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Migration and Intercultural Cinema in Ireland: A New Contemporary Movement?

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Migration and 'Intercultural' Cinema in Ireland: A New Direction?

The new millennium has brought a growing interest amongst filmmakers to represent the cultural and ethnic diversification of Ireland. An unprecedented growth in Irish immigration has definitely changed the face of the nation forever; the ambiguity of traditional notions of Irishness – as a result of the socio-economic effects of the Celtic Tiger era and Irish Diaspora studies – has come to the forefront to generate further debate. The number of Irish film productions per annum is relatively small; yet, Irish filmmakers have made about six feature-length films with an immigration theme in the last five years, alongside several documentaries and short pieces since the year 2000. However, scholarship in the area of Irish film studies has yet to respond to this new thematic focus.

This emerging body of work, which addresses various layers and dimensions of migration and the immigrant Other, embeds many of the theoretical, aesthetic, and thematic discourses that film scholars have formulated in the context of various (trans-)national film practices. As regards their broader social implications and in relation to their depiction of different experiences of migration, the study of these contemporary Irish films can give a fresh impetus to scholarly discourse. The relevance of examining the portrayal and participation of new immigrant communities (and with it the scrutiny of cinematic portrayals of trans-cultural encounters) is a relatively new field in Ireland, even though its relevance is becoming increasingly obvious.[1]

In this article I wish to address this current gap in Irish film studies by posing questions about the possibility and validity of establishing a politically engaged, interdisciplinary approach to film studies, in the hope of shedding light on issues of racism and antiracism, social inclusion and exclusion as reflected through the politics of representation in Irish cinema. How are local realities of migration depicted in film? What types of trans-cultural encounters (if any) evolve through film? These are some of the basic questions this new body of work exploring a changing Irish ethnoscape evokes. What is at stake here is more than the reworking of a discipline or the redefinition of Irish national cinema. Recalling the idea that the camera is a weapon,[2] I argue that film as a text can be scrutinised to map the prevailing ideology and discursive practices Ireland has employed in its "governance of difference".[3]

This article is structured around three main parts. In the first part, following a summary of modern-day immigration in Ireland, I outline the

major trends and discourses in Irish film studies up to date, situating the possibility of an Irish migratory cinema point of view within this context. In the second part, I offer a brief taxonomy of most of the films with an "intercultural"[4] or migration theme that have been made in Ireland since 2000. In the third part, I delineate existing theories of exile/migration/ethnic cinema and their relevance to Ireland and I provide close readings of a few relevant films to illustrate how the discussed theoretical frameworks of this perspective could be relevant in an Irish cinematic context. *Here to Stay* (2006; dir. Alan Grossman and Áine O'Brien) is an ethnographic documentary film about Fidel Taguinod, a Filipino nurse now living in Ireland, and his various engagements as a human rights activist. *Seaview* (2007; dir. Paul Rowney and Nicky Gogan) is a documentary depicting the lives of asylum seekers in a seaside direct provision centre. *Capital Letters* (2004; dir. Ciaran O'Connor; released in 2010 as *Trafficked*) is a powerful drama that combines the themes of human trafficking and sexual exploitation to tell the story of a young exiled woman in Dublin. All three pieces are good examples of a new Irish film eager to explore migration as a defining domestic experience; they also illustrate the types of questions film theorists interested in ethnic/migrant (themed) cinema have been posing in relation to other national and transnational film practices.

National Film Histories and the External Other in Ireland

Ireland is widely described as a place transformed from 'a nation of emigrants' to 'a country of immigrants'. Indeed, there has been an 8.1% increase in the population of Ireland since 2002, and this is largely due to contemporary inward migration. At present, 420,000 non-Irish-born people reside in the country, which means that an estimated 12% of the population is non-Irish-born. Out of this number about 66% come from other EU (both pre- and post-2004 accession) countries, about 11% have roots in Asia, 8% in Africa, and 15% in the rest of the world (Office of the Minister for Integration 19). The emergence of the Celtic Tiger economy in the mid-90s and Ireland's non-restrictive approach to new EU countries in 2004 are thought to be among some of the elements that gave impetus to the increase in Irish inward migration.

