

# ***Fictions of Migration. Narratives of Displacement in Peru and Bolivia***

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reseñado por

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*Fictions of Migration. Narratives of Displacement in Peru and Bolivia*, by Lorena Cuya Gavilano, is a welcome addition to the corpus of studies on the representation of migration in Latin America, and on Andean cultural production. The book analyses accounts of displacement in a selected number of well-known twenty- and twenty-first century Peruvian and Bolivian films and literary texts, with a particular focus on the function of affects and feelings (terms that are used, as claimed by the author, interchangeably) of and surrounding migrants. Affects, it is argued, have an epistemological and political dimension in that they provide knowledge about migration as a socio-cultural experience, which in turn empowers the reader to 'rethink' the subjectivity of migrants and challenge the mainstream often derogatory portrayals of them.

This book brings together the 'migrational fictions' of Peru and Bolivia on account of the similar colonial histories of the two countries and the pronounced and long-standing urban-rural divide visible in both. The two regions, however, are studied separately in two different sections. The author's overall argument, as elucidated in the introduction, is that migration can be read as a 'repository of public feelings and ideologies', and that affective narratives serve as anti-hegemonic, or 'decolonial', strategies that challenge dominant (i.e. Western) discourses and forms of knowledge. The introduction also briefly situates this study within the existing scholarship on affect and decoloniality, while introducing the reader to key regional historical processes, debates, and narratives of national identity, providing a useful contextualization for the ensuing analysis. Each section is then divided into two chapters that deal with cinema and literature independently. Chapter one examines imagery surrounding anxiety, illnesses, and monstrosity. It focuses on two quite distant cinematic productions: the 1980s socially committed films by Grupo Chaski,

and the first two films of Claudia Llosa, suggesting that the different contexts of their production (specifically, the passage from a protectionist to a neoliberal cinema legislation) explain the films' differing representations of social inclusion. The depiction of horizontal geographies and survival tactics of rural migrants in Chaski's films are interpreted as a way of deconstructing the dominant social order. Llosa's films, on the other hand, reveal the feelings and anxieties of the non-migrant, as well as what the author interprets as stereotypes of deviancy. Chapter two also marries disparate historical periods, spanning from the early 1970s to the late 2000s, through Jose María Arguedas's *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*; Cronwell Jara's *Montacerdos*; Santiago Roncagliolo's *Abril rojo*; and Daniel Alarcón's *Lost City Radio*, the latter originally published in English. The thread uniting these works lies in how they portray the relationship between migration and modernity. The chapter therefore examines how the migrant's experience reveals uneven and failed capitalism-driven modernization and nation-building projects as well as the problems faced by the people displaced from the Andes to the coast due to the internal conflict. The focus here is on the representation of migrants' strategies of resistance – including madness, writing, death, non-Western knowledge – which can become strategies for 'liberation' and 'decolonization'. The third and fourth chapter investigate Bolivian cultural production, arguing that literature and cinema have employed feelings to engage with social inequality and foreground the struggles and cultures of the powerless, succeeding in the depiction of 'alternative communities'. Chapter three examines the language of emotions in films produced between 1982 and 2013: Paolo Agazzi's *Mi socio*; Jorge San Jinés's *Nación clandestina*; Juan Carlos Valdivia's *American Visa* and *Yvy Maraey*, grouped together due to their sharing of an affective 'decolonial' aesthetics. The analysis examines how the films move beyond mere images of crisis and humanise the migrant; how they deal, via mobility and affective relationships, with internal colonialism, the country's cultural and racial diversity and, in some cases, the visibilization of Indigenous epistemes. Lastly, chapter four examines Bolivian narrative works published between 1996 and 2015: *Los tejedores de la noche* by Jesús Urzagasti, *El jardín de Nora*, by Blanca Wiethüchter, *Cuando Sara Chura despierte*, by Juan Pablo Piñeiro, and *El blues del minibús*, by Antoine Rodríguez-Carmona, all of which put centre stage the notion of recognition (of Bolivia's geographical, linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity) and fictionalise 'alternative spaces' that facilitate the creation of alternative social formations, contrary to the logic of Eurocentrism.

*Fictions of Migration* vindicates the cultural worthiness of the migrant. This, along the study of literary and cinematic strategies that challenge Eurocentric, colonialist and/or dominant imaginaries of migrancy, the understanding of the affective dimension of migration as a gateway to investigate the problematics associated with major historical processes and their underpinning ideologies, and the examination of long-standing racial and social issues, is a major strength of this book. One thing that might have bolstered the book's argument would have been a stronger focus on the contradictions, problematics, and overall limits of the 'decolonial' efforts examined in each chapter. In other words, an extensive analysis of the obstacles and grey areas that render the process of constructing a decolonial praxis (that goes beyond the merely symbolic) so challenging. On the other hand, some of the analysis could have dialogued more with existing scholarship. Although the decision not to do so might have been motivated by the book's scope and indeed

length, it does result in the omission of important conversations. In the case of *La teta asustada*, for example, the book does not discuss the fictional migrant community (and its relationship with the off-screen reality of Manchay, a town inhabited by displaced migrants), and neither does it examine the figure of the migrant-entrepreneur, a key trope of the contemporary neoliberal national narrative that the study mentions.

In summation, *Fictions of Migration* will doubtlessly be useful for scholars and teachers, and it paves the way for future critical engagements with the marginalised voices of migrants in lesser-known productions and beyond the realm of representation. It provides a framework and case studies from which to draw to think about the political, even decolonial, power of affect in its cultural manifestations.