



Immigration cinema in the New Europe

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To cite this article: Christine L. Quinan (2016) Immigration cinema in the New Europe, *Transnational Cinemas*, 7:2, 212-215, DOI: [10.1080/20403526.2016.1217640](https://doi.org/10.1080/20403526.2016.1217640)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20403526.2016.1217640>



Published online: 05 Aug 2016.



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political art and is sensitive to the ethical issues inherent in making visible those who necessarily strive to be invisible' (2016, 178).

In a smart conceptual move, the book starts and ends with the short analyses of video installations featuring airports and their function not only as spaces of global mobility, arrivals and departures but also as places of surveillance, identity checks and bodily scrutiny. The opening pages offer a close reading of Milan-based Albanian artist Adrian Paci's *Temporary Detention Center* (2007). Bayraktar focuses on the image of the mobile stairway, which seems to be attached to a plane when, in fact, it is not attached to it at all. Instead, the passengers are standing there, 'suspended on this stairway to nowhere' (2016, 2), an image that speaks to the liminal status of many displaced people. The book's conclusion features a discussion of *Point of Departure* (2006) by Ergin Çavuşoğlu, a London-based artist from Bulgaria with Turkish heritage. His carefully orchestrated multiscreen project reveals various, seemingly familiar airport images and sounds, which suggest, as Bayraktar writes, 'that the very processes and technologies that produce complex mobilities and interconnections also create exclusion and immobility' (2016, 187).

With the exception of *Countess Sophia Hatun* (1997), the films and screen installations under discussion were all produced in the post 9/11 era, a period that has witnessed the uneven diffusion of globalization, the feminization of migration, the fervor of anti-immigrant politics, the criminalization of racialized foreignness as well as the production of a fetishized rhetoric of 'illegality'. With its analysis of cinema and the screen-based art, Bayraktar's project is certainly an important contribution to studies of the visibility of migrancy. It offers a deeply troubled vision of the New Europe which sustains itself through the perpetual guarding of real and imagined borders, while continually disciplining those who, arriving from various 'elsewheres', are implicitly perceived as unwanted intruders. This book, however, does not allow its readers to dwell on the victimary status of migrants. Especially in Part II, it shows the power of alternative aesthetic and political visions created by a variety of artists committed to counter-hegemonic representations of human mobility.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20403526.2016.1217639>

Immigration cinema in the New Europe, by Isolina Ballesteros, Chicago, IL, Intellect, The University of Chicago Press, 2015, 288 pp., \$40 (paperback), ISBN 9781783204113

In *Immigration Cinema in the New Europe*, Isolina Ballesteros aims to offer a comparative study of European films that focus on themes like migration, border-crossing, transnationalism, diaspora and hybridity through a mapping of the terrain of European multinational and intercultural cinema. Ballesteros uses the key term 'immigration cinema' (not dissimilar from other labels like 'world cinema' and 'accented cinema' with whom it may share concerns) as a capacious heading for films that

depict and address the lives and identities of both first-generation immigrants and children of the diaspora, whether they are authored by immigrants themselves or by white Europeans who choose to use the resources and means of productions of dominant cinema to politically engage with the immigrants' predicaments. (14)

But as Ballesteros emphasizes, immigration cinema resists a succinct definition, for ‘the unmapable and hybrid condition of immigration cinema results from its free combination and deliberate blurring of filmic conventions’ (3). Indeed, the book alerts us to the problematics of categorization in the field of film production and reception, but at the same time Ballesteros also acknowledges the impossibility of entirely escaping this tendency to name and label when working in cinema studies. Notwithstanding, one mark of immigration cinema is, according to Ballesteros, the blending and mixing of genres (e.g. comedy/tragicomedy, drama/melodrama, film noir, documentary, etc.) as well as the use of cinema vérité techniques. In this sense, the author is attuned to style and method throughout the entire text, demonstrating the play between form and content and the effects that this blurring may have when viewing or analyzing migration-themed films.

Immigration Cinema in the New Europe begins by detailing the contemporary European political landscape and rise of nationalist, right-wing and conservative political parties with anti-immigration stances along with significant events that have impacted how immigrants and racialized and religious populations and communities are treated and represented. In this sense, the book contextualizes immigration cinema in a recent political climate of populist, racist and xenophobic trends and European anxieties over national identity and its apparent instability. Drawing upon a theoretical framework informed by postcolonial studies and by memory studies, the book makes a contribution by formulating a corpus of films (both canonical and less publicized) and by bringing migration studies into conversation with film studies, particularly in relation to Europe. Its intervention also lies in signaling the political role of film – that is, the idea that the way in which immigrant communities view themselves (and others) is always mediated – and its power to effect change.

