construction. The study thus opens another way of understanding the relation between literature and its world, between thought and destruction, and we must begin to assume the challenges it poses.

Bruno Bosteels has written a truly significant book. It will be of interest to all Latin Americanists, and surely also to a fair number of non-Latin Americanists concerned with the destiny in the present—that is, beyond their potentially archival status—of Marx’s and Freud’s interventions. While its case studies will become—if they have not already—indispensable resources for researchers working on the topics they cover, the book as a whole marks a possible “untimely” return of the Latin Americanist field to its critical heights.

Samuel Steinberg

University of Southern California


Isabel M. Estrada’s *El documental cinematográfico y televisivo contemporáneo. Memoria, sujeto y formación de la identidad democrática española* is a fascinating study of the politics of memory of the Civil War and the Francoist repression, and the construction of democratic identity in contemporary Spain in relation to the documentary medium. As the pioneering book to focus exclusively on both documentary films and documentaries specifically made for national and regional television in Spain, Estrada successfully intervenes in the increasing scholarship on how memory debates have shaped cultural production in Spain for the past two decades: since the 1990s onwards. Although the bibliography, both in Spain and the Anglo-American academy, is exhaustive (and Estrada does include an extensive bibliography on this topic in *El documental*), this study distinctively refers to the ethical and political underpinnings of the debates on memory and amnesia in Spain. Referring to the Ley de memoria histórica, a law proposed by the former socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and approved by the Spanish parliament in 2007, *El documental* distances itself from the historiographical emphasis that has been placed on the Moncloa pact, which led to the so-called Pacto del silencio and the Constitution of 1978. Instead, Estrada’s book explores how filmmakers in Spain have been committed to using the documentary medium as a transmitter of historical trauma, enabling us to rethink our own assumptions with regard to the “success” attributed to the smooth transition from dictatorship to democracy in Spain. As a result, some of the documentaries Estrada covers in her book acquire an ever greater significance in the absence of institutionalized transitional justice in Spain, despite the fact that some of the documentaries, as Estrada points out, epitomize the way in which memory debates have been ideologically instrumentalized by respective governments, whether central or autonomic, or commodified by the cultural industry in Spain.
The debates on historical memory that have taken place in Spain have now been eclipsed by the economic crisis that has affected Spain since 2008 and have been completely excluded, as Estrada mentions in her book, from the political agenda of the conservative government since returning to power in 2011. Yet, *El documental* remains a timely book, as one wonders whether this new, and yet, repeated imposed collective amnesia means that the traces of the traumatic past have stopped affecting us, both subjectively and collectively, in the present. If neoliberalism is predicated on the constant erasure of old commodities, so that new commodities can replace them, do not we need, as Estrada successfully demonstrates in this study, to keep reflecting on how to redefine historically and theoretically the terms of the debates in order to account, in a Benjaminian manner, for traces of trauma and fragments of memory of the past as an intervention in the neoliberal present for a more satisfying future?

Divided into two parts, the first part of *El documental* focuses on documentaries that explicitly deal with the memory of the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship, including *Les fosses del silenci* (2003); *Las fosas del olvido* (2004); *Muerte en El Valle* (1996); *Aguaviva* (1996); *Esperanza Martínez* (2006); *Mujeres en pie de Guerra* (2006); or *El grito del sur: Casas viejas* (1995) from veteran documentary filmmaker Basilio Martín Patino. *El documental* resists a teleological conception of history in general or of documentary film practice in Spain in particular. The final chapter in this section of the book concentrates on a re-reading of the highly-acclaimed documentary directed by Jaime Camino in 1978, *La vieja memoria*, as a way of rethinking the documentary in the context of the Spanish transition and in the context of more current debates on memory, enabling her, moreover, to distinguish between resorting to feeling as a way of instrumentalizing memory and the presence of affect and emotion in any testimonial account from the victims of history. Departing from a conventional chronological structure or from being conceived as a survey of documentary filmmaking in Spain, each chapter is devoted to a historical and critical close-reading of a single documentary or to a comparative study of two or three documentaries that deal similarly and differently with the issues at stake, without sacrificing the socio-cultural analysis of the corpus selected here. This reader finds the book’s focus on close reading and cinematic analysis highly compelling, showing a deep sensitivity to the specificity of the medium. Through the use of footnotes or included in the main text, *El documental* consistently refers to other documentaries produced in Spain since the 1990s, thereby bringing to the fore an impressive archive of Spanish documentary filmmaking. The second part of Estrada’s book provides the reader with a more evocative and oblique reflection on memory to engage, as it does, with the current socioeconomic conditions that have provoked a threat to the subject in a neoliberal democracy by focusing on the fascinating documentary film practices coming out from the documentary film school at the Universidad Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, including *El cielo gira* (Mercedes Álvarez, 2005); *En Construcción* (2001) by internationally-renowned filmmaker José Luiz Guerin; *Vint anys no és res* (2004) by the late Joaquim Jordà; and *La leyenda del tiempo* (2006) by Guerin’s disciple Isaki Lacuesta.

Reflecting on the complex relationship between testimony, memory, and history, *El documental* makes us think of how our encounter with subjective and
collective memories through the documentary medium becomes a constitutive force for a rethinking of the effects of the past on the present, enabling us to be engaged with an form of “responsibility,” so that, as Derrida suggests, “the injunction to remember” in the present may allow us to anticipate or hope for a promising future. Highly versed in concepts drawn from memory studies (Halbwachs, Nora, or Connerton) and drawing extensively from scholarship on memory studies and film studies pursued in Spain and in the Anglo-American Hispanism, *El documental* moves beyond a study of the documentary medium in terms of its referential achievements or failures in order to concentrate on the relationship between the subjective and the objective, the real and representation, or affect and cognition. Estrada claims that her book is not informed by psychoanalysis, enabling her not to reduce and distil complex, multilayered, and contentious historical, social, and cultural processes to the category of trauma. Yet, the theoretical sophistication of Estrada’s study does not prevent readers from reflecting on how Freudian psychoanalysis conceives the psyche as an archive of the archaic (past) desires and impulses that, as specters encrypted or carved in our psyche, determine our present and future and are less uncovered than extracted through repetition in the psychoanalytic encounter. From this perspective, can one pay attention to the traces, the affects or, to use Derrida’s term, the “impression” of history and memory as a “material truth” inscribed in subjectivity and leaving its mark on the body, as it is extracted and brought into presence beyond signification through our encounter with the documentary medium in the present? Similarly, *El documental’s* emphasis on the formation of the subject may prompt us to think of how our intersubjective encounters with the memory of the past through the documentary medium point to the impossibility of reifying a logic of identity. Finally, another question this reader formulated in the process of engaging with this groundbreaking book was whether, instead of conceiving democracy as a macropolitical, representative political system based on the implementation of a constitutional state in the recent past, one may think about a “democracy to come,” to use Derrida’s concept, within democracy. Deferring democracy opens up the conditions of possibility for the (unfulfilled) promises of democracy. Characterized by its elegant writing and clarity of exposition, *El documental* will become a seminal text in the incipient field of Spanish documentary studies, but it also distinctively contributes to Spanish cultural studies and Spanish memory studies more broadly.

Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla

University of Southern California


In 2009, Marina Brownlee edited a special issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* in which a number of scholars analyzed “the dialogic context of Anglo-Spanish cultural articulations” in the early modern period. In that volume, Alexander Samson notes documented tensions in the diplomatic relationship between England and Spain dating back to 1422, and highlights the use and