In the introduction to the book *Keeping it Real: Irish Film and Television*, Ruth Barton criticizes Irish film historians for restricting their focus to a limited set of themes and names:

> I sense a feeling among people working in the field that we have found ourselves stuck in the one representational rut. If it isn't the films of Neil Jordan (favoured text: *The Butcher Boy*, runner up: *The Crying Game*) then it is the

> postcolonial pack (Joe Comerford, Neil Jordan) or gender (Pat Murphy, *Hush-a-Bye-Baby*, Neil Jordan). The Troubles are always good for a chapter, as is the legacy of nationalism. The same binaries also tend to reappear: city/country, Church/individual, feminine/masculine, colonial/native, global/local. (3)

She reveals that attempts to "challenge the canon, and particularly the approaches to Irish cinema" are much needed in Irish film studies ("Introduction" 1). Exploring these films themed around immigration and the migrant Other could very well stand as a new interdisciplinary approach to Irish film that builds on 'race', ethnicity, and migration studies together with film theory, such as Althusser's ideas on the workings of this ideological state apparatus – cinema.[5]

Irish film scholars have long acknowledged migration as a powerful formulating force in cinema; however, they have tended to restrict their focus to issues of Irish emigration and the representation of Irish emigrants in the United States and the United Kingdom. Studying the portrayal of the Irish emigrant in American cinema and the influence of the Irish diaspora in American culture has always been one of the main focal points of cinema studies in Ireland.[6] At the same time, studying the representation of immigrants in Ireland has been brief and somewhat superficial. Barton initiates an engagement with this issue in her book *Irish National Cinema*, where she disputes the validity of a "hyphenated" or ethnic Irish identity in Ireland. As she puts it, "such à la carte ethnicity is not so acceptable in Ireland where new immigrants have yet to be incorporated within the national self-image" (4). It could be argued that establishing a lively discourse on migration and inter-culturalism, as reflected in Irish cinema, will actually advocate and facilitate the recognition and incorporation of hybridity as a defining element of Irishness.

Irishness is a heterogeneous concept, indeed, in the most inclusive sense of the word, situated far from the self-conceived uniformity of a hegemonic national psyche. This is a fact not only because of the coming-of-age of Irish Diaspora cultures abroad, but also due to the – perhaps neglected – presence of Ireland's 'internal Others': Travellers, 'mixed-race' Irish,[7] etc. When Martin McLoone defines Irish identity as "located as a shifting set of signifiers that inhabit a space caught between the local and the global, an ethnic and national identity that occupies a 'liminal space' that reflects Ireland's specific relationship to the global and the universal", he refers to the broadening effect of Irish Diaspora studies on constructions of Irish identity (4). Arguably, this reconstruction of Irishness should further be extended to include contemporary Irish immigrant cultures, just as the scrutiny of the politics of representation in Irish cinema should embrace the study of migrant representations and participation. Barton defines an Irish "imagined community" as including the Irish within Ireland and

those "domiciled elsewhere" (4) and Irish national cinema as "a body of films made inside and outside of Ireland that addresses both local and diasporic cultures" (5). Eventually, Ireland's 10% of non-Irish – or new Irish – population will also be included in these categories, as new defining elements of Irishness and Irish cinema.

Relatively little has been written about cinematic representations of the external Other in Ireland, and the minor discussion in circulation has served as a brief summary reminding us of the absence of an extensive discourse. In the final chapter of *Irish National Cinema*, Barton notes a couple of titles that she calls the beginnings of an Irish multicultural cinema; her description of *Padraig Agus Nadia* (2002) as an exploration of an "*interracial* love affair" (italics added) demonstrates the ambiguity of terminology one must face when theorising widely contested notions of ethnicity and 'race' (181). In Kevin Rockett's short summary of Irish immigration and its filmic reflections, "Immigration to Ireland on Film", he correlates the experience of Irishness as Otherness[8] with that of the newly arrived asylum seeker and refugee groups in the country (169–71). Unfortunately, he does not discuss the cinematic relevance (portrayal or participation) of the new immigrants in much detail, as he explains, "[t]he events surrounding the new refugees and asylum-seekers are too recent to have found their way in any reflective manner into Irish film or television drama" (170). Beth Newhall in the *National Cinemas* series examines issues of 'race' and multiculturalism by analysing Jim Sheridan's *In America* (2002), suggesting that his treatment of Mateo, the African-American friend of the emigrant Irish family in New York, is stereotypically exoticised as a spiritual 'voodoo' Other (149–50) – a stereotype that will later emerge again in the 2008 movie *Kisses* (dir. Lance Daly). Cheryl Herr, on the other hand, praises *Zulu 9* (2002; dir. Alan Gilsenan) as a remarkable short drama that investigates illegal immigration, exile, border control, and the "human being as item of cargo" in a highly analytical way (111). In her study of Irish film, Debbie Ging describes the work of the so-called First Wave of Irish filmmakers as decisive influences in Irish film history (178–82). She argues that, going against traditional representations of rural, homogenous, picturesque Ireland, directors such as Cathal Black and Joe Comerford constructed a new image of the country, focusing on a suppressed heterogeneity, exploring issues of racism, marginalisation, and social oppression in films such as *Pigs* (1984; dir. Cathal Black) and *Reefer and the Model* (1988; dir. Joe Comerford). She calls for a more inclusive Irish film, one that strives to reconstruct Irish identity according to the new realities of the country and where cultural diversity is a decisive phenomenon in everyday life (193). Finally, remarking upon the unexpectedly high number of short releases with an intercultural theme at the Galway Film Fleadh in the mid-2000s, Jennie McGinn notes that, although filmmakers working with the short formula have recognised the "new multicultural voices" of Ireland,

