Legendary French writer Jean Genet made only one film, *Un chant d’amour* (1950), a fantasy set in a men’s prison, with scenes featuring masturbation and explicit nudity leading to bans and various edits over the years. The film would later influence German filmmaker, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, with his own work, especially *Querelle* (1982), while Genet’s literary oeuvre partially inspired New Queer Cinema’s *Posion* (Todd Haynes, 1991). In 1950 Jean Cocteau’s *Orphée* was also released and, although onscreen relationships are undoubtedly heterosexual, it has been read queerly, mostly due to the imagery and the fact Cocteau cast his former lover, Jean Marais, as Orphée. Lesbians were not overlooked in this period. *Olivia* (Jacqueline Audry, 1951), about a young English girl in love with her schoolmistress at a French finishing school, recalls the earlier German-language *Girls in Uniform*, which would be re-made in a less ambiguous, and more tame version in 1958 (Géza von Radványi). *Later, Les Biches* (*The Does*) directed by Claude Chabrol and released in 1968 portrayed a torturous lesbian relationship, and *Girl Slaves of Morgana Le Fay* (Bruni Gantillon, 1971), a lesbian exploitation film, in which Morgane grants eternal youth and beauty to those who are willing to make a pact with her, giving her their soul.

In the meantime, the 1960s saw the rise of the *nouvelle vague*, or French new wave, which inspired the aforementioned New German Cinema, and attempted to make a break – politically
and stylistically – from what had come before and sometimes showed a new kind of woman: short-haired, sassy and increasingly stronger. Partner of rive gauche filmmaker, Agnès Varda, Jacques Demy made Les Demoiselles de Rochefort (1967), a colourful musical, which could be read as queer due to non-normative lifestyles and a campness to both style and content. Even more queer cinema was made in the 1970s, with La Cage aux Folles (Harvey Fierstein, 1978) - tagline ‘une comédie très gay’ – which foregrounded homosexuality, drag, and the staged performance and would inspire a 1996 Hollywood remake, The Birdcage (Mike Nichols) with both Robin Williams and Gene Hackman. Before these, I Love You, I Don’t (Serge Gainsbourg, 1976) portrayed a gay man attracted to a woman with an androgynous appearance.

Moving forward, openly gay François Ozon, who has been making film since the nineties, frequently includes queer sexualities in his work, such as the short, A Summer Dress (1996), about a gay man’s brief encounter with a woman, satire Sitcom (1998) with both lesbian and gay male characters, 8 Women (2002) featuring a lesbian and two bisexual women.

As with other queer cinemas outlined here, France has represented AIDS on the big screen, most notably in multiple award-winning Savage Nights (Cyril Collard, 1992), about a bisexual HIV+ aspiring filmmaker, and his complex relationships with men and women, while the 1990s also saw an increase in LGBTQ cinema with comedic aspects, such as French Twist (Josiane Balasko, 1995), about two women and a man in a ménage à trois. Complicated marital relations also come to the fore in Pédale douce (Gabriel Aghion, 1996) about a gay man pretending to be married to a woman, before falling in love with his beard, and gay comedy continues with Why Not Me?
(Stéphane Guisti, 1999) about a group of friends coming out to their parents. Alongside blatant homosexuality, there were still films full of homoeroticism, which can be read queerly, such Claire Denis’ *Beau Travail* (1999).

Since the mid-2000s, the representation of sexuality has become even more explicit. *Baise-Moi* (Virginie Despentes and Coralie Trinh Thi, 2000), based on the novel of the same name by Despentes (1999), follows a sex worker and a sometime pornographic actress, who feel marginalized in society and embark on a violent rampage with lesbian undertones. A scene cut from the final edit of the film features lesbian sex. Meanwhile, Catherine Breillat’s *Anatomy of Hell* (2004) follows a protagonist who slashes her wrists in a gay bar, the gay man who rescues her, and the four nights he watches her when she is ‘unwatchable’, with a series of sex acts including rakes and menstrual blood. Indeed frequent characters and themes in recent queer French cinema are hustlers, call girls and porn, such as *Man at Bath* (Christophe Honoré, 2010) and *Our Paradise* (Gaël Morel, 2011). Like the aforementioned trend for queer horrors, often parodic and/or grotesque, France released *Poltergay* (Éric Lavaine, 2006). Furthermore, there has been a focus on the queer road movie in recent French-language cinema, as explored by Michael Gott and Thibaut Schilt in their article in this special issue.

