

Alfonso Cuarón, dir., *Roma*. 2018 Mexico: Espectaculos Filmico El Coyu: 2018. Netflix.

Written, directed and produced by Alfonso Cuarón, the Oscar-winning film *Roma* showcases the life of Cleo, a live-in housekeeper of a middle-class family in Mexico during the 1970s. This film is partially based on Cuarón's recollections of growing up with a nanny like Cleo, honoring her for the immense impact on his life. Released in the United States in November 2018, this film is unique as parts of the dialogue are spoken in an indigenous language and the protagonist and much of the cast are indigenous people. With enticing cinematography the audience is exposed to realities of living in "Dirty War" Mexico in the seventies.

*Roma* takes a cultural approach and follows the trials and tribulations of Cleo, the nanny and Sofia, her employer, navigating through the ups and downs of life to showcase and understand the realities of Mexico's political climate and social hierarchy, interweaving class, culture, and ethnicity. The film also offers insights into gendered expectations in 1970s Mexico for women in general and domestic workers in particular. The film begins with the tumultuous marriage of Cleo's employers, leaving her and Sofia to take care of the family and house after Sofia's husband abandoned them. Here the audience is taken through a rollercoaster of emotions as we follow Cleo and how her bond with the family grows stronger. At the same time, she learns that she is pregnant by her boyfriend who is devoted to martial arts as a way to escape and distance himself from the slums of Mexico. He then, too, abandons Cleo to devote himself to this art and Sofia becomes her support. The boyfriend's devotion to martial arts and his refusal to acknowledge his child represent Mexico's rapid radicalization during that time. Here we can also see parallels between Cleo and Sofia, and abandoned by the men in their lives, left to care and provide for their children on their own. When buying a crib, student protests and violence break out in the street where the store is located. These are some of the most important and powerful scenes of the film as they capture the harsh realities of living in a country with immense political turmoil, violent government corruption, and social unrest. Cleo's personal tragedy culminates in the birth of her still-born child. The film ends with the women on the beach embracing one another after Cleo saves the children from drowning to showcase their unity as a new, female headed family.

*Roma* is rich in plots, historical accuracy and visuals, but falls short because of the film's limited distribution. The film was only available through Netflix and released in very few theaters in the United States, limiting its ability to reach a larger audience. Nevertheless, *Roma* is an important film as it exposes audiences to the political turmoil, social inequalities, and political instability of Mexico in the 1970s that arguably continue to the present day.

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