there is no production and distribution background that would encourage the making of this kind of work (39).

My focus on migration cinema can be situated as recognition of the need to push the boundaries in Irish film studies. Granted the fact that Irish cinema grows out of the "concatenation of pressures and influences" caused by nationalism, post-colonialism, emigration, and a contested sense of Irishness (McLoone 121), the effects of contemporary human migration must be regarded as a new, additional formulative power in Irish cinema. This new direction does not only reflect a growing awareness of Ireland's own cultural diversity and a general acknowledgement of the socio-political challenges related to immigration in the politics of representation, but also foreshadows the emergence of new modes and practices of film production and distribution. Embedding the study of migration and the migrant Other in the study of Irish film and re-focusing experiences of exile and migration from the Irish Diaspora to new Irish immigrant communities is a new possible approach in Irish film studies.

Contemporary Irish Cinema Representing Migration and the Migrant Other

A taxonomy of the films that have been made in Ireland since 2000 depicting migration and the migrant Other reveals the diverse themes and forms this new cinematic direction in Ireland has entailed. *Capital Letters* is the first feature-length drama that employs both issues of migration and intercultural communications in its conventional thriller narrative, which will be discussed in detail later in this article. Perry Ogden's *Pavee Lackeen* (2005) examines cultural diversity in Ireland, through the portrayal of different layers of marginalisation. Following the everyday life of a thirteen-year-old Traveller girl, Winnie, the viewer is introduced to a complex system of institutional racism, where even immigrants seem to enjoy greater social inclusion. John Carney's *Once* (2006) has received much attention both in Ireland and abroad, not only for its innovative re-thinking of the musical, but also for its witty East European immigrant sub-plot. *The Front Line* (2007; dir. David Gleeson) is perhaps the best example of a higher-budget genre production intended for mainstream audiences; its treatment of a tight-knit African subculture in Dublin is nevertheless noteworthy from a sociological point of view. The same year Liam O Mochain directed and starred in *W.C.*, exploring themes of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Although immigration is less relevant in *Kisses*, two turning points in the plot are triggered by the main characters' encounters with strangers, and both meetings are heavily metaphorical and romanticised. There are three features that have recently been released in Irish theatres. Two co-productions, *Little Foxes* (2010; dir. Mira Fornayova) and *Loss* (2008;

dir. Maris Martinsons) involve stories with East European migrant workers, while *Happy Ever Afters* (2009; dir. Stephen Burke) is a romantic comedy with a Nigerian groom and a suspicious immigration officer.

The documentaries (both feature and short) include several interview- and archived-footage-based films on asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland: *Lives Apart* (1998; dir. Katherine Fay), *The Street* (2003; dir. Julian Fortune), *Céad Míle Fáilte* (2005; dir. Bob Hoskins), and *The African Experience* (2006; dir. Benedicta Attoh). *Here to Stay* (2006; dir. Alan Grossman and Áine O'Brien) is an ethnographic documentary film discussed in length later in this study. *Saviours* (2007; dir. Liam Nolan and Ross Whitaker) is an observational documentary depicting the road to success of three boxers – one of them is the late Darren Sutherland, whose Caribbean-Irish background is a thought-provoking sub-topic in the film. *Seaview* (2007; dir. Paul Rowney and Nicky Gogan) will also be analysed in detail as an aesthetic experiment about the lives of asylum seekers in a former holiday camp in Mosney. Additionally, the 2009 Galway Film Fleadh screened a new Nigerian documentary entitled *Rapt in Éire* (2009; dir. Akibor Emihian) in its programme, which, although not an Irish production, has clear relevance due to its immigration theme.