The French - and Flemish - film of Belgium is also noteworthy and played a role in the queer horror, such as the lesbian vampire film, *Daughters of Darkness* (Harry Kümel, 1971), adapted from Joseph Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla* (1871). Kümel’s first feature film was also queer: *Monsieur Hawarden* (1969), a biopic about the life of cross-dressing Meriora Gillibrand, and the
theme of cross dressing came to the fore again in Alain Berliner’s 1997 film, *Ma vie en rose* (*My Life in Pink*) about little girl Ludovic, who was assigned male at birth. French-language French film *Tomboy* (Céline Sciamma, 2011) would go on to recall Berliner’s film for it follows a 10-year-old assigned female at birth and named Laure, who, after moving, introduces himself to new friends in his new neighborhood as Mikäel.

Recently deceased Belgian lesbian filmmaker, Chantal Akerman was widely considered a leading light in experimental European and feminist cinema with her exploration of female sexuality and identity. Indeed lesbian coming of age is a key strand running through much of her work, although the narratives she creates in films such as *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974) and *Portait d’une jeune fille de la fin des années 60 à Bruxelles* (1994) resist established binaries relating to sexual identity, instead portraying a fluidity of desire.

Belgian film, too, has witnessed the relatively recent - but very different – queer trends: horror; the move towards the normalization of homosexuality; and increased transnational cinema with transcultural themes. Examples of each of these include *The Ordeal* (Fabrice Du Welz, 2004), a psychological horror notable for a boy having sex with a pig; normalization happens in Flemish film, *North Sea Texas* (Bavo Defurne, 2011), about a boy in love with his male best friend. Like the young queer love of *North Sea Texas*, *Puppylove* (Delphine Lehericey, 2013) features a 14-year-old girl exploring her sexuality with a female friend, including threesomes. Romantic feelings between same-sex friends comes to the fore again in *Mixed Kebab* (Guy Lee Thys, 2012), which focuses on Ibrahim, a twentysomething gay Muslim with Turkish roots, born in Belgium, and a same-sex friendship turned relationship.
Notable Swiss queer cinema includes *Mano Destra* (Cleo Übelmann, 1986), a black and white lesbian art film portraying bondage. *Garçon stupide* (Lionel Baier, 2004) is about a young factory worker who cruises older men online and indulges in emotionless sexual encounters, while undergoing personal growth. Indeed, like many European countries, the period around the new millennium witnessed a different type of - more rounded - gay characters. In *As Luck Would Have It* (Lorenzo Gabriele, 2002), a literature professor is selected to be the guardian of a teenage boy, while juggling his career and a jealous boyfriend. Like much of the rest of Europe, too, there were more transnational co-productions, such as *Soundless Wind Chime* (Hung Wing Kit, 2009) about the relationship between Ricky, a Chinese man in Hong Kong and a Swiss gay pickpocket, who later dies. Memory comes to the fore when Ricky travels to Switzerland where the present and the past is intertwined. The queer past is explored in German-language Swiss film *The Circle* (Stefan Haupt, 2014), about a gay publication in Zurich in the 1940s and 1950s, which became a scapegoat for the murders of gay men in the city.

Meanwhile, in this period Italy saw the end of a fascist regime, the execution of Benito Mussolini, and a transition to a republic in quick succession, meaning the 1950s and 1960s was a time of major change, as it was for many countries, due to the end of World War Two. Social progress and cultural change were simultaneous as Italian neorealism arose when Mussolini’s government ended and the film industry was without a hub. This new cinematic movement, in the 1940s and 1950s, was about the social reality of post-war Italy and began with the stories of the poor and the working-class. It went on to inspire other cinematic movements such as the French New Wave and New German Cinema. *Ossessione* (Luchino Visconti, 1943) is considered the first neorealist film. Openly gay Visconti would then go on to explore homosexuality,

Neorealism received international attention with *Rome, Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945), a film co-written by Federico Fellini, who later directed *Satyricon* (1969) about a scholar and his friend who try to win the affection of a young boy, with whom both are in love. Openly gay Pier Paolo Pasolini is said to have created films with a picaresque neorealism, as well as controversial work, such as the last film before his murder *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975), based on the book *The 120 Days of Sodom* by the Marquis de Sade and updated to the fall of Mussolini. *The Conformist* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970) also explores homosexuality, fascism, and the fall of Benito Mussolini, with filmmaker Bertolucci, beginning as an assistant to Pasolini.

