



### **Cine y frontera.**

#### **Territorios ilimitados de la mirada**

(Cinema and Border. Unlimited Territories to View)

Juan Carlos Vargas and Graciela Martínez-Zalce, comps.

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In 2009, the Network of Cinema Researchers organized the first congress about cinema and the border, entitled “Territorios ilimitados de la mirada” (Unlimited Territories to View) in Guadalajara, Jalisco. The approximately 20 specialists from Mexico and other countries of the world exchanged points of view about the concept of border from the standpoint of cinematic research. When the conference was over, they agreed to publish a selection of the papers presented. The compilers, Juan Carlos Vargas and Graciela Martínez-Zalce, brought together the materials in this publication that attempts to respond to the concerns of the cultural studies academic community at the end of the last century.

In effect, the 1990s brought a change in the circulation of products, services, and persons across borders. Consequently, this sparked a spike in border studies, and, from the cultural point of view, special attention was paid to space, migration, hybridization, and the timeliness of concepts like

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state and nation. Geographic and symbolic borders were also objects of analysis for film studies: in that decade, they opened up the topic but did not explore the issue directly. This book seeks to fill that void with a multi-disciplinary proposal and approaches ranging from the analysis of film language to cultural studies of content.

The compilation is divided into four thematic sections. The first, entitled “Fronteras territoriales, imaginarias y temporales” (Territorial, Imaginary, and Temporal Borders), begins with an article by Ester Bautista Botello analyzing looks as an experience of the other in the Mexican film *El jardín del Edén* (The Garden of Eden). Set in Tijuana, the film completely fulfills the characteristics that Norma Iglesias recognizes as those of border cinema: a plot set in a border region, characters who debate between both sides of a border, or a main character from the border. The genre inevitably deals with the problem of cultural identity that concerns all borders, not only the one between Mexico and the United States. Proof of that is the next article, in which Graciela Martínez-Zalce looks at two Canadian films, *Highway 61* and *Bordertown Café*, to discern the differences in the approach to road movies around the border between Canada and the United States. But borders are not always geographical regions, as Alma Delia Zamorano’s article shows; symbolic borders displace, confine, and violate the other. The author theorizes about the concepts of “inside” and “outside” to examine the territories of exclusion in a series of films that recreate life in the Nazi concentration camps.

The book’s second part, “Migración e identidad en el cine fronterizo” (Migration and Identity in Border Cinema), opens with an article by María Ignês Carlos Magno and Vicente Gosciola that analyzes five Brazilian films with a common denominator: the movement of migrants. Based on the concept of “dislocography” or the geography of the non-place, the authors delve into the functions of space, time, and trajectory as the crosscutting themes of a cinema that constructs an imaginary-in-progress. Borders can also separate civilizations: based on the documentary *Crossing the Bridge*. The *Sound of Istanbul*, Joachim Michael’s article shows us Istanbul

bul as an inter-cultural city and an area of contact between two worlds, “Western culture” and “the Islamic world.” The author takes a particular look at the musical expressions in the film to demonstrate both the marginalization and repression and the manifestations of protest and rebellion in contemporary Turkey. Wilfried Raussert, for his part, contributes to inter-American studies with his analysis of the film *Frozen River*, set in the lands of the Mohawk Indians on the border between the United States and Canada. Using Michel Foucault’s concept of “heterotopia,” Raussert conceives of borders as transcultural, multi-dimensional spaces in the context of human, legal, and geopolitical relations. To finalize this section, Julio Valdés’s article explains how cinema mediates in the process of erosion and reinforcement of national borders and nationalist perspectives. To do this, he focuses on the analysis of three films about the Mexico-U.S. border: *Traffic*, *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*, and *Bordertown*.

The next section, “Frontera y género” (Border and Gender), offers the reader two articles that explore films about the women murdered in Ciudad Juárez. The first, by Miguel J. Hernández, looks at the documentary *Señorita extraviada* (Missing Young Woman), using Giorgio Agamben’s idea of *vita nuda* (bare life) to recognize that Lourdes Portillo’s film proposes a grammar or new way of showing violence against women on Mexico’s northern border. Yolanda Mercader, for her part, thematically categorizes the points of convergence and difference among three features, *The Virgin of Juárez*, *Bordertown*, and *Backyard*, and two documentaries, *Missing Young Woman* and *Bajo Juárez: la ciudad devorando a sus hijas* (Bajo Juárez: The City Devouring Its Daughters). Mercader supposes that the fact that the city is on the border determines the cinematic and real development and approaches to the issue of gender violence.

Finally, in “Representación estética de la frontera” (Aesthetic Representation of the Border), Sebastian Thies looks at the artistic dimension of dividing lines, whether symbolic or geographical. He asks himself how cinematic representations of U.S. multiculturalism adapt to the hegemonic discourse. In response, he contrasts the different metaphoric uses of the glass border trope and distinguishes the presence of strategies of the diaspora discourse in three Hollywood films about the border, *Traffic*, *Crash*, and *Babel*. The book ends with an article by Lauro Zavala, who proposes the exploration of a dozen border films from various countries using the internal border as the starting point; that is,

the “symbolic border crossing that must be negotiated in the imagination by every person who crosses a territory.”

The book is a significant contribution to cinematographic research about borders and broadens cultural studies’ theoretical outlook because its multi-disciplinary approach is proposed as an efficient method for future dealings with the theme. Remembering its title, the publication offers new views of the unlimited territories of cinema and the border. ■■

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