The most acclaimed intercultural and migration films in Ireland are the numerous short productions that emerged in the past ten years. *Black Day at Blackrock* (2000; dir. Gerry Stembridge) is a lively satire about the turmoil caused by the suspected arrival of a group of asylum seekers in a small suburban town. *Buskers* (2000; dir. Ian Power) follows a long tradition of works that celebrate music as a unifying force among the underprivileged. *Pádraig agus Nadia* (2002; dir. Kester Dyer), *Yu Ming Is Ainm Dom* (2003; dir. Daniel O'Hara), and *Push Hands* (2003; dir. Steph Green) all explore the obstacles and triumphs of intercultural dialogue, while *Zulu 9* (2002; dir. Alan Gilsenan) takes a more serious look at the mechanics of the asylum passage. Róisín Loughrey's *Simple Piece of Cloth* (2006) provides a gender-critical look at the beauty ideals of an Irish and a Muslim woman, while *New Boy* (2007; dir. Steph Green), which was nominated for Best Short at the 2009 Academy Awards, captures the story of a young African pupil's first day in his new Irish school. Interestingly, three other films (*Once a Man Called Omar*, 2001, dir. Michael Joyce; *Caught Offside*, 2002, dir. Galway Asylum Group; *Detention*, 2004, dir. Dolores Rice) cannot be located even though they had been screened at various film festivals across the country. The Forum on Migration and Communications (FOMACS), an independent production centre, must also be mentioned in this comprehensive list. FOMACS has been promoting and producing a number of innovative ethnographic and animation films, as well as digital stories (*Abbi's Circle*, *Promise and Unrest*, *Union, Ink and Paper*) that set out to challenge traditional strategies and forms of representing migrants' voices.

Theoretical Framing: Intercultural and Migration Cinema in Ireland and Beyond

Accented, multicultural, third, and intercultural cinemas have been widely theorized and discussed both in relation to the representation of, and representation by, migrant/displaced/exilic/diasporic subjects. Cultural alterity itself has also been referred to in a plethora of ways, as "the Other"[9] or as "the Stranger",[10] just to name a few. In the specific context of visual depictions of cultural/ethnic difference, Stuart Hall calls these representations the "spectacle of the Other", which he characterises as historically stereotyped, fixated, and dichotomised (224). As studies by Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, Laura Marks, and Hamid Naficy reveal, these hegemonic representations are gradually answered by the specific experiences of ethnic-minority filmmakers who often revert to subversive methods of representation and production practices in their work. Hamid Naficy calls this body of work "accented cinema", which is characterised by the interstitial positionality of the exiled/migrant film and production practice and is shaped by the personal exilic and diasporic experience of the filmmaker.

The idea that a type of accented cinema might currently be emerging in Ireland is exemplified by *Here to Stay* (2006; dir. Alan Grossman and Áine O'Brien). Perhaps influenced by the two filmmakers' personal trans-national experiences, this ethnographic documentary film combines the private with the public through the portrayal of Fidel, a gay Filipino nurse/activist. It works on several layers with one plot running around Fidel's personal roles, exploring his serious romantic relationship with John, his participation in, and organisation of, the 'Alternative Ms. Philippines', and his academic achievements at University College Dublin. The second plot portrays his role as a political activist organising the Overseas Nurses Section of the Irish Nurses Organisation, whose main role is to secure equal rights and opportunities for non-EU immigrants in Ireland, especially in the field of nursing. Through his triumphs and failures, we are not only introduced to a vibrant Filipino community, but also to several issues and challenges faced by immigrants, particularly those of a non-EU background.