Liliana Cavani, too, is a key name in Italian queer cinema. Like Visconti, her work includes a ‘German Trilogy’: *The Night Porter* (1974) a Nazisploitation film portraying a link between fascism, sexuality, and perversion, and *Beyond Good and Evil* (1977) about the relationship between Friedrich Nietzsche, Lou Salomé, and Paul Réé, while *The Berlin Affair* (1985), an Italian-German film set in war-torn Berlin, sees a wife and her Nazi diplomat husband fall in love with the same man.

The 1960 and 1970s included other Italian gay cinematic output, such as *A Complicated Girl* (Damiano Damiani, 1968), about a man who listens in to a phone call between lesbians and his quest to become one of their lovers and, in keeping with several other European films of that period, *Check to the Queen* (Pasquale Festa Campanile, 1969) centres on an actress’ sadomasochistic, homoerotic relationship. Italian director Dino Risi made a series of films exploring
sexuality, such as *I See Naked* (1969) and *How Funny Can Sex Be?* (1973). Similarly, Italy was part of the supernatural lesbian film trend, with *Baba Yaga* (Corrado Farina, 1973) about a female photographer who is controlled through a doll dressed in fetish wear by a seductress with special powers. Queer Italian-French horror *Blood for Dracula* (1974) was directed by American Paul Morrissey and produced by frequent collaborator, Andy Warhol.

Fears from fascist past came to the fore again in Steno’s 1979 film, *La patata bollente* - *Commedia all’italiana* (comedy the Italian way), a label given to Italian comedies in this period - in which a gay man is beaten by neo-Nazis and rescued by a man whose girlfriend then believes he has turned gay. The film discusses homophobia in the political left, working-class culture, and Eurocommunism. That same year, *Ernesto* (Salvatore Samperi, 1979) explored the gay relationship between teenage Jewish boy and a stableboy in Italy in 1911.

Italian queer film of the 1980s and 1990s also refused to shy away from controversial topics. *The Flavor of Corn* (Gianni Da Campo, 1986) portrays a gay romance between a man and his 12-year-old student, while *Sacred Silence* (Antonia Capuano 1996) follows a Catholic priest and his paedophilic relationship with a street boy. The past, too, remained in people’s consciousness with films including *The Gold Rimmed Glasses* (Guiliano Montaldo, 1987), set in 1938, which outlines a Jewish student and a gay doctor’s persecution in Fascist Italy.
Turkish-Italian director Ferzan Özpetek’s work, which is explored in more depth in an article in this issue, includes *The Ignorant Fairies* (2001), about a woman who discovers her recently deceased husband had been having an affair with a man, with whom she develops a friendship, *Saturn in Opposition* (2007) about a group of friends, straight and gay, while *Loose Cannons* (2010) centers on two gay brothers and the familial reaction when one of them comes out. The fluidity of sexuality as demonstrated in both US and European film in recent years, such as *The Ignorant Fairies*, also featured in other Italian film, such as *David’s Birthday* (Marco Filiberti, 2009) about the friendship between two heterosexual couples and the fallout after the men begin an affair and *Different from Whom?* (Umberto Carteni, 2009), which shows openly gay Piero, a left-wing politician, fall for a woman during his election campaign for mayor.

There has been more lesbian film in recent times, including *Gasoline* (Monica Stambrini, 2001), about a young lesbian couple on the run, *Rosa and Cornelia* (Giorgio Treves, 2000), and lesbian romance *Purple Sea* (Donatella Maiorca, 2009), while supernatural horror *The Mother of Tears* (Dario Argento, 2007), featuring lesbian lovers, fits in with the recent trend for queer European horror.

The past keeps coming to the fore in cinematic output with *Il Rosa Nudo (The Naked Rose)* (Giovanni Coda, 2013), a film about the life of Pierre Seel, who was imprisoned by the Nazis as a teenager for being gay, but later went on to marry and have children, remaining silent about the reason for his imprisonment until the Bishop of Strasbourg’ attacks against gay people in
1982 inspired him to write his autobiography. This trend for telling queer history ties to Italian cinematic history with *Pasolini* (Abel Ferrara, 2014) the filmmaker’s final days in which he was increasingly opposed by the Italian people due to the coupling of his homosexuality and his final film, the aforementioned *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom*.

