UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
FACULDADE DE LETRAS

Women's Access to Silent Cinema in Portugal and Spain: the Case Studies of Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and Helena Cortesina

Elena María Cordero Hoyo

Orientadoras: Prof.ª Doutora Luísa Suzete Afonso Soares
Prof.ª Doutora Begoña Soto Vázquez
Prof.ª Doutora Monica Dall'Asta

Tese especialmente elaborada para obtenção do grau de doutor no ramo de Estudos de Literatura e Cultura, na especialidade de Estudos Comparatistas, com obtenção do Doutoramento Europeu

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Abstract

This dissertation (re-)constructs the 'bio/careerographies' of the writer Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (Lisbon, 1874 – 1945) and the performer Helena Cortesina (Valencia, 1903 – Buenos Aires, 1984). Coming from different backgrounds, both women owned film production companies in which they played various decision-taking roles during the early years of 1920s in Portugal and Spain, respectively. Although they developed long international and intermedia professional careers, their life-stories have largely remained untold.

In this dissertation, I reflect on the reasons behind their absence in film histories looking at the historiographical, conceptual and methodological challenges that the research and narration of their 'careerographies' entails. In this sense, I problematize the conventional film history-writing, proposing a 'new cinema history from below' approach. Also, I identify traditional categories of 'authorship', 'woman' and 'pioneer' as frames that limit the inscription into silent cinema histories only to those cases that conform to a certain nationalistic and individualistic narrative of success or heroicism. Furthermore, I describe core characteristics of film historiography, such as its dependence on film as source, its territorial delimitation, and its focus on cinema's specificity as medium, as methodological problems that prevented Almeida's and Cortesina's stories to be appreciated.

Finally, using a comparative perspective, I analyse the characteristics that allowed Almeida and Cortesina to overcome difficulties and be among the few women that achieved film-making in the Iberian countries during the silent cinema period. In that sense, I identify the two models of access to film-making they represent. Moreover, I argue that it was the affective relationship of 'relational autonomy' they established with their matrilineal caring network which provided the security they needed for their leap into cinema. However, their familial film production system proved to be ineffective in a growing male-centered capitalist and professionalized film industries.

Key-words: Silent cinema; Virgínia de Castro e Almeida; Helena Cortesina; Portuguese cinema; Spanish cinema; comparative studies; film history; feminist theory; biography.

Resumo

Esta tese (re-)constrói as 'bio/*carreirografias*' da escritora Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (Lisboa, 1874 – 1945) e da atriz Helena Cortesina (Valencia, 1903 – Buenos Aires, 1984). Vindo de diferentes origens, ambas criaram companhias produtoras de filmes, nas quais tiveram diferentes responsabilidades, durante os primeiros anos da década de 1920 em Portugal e Espanha, respetivamente. Embora ambas desenvolveram longas carreiras internacionais e intermediais, elas não têm tido os seus percursos de vida narrados.

Com esta tese, tenho como objetivo refletir sobre as razões por trás desta ausência nas histórias do cinema identificando os desafios historiográficos, conceptuais e metodológicos que a pesquisa e narração das suas *carreirografias* envolve. Neste sentido, problematizo a escrita convencional da história do cinema, propondo um avanço para uma 'nova história do cinema desde abaixo'. Também identifico as categorias tradicionais de 'autoria', 'mulher' e 'pioneirismo' como enquadramentos que limitam a inscrição nas histórias do cinema mudo só àqueles casos conformados a uma certa narrativa nacionalista e individualista de sucesso ou heroicidade. Além disso, descrevo as características principais da historiografia do cinema, tais como a dependência nos filmes como fonte, a sua delimitação territorial e seu foco na especificidade do cinema meio como problemas metodológicos que tem vindo a colocar obstáculos na valorização de histórias como as de Almeida e Cortesina.

Finalmente, usando uma perspetiva comparatista, analiso as características que permitiram a Almeida e Cortesina superar dificuldades e estar entre as poucas mulheres que conseguiram fazer filmes nos países ibéricos durante o período do cinema mudo. Neste sentido, identifico os dois modelos de acesso à produção cinematográfica que elas representam. Argumento, também, que foi a relação afetiva de 'autonomia relacional' com uma rede matrilinear de cuidados o que lhes permitiu o salto para o cinema. No entanto, o seu sistema familiar de produção de filmes provou ser ineficaz nas crescentes indústrias fílmicas que, cada vez mais, eram dominadas por um sistema profissional, masculino e capitalista.

