*Spanish Practices. Literature, Cinema, Television*, Paul Julian Smith (2012) Oxford: Legenda. x + 166 pp. ISBN 978-1-907975-04-2, Hardback, £45

Paul Julian Smith has already produced a number of pioneering studies within the field of Hispanic Studies that focus on different media, among them *Contemporary Spanish Culture. TV, Fashion, Art and Film* (2003) and *Spanish Visual Culture: Cinema, Television, Internet* (2006). His latest book, *Spanish Practices. Literature, Cinema, Television*, explores the interaction of new or little-studied literary, filmic and television material such as Esther Tusquet’s autobiographical novel *Habíamos ganado la guerra* (2007), Emilio Martínez Lázaro’s historical drama *Las 13 rosas* (2007), or Tele 5’s sketch comedy show *Camera Café* (Tele 5, 2005-08) and returns to cultural producers and texts that have concerned Smith for over three decades of academic scholarship, from Pedro Almodóvar to TV drama *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (TVE 2001 –).

The brief introduction lays out the methodological and critical framework. The volume combines ‘close readings of key texts with the analysis of production processes, media institutions, audiences, and reception’ (1) and addresses ‘three pairs of linked issues central to Hispanic studies and beyond: history and memory, authority and society, and genre and transitivity’ (1), providing the judicious mix of contextual research and theory that Smith’s work has come to epitomise. The title of the book, *Spanish Practices*, hints at a wide range of practices: cultural, industrial and discursive. As Smith observes in the concluding paragraph of his introduction, although ‘[T]he *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that the phrase “old Spanish custom or practice” (which it characterizes as “jocular”) means a long-standing though unauthorized or irregular practice (s.v. “Spanish”)’ (4), the ‘literature, cinema and television analysed and celebrated here offer examples of cultural and industrial sophistication that have few equals elsewhere’ (4).

The three media and three sets of interrelated critical concerns structure the book: Part I ‘Literature: History and Memory’ (6-46), Part II ‘Cinema: Authority and Society’ (48-92), and Part III ‘Television: Genre and Transitivity’ (94-157). But, although each part is devoted to a specific medium and the discussion of particular texts is framed through these specific pairings, the arguments throughout are methodically placed within the cultural (and industrial) field of their respective times and connected to wider theoretical issues such as gender, sexuality, genre or transnationalism . Thus Part I locates the analysis of texts within recent debates around historical memory legislation. Chapter 1, ‘Winners and Losers in Cinema and Memoirs’, juxtaposes Martínez Lázaro’s film *Las trece rosas* and Tusquests’ *Habíamos ganado la guerra*, Chapter 2, ‘Resuscitating Franco in Popular Narrative and Television’, contrasts Fernando Vizcaíno Casas’ popular best-seller *Y al tercer año resucitó* (1978) with the popular TV fiction series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* as ‘two different yet complementary versions of the disappearance and uncanny recreation of Franco’ (20), and, Chapter 3, ‘The Audiovisual Transition: Cinema, Television, and Muñoz Molina’s *El jinete polaco* (‘The Polish Horseman’,1991)’, explores through a literary piece the role of television and cinema ‘in the construction of popular memory in the Transition and beyond’ (37). Part II moves from Chapter 4’s examination of queer authorship in Almodóvar’s unpublished short stories written in the 1970s, which are only available ‘in fading, cyclostyled volumes in the manuscript room of Madrid’s Biblioteca Nacional’(51), to Chapter 5’s analysis of the missing child motif in Juan Antonio Bayona’s *El orfanato* (2007) and Jaime Rosales’ *La soledad* (2007) through to Chapter 6’s comparison of representations of ethnicity and immigration in recent filmic and televisual production. Part III opens with a comparative analysis of two screen versions of the life of Santa Teresa de Ávila produced twenty years apart, Josefina Molina’s TV mini-series *Teresa de Jesús* (TVE, 1984) and Ray Loriga’s film *Teresa: el cuerpo de Cristo* (2007), and shifts to television territory in the final two chapters with a discussion of two successful hybrid fictions in Chapter 8 – *Los Serrano* (Tele5, 2003-08) and *Camera café* (Tele 5, 2005-09) – and an analysis in Chapter 9 of the Spanish and American versions of the Colombian *telenovela* *Yo soy Betty la fea* – *Yo soy Bea* (Tele 5, 2006-08) and *Ugly Betty* (ABC, 2006-10), respectively.