While some cinemas boast rather illustrious queer beginnings, the same cannot be said for Spain, which was ruled by dictator Francisco Franco Bahamonde from 1939 until his death in 1975 and it was only towards the end of this rule that some queer film appeared. Both lesbianism and vampirism featured in *The Blood Splattered Bride* (Vincente Aranda, 1972), a Spanish horror film also based on Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*, which simultaneously rejected fascism and depicted more progressive gender and sexuality. That same year another taboo under Franco’s regime, gender reassignment, was explored in black comedy *My Dearest Senorita* (Jaime de Armiñán), about 43-year-old Adela, who takes on the identity of Juan, moving from a small village to Madrid. Four years later, and now post-Franco, *Change of Sex* (Vincente Aranda, 1976) depicted someone assigned male at birth who also moves to the big city, this time to live out life as a woman. The film features Victoria Abril, who has roles in several queer films, including aforementioned comedy *French Twist*, thus creating a queer intertextuality.

Moving from queer gender to sexuality and a film considered to show the first extended representation of gay men in Spanish cinema, *Hidden Pleasures* (Eloy de la Iglesia, 1977) follows
a middle-aged closeted banker who falls for a straight man many years his junior. The older gay man in love with a younger one is also the basis for *To an Unknown God* (Jaime Chávarri, 1977), in which a 50-something magician, fixated on his childhood in Grenada in 1936 and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, comes to terms with both his homosexuality and his mortality during an affair with a young politician. De la Iglesia also explores closeted homosexuality and the transition to democracy in *El diputado* (1978) about a married member of the Spanish left who desires men, with his Fascist enemies aware of this double life. Sexuality and corruption during the transition to democracy in Spain continued in 1981 with *The Minister’s Wife*, about a young rural waiter who prostitutes himself with older men and becomes implicated in terrorism, while the film gained further attention for its lesbian subplot between a wife and her female gardener. Homosexuality continues to be tied to Spanish politics in *The Death of Mikel* (Imanol Uribe, 1984), recounting - via flashback - the story of a gay member of ETA, a Basque nationalist and separatist organization, who dies mysteriously.

Still engaging with queer sexuality and fascism, the controversial *In a Glass Cage* (Augustí Villaronga, 1986) concentrates on former Nazi doctor Klaus, who, after a failed suicide attempt, is nursed by a man whom he had abused as a child.

In 1980, Pedro Almodóvar, the now most well-known queer Spanish filmmaker, released his first feature film, *Pepi, Luci, Bom and Other Average Girls*, a camp comedy about a lesbian punk singer and a masochistic housewife, which is said to belong to *La Movida Madrileña* (The Madrilenian scene), a period of cultural freedom and sexual exploration between the end of Franco’s regime and the onset of AIDS consciousness. Almodóvar followed this with comedy *Labyrinth of Passion* (1982) - in which Antonio Banderas has his filmic debut in a small role,
while Penélope Cruz would go on to feature in several of Almodóvar’s films - about a sex-obsessed gay popstar who falls in love with a Middle-Eastern prince. *Law of Desire* (Almodóvar, 1987) explores a love triangle between three men, while *Love of a Man* (Almodóvar, 1997) focuses on the friendship between a gay man and a straight woman, and *All About My Mother* (Almodóvar, 1999) covers delicate subjects including AIDS, homosexuality, trans status, and religion, and won an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Some of these themes come to the fore again in *Bad Education* (Almodóvar, 2004). More recently, *I’m So Excited!* (Almodóvar, 2013), featuring both Banderas and Cruz, includes queer sexualities and practices.

