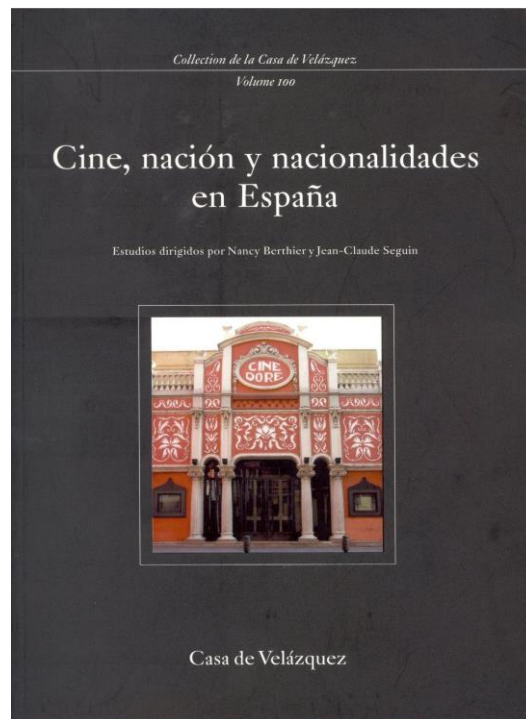


## Book Reviews



Berthier, Nancy y Seguin, Jean-Claude, eds. *Cine, nación y nacionalidades en España*. Madrid: Casa Velázquez, 2006. 343 p.

In the twentieth century the history of almost every nation can be told as a new art came into being: cinema. In these days, nothing escapes the eye of the movie camera; everything can be seen as cinematographic fiction. The book *Cine, nación y nacionalidades en España* presents the thoughts of the academic specialists about the ways Spanish cinema has created, invented, and turned collective memory into national identity. It takes on national themes, how Spanish film dealt with

the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, what to do in the absence of censorship, and many other topics and discussions which were part of a conference that took place in June 2006.

This effort brings together the most prestigious specialists on the phenomenon of Spanish film. This book is clear about two things: it wants to distance itself from the American film industry, which in most cases lacks serious content, but is almost omnipresent; and it is academic in nature. In this book are found all kinds of critical schools of thought: from structuralism to cultural studies.

The book has seven sections. In the first, "Cine, nación y nacionalidad," discussed are the beginnings of the Spanish film industry and how it goes hand in hand with the turbulent political and social atmosphere at the start of the new century. We find the struggle of the first filmmakers to define what Spain was against what it wasn't (*españoles* vs. *la española*). The articles "El cine en la formación de la conciencia nacional", written by Jean-Claude Seguin, and "Cultura popular e identidad nacional en el cine mudo español de los años veinte", by Joaquín Cánovas Belchí, are very illustrative about the formation of a new Spanish identity. The article, "El otro y su representación fílmica. Hacia nuevos planteamientos nacionales," by Anne-Marie Jolivet, tells us about the problem of "the other" as an important subject for the filmmaker as well as for the new audience.

This study has a very clear *leit motif*, Franquismo. The dictatorship of Francisco Franco had an obvious impact on the formation of a national identity through cinema. Although this impact not always was direct, Franco made his own story for the silver screen: *Raza*. By the end of the dictatorship, censors began to relax on films' content. In the articles "Cine y democracia", "Cine nacional non grato. La pornografía española en la transición (1975-1982)," and "Los niños de ninguna parte. El cine del exilio español" we read how censorship began to break down, opening the way for a huge amount of movies which a censor would have rated as "S" ("implicit sex") or even as pornography. In the last of these articles we find analysis the drama of films of those who were left without

a homeland because of the civil war, pointing out the special drama of children of exile.

In the section "Cine y autonomías," we can see one of the new features of recent Spanish filmmaking. In this section we can find articles by Marie-Soledad Rodríguez, Rafael Urtera Macías, and Ángel Quintana. They give an account of the new and contradictory phenomenon of the cinema of the autonomous regions. These new film industries seek to independence from the central film industry of Madrid. The provinces, León, Aragón, Cataluña, are making efforts to find their identity in their own films. In this section we also read about the new documentaries made in Spain, a genre that is gaining audience as well as regaining memory. The provinces have also a history that needs to be told in terms of film language, such as in the case of the film *El mar* according with Jacques Terrasa in his article "La Guerra civil en Mallorca: ¿Una amnesia nacional?"

An important moment in the history of Spanish cinema is the artistic exchange between Spain and her former colonies in the mid-twentieth century, particularly with Cuba, Argentina and México. These subjects are reflected, for example, in the scholarly piece by Julia Tuñón, "Cine hispano. Un debate de ida y de vuelta entre España y México en 1948". In this essay, Tuñón talks about the long and problematic exchange between Mexican and Spanish film, especially in the so called Golden Age of Mexican cinema. It was problematic, indeed, due to the breaking off the political relations between Spain and México.

The final section of *Cine, nación y nacionalidades* is dedicated to *auteur* films. The names of Luis Buñuel and Pedro Almodóvar are obvious references if we are looking for the identity of the Spanish through their film history. The first essay, "Buñuel y el nacionalismo español durante el franquismo. La recepción de *Los olvidados* como síntoma", shows us the public and critical response to *Los olvidados* in the times of Franco. The other significant name is Pedro Almodóvar; in the article "Cine e identidad nacional. El caso de Almodóvar" describes how Almodóvar presents us the postmodern identity of the Spanish versus the traditional way of

being. We return to the very beginning, the new español versus that of *la españolada*. This piece by Claude Murcia explains the tension between old and new Spain.

The essays of *Cine, nación y nacionalidades en España* come together to form a valuable instrument to see scholarly approaches to Spanish film since Civil War times. They also raise another voice that the national film industry needs to call for attention to films made in the homeland.

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