While the material covered by Smith is diverse and wide-ranging, the reader can discern a number of methodological and theoretical concerns cutting across the volume: for example, a systematic Bourdieuian approach to the field of culture, which understands texts, authors and institutions as bound up with other forms of cultural practice and which questions received taste culture arguments; an unfailing engagement with recent manifestations of popular culture and their cognitive and emotional value, which make his studies pioneering and up-to-date; and, an exhaustive and meticulous attention to production, distribution, exhibition and reception practices, which yield illuminating and nuanced readings of cultural artefacts, events and institutions. Thus Chapter 5 provides, following *The Rules of Art*, a ‘Bourdieu-style institutional analysis’ (69) of the industrial and institutional contexts within which a ‘mismatched couple of films’, commercial horror product *El orfanato* and experimental art-house film *La soledad*, engage with a ‘shared common theme: the loss and death of a child’ (61). The comparative close reading of the films is also framed through Emma Wilson’s study *Cinema’s Missing Children* (2003), which explores the psychic and emotional effects and meaning of such deaths and losses as well as their cultural significance in post-1990s European and North American independent cinema. The chapter therefore weaves two strands of analysis which integrate issues around aesthetics and commerce, historicity and topicality. Through the former Smith reads the critical reception of the films as symptomatic of the discursive practices underlying mainstream Spanish film criticism, namely questions of cultural distinction and of cultural authority, or, put simply, the institutional and aesthetic conflict between art and commerce which has shaped, and still shapes, critical and ideological debates about Spanish cinema. While many Spanish film critics ‘continue to reiterate the unthinking discursive limits (or ‘habitus’) explored [by Bourdieu] in *The Rules of Art*’ (63), which privilege the cultural consecration and legitimation of certain filmmaking practices – art-house traditions – over other – commercial popular genres, Smith argues that films like *The Orphanage* introduce another model and ‘a new aesthetic regime to the Spanish audiovisual establishment’ whereby ‘art and commerce are not mutually exclusive’ (67) and ‘might better embody Bourdieu’s “logic of change” in the field of the present’ (77). Through reference to Wilson’s work, Smith’s textual analysis considers the missing children in *El orfanato* and *La soledad* as ‘symptomatic of contemporary social conditions’ and ‘the actual plight of missing, dead, or displaced children, abroad as in Spain’ (61).

Two aspects central to Smith’s critical project are worth highlighting in the remainder of this review: firstly, the transfer of theory, and, secondly, the question of intermediality (a term that Smith does not use in the manuscript but which, as he concedes in the Acknowledgements, the anonymous reader ‘rightly suggested that my work be seen in the context of the critical debate on ‘intermediality’’). For many advanced students and researchers, Smith’s volume will provide invaluable examples of how theory and method originally conceived for non-Spanish cultural production can be adapted for use on the specific Spanish case studies under discussion. Likewise, the analysis of the technological, industrial and cultural relations of specific media productions and media configurations offers to cultural studies practitioners a range of approaches to the interdisciplinary and intermedial study of audiovisual and literary material. For example, Part I of the volume productively juxtaposes a personal memoir and a historical film in Chapter 1, a popular novel and a TV drama in Chapter 2, and concludes with an examination of cinema’s and television’s role in forming popular memory in and beyond the Transition in Chapter 3.

Let’s look at Chapter 8 as one of those instances where the transfer of theory is at work. As Smith observes in the first pages of this chapter devoted to television comedies *Los Serrano* and *Camera Café*, Spanish sitcoms have been hitherto overlooked in academic scholarship on the genre. His analysis of these *telecomedias* is initially framed in relation to studies on this televisual genre such as Brett Mills’ *Television Sitcom* (2005) and Ethan Thompson’s ‘Comedy vérité: the Observational Documentary Meets the Televisual Sitcom’ (2008) and to contemporary Anglo-American sitcom trends (formats and emerging modes of production), and then reframed through the lens of [Italian TV fiction of the 1990s via the work] of Milly Buonanno, in particular her concept of “indigenization” as developed in *El drama televisivo: identidad y contenidos sociales* (2000). Buonanno’s term also allows Smith to establish a wider conceptual framework familiar to scholars of Latin American and Spanish cultural studies since ‘indigenization’ is indebted to ‘Latin American cultural theorists of transnationalization and hybridity such as Martín Barbero and García Canclini’ (113-14). As a theoretical move, ‘indigenization’ repositions the analysis of televisual fiction beyond ‘earlier hypothesis of ‘cultural imperialism’ and ‘Americanization’, still widely held by both academic and general audiences in Italy’ (Buonanno in Smith, 114). (Certainly such a claim could be extended to the French and Spanish contexts). For Buonanno, ‘asymmetrical circumstances (the continued quantitative dominance of US production) are offset by locally situated dynamics of appropriation and transformation of foreign models’ (114) in many European television contexts. Indigenization implies a different way of looking at the relationship between the global and the local whereby the emphasis should shift from ‘cultural dominance and dependence, ideological control, colonization, imitation, and homogenization to asymmetry, interdependence, appropriation, hybridism and heterogeneization’ (114). Furthermore, the term extends also to ‘forms of dubbing, advertising and scheduling’ (114), industrial practices that tend to be disregarded in studies that privilege textual analysis. Tracking industrial and aesthetic shifts in the Spanish mediascape and socio-historical changes in the country during the second half of the twentieth century and the turn of the twenty-first century, Smith argues that these two contemporary Spanish *telecomedias* blur the distinction between genres and national traditions, by displaying sophisticated levels of hybridization and self-reflexivity and offering domestic audiences ‘products that are distinctively national in form, content, and narrative rhythm’ (133) and close to their communal shared experiences.

*Spanish Practices* is a most welcome example of scholarship which pays serious attention to the innovative and sophisticated quality work emerging from Spanish literature, cinema and television, and which reminds us of the significance of the social contexts of cultural practices. To paraphrase the opening words of Randall Johnson in his ‘Editor’s Introduction: Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture’ to Bourdieu’s *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) Paul Julian Smith has become since the late 1980s a major theoretical voice in the critical study of Spanish cultural practices.

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