While Almodóvar was making a name for himself internationally, gay exploration was becoming popular onscreen, such as coming-of-age dramas *The Lame Pigeon* (Jaime de Armiñán, 1995), which simultaneously explores class in 1950s Andalusia, and *Nico and Dani* (Cesc Gay, 2000), while *Second Skin* (Gerardo Vera, 1999) examines a heterosexual marriage in which the husbands cheats with a man, and *My Mother Likes Women* (Inés París and Daniela Fejerman, 2002), about three grown-up daughters’ responses to their mother entering a lesbian relationship. *Bear Cub* (Miguel Albaladejo, 2004) is about a dentist who agrees to look after his nephew, which makes the bear alter his highly sexed gay lifestyle, while more normative gay lifestyles come to the fore again in *Queens* (Manuel Gómez Pereira, 2005) about a group of men marrying in Spain’s first same-sex wedding ceremony. Recent lesbian film is English, Spanish and Russian language *Room in Room* (Julio Medem, 2010), while a fluidity of sexuality rather than language or culture appears in the love triangle in *Sex of Angels* (Xavier Villaverde, 2012).
Moving back in time to when Dietrich was queering film, Swedish actress Greta Garbo starred in a Hollywood biopic as the eponymous *Queen Christina* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1933), in which she cross-dressed and declared ‘I shall die a bachelor’, although Christina’s sexuality is only hinted at via an attraction to a lady in waiting. Sweden has long been one of the most progressive countries regarding LGB rights, and is a forerunner for trans rights. The country’s film industry, too, has pushed boundaries regarding sexuality and gender, such as *491* (Vilgot Sjöman, 1964), a controversial film about a group of young criminals participating in a social experiment and featuring a homosexual rape scene as well as a – cut – scene where a woman is raped by a dog.

In the 1970s, Sweden became increasingly known internationally for pornography and other sex-related films and Ingrid Ryberg’s article within this issue focuses on pornography, albeit more recent. More from the *Language of Love* (Torgny Wickman, 1970) is a Swedish sex education film about alternative sexualities and lifestyles, while *Anita: Swedish Nymphet* (1973) by the same director, is an erotic drama, and *Thriller – A Cruel Picture* (Bo Arne Vibenius as Alex Fridolinski, 1973) recounts the story of a mute woman forced into heroin addiction and prostitution and her revenge on the men she holds responsible. *Loving Couples* (1964), deals with complex topics such as sexual repression, adultery, premarital sex, lesbianism, male homosexuality, bisexuality and paedophilia and was made by Mai Zetterling, a filmmaker who was an actress in work of the best-known Swedish director, Ingmar Bergman, whose work includes *Persona* (1966), a film with a strong lesbian subtext and *Face to Face* (1976), which explores the mental health of a female doctor who is interested in a man in the same profession who turns out to be attracted to other men.
More recently, director Lukas Moodysson has gained international attention, notably for *Show Me Love* (1998) about two teenage girls who embark on a romantic relationship, which Anna Weststål Stendahl claims was ‘related to the New Queer Cinema wave of the early 1990s’ (2012: 5), although it must be noted the New Queer Cinema consisted of queer works by queer directors. Moodysson’s second feature *Together* (2000), a comedy set in 1975 in a Stockholm commune, also includes lesbianism as well as male homosexuality and his black and white stream of consciousness film *Container* (2006), too, is queer.

In line with the transcultural and transnational trend, *Ciao Bella* (Mani Masserat-Agah, 2007) is about a teenage football player from an immigrant Iranian family living in Sweden, who is encouraged to pass as Italian by an Italian player, Enrico. The boy’s friendship becomes a love affair. Europeanness more broadly is highlighted again in *Once in a Lifetime* (Susanne Bier, 2000), featuring cameos by numerous Swedish singers, about a mother obsessed with the - very queer - Eurovision Song Contest and who achieves fame through a song she pretends she wrote. A theme more common in earlier film, AIDS, comes to the fore again via her HIV+ brother. *Patrik, Age 1.5* (Ella Lemhagen, 2008) is a comedy about a gay couple who think they are adopting a baby, but he is actually a homophobic teenager. Family complexities continue in *With Every Heartbeat* (Alexandra Therese Keining, 2011) about Mia, engaged to a man, who falls in love with the daughter of her father’s fiancée. Most recently, *Dyke Hard* (Bitte Andersson, 2014) has made
an impact on the queer European film festival scene.\textsuperscript{11} The genre-bending film follows a failed lesbian rock group trying to revive their career on a trip to a Battle of the Bands competition and, along the way, parodies genres such as the ghost story and the road movie.

Stepping back in time again, in 1959, homosexuality was officially criminalized in The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was founded in 1943, in the aftermath of World War Two. While the Socialist Republic of Croatia decriminalized homosexuality in 1975, some parts of the Federation only did this after the fall of Yugoslavia, meaning a dearth of LGBT cinematic output. Since Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, there has been some LGBTQ film, which I will not discuss here as I have done with other national cinemas, as these are outlined, alongside the social and political reality of LGBT people, in Lačan’s article in this special issue.

This is poignant, for although there has been a significant increase in European LGBTQ film production in recent years, both mainstream and independent, this does not mean that LGBT identities are now safe in the European context, with Russia an example of a country where LGB citizens do not enjoy the same rights as heterosexual ones, while trans rights remain far behind those of cis people - those whose sex and gender are aligned - across a large proportion of Europe. It is for this reason that LGBTQ film is important, not just for entertainment, although that is an important aspect, but also for its socio-political use: delivering information about political injustices and social realities to a broader audience. Indeed film, which foregrounds

\textsuperscript{11} The film opened the first ever Scottish Queer International Film Festival (SQIFF), which I helped to organize, and which took place in Glasgow from 24 – 27 September 2015.
visibility, can also be used as a tool for acceptance of a range of identities and can give a presence and a voice to identities which are otherwise invisible, whether through choice or fear.

The temporal and special breadth of this introduction creates a queer space of LGBT cinematic trends that cross borders and boundaries. Indeed queer film and space is a key thread running throughout this issue, which explores film from a breadth of countries, including Germany (with an Iranian protagonist), Italy (featuring Turks), Croatia, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and - beyond Europe - the USA. A focus on both European unity and the queering of this is especially significant at a time when Europe, and the European Union in particular, is undergoing difficulties and having to make major decisions about its present and its future. Furthermore, it is a time when - decidedly unqueer - gay marriage is making headlines both in and beyond Europe.

Queer temporality is woven through this issue and, although the timeframe of primary films analyzed is a relatively narrow sixteen years, from 1997 to 2012, these works draw on the queer cinematic history outlined in this introduction and, furthermore, this period from 1997 has seen huge changes regarding LGBTQ rights and the socio-political reality of gay lifestyles. When proposals for this special issue started to arrive, I noticed a marked focus on the intersection between LGBTQ film and queer space and place, thus enabling this issue to push forward discussion regarding LGBTQ identity and location. Furthermore, in order to continue to queer film, this collection explores films traditionally belonging to ‘low culture’, such as pornography, through the spectrum to the ‘high culture’ of independent arthouse movies.
Leanne Dawson’s article, which opens this special issue of Studies in European Cinema, considers not only a multi-lingual queer European film with an Asian protagonist, Unveiled/Fremde Haut (Angelina Maccarone, 2005), but also a film from beyond Europe: North American Boys Don’t Cry (Kimberly Peirce, 1999), which, it has been argued, sounded the death knoll for New Queer Cinema due to its mainstream success. Dawson reads these two films alongside each other to consider how queer identity, in terms of both gender and sexuality, as well as ethnicity and socio-economic position, are controlled and regulated. Drawing on the aforementioned Halberstam text, which employs Boys Don’t Cry to posit a transgender gaze, as well as Butlerian gender performativity (1990) and Michel Foucault’s body of work on the development of Western systems of control, Dawson’s article considers how power is articulated and policing is conducted in relation to the body and relationships, before homing in on identity and medium specificity to consider sight - the filmic gaze - alongside the sense of touch, then finally pulling back to read these aspects alongside the political reality of socio-economic position, queerness, crime, and location, before offering a new interjection relating to second cinema: arthouse and the appropriation of space.

Sanja Laćan also considers socio-political reality alongside representation, although here it is specifically lesbian representation in film at important political moments for Croatia, namely its entry into the European Union and marriage referendum, thus highlighting two issues that are continuing to make news headlines worldwide as this journal issue goes to press. ‘Concealing, Revealing, and Coming Out: Lesbian Visibility in Dalibor Matanić’s Fine Dead Girls/Fine mrtve djevojke (Matanić 2002) and Dana Budisavljević’s Family Meals/Nije ti život pjesma Havaja
(Budisavljević 2012)’ draws on studies of LGBT representation in post-socialist cinema, which have pointed to the problem of lesbian visibility in particular, by asserting that ‘all mainstream Eastern European films about lesbians are also national allegories and use the lesbian as a metaphor to challenge the implicitly heterosexual political institution of the nation’ (Moss and Simić 2011: 271). Both films examined are crucial, Lačan argues, in aiding our understanding of the evolution of cinematic representations of lesbians in Croatia, just as they are for evaluating the ongoing changes in public perception of queer sexualities. Departing from the notion of cinematic lesbians of the Western Balkans as mere repositories of nationalist and male discourse, this analysis pulls back to consider homophobia and hetero-sexism as socially constructed phenomena not particular to the Balkans, while illustrating the significance of anti-essentialism regarding sexuality and gender in constructing a visible lesbian subject.