Palavras-chave: cinema mudo; Virgínia de Castro e Almeida; Helena Cortesina; cinema português; cinema espanhol; estudos comparatistas; história do cinema; teoria feminista; biografia.

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‘I don’t think film should have married words.
It separates the world.’

– Lillian Gish, *Hollywood* Episode 1

Introduction

Helena Cortesina (Valencia, 1903 – Buenos Aires, 1984) crossed my path when I was an undergraduate student of Journalism and Audiovisual Communication (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, 2011) and joined a course on scriptwriting against gender violence. In that course, the scriptwriter and film director, Rosa Blas Traisac, showed us her film – *Toma 0. Pionera* (2010); where she fictionalized the life of the 'first female director' of Spanish cinema I had not heard about before. In fact, it was not only me. She was unfamiliar to most people, even to film studies scholars, and very few details about her were known, except her stage name and the title of the feature film she directed. My curiosity was sparked, and I devoted the following years, including my MA dissertation (2013–2015), to research on the life and work of this woman. However, a few years later I decided to go deeper in my research and discover how alone Cortesina was in her cinematic experience. Thus, I started digging and I found Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (Lisbon, 1874–1945), an apparently comparable case in Portugal.

Both women had been film-makers during the first years of the 1920s in the Iberian Peninsula. Almeida was a children's book writer and novelist who, interested in cinema's pedagogic potential, in 1922 created her own production company called Fortuna Films. Her main achievements in cinema were the release of two films: *A Sereia de Pedra* (Roger Lion, 1922) and *Os Olhos da Alma* (Roger Lion, 1923), which she wrote, produced, and supervised. Cortesina, on the other hand, was a variety show dancer who swapped the popular stage for cinema in 1920 when she starred in the film *La inaccesible* (José Buchs). One year later, she announced the launch of Cortesina Films, a film enterprise that produced *Flor de España* (1923) of which she was the producer and director, and in which she also played the leading role.

The equivalence – the fact that both founded their own production houses around 1920 that lasted two or three years and were in charge of the films they produced – but also the fact that they came from such different upbringings and artistic mediums seemed very tempting to me and I decided to devote to them the next five years of my life in developing a PhD dissertation. For that reason, this dissertation presents the first approach to Almeida's and Cortesina's lives in order to understand the objectives, expectations, and opportunities that led these singular women to access Iberian film-making before the crisis of silent cinema and the change of paradigm around 1930.

Theoretical and methodological frames

Recent international historiographic feminist film research guided by Jennifer M. Bean, Sofia Bull, Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett, Jane Gaines, Christine Gledhill, Rosanna Maule, Diane Negra, Catherine Russell, and Karen Ward Mahar, among many others, has demonstrated that internationally these two cases were not exceptional.[1] Surprisingly, women, in some regions, had a singularly pre-eminent place behind the cameras – in almost any profession related to film-making – during the silent period compared to any later decade until the twenty-first century.[2] The geographical and historical context were key in defining which cinematic practices and roles women had access to. Countries with important early film industries at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as the USA, France, Italy, Germany, or even Northern European countries like Denmark, had a higher number of women working in silent cinema than the Iberian countries, where the cinema organization did not welcome much female involvement in fame-inducing positions, apart from the acting profession and, to a lesser degree, specialized journalism.[3]

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[1] I am referring only to authors and editors of a few of the most relevant recent books in the field, such as Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (eds.), *Camera Obscura. Early Women Stars* 48, vol. 16, n. 3 (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, December 2001) and *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2002); Rosanna Maule (ed.), *Cinémas. Femmes et cinéma muet: nouvelles problématiques, nouvelles méthodologies*, vol. 16, n. 1 (Quebec: Université de Montréal, Autumn 2005); Catherine Russell (ed.), *Camera Obscura. New Women of the Silent Screen: China, Japan, Hollywood* 60, vol. 20, n. 3 (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, December 2005); Karen Ward Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Sofia Bull and Astrid Söderbergh Widding (eds.), *Not So Silent. Women in Cinema before Sound* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2010); Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett, and Lucia Tralli (eds.), *Researching Women in Silent Cinema: New Findings and Perspectives* (Bologna: Università di Bologna, 2013); Christine Gledhill and Julia Knight (eds.), *Doing Women's Film History. Reframing Cinemas, Past, and Future* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015); and Jane M. Gaines, *Pink-Slipped. What Happened to Women in the Silent Film Industries?* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

[2] Jennifer M. Bean, 'Introduction. Toward a Feminist Historiography of Early Cinema', in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, ed. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 1.

