



Deveny, Thomas G. *Migration in Contemporary Hispanic Cinema*. Lanham: Scarecrow, 2012. 393p

Whether it is Syrians seeking refuge in Turkey, internally displaced persons (IDP's) within their own countries of Afghanistan, the Congo, Colombia or Somalia, or unaccompanied adolescent Central Americans being stopped at the U.S.-Mexico border, migration is one of the

important, newsworthy issues of our times. It is an important and much-discussed topic throughout the world, and the filmic depiction of migration helps to shape perceptions of the issues involved. Migration is the stuff of international law, sociological research, humanitarian concern, and political debate. We have only to look at two 2013 films still in the cinemas, one French (*La cage dorée*, Ruben Alves) and one Mexican (*La jaula de oro*, Diego Quemada-Díez), to know that migration is also the stuff of international film. And, clearly it is the stuff of Spanish-language film, making it the interesting subject matter of Thomas G. Deveny's *Migration in Contemporary Hispanic Cinema*.

In *Migration...*, Deveny adopts a global perspective as he examines the last four decades of emigration and immigration films from throughout the Hispanic world. His book is composed of an introduction and eight chapters (plus the requisite, and useful, filmography and bibliography sections). Organizing the study by geographical areas allows for a clear view of the migration flow out of, into, and within the Hispanic world, movements that are different at different moments in history. Spain, for example, was historically an emigrating nation, but more recently it has become a destination nation where current estimates put the immigrant population at over 12% of the total population with immigrants coming from Latin America, Africa, and other European nations; giving Manuel Fraga Iribarne's claim that "Spain is Different" a whole new meaning. And this is reflected in Spanish films dealing with migration as studied by the present volume.

The volumes' chapters are: "Migration in Spanish Cinema," "Migration in Argentina Cinema," "Migration in Mexican Cinema," "Migration in Films from Central America," "Migration in Films from the Hispanic Caribbean," "The Underbelly of Migration: Trafficking of Drugs and Humans," "Multinational Migration in the Hispanic World," and "Hispanic Cinema and the 'Huddled Masses Yearning to Breathe Free.'" Chapter titles that begin "Migration films from..." make it clear to the reader that the volume's focus is the analysis of individual films dealing with migration.

From Spanish cinema, the immigration films chosen for analysis range from the 1990 groundbreaking *Las cartas de Alou* to 2010's *Biutiful*; emigration films range from *La línea del cielo* (1984) to *Un franco, 14 pesetas* (2006).

For Argentina, films on immigration range from *Los gauchos judíos* (1975) to *Fotografías* (2007), and emigration films range from *El exilio de Gardel: Tangos* (1985) to *Hermanas* (2005).

Analysis of Mexican emigration films begins with the seminal *Alabrista!* (1977), continues with *Los mojados* (1979), and ends with *El viaje de Teo* (2008).

Hispanic Caribbean migration is the topic of analyzed films from *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1968) to *Nueva Yol* (1995) and *Cercanías* (2008). Central American migration appears in films ranging from the canonical *El norte* (1983) to the important *Sin nombre* (2009).

In this book, the author realizes individual close textual analyses, mindful of sociological migration theories, as well as critical theory on film. Recurring themes, such as the depiction of the "Other," individual identity, and social and cultural contextualization ("push and pull factors," stereotypes, rejection, acceptance, and change) are consistently identified and discussed. Now canonical films such as *El norte*, *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, *Flores de otro mundo*, or *María llena de gracia*; as well as newer and other films such as *Biutiful*, *Retorno a Hansala*, *El camino*, *14 Kilómetros*, and many others are carefully studied.

The next-to-last chapter ("Multinational...") examines *Al otro lado* (*To the Other Side*), a film with narratives involving three nationalities and three destinations, thus concluding the volume with a display of the global nature of the migration phenomenon.

In the analysis of Hispanic films, the emphasis is on films from three countries with long cinematographic traditions and reasonably strong film industries—Spain, Argentina, and Mexico. In order to show the global nature of the migration phenomenon, attention is paid to its presence in other smaller film traditions.

Also, attention is paid to the trafficking theme: analysis of films from Colombia (*María llena de gracia*, 2004) and Uruguay (*En la puta vida*, 2001) focus on the phenomena of drug trafficking and human trafficking for prostitution, where the "Underbelly" chapter analyzes the seamier side of migration in films about Colombian "mules" coming to the United States and Uruguayan prostitutes in Spain.

To show that migration is not solely a south to north, developing to developed phenomenon, attention is paid to films portraying movement from one Hispanic context to another.

Also analyzed are films from the United States (after all more Hispanics reside in the U.S. than any country besides Mexico). Deveny looks at American films in Spanish dealing with emigration to the U.S. that portray the point of view of the emigrant/immigrant. Here, films are from Hispanic (Salvador Aguirre, *De ida y vuelta*) as well as non-Hispanic directors (Mark Becker, *Romántico*; David Rikker, *La ciudad*; Robert Young, *Alambrista!*).

Although it is clear from the analyses of the many films that national cinemas deal with the question of migration at different times and in different ways, Deveny proposes three elements as common to and explicit or implicit in migration films. For the volume's author, the three common components are: 1) a premigration context that triggers a decision to leave the homeland; 2) the journey or crossing; and 3) the immigrant's life in the new land. In spite of these commonalities and the large number of films examined, though, the volume's author does not go so far as to propose the existence of a migration genre within Spanish-language film (nor international film for that matter), evidence of which seems to be more than sufficient.

These general characteristics form the core of the final chapter, "Hispanic Cinema and the 'Huddled Masses Yearning to Breathe Free,'" which supplies an excellent summative, overall perspective on the films, geographical areas, and historical migration trends. This chapter clearly situates migration as a universal human experience with which all readers and filmgoers can identify.

Through the analyses of immigration and emigration depictions in film, this book allows its readers to understand the universal nature of migration. As is the case with the many the films it analyzes, *Migration...* provides a deeper understanding of the emigration/immigration experience, as it perceptively and convincingly highlights issues attendant and relevant to that experience in the Hispanic world.

With *Migration in Contemporary Hispanic Cinema*, Thomas G. Deveny has created a highly informative, timely volume that should appeal to multiple readerships. The writing style makes the book easily accessible to even the casual reader interested in migration concerns. Its level of detail, the rigor in sociopolitical contextualization, the perspicacity of its analyses, and its breadth and engagement with theory, make the volume required reading for students and teachers of Hispanic culture

and film. *Migration in Contemporary Hispanic Cinema* will become an valuable contribution to the field of Film Genre Studies.

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