Also moving away from rigid concepts of nationalism, Elena Boschi examines queerness alongside transnationalism in her analysis music and camp in Ferzan Özpetek’s films Hamam: il bagno turco/Hamam: The Turkish Bath (1997), Le fate ignoranti/His Secret Life (2001), Saturno contro/Saturn in Opposition (2007), and Mine vaganti/Loose Cannons (2010). In ‘Loose Cannons Unloaded: Popular Music, Space, and Queer Identities in the Films of Ferzan Özpetek’, Boschi explores how songs undermine the inclusivity claimed by films featuring queer and other non-dominant identities. Drawing on Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim (2010), Boschi proposes to think about Özpetek’s films in terms of, ‘a critical transnationalism [that] does not ghettoize transnational film-making in interstitial and marginal spaces but rather interrogates how these film-making activities negotiate with the national on all levels’ (2010: 18). Combining
transnational film theory with Freya Jarman’s interjections on camp and popular (music) culture (2009), Boschi problematizes instances where music and spatial positioning can aurally undermine inclusive representations of queer identities and their ‘visibility’ to musically other queer characters.

Location is explored in terms of embodiment in Ingrid Ryberg’s reading of queer, feminist, lesbian pornography, ‘The ethics of shared embodiment in queer, feminist and lesbian pornography’, which examines *Dirty Diaries: Twelve Shorts of Feminist Porn* (2009). The collection comprises a film by Ryberg herself (*Phone Fuck, Sweden*), as well as work by Emilie Jouvet (France), Marit Östberg (Sweden/Germany), and collectives such as girlswholikeporno (Spain) and PostPorn (Sweden). Ryberg’s interjection belongs to a trend of reigniting discussion about lesbianism, queerness, feminism, and pornography, much like the Sex Wars did; that is the clash between anti-porn feminists and sex radical feminists in the United States, often symbolized by the infamous Barnard conference on sexuality in 1982, which represented a change from Second Wave feminism, which was notoriously anti-butch-femme and anti-S&M. Ryberg discusses how feminist pornographic film culture invites a particular ‘ethics of shared embodiment’ (Laura U. Marks 2002: 8), which is capable of accommodating heterogeneity - queer, lesbian, and feminist, although these categories frequently do overlap - and disagreements within this film culture to argue against an essentialism about what such porn is or should be, coupling this with José Esteban Muñoz’s aforementioned work on queerness as horizon and utopia (2009), to conceptualize conflicts in a non-linear fashion, while calling for an ethics of shared embodiment.
The issue then moves from the travelling protagonists of Emilie Jouvet’s Queer X Show to Michael Gott and Thibaut Schilt’s exploration of road movies. In ‘Crossing Borders and Queering Identities in French-language European Road Cinema’ Gott and Schilt focus on space, citizenship, cross-dressing and liminal spaces, allowing us to come full circle regarding the dominant themes discussed in relation to both Boys Don’t Cry and Unveiled in the opening piece of this special issue. Like several other articles included here, Gott and Schilt touch on socio-political reality of LGBTQ identities in recent years, such as the controversies surrounding the adoption of the pacte civil de solidarité (PACS), and other debates about civil partnerships in Europe in the late 1990s, which, they argue, coincide with a revival of the road movie format in the cinema of France and its neighbours. This article homes in on three French-language, queer-themed, border-crossing road movies: Plein sud/Going South (Sébastien Lifshitz, France, 2009), Origine contrôlée/Made in France (Ahmed Bouchaala and Zakia Tahri, France/Luxembourg, 2001), and Comme des voleurs (à l’est)/Stealth (Lionel Baier, Switzerland, 2006), and how the border-crossing of road movies, including the multilingualism within them, tackles the fluidity of identity and citizenship from a transnational perspective to argue that the trend for road movies in France and beyond corresponds to a period marked by identity debates and the decreasing relevance of the traditional fabric of citizenship.

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