[3] At the moment, very few of the women who worked behind the cameras during the first three decades of the twentieth century in Iberian silent cinema are documented; there were more women in the acting profession, although they also did not enjoy a particularly powerful position if compared with other countries. Apart from Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and Helena Cortesina, a non-exhaustive list of the Portuguese context could include Amélia Pereira and Maria Emilia Castelo Branco as producers (also being actresses), Valentine Coutable and Marie Meunier as editors, Beatriz Costa as memorialist, and Maria Helena Matos as writer and directorial assistant. In the Spanish context more women are recognized, mostly as cinema critics in the press such as Carmen Prada Mantrana, María Luz Morales, Cecilia Alonso i Bozzo, and Carlota O'Neill, but also as producers and directors, such as Elena Jordi, and Carmen Velacoracho, and writers such as María Comendador. This topic is discussed further in

For that reason, although the number of women accessing cinema at the beginning of the twentieth century, the ways and the context in which they did so, and the scope of their contribution to the construction of cinema practices are still quite unknown, since the beginning of the twenty-first century scholars have engaged in research into the role that women played in early cinema systems all around the world.[4] However, that research has been very unequal in terms of scholarly interest. While anglophone countries have produced works in which they explore specifically the role and conditions of women as film producers,[5] in the Iberian context the role that women played within the Spanish and Portuguese silent cinema industry has not been properly researched.[6] This assertion is also applicable to the Ibero-American context, on which several researchers are now developing new studies about female agency during the silent period and are identifying particular models of access to film-making.[7]

For that reason, the work of the aforementioned feminist film historians who have made important contributions to the field during the twenty-first century, has been the main theoretical frame for this dissertation. Their archival research, theoretical

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Chapter VII, section 7.3.

[4] The *Women Film Pioneers Project* is a digital publication of the Columbia University that provides free scholarly work on more than three hundred short career profiles of female professionals who worked in cinema in more than thirty countries. It is a collaborative project and contains profiles of film-makers written by scholars from all around the world. Jane M. Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta (eds.), *Women Film Pioneers Project* (website) (New York: Columbia University Libraries), https://wfpp.cdrs.columbia.edu/.

[5] Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood*; and Jane M. Gaines and Radha Vatsal, 'How Women Worked in the US Silent Film Industry', in *Women Film Pioneers Project* (website), ed. Jane M. Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta (New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2011).

[6] There is no specific monographic work on the contribution of women to Portuguese or Spanish silent cinema. However, the contributions at an international seminar devoted to women and silent cinema in Girona in 2017 opened the field to further research. See Elena Cordero-Hoyo, 'El salto del espectáculo de variedades a la dirección cinematográfica en el cine mudo: el caso de Helena Cortesina en España'; Víctor Rivas Morente, 'Carmen Prada: periodista y empresaria. La recepción del cine en Madrid (1918-1920)'; Begoña Soto-Vázquez, 'El poder de lo desconocido. O cómo enfrentarse a la contribución de las mujeres en los primeros años del cine español'; and Lluïsa Suárez, 'La dona a la indústria cinematogràfica barcelonina dels primer temps. Els tallers per acolorir pel.licules', all in *Presències i representacions de la dona en els primers anys del cinema. 1895–1920*, ed. Ángel Quintana and Jordi Pons (Girona: Fundació Museu del Cinema – Col.lecció Tomàs Mallol/Ajuntament de Girona, 2019).

[7] See, for example, Joanne Hershfield and Patricia Torres San Martín, 'Writing the History of Latin American Women Working in the Silent Film Industry', in *Women Film Pioneers Project* (website) ed. Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta (New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2013); Lucio Mafud, 'Mujeres cineastas en el período mudo argentino: los films de las sociedades de beneficencia (1915–1919)', *Imagofagia*, n. 16 (Asociación Argentina de Estudios de Cine y Audiovisual, 2017): 51–76; and Álvaro Lema Mosca, 'Los comités de damas y el primer cine uruguayo' in *Coloquio Internacional Modos de hacer: cines y mujeres de América Latina* (unpublished paper, Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 11–13 September 2019).

reflections, methodological solutions, and historiographical concerns for the recovery of other silent-film female film-makers has formed the basis of my work, mainly in ***Part I. 'Historiographical, conceptual, and methodological challenges to researching women's access to silent cinema'***. In addition, the work of historians of early cinema, such as Thomas Elsaesser, André Gaudreault, Tom Gunning, and Charles Musser have been the stepping stone to conceptualizing, researching, and describing the practice of film-making in this period, to which the hegemonic notion of organized, capitalist, industrial film-making is not applicable.[8]

