

With this engaging work on the contemporary filmic representation of migration by Greek cinema, Philip Phillis enters significantly into the hotly debated issue of migration en masse to Europe of the last decades, doing so with an approach that is both artistic and historical. In focusing on the border crossings that have particularly affected the geopolitical space of the Greek peninsula over the last thirty years, the author succeeds in proposing a thorough outlook to the migratory question through the analysis of its cinematic portrayals by Greek filmmakers or filmmakers active in the Greek area from 1991 to 2016. In fact, through a sensitive and intelligent operation, Phillis sets issues of a purely cinematic nature alongside an eminently political analysis, developing these in parallel throughout the book. This dual nature of the discourse is masterfully held together through the careful — and never superficial — descriptive analysis of the films covered and the ability to compare the poetics of the various directors with the need to re-give voice to migrants and refugees. In fact, Phillis, while praising many directors in his book, seems never to lose sight of the fact that “Greek immigration cinema is produced from a hegemonic position of enunciation since relevant power structures empower indigenous filmmakers rather than the migrants represented on film” (p. 11).

The book opens with a wide-ranging introduction, in which a number of key elements underlying the research work are discussed. First and foremost is the question of identity, Greek and European, and how this has been tested by the phenomenon of migration and is reflected in the nationality of the individual cinematic works themselves. In this regard, Phillis states that one of the main aims of his work is to “closely examine the preoccupation of Greek filmmakers with migration in order to convey the transformation of Greek cinema from national to transnational and to show how Greek films have moved from a more insular model to one that mirrors Greece’s European agenda” (p. 3). The transition from national to transnational takes place for Phillis mainly at the level of regional co-production, which makes him speak of a cinema that is now ‘Balkan’ rather than ‘Greek’. However, he notes as well that the official certification of nationality remains a central element in the life of a cinematic production, as it is the only way to ensure that the various filmmakers can compete in European and other international festivals (p. 57). Indeed, like other cinematic products that could be defined as non-mainstream, festivals remain the main and most important dissemination venue for cinema about migration, which seem to have a very poor reception at the general audience level. Phillis points out that these types of productions remain unattractive, if not unpalatable to Greek audiences, often disturbed by the

unattractive portrayal of their own society as xenophobic. On the other hand, the reaction to some films, such as Constantine Giannaris' *Hostage/Omiros* (2005) "provide some evidence to the nationalistic conditioning of a segment of Greek audiences, for whom the very thought of a film prioritising the experience of an Albanian migrant is anathema. This is the basic element that separates *Hostage* from the rest of Giannaris's filmography, and it brings solid evidence as to the anxieties that migration films can trigger in Greece" (pp. 62-63).

Four major themes can be identified in the book. The first, which is dealt with at length in the first chapters, concerns the role of Albanians in the migration films produced in Greece or by Greek filmmakers. As the first and largest group to cross their borders to get to Greece, the Albanians play a fundamental role in the Greek imaginary and, consequently, in Greek cinema about migration. Phillis investigates in depth the dynamics between the Greeks and this group, the members of which are alternately defined as criminal or hard workers. Nevertheless, in Chapter 5, two films are analysed that manage to go beyond this cultural bias. These are *See You/Mirupafshim* (Voupouras and Korras 1997) and *Eduart* (Antoniou 2006), and are considered as "valuable sources of insight on the unsettling potential of cultural difference as they propose nuanced and complex identities and affiliations, contesting xenophobic discourse and simultaneously defying liberal, western views that produce the more painless version of migrant identities" (p. 128). This reflection leads to the second focus of the analysis, the migration narratives. Otherness and its narration, in fact, are usually used in these productions as a mirror for reflecting the otherness by the dominant identity. Here, the author is perhaps the first to criticise the narrative of Theo Angelopoulos – the most iconic and praised Greek director. In fact, Phillis notes how *Eternity and a Day/ Mia Aioniotita kai mia Mera* (1998) is deeply Eurocentric and paternalistic in nature, providing an elitist discourse on diversity where otherness is meant to serve as a stimulus for the protagonist, usually a white character. This leads directly to the third focal point of the book, that is how migrant agency is represented in these films. The book points out how usually we cannot find any political reflection on the causes of migration, on why people have decided to migrate, and in the case of refugees "systemic violence, which turns citizens into refugees, is disregarded and refugees are revealed in terms of non-agency, loss and death, leaving little room for reflection" (pp. 199-200). There is no control of the other over his or her life, in a tragic vision that is only rarely taken up by the cinema of migration. The last aspect to be analysed is that of documentary production on migration and the rise of xenophobic violence in Greece with the Nazi party Chrysi Avgi.

In placing cinematic fiction under the pretence of reality representation offered by documentaries, the book closes the circle on the migration narrative offered by Greek filmmakers. Eventually, the book aims to be a complete and meditated handbook that can guide the reader, even non-specialist, to discover a rich but little-known production.

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