Here to Stay never celebrates diversity in a dogmatic manner; through Fidel's achievements his Otherness becomes triumphant. Social issues, such as integration and interculturalism, are examined through the special experience of overseas nurses who had been recruited to Ireland due to a shortage in Irish nurses. Their situation highlights a series of problems overseas immigrant workers face in Ireland. Bureaucratic tedium regarding the issuing of working visas; lack of a clear policy about family reunification for overseas workers' spouses and children; differences (hierarchy) between EU and non-EU labour migrants in Ireland; inconsistencies in the procedures of the Immigration Office; victimisation by exploitative employers;

differentiation between low-skilled and high-skilled workers; and the presence of a very evident glass ceiling, preventing overseas (and EU) migrants to advance in their careers, are all central motifs that characterise the experience of labour migrants in Ireland. Influenced by the migrant sensibility of the filmmakers and produced by a research centre specialising in research on migration and transnational film practices,[11] *Here to Stay* nicely exemplifies Hamid Naficy's argument on the sense of interstitionality amongst migrant filmmakers and production practices. The focus on sexual and migratory Otherness in the film discloses this sense of liminality on a thematic level as well.

Another example of a Nafician 'accented style' in the Irish context can be traced in *Capital Letters* (2004) by director Ciaran O'Connor. This feature drama combines a popular thriller with a poetic epistolary voice to tell the story of Taiwo, a trafficked immigrant woman, whose quest for freedom is quickly diminished by the Dublin underworld. The film engages with issues of human trafficking, organised crime, sex exploitation, and gender, while capturing the new reality of the Celtic Tiger era, where Ireland has quickly become a new promised land for people from less fortunate parts of the world.

Taiwo arrives in the city via the port of Dublin, hidden in the back of a truck. She manages to escape from her smugglers only to fall into the trap of petty criminal Keely. Having been robbed by him, Taiwo depends on Keely for survival. He provides her with food, shelter, and a waitressing job in a strip club, in exchange for some money. Hoping to reunite with her sister, Taiwo agrees to enter the sex industry as a dancer and soon becomes the club's 'hottest asset'. When her smugglers finally track her down, she is entangled in the Dublin crime scene. She works as a prostitute serving the elite circles of Dublin, while becoming a substance user to cope with the stress. When romantic Keely boldly decides to buy Taiwo back, catastrophe becomes inevitable: Taiwo is raped and badly beaten, while Keely is brutally killed. Ironically, Taiwo's wish to reunite with her sister is only attainable through the death of her lover and the enslavement and prostitutionalisation of herself and her sibling.

The narrative in *Capital Letters* is structured around Taiwo's correspondence with her loved ones. According to Hamid Naficy, epistolarity is a typical narrative style of accented cinema, whereby the main protagonist shares her thoughts and feelings through letters addressed to family and friends left behind on a kind of 'meta-plot' level. Epistolarity evokes distance and embodies exile and displacement. It connects the departed across countries and continents, but it is also a reminder of disconnection. The idea that the epistolary narrative can represent displacement and can be used to maintain personal relationships across transnational locations is successfully employed in *Capital Letters*. Significantly, however, the direc-

tor goes even further in suggesting that exile itself is a never-ending process. As the reading of the last letter in the film suggests, dependence on the epistolary is an inherent, embedded experience of exile. Even after the sisters are finally united, correspondence is continued with the mother: the void created by leaving loved ones behind is never completely filled.

Although *Capital Letters* does not necessarily fit into the category of "accented cinema" (after all it was made by a white Irish filmmaker), it exemplifies the types of narratives, characters, and themes Naficy identifies as typical of the "accented style". The significance of *Capital Letters* is not really whether it fits into a certain film theory *per se*, but the questions it raises as a contemporary Irish film possessing a certain kind of "accented voice".

In her book *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Laura Marks proposes the term "intercultural cinema", as a category describing the filmmaking practices of migrant and ethnic filmmakers, referring to their experimental modes of representation and production. She argues that "intercultural cinema is characterized by experimental styles that attempt to represent the experience of living between two or more cultural regimes of knowledge" and claims that "many of these works evoke memories both individual and cultural, through an appeal to non-visual knowledge, embodied knowledge, and experiences of the senses, such as touch, smell, and taste" (1–2). Similar to *Capital Letters*, which, as I previously suggested, represents a type of "accented cinema", even though it was produced in a traditional setting, the documentary film *Seaview*, made by two Irish directors, embraces what Marks describes as cinema's ability to "embody cultural memory [...] by awakening memories of touch" and the other senses (22). As such, it is an Irish piece where the theme of migration is combined with a production style and practice that Marks describes as "intercultural" and which is a characteristic of migrant filmmaking.

