

Sylvie Blum-Reid. *Traveling in French Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. viii + 237 pp.

In her book-length study, Sylvie Blum-Reid examines travel narratives in French fiction film from the 1980s to the present. She studies tropes such as departures and returns, nomadic wandering, interior voyages, pilgrimages, migrants' narratives, the figure of the clandestine, women's travel, and healing narratives. While embracing several discourses and scrutinizing the meaning of "routes" and circulation at the beginning of the twenty-first century channeled through various films, Blum-Reid touches on the theme of departure and destination and how the crossing of borders and boundaries are interrelated. Hence, her study demonstrates how some movies resist speed in our accelerated lifestyles and celebrate slowness.

The first two chapters deal with travel narratives that Blum-Reid labels "the European-travel or euro-trip." Films like Cédric Klapisch's *L'Auberge espagnole* (*The Spanish Apartment*, 2002) and Tony Gatlif's *Gadjo Dilo* (*The Crazy Stranger*, 1997), which portray traveling characters finding home outside of the Hexagon, highlight the trope of leaving as a motivating force for self-knowledge. Although the former is imbedded in the Bildungsroman type and the latter in the topos of escape, both films cross French borders into Cataluña, Spain, and Romania, and both works address a geographically and racially different Other. Indeed these geographical displacements and crossings can often entail rejection of social norms. For example, Alain Corneau's *Nocturne indien* ('Indian Nocturnal,' 2008) takes us beyond the "euro-trip" to another journey and borrows the travel form as a means for the main character (Jean-Luc Anglade) to find and lose himself in Bombay, India. Also in search of his true identity, Mohammed, the retired factory worker in Khaled Ghorbal's *Un si beau voyage* ('Such a beautiful Journey,' 2008), leaves Paris in order to return to his homeland, Tunisia.

In Chapter 3, the figure of the vagabond emerges in diasporic cinema. Sarah Petit's *Le lac et la rivière* ('The Lake and the River,' 2002) and *L'Arpenteur* ('The Land Surveyor,' 2001), two films best seen as a diptych, interweave several paths that facilitate wandering but eventually culminate in a return to one's origins. Thus the vagabond trope permits new perspectives on the theme of the journey. Siegfried's *Sansa* (2003) conveys an ingenuous portrait of the vagabond who may also be subjected to identity verification by security forces. Walking relentlessly, he/she is the embodiment of nomadism, which Blum-Reid surveys in other filmic modes. Jean-Claude Guiguet's *Les passagers* (*The Passengers*, 1999) and Cédric Klapisch's *Paris* (2008) display the vector of the tramway as a perfect site for encounters between multiple characters and their inner thoughts. Both directors' desire for *vagabondage*, or wandering, is a leitmotiv exemplified in their use of the

film choral ‘hyperlink cinema,’ which displays multiple leading characters with parallel stories, crossing or not.

Chapter 4 shifts to “accented cinema,” a new kind of travel narrative that involves journeying, displacement, and identity. Blum-Reid deals with North-South migration scripts crossing over the sea for the Maghreb and investigates the theme of return to one’s original country. She explores the colonial past and its effects on the main characters’ present lives. François Dupeyron’s *Monsieur Ibrahim et les fleurs du Coran* (*Monsieur Ibrahim*, 2003), Medhi Charef’s *La fille de Keltoum* (*Daughter of Keltoum*, 2001) or Ismael Ferroukhi’s *Le Grand Voyage* (2004) exhibit the search for one’s origins and the location of home. “Cross borders films” (105) and the theme of illegal immigration is at the core of Chapter 5, which investigates Emmanuel Finkiel’s *Nulle part, terre promise* (*Nowhere, Promised Land*, 2009), Philippe Lioret’s *Welcome* (2009), Aki Kaurismäki’s *Le Havre* (2011), and Rached Bouchared’s *Little Senegal* (2001). These four movies document real situations in a documentary format and target a new figure at the margin of society: the illegal immigrant. In all these filmic narratives, the port city denotes a border which harbors refugees as well as active police forces. Lioret actually traveled to Calais and spent time with both refugees and volunteers to understand better their confined existence.

Chapter 6 focuses on traveling women or “female nomadic subjectivity” and their displacement in unchartered territories. Blum-Reid purposefully appropriates the image of the *flâneuse* ‘female stroller’ as one strategy to feminize and distinguish female traveling experiences like negotiation and self defense. Alain Tanner’s *La Salamandre* (*The Salamander*, 1971), for instance, documents the boundaries of travel and the restriction of women’s movement within 1970s Switzerland. Chantal Akerman’s *Les Rendez-vous d’Anna* (*The Meetings of Anna*, 1978) involves the main character, the filmmaker, who travels by train through different European countries. Indeed the train ride consecrates women through slow speed travel and what they accomplish from such a mode of transportation—a trope that surfaces in Jacques Rozier’s *Les naufragés de l’île de la Tortue* (*The Castaways of Turtle Island*, 1976) and *Maine-Océan* (1985), the name of the train line from Paris to Nantes in 1974. In Chapter 7, the author’s argument relies on the key concept of *dérive* ‘the drifting away’ originally framed by the Situationists who applied it to unplanned journeys through an urban landscape. Blum-Reid expands it to both rural and exotic settings as new interpretations of “open voyages.” Passengers share bonds despite geographical, physical, and linguistic barriers. Boats and particularly sailboats predominate in Rozier’s adventures in France’s overseas islands and are as important as the motif of the train for the travel narrative.

Blum-Reid invites the reader to rethink existing tropes within the field. She locates contemporary forms of travel in French films and distinguishes them from traditional practices. All film genres and styles crisscross each other, from

detective fiction to comedy or science-fiction, from horror to homecoming narratives and the aimless *dérive*. While investigating the many forms and metaphors recycled in such narratives and what they accomplish on a purely cinematic level, Blum-Reid provides a succinct bibliography supplemented by an impressive filmography that lists seventy-eight directors. Her welcome resource spans cultural studies, ethnography, film studies, gender studies, philosophy, semiotics, tourism studies, and travel writing.

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