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Framing the (New) Cinema of Immigration

This paper outlines a conceptual framework for an emergent topos in narrative cinema, namely films dealing with immigration as a social, political, legal, and experiential phenomenon in the contemporary world. In recent years immigration has emerged as one of the most contentious issues confronting nation-states in western capitalist democracies. Unlike earlier waves of migration, the ones of the past half-century have been primarily of non-white peoples from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Perceived and feared demographic shifts have led to ominous pronouncements of a “revolution in Europe,” a “clash of civilizations,” the “browning of America,” and the like. In this ideological climate, how has cinema addressed immigration, and in what ways does it engage current debates? The purpose of my paper is to provide a mapping of an output that ranges from action drama (*Gran Torino*) to sci-fi (*District 9*) to gritty realism (*Frozen River*).