Seaview pays homage to Mosney, which used to be a busy and popular holiday resort in Ireland in the second half of the twentieth century, hosting a large number of mainly British families in the summer season. Equally importantly, *Seaview* is a portrayal of the people who currently occupy this space. On an abstract level, *Seaview* is a film about presence and absence. Besides focusing on the everyday lived experience of living under direct provision, the complexity of the film derives from the fact that the location itself is an equally important subject of the narrative. In other words, *Seaview* combines the theme of displacement with an emphasis on spatial and temporal locations. Memory becomes an elemental concept in this film: the memories of the filmmakers about a glorious past that had faded away; the memories of the Mosney staff, who are gatekeepers of past and present and who clearly maintain a strong sense of nostalgia towards

the former; and the memories and present-day realities of the current Mosney residents.

In a pre-opening-credit scene an old Irishman takes the filmmakers around the holiday camp reminiscing about the different function rooms of the place. The man turns on a set of lights in an almost ceremonial, theatrical manner. What we see is a series of forlorn, abandoned, worn-down halls. These establishing shots, from which an overwhelming sense of absence emerges, is actually stimulating enough to echo the laughter, excitement, and chatter of the happy crowd that once occupied this place. Through these opening frames nostalgia becomes almost tangible. In a way it comes as a surprise when the filmmakers gradually reveal that Mosney is far from being abandoned. A sequence of close-up shots of signs and documents finally introduce the current residents: Mosney now operates as a direct provision centre for asylum seekers whose cases are under process.

These few beginning sequences nicely establish the filmmakers' wish to approach documentary filmmaking from an experimental point of view, rethinking the formal and narrative qualities of documentary film. To begin with, the filmmakers throughout the film function as observers: their presence unobtrusively facilitates characters to voice their own stories. More uniquely, the cinematography and editing establish an aesthetic that goes beyond representation. The directors aim to incorporate the stimulation of all the senses through a highly stylised audiovisual form. As mentioned before, Laura Marks claims that exilic and diasporic films, in her words "intercultural cinema", often go beyond the use of the audiovisual characteristics of film in representing and constructing experiences of displacement and exile. Marks argues that by invoking senses traditionally not associated with cinema exilic filmmakers aim to recall closer, more tangible memories of home and absence. A formal emphasis on symmetry and geometry in carefully planned compositions, ambient sounds creating a meditative atmosphere, and the genteel pace in *Seaview* summon a similar viewing experience to Marks's characterisation of intercultural cinema.

On a more practical basis, stylised filming is necessitated by the subject matter. As mentioned before, asylum seekers are a highly vulnerable group of people who very often choose to remain invisible. Therefore, representation is always a tricky question that filmmakers need to address. In a simplified manner, they need to find alternative ways to visually depict the invisible. In the first scene, a highly articulate and engaging voice-over of a woman asylum seeker, whose simple but moving words carry such power that stretches simple commentary to artistic performance, gives account of the difficulties of living under direct provision. This opening scene successfully conveys the complexity of invisibility as experienced by asylum seekers. The woman is invisible due to her situation of living in direct provision, forcefully prevented from social participation. Her invisibility (what the

viewer sees is blurred images of her surroundings) also critiques the distorted media-hype that asylum seekers in Ireland have received. The threat and 'flood' of asylum seekers – often labelled as bogus – have been major topics in the Irish press, especially the tabloids; the emphasis on forlorn invisibility in *Seaview* corrects the unfairness and sensationalism of these news reports.

Recurring sequences of a stringent aesthetics based on geometrical forms and industrial design combined with the ambient soundtrack conjure up Deleuze's time-images,[12] which help the narration in *Seaview* to transmit concepts of absence and exile through the senses rather than through verbal explanation. A highly engaging scene combining cinematic formalism with social criticism involves a male asylum seeker's voice-over remembering his passage from Africa to Europe as a trafficked refugee. As he describes the crammed, unsanitary conditions of a devastating journey, where the destination and the success of reaching the destination are altogether uncertain, we see underwater images in a close-up long take. The quick motion of the waves invokes dizziness, and the overwhelming closeness of the water, filling up the frames almost entirely, creates a sense of drowning and claustrophobia. These images do not only illustrate the words of the speaker – they physically induce his emotions and physical experience of the journey. As the camera opens up to reveal a shabby underwater room interior, it feels like the belly of the trafficking ship from a passenger's point of view.

