



Emigrant Dreams, Immigrant Borders: Migrants, Transnational Encounters, and Identity in Spain

By Raquel Vega-Durán

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Emigrant Dreams, Immigrant Borders: Migrants, Transnational Encounters, and Identity in Spain offers a new approach to the cultural history of contemporary Spain, examining the ways in which Spain's own self-conceptions are changing and multiplying in response to migrants from Latin America and Africa. In the last twenty-five years, Spain has gone from being a country of net emigration to one in which immigrants make up nearly 12 percent of the population. This rapid growth has made migrants increasingly visible in both mass media and in Spanish visual and literary culture. This book examines the origins of media discourses on immigration and takes the analysis of contemporary Spanish culture as its primary framework, while also drawing insights from sociology and history.

Emigrant Dreams, Immigrant Borders introduces readers to a wide range of recent films, journals, novels, photography, paintings, and music to reconsider contemporary Spain through its varied encounters with migrants. It follows the stages of the migrant's own journey, beginning outside Spanish territory, continuing across the border (either at the barbed-wire fences of Ceuta and Melilla or the waters of the Atlantic or the Strait of Gibraltar), and then considers what happens to migrants after they arrive and settle in Spain. Each chapter analyzes one of these stages in order to illustrate the complexity of contemporary Spanish identity. This examination of Spanish culture shows how Spain is evolving into a new space of imagination, one that can no longer be defined without the migrant—a space in which there is no unified identity but rather a new self-understanding is being born.

Vega-Durán both places Spain in a larger European context and draws attention to some of the features that, from a comparative perspective, make the Spanish case interesting and often unique. She argues that Spain cannot be understood today outside the Transatlantic and Mediterranean spaces (both real and imaginary) where Spaniards and migrants meet. *Emigrant Dreams, Immigrant Borders* offers a timely study of present-day Spain, and makes an original contribution to the vibrant debates about multiculturalism and nation-formation that are taking

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Editorial Review

Review

"Emigrant Dreams, Immigrant Borders is the most innovative and original book about migration that I have ever read. Raquel Vega-Durán moves away from the traditional representations of immigrants in order to revisit their interdisciplinary depiction in literature, film, music, art, and photography, arguing that migrant narratives are essential to understand the current perceptions in the redefinition of Spanish national identity. Vega-Durán's insightful interpretations are characterized by a fresh and unique vision. This book is a must-read, and it will become an important reference in the field of Spanish cultural studies. (Ana Corbalán, The University of Alabama)

Emigrant Dreams, Immigrant Borders tackles substantial questions, ranging from the effects of migration on contemporary Spain's sense of identity to what Vega-Durán considers to be the unsolvably dual condition of the migrant as both *emigrante* and *inmigrante*. Throughout the book, a view of contemporary (and future) Spain emerges that is deeply marked by migration processes—and as such, can only be understood in its Trans-Atlantic, Mediterranean, and European contexts. *Emigrant Dreams, Immigrant Borders* stands out for the broad scope of countries of origin that it considers and for the amount and variety of primary sources it analyzes, which encompass literary texts, films, photographs, and other cultural products. This is a well conceived, competently researched, clearly written study that will make a valuable contribution to the debate on African and Latin American migration into Spain. (Jordi Marí, North Carolina State University)

Emigrant Dreams, Immigrant Borders: Migrants, Transnational Encounters, and Identity in Spain is a major contribution to the field of Hispanic migration studies. Its Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Mediterranean approach is accompanied by very effective juxtapositions of materials from different historical periods. Equally impressive is the broad interdisciplinarity of this book that examines and uncovers a variety of materials and discourses that will pave the way for other scholars. In addition, Prof. Vega-Durán opens Hispanic migration studies to new fields and concepts such as "airport customs" and "neorural settlers." (Rosalía Cornejo-Parriego, University of Ottawa)

Vega-Durán takes up what we in the field have always known—that, unlike English and some other languages, Spanish consistently maintains the distinction between **emigrant** and **immigrant**—and examines this peculiarity as a fact of social semiosis. In Vega-Durán's relevant reading, the slippage between immigration and emigration facilitates national self-identification in Spain as a whole and in its sometimes unwilling parts. The enormous potential of this approach is revealed in each of the book's chapters that empower us to analyze immigration as a product of global economy misleadingly used to support national narratives. *Emigrant Dreams, Immigrant Borders* is a must read for those who want to understand the intersections of Immigration Studies, Border Studies, Mobilities Studies, and Gender Studies in Spain. (Eugenia Afinoguénova, Marquette University)

Emigrant Dreams, Immigrant Borders: Migrants, Transnational Encounters, and Identity in Spain, makes an original, illuminating contribution to the field of Hispanic Studies. Raquel Vega-Durán examines Spanish identity through the lens of the historical past and grounds Spanishness in the present and evolving toward the future through its repeated migrant encounters. Her study is nuanced, recognizing that contemporary Spanish culture depicts neither migrants nor Spaniards as fixed identities, but rather identities in dialogue, in

conflict, in the process of becoming. ... The scope of this book is impressive, covering centuries of time as well as a wide range of texts that have previously received little or no critical attention. It engages the leading theories of identity in order to tease out the complexities and contradictions of Spanishness and its ongoing struggle with inclusion/exclusion of the migrant. This is a brilliant and ground-breaking book that makes a seminal contribution to Hispanic Studies. Reading it, I feel nothing less than excitement and appreciation for the new material the author presents, and the scope, connections, and insights that she offers. (Jessica Folkart, Virginia Tech)

About the Author

Raquel Vega-Durán is associate professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Claremont McKenna College.

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