

## **Introduction: 'Alternative Voices in European Cinema'**

(Margaret Topping & Guyda Armstrong)

This issue considers the dynamic shifts in European cinema in recent decades against the backdrop of an evolving Europe, a Europe whose geographical, ideological and cultural terrains are shifting precisely because of the plurality of identities it comprises. These shifts, which are testimony to modern Europe's status as a locus of movement, flux and heterogeneity, have called into question such artificial classifications as centre and margins, self and other, 'normative' and 'alternative'.

They have also prompted the creation of new spaces in artistic production and distribution for unheard voices and marginalized identities. These are the regional and popular voices, the voices of women, and of others that have historically been silenced by unequal power dynamics or cultural hierarchies. They are also Europe's 'new' voices: once relegated to the status of the 'Other within', migrants and their descendents have become central to the creation of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic landscape which – ideally constructed if not always practically realized – is based on creative synthesis and hybridity.

The articles collected here examine the 'alternative' forms and subject matter, critical approaches and commercial values that, in recent decades, have enabled filmmakers and their audiences to engage in a productive rethinking of (ethnic, gender and sexual) identities within the context of a changing Europe.