The text takes an analytical approach and is guided by a focus on gender and sexuality. That said, it simultaneously misses an opportunity to fully develop this aspect. It seems that this contribution could have been signaled earlier in the text (or even in the monograph’s title); as well, in examining the topic of immigration cinema through the lens of gender and sexuality, a more thorough engagement with feminist, queer and trans scholarship (particularly in Chapters 2–4) would have made for an even greater intervention. Ballesteros is also quite clearly taking a feminist intersectional approach, although it is not named as such: ‘Foreignness, race, and ethnicity are depicted and juxtaposed with (working) class, age, gender, and sexuality. Often immigrants are discriminated against twice, once by virtue of their being foreigners ... once for being women or gay ...’ (22). Pushing this line of thought further could have offered an opportunity to more fully engage with the wealth of feminist theoretical work similarly grounded in intersectionality.

Following the introduction, the monograph is then divided into seven chapters. The first, entitled ‘Race, Mobile Masculinities, and Class’, centers around filmic representations of male migrant workers, with a specific focus on guest-worker programs and single males’ involvement in them. Constructions of masculinity, particularly the notions of masculinity in transition and masculinity as relational, are central to the films analyzed. As with the rest of the monograph, Ballesteros includes a body of immigration films released after the early 1990s, with the exception in this chapter of Rainer W. Fassbinder’s *Angst essen Seele auf/Ali, Fear Eats the Soul* (1974). By far the earliest film that is analyzed, Ballesteros reads this milestone in German cinema as an exemplar of the convergence of race, masculinity and class. After providing a brief summary and short analysis, she turns to films from Spain, France and the UK and their respective diasporic populations. This clustering is fairly typical of the rest of the text, with most chapters including a similar assortment of geopolitical locations.

Other chapters, particularly Chapter 2 (‘Female Transnational Migrations and Diasporas’) and Chapter 4 (‘Queer Immigration and Diasporas: Performative Identities, Cross-Dressing Displacement/Assimilation’) fill gaps in the existing literature in their respective focuses on

migrant women and immigrant gay men. Ballesteros presents a selection of films that shows a fuller portrait of both of these oft-marginalized populations, including *Bhaji on the Beach* (Gurinder Chadha, 1993), *InchAllah dimanche/God willing, it's Sunday* (Yamina Benguigui, 2001) and *Extranjeras/Foreigners* (Helena Taberna, 2002) in Chapter 2, and *J'ai pas sommeil/I can't sleep* (Claire Denis, 1994), *Lola und Bilidikid/Lola and Billy the Kid* (Kutlug Ataman, 1999) and *Princesa/Princess* (Henrique Goldman, 2001) in Chapter 4. In Chapter 2, she focuses on female film-makers' treatment of immigration, female immigrants and social invisibility, grouping her analysis around themes like home, mobility and labor for a number of migratory paths (e.g. Algeria–France, Caribbean–Spain, South Asia–UK and Lithuania–France). I would, however, ask what the importance is of this selection of films having been made by women: What effects does this have on the topics treated and on the viewers?

For Chapter 4, the question of 'double marginality' forms the core of the analysis through its reading of immigrant gay male cross-dressers. The chapter argues that performance and drag provide immigrant gay characters 'with subversive potential insofar as it is through live performance that they (re)define or (de)construct their gender and diasporic identities, generally in opposition to rigid social and (hetero)sexual norms' (123–124). While I find this argument persuasive, in focusing on cross-dressing and performance there seems to be a collapsing or conflating of gay and transgender identity at various points in the chapter. Despite there being a fine line in the selected films, I would ask what 'cross-dressing' means for this chapter? Is it clear that these characters are gay men? In this respect, the complicating of gender and cultural identifications rightly signaled by Ballesteros is an important point, but one that is worthy of elaboration. Here again an explicit referencing of intersectionality could have strengthened the theoretical analysis and import of these films.