Contrary to traditional *cinéma vérité* and Direct Cinema approaches to documentary filmmaking, which rely on synchronous sound and aleatory techniques to document reality, *Seaview* engages in a different kind of filmmaking to address displacement and migration. As a result of its highly formal language, *Seaview* approaches documentary filmmaking from an experimental point of view. Its strategy of employing an experimental style in recording displaced people's lives in exile reminds one of Marks's analysis of "intercultural cinema" by migrant and diasporic filmmakers around the world.

The analogies I have outlined here raise many important questions in relation to migrant (themed) cinema in Ireland. Can we approach Irish film studies from an 'accented' or 'intercultural' cinema point of view? What other theoretical frameworks could be useful to position Ireland's cinemas of migration? Who represents Ireland's external Others and how? Finding answers to these enquiries will necessitate further scrutiny and debate as well as the continuous 'monitoring' of future Irish productions.

As I have argued, there is a growing body of Irish films that engage with immigration and the representation of immigrants on a thematic level. This fact does not only suggest that a new direction has emerged in Irish cinema, but also reflects Irish filmmakers' desire to comment on the social

and cultural changes that Ireland has been facing. It also reveals their wish to address issues of racism and antiracism, multi-/inter-/trans-culturalism, inclusion and exclusion that this transformation has entailed. This new direction in Irish film, which depicts the migrant Other, affirms that film is a vehicle through which processes of racialisation and intercultural dialogue can be performed and explored. In conclusion, we are at a historic crossroads in Irish film: the present is characterised both by hegemonic representations of the external Other and by critically engaged cinemas that advocate a re-evaluation of the same hegemonic discourse. The future will most probably see the emergence of an Irish migrant cinema whose voice will alter notions of Irish film and Irishness in its essence.

Notes

1 See Pramaggiore for a comparative analysis of Irish and African American cinema, Cullingford for an analysis of gender and ethnicity in Irish literature and popular culture, and Brannigan for a discussion of 'race' in Ireland.

2 For example, as is widely noted, Third Cinema filmmakers made politically engaged 'cinemas of hunger' pointing out the differences in power and resources in the establishment.

3 Gavan Titley uses this term in a recent call for papers in the online journal *Translocations*.

4 Laura Marks uses "intercultural" to indicate "movement between one culture and another", implying "a dynamic relationship between a dominant 'host' culture and a minority culture" (6–7).

5 Louis Althusser calls cultural institutions (such as cinema) ideological state apparatuses that interpellate individuals as subjects, conveying hegemonic state ideologies (Althusser 79).

6 See Chapter Three of Barton's *Irish National Cinema* on Irish emigrants in American cinema; see also McIllroy's "Exodus, Arrival and Return: The Generic Discourse of Irish Diasporic and Exilic Narrative Films"; Chapter Nine of McLoone's *Irish Film* also discusses emigration and Irishness in film. A symposium on "Screening the Irish in Britain" was recently held at Trinity College Dublin; for the programme, see <http://www.globalirish.ie/2009/screening-the-irish-in-britain-trinity-college-dublin-26-sept-09/>.

7 See Zélie Asava's essay in this collection.

8 Rockett quotes the classic line, "The Irish are the blacks of Europe ..." (*The Commitments*, 1991, dir. Alan Parker) to parallel exclusion as experienced by colonial Ireland and today's asylum seekers in the country (169).

9 Edward Said describes a type of identification where the Self is constructed against the Other in a (post-)colonial context: the coloniser against the colonised; the civilised against the barbarian; the superior against the inferior.

10 As Georg Simmel explains, the stranger "is fixed within a certain spatial circle – or within a group whose boundaries are analogous to spatial boundaries – but his position within it is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially and that he brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it" (143). Simmel goes on to claim, "the stranger is an element of the group itself, not unlike the poor and sundry 'inner enemies' – an element whose membership within the group involves both being outside it and confronting it" (144).

11 "The Forum on Migration and Communications (FOMACS) is a collaborative public media project, producing film, photographic, digital storytelling, radio, animation and

print stories on the topic of immigration and integration in Ireland, with the aim of reaching and engaging diverse audiences" (<http://www.fomacs.org/about.php?cat=What%20We%20Do>).

12 Time-images are "direct manifestations of time" in cinema (Bogue 107). See Bogue for a detailed study of Deleuze's concepts of different time-images.

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