

niño” ’ (93). In her readings of *El espíritu de la colmena* (Víctor Erice, 1973) and *Secretos del corazón* (Montxo Armendáriz, 1997), Wright pays special attention to the child’s gaze, which functions as a marginalized witness to history, as well as a portent of impending corruption. The realization of this corruption is further explored in analyses of *La lengua de la mariposas* (José Luis Cuerda, 1999) and *Pa negre* (Agustí Villaronga, 2010), whose child protagonists apparently betray a close friend and kin respectively. The final chapter examines films, such as *El Bola* (Acheró Mañas, 2000), which dramatizes the plight of Spain’s disaffected adolescents, who are forced to grapple with the ramifications of their parents’ unemployment and social fragmentation. The film cited is set in Carabanchel, a working-class neighbourhood of Madrid, and tackles male bullying, in effect, the physical and verbal aggressiveness of a father towards his teenage son. It is, Wright concludes, a critique of the nuclear family as the cornerstone of Spanish society, and moreover, demonstrates the defectiveness of social institutions entrusted with the care of minors.

This book is compelling reading for undergraduate and postgraduate students, film historians, Hispanists in general, and for anyone interested in the imaginary and the construction or invention of children by dictatorial regimes, exploitative producers and politically committed directors. Indeed, it could serve as a mandatory reference text for future university courses on this popular topic.

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La comedia y el melodrama en el audiovisual iberoamericano contemporáneo. Editado por Paul Julian Smith, con la colaboración de Nancy Berthier. Madrid: Iberoamericana/ Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert. 2015. 213 pp.

La comedia y el melodrama en el audiovisual iberoamericano contemporáneo brings together extended essays from the ‘Cuarto Coloquio Internacional de Cine Iberoamericano’ (2013). The colloquium bridges work done on moving image studies in the Mexican, French, Spanish and US academies; this particular event addressed the genres of melodrama and comedy across the Spanish-speaking world. Divided into two thematic parts, Smith’s volume delves into issues of historicity, film theory, philosophy and media studies across a wide panorama of films and directors. The first section on comedy focuses exclusively on the cinema of Spain, whereas the second section—on melodrama—tackles Latin-American films. The latter, however, is really about Mexican cinema/television serials, with an additional essay on Ecuador that surprisingly is not out of place.

The essay at the very beginning of the anthology by Jordi Revert will be of great interest to scholars and pedagogues of Spanish cinema, history and cultural studies. Parting from the idea that ‘la historia del cine español sólo se entiende en su relación intrínseca con la misma historia de España’ (16), Revert argues—quite convincingly—that ‘la comedia se revela indispensable para entender la evolución histórica [del cine español]’ (16). The essay provides an excellent panorama of the comedy in Spanish cinema. Following Revert’s piece are a set of more specialized essays. Alberto Medina discusses the bonds between humour and politics in Ramón Gómez de la Serna’s intertextual references to Primo de Rivera, while Jorge Nieto Ferrando examines the ‘vínculo entre el turismo y la política institucional en el campo de la comunicación’ (58) through the analysis of *Manolo, la nuit* (Mariano Ozores, 1973) and *Tres suecas para tres Rodríguez* (Pedro Lazaga, 1975). Nancy Berthier, in turn, analyses Albert Boadella’s *¡Buen viaje, Excelencia!* (2003) alongside a trajectory of films about Franco’s death, posing that the film adheres to a ‘clave de humor que se fundamenta en el género de la comedia, dando lugar a una auténtica tragicomedia moderna’ (68). In essays that discuss

individual films, Marianne Bloch-Robin explores the relationship between Hollywood cinema and Fernando Trueba's *La niña de tus ojos* (1998), while Antonia del Rey Reguillo frames Álex de la Iglesia's *800 balas* (2002) as 'un peculiar ejemplo de mestizaje genérico entre comedia, *western* y cine de aventuras' (95). To conclude the first half of the anthology, Rubén Higuera Flores traces the development of 'la nueva comedia juvenil', noting that the genre is 'protagonizado por jóvenes con evidentes problemas sentimentales y laborales' (106), while Sonia García López explores the 'nuevas formas de la comedia en España' (119) in the work of Carlos Vermut.

The second section of *La comedia y el melodrama* begins with an essay by Lauro Zavala that outlines the canon of both genres in Ibero-American cinema. Though Zavala's essay is meant to provide the same sort of panorama as Revert's piece (as stated by Smith in the Introduction [11]), it falls quite short. I believe this is due to two reasons: first, the essay is overly ambitious. What could very well be the topic of a monograph is reduced to a few pages that are superficial in their discussion of concepts and genealogies. The author gets bogged down by going over definitions of the canon, which, while pertinent, could be relegated to a footnote at most. Second, Zavala is tasked with discussing both comedy and melodrama in Spain and Latin America, which lacks the geographic and genre specificity that makes Revert's essay so valuable. Focusing exclusively on melodrama (and perhaps also exclusively on Mexico) would have strengthened this section of the anthology. In the most theoretically informed essay in the collection, Álvaro A. Fernández performs close readings of several films to examine the implantation of ideology, ethics and aesthetics through the narrative and audiovisual mechanisms of melodrama. Julia Tuñón follows with a comparative study of two iterations of *Salón México* (José Luis García Agraz, 1995 and Emilio Fernández, 1948) to argue that 'el cine clásico mexicano se ha convertido en una seña de identidad de la cultura del país del siglo XX' (162). Devoted solely to the small screen, Tanya Meléndez Escalante's analysis of clothing and wardrobes in the *telenovela Cuna de lobos* (1986–1987) is thought provoking and delves into an often unexplored facet of moving image analysis. The final essay in *La comedia y el melodrama* concerns the cinema of Ecuadorian director Sebastián Cordero. In the only essay not devoted to Mexico in the second half of the volume, Paulina Sánchez provides a thorough overview of his *oeuvre*.

La comedia y el melodrama is at times hampered by its own genesis, as individual pieces originally presented at a research colloquium may not always mesh well with each other. The first section is more cohesive and structured, whereas the second part sometimes seems like a disjointed set of essays. That all being said, however, Smith's anthology is an important read for scholars, graduate students and advanced undergraduates. Essays on individual directors will be of use to specialists, whereas those focusing on specific themes will no doubt provoke future research.

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ABIGAIL LOXHAM, *Cinema at the Edges: New Encounters with Julio Medem, Bigas Luna and José Luis Guerín*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn. 2014. viii + 193 pp.

Abigail Loxham's book on three of the most important contemporary 'Spanish' film-makers, namely Julio Medem, Bigas Luna and José Luis Guerín, is a theoretically sophisticated and beautifully-written study of these three film directors, which critically engages with the directors' articulation of 'peripheral' identities and subjectivities, whether national, gender or cinematic. Loxham focuses on formal, theoretical and political readings of these three directors from the Basque Country and Catalonia, thereby shifting the focus from the cinema