In Chapter 3 ('Human Trafficking and the Global Sex Slave Trade') and Chapter 5 ('The European Family in the Face of Otherness: Family Metaphors and the Redemption of White Guilt'), Ballesteros also gathers a corpus of noteworthy films in her respective analyses of representations of human trafficking (in both fiction and documentary films) and of White European film-makers' treatment of the family as symbolic and allegorical of the nation. Even though these chapters treat topics integral to discussions of migration, they at times seem to stray from some of the larger arguments made by the book. In many ways, both of these chapters could have stood on their own (the former easily could have been an entire monograph).

Chapter 6 ('Border-Crossing Road Movies: Inverted Odysseys and Roads to Dystopia') offers an intervention in focusing on the genre of the road movie and variations upon it. Here, Ballesteros discusses how immigration cinema draws upon the typical American road movie, but also takes it into new directions with a cinema vérité sensibility. The subversion or questioning of genre and of temporal linearity in these films speaks to the unpredictability of migrants' journeys and to the unevenness of migratory patterns and flows. This portrayal is achieved through various devices, including a focus on circularity and return trips (as opposed to migrants' journeys to their chosen destinations) and through novel techniques such as animated maps and a blurring of fiction and documentary. The chosen films also prompt larger questions around border-crossings and rights to mobility, and concepts like nomadism and in-betweenness lie at the heart of Ballesteros' commitment here. Indeed, this chapter evinces a larger concern with borders (physical, geographic, social, political, ethnic and linguistic), particularly through the way in which 'Fortress Europe' has closed off possibilities by erecting such borders and boundaries. Ballesteros reads into these films the film-makers putting forth of an ethical project in which they present the audience with themes that demonstrate the right to mobility and movement and the need 'to develop a politics of borders that is respectful of fundamental human rights' (199).

Immigration Cinema in the New Europe ends with a well-executed chapter entitled 'Identities In-Between in Diasporic Cinema'. Here, the author explores what diasporic films do: they

document or fictionalize this dual, 'transmigrant,' and sometimes conflicting conception of individual and national identity. They expose their characters' identities as trapped in (or struggling to navigate) dichotomies and as determined by the dialectics of center/periphery, sending/receiving nation, and displacement/assimilation. (208)

The theme of generation conflict as well as nostalgia for a lost origin run throughout the films analyzed, as does the notion of being caught between two nationalities or cultures. As Ballesteros points out, growing populations of 'hybrid nationals' combined with access to education and resources to tell their stories has translated into an increase in the quantity of diasporic films, which is also evidenced by the relative weight of this chapter (by far the longest of the entire monograph).

While some important postcolonial references are interspersed throughout the chapter, a fuller discussion of European colonial legacies could have further strengthened the argument; for example, a discussion of French colonialism when discussing *Beur* cinema and *banlieue* films would have enriched the analysis of films like *Le thé au harem d'Archimède/Tea in the Harem* (Mehdi Charef, 1985) and *La haine* (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1996). Likewise, I imagine that the ways in which France's colonial history differs from Britain's or Spain's affects how diaspora is explored and how diasporic communities represent their own histories in such films. It would therefore be tempting to ask of the text how different colonial pasts manifest themselves in diasporic cinema.

My overall points of critique of the monograph are relatively minor. For example, while the text occasionally feels like a cataloging of films, for the most part it deftly avoids a mere listing of film summaries by interweaving theory with film analysis and by moving between multiple films that touch upon common themes. With projects of this sort, there is a risk of using a relatively small selection of films to make large arguments, but this is largely avoided by Ballesteros. I found that the film stills included throughout the text were often under-analyzed; these images were often left standing on their own without a clear idea of what role they served. Lastly, a fuller discussion of race would have also proven helpful, as 'migrant' or 'immigrant' at times stood in for racialized individuals.

Larger questions around representation are clearly key to any study of this sort. As Ballesteros writes, cinema is 'a cultural, ideological, and ethical apparatus' (3). Equally important is her assertion that immigration cinema offers a tool and terrain of political resistance, even as it may play into commercial interests connected with the medium of film. Overall, the book achieves its objective of drawing attention and awareness to immigrants' lives and realities in the EU and to 'shake audiences out of their silent complicity with some of the issues concerning immigration patterns and policies' (25). That is, the book views the political potential of cinema as a starting point for real social transformation. It is also successful in creating a dialog with existing research on 'the transnational, multinational, intercultural, polyglot, hybrid, and border-crossing nature of European cinemas that depict the experience of immigrants and diasporic subjects' (13), thereby making significant contributions the fields of both film studies and migration studies.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20403526.2016.1217640>