The basis of my exploration of Iberian national histories of cinema and their use as nationalizing tools by means of distinguishing between 'us' and 'them' is taken from the critical perspective of Luis Alonso García, Paulo Cunha, Joan M. Minguet Batllori, Begoña Soto-Vázquez, and Jenaro Talens and Santos Zunzunegui.[9] Although many histories of Spanish and Portuguese cinema have been used to search for information on Almeida and Cortesina, there have been some that have also stood out as important works of reference for their particular focus on silent cinema, such as those written by Tiago Baptista, Henrique Alves Costa, João Bénard da Costa, and M. Félix Ribeiro in the Portuguese context,[10] and Vicente Benet, Juan Antonio Cabero, Joan M. Minguet Batllori,

[8] Some of the main texts that have been useful for understanding early cinema and the different organizing systems of production in the US context are Charles Musser, 'Pre-Classical American Cinema: Its Changing Modes of Film Production', in *Silent Film*, ed. Richard Abel (London: The Athlone Press, 1996), 85–108; André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, 'The Cinema as a Model for the Genealogy of Media', *Convergence* 8, n. 4 (2002): 12–18; André Gaudreault, 'From "Primitive Cinema" to "Kine-Attractography"', in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 88–89 and *Film and Attraction. From Kinematography to Cinema* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Thomas Elsaesser, 'Media archaeology as symptom', *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 14, n. 2 (Routledge, 2016): 181–215; and Tom Gunning, 'Early Cinema as Global Cinema: The Encyclopedic Ambition', in *Early Cinema and the "National"*, ed. Richard Abel, Giorgio Bertellini, and Rob King (New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing, 2016).

[9] Jenaro Talens and Santos Zunzunegui, 'Introducción: por una *verdadera* historia del cine', in *Historia general del cine, vol. I, Orígenes del cine* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1998), 9–38; Joan M. Minguet Batllori, 'Lo nuestro y lo ajeno: cine, cultura y nacionalidad', in *Once miradas sobre la crisis y el cine español*, ed. Luis Alonso García (Madrid: Ocho y medio, 2003), 131–146; Luis Alonso García, 'De quimeras, engaños y pendencias: El problema de España y la cuestión de los cines nacionales en 1900', 279–288 and Begoña Soto-Vázquez, 'Extrañezas posibles a propósito de procedencias y caminos de algunas de las primeras imágenes animadas entre España y Portugal', 85–93, both in *A propósito de Cuesta: escritos sobre los comienzos del cine español 1896-1920)*, ed. Juan Ignacio Lahoz Rodrigo (Valencia: Institut Valencia de l'Audiovisual i la Cinematografia Ricardo Muñoz Suay, 2010); and Paulo Cunha, 'Para uma história das histórias do cinema português', *Aniki* 3, n. 1 (2016): 36–45.

[10] Tiago Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu: Franceses tipicamente portugueses* (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa – Museu do cinema, 2003), *A Invenção do Cinema Português* (Lisbon: Tinta-da-china, 2008), *As cidades e os filmes, uma biografia de Rino Lupo*. Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa – Museu do cinema,

Julio Pérez Perucha (together with Román Gubern, José Enrique Monterde, Esteve Riambau, and Casimiro Torreiro), and Alfredo Serrano in the Spanish context.[11]

As one of the main objectives of this dissertation has been researching and writing the life-stories of Almeida and Cortesina, theoretical works coming from biography studies on the particularities of this writing style have been some of the most important sources. In this context, Sabina Loriga, Hans Renders, Binne de Haan, Jonne Harmsma, Isabel Burdiel, and Roy Forster have been the key scholars I have relied on.[12]

As has been established, in this dissertation very different theoretical frames and methodologies have coexisted and intertwined across the timeframe covered and have defined each part of it. While in ***Part I*** the methodology has been mainly bibliographical and descriptive of the research process that I have undertaken which is full of challenges, ***Part II. 'The 'careerographies': Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (1874–1945) and Helena Cortesina (1903–1984)'*** has used mostly archival research to (re-)construct the 'bio/careerographies' of Almeida and Cortesina. The term 'careerography' has been borrowed from Annette Förster's analysis of the biographies and works of the variety show performers and film directors Adriënne Solser, Musidora, and Nