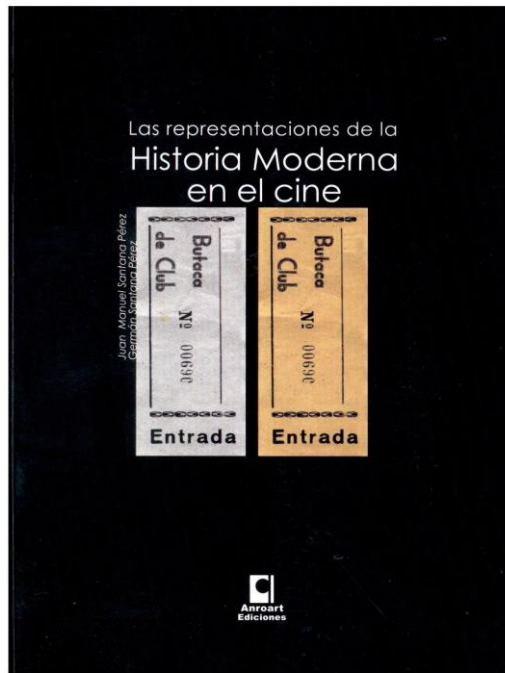


Book Reviews



Santana Pérez, Juan Manuel y Santana Pérez, Germán. *Las representaciones de la historia moderna en el cine*. Las Palmas: Anroart, 2008. 407 p.

This volume analyzes 80 films whose storyline takes place in the 16th, 17th or 19th centuries. As it does so, each film is presented through the presentation of basic technical information, the enumeration of those historiographic elements present as to whether or not they are accurate and their value in giving the viewer an approximation to the life of the period. The consideration of each film is followed by a reasonably detailed bibliography which should allow those interested to deeper into those aspects touched on for each film. The main focus of each analysis, though, is a

linear summary of the plot in which important events are accompanied by pertinent historiographic explanations. These detailed analyses follow the model established by the Film-Historia project and one of its founders José María Caparrós Lera (*100 películas sobre historia contemporánea* and *La guerra del Vietnam, entre la historia y el cine*, among others). For Caparrós, as for the authors of *Las representaciones de la historia moderna en el cine*, period pieces are more a reflection of the times in which they are made than of the time period the films seek to present.

The ordering of the films analyzed in the volume responds to the chronology of the setting of the filmic fiction, and not to the time of films' making. Thus, the first chapter, "Recuperation, Development, and Expansion," deals with the 16th century of colonization and its context in Europe; "A Century in Crisis" is the second chapter, dedicated to the social and political vicissitudes of the 17th century; and, "A Century of Growth," the third chapter, is dedicated to the social and political transformations of the 18th century. A short fourth chapter, "The End-of-Century Revolutionary Processes," analyzes but three films which deal with the American and French revolutions.

The films analyzed offer an interesting variety, both from the perspective of the time in which they were made and their place in national cinema. The most recent film analyzed is *La reine Margot* (Patrice Chéreau, 1994), while the oldest film included is *Madame Du Barry* (Ernest [sic] Lubitsch, 1919). Thirteen different national cinemas are represented by the films analyzed with English-speaking films, both U.S. and English, being predominant. The range of directors represented is equally varied, moving from iconic directors such as Eisenstein, de Mille, Ford, Kurosawa, Lubitsch, and Saura to lesser known directors. This variety is not due so much to any scholarly concern, but rather to the ready availability of the films in Spain.

The number of Spanish-language films analyzed as *Las representaciones de la historia moderna en el cine* is significant. Included in the volume are: *Cabeza de Vaca* (Nicolas Echevarría, 1991), *El Dorado* (Carlos Saura, 1988), *La marrana* (José Luis Cuerda, 1992), *La noche oscura* (Saura, 1988), *Juana la loca* (Vicente Aranda, 2001), *Viento de cólera*, (Pedro de la Sota, 1988), *La nao capitana* (Florián Rey, 1947), *El rey pasmado* (Inmanol Uribe, 1991), *La monja alférez* (Emilio Gómez Muriel, 1944), *Yo, la peor de todas* (María Luisa Bemberg, 1990), *Esquilache*

(Josefina Molina, 1988), and *La última cena* (Tomás Guitérrez Alea).

The authors used multiple criteria in the selection of films to be analyzed in *Las representaciones de la historia moderna en el cine*. Beyond the obvious criterion that a film's thematics deal with the Modern Era prior to the dissolution of the old order and that the theme be believable and feasible, availability was the most important determining factor. Chosen for analysis were films which are readily available in Spain, a criterion driven by the volume's overarching didactic purpose. Other factors considered in film selection were their commercial success, their professional/specialist advisors, and the access to directors' objectives and information.

Las representaciones de la historia moderna en el cine is a volume which ought to appeal to any general audience of students of history. But, more specifically, what the authors have sought to create a volume which can be useful as a complement to classes in history. In the belief that audiovisual materials have not been sufficiently incorporated into the teaching of history, the authors' hope is that their book will encourage teachers to make more pedagogical use of audiovisual systems.

Their didactic objectives achieved, what the authors of *Las representaciones de la historia moderna en el cine* have established is a baseline from which future, more sophisticated and specialized studies can be done. This book opens the way to more detailed views of the films analyzed, to studies of the perspectives of historical processes, to the view of the presentation of women in historical film, to the analysis of indigenous peoples as naïve and never central nor self-sufficient characters, and to the study of diverse historical perspectives in relationship to national cinema.

Understanding that the teaching of modern history presents a number of didactic issues and problems, and in an effort to expouse the character of history as thoughtful, reasoned activity produced by historians, the authors of *Las representaciones de la historia moderna en el cine* have produced a volume which shows the general reader how film is part of historical processes and how it can be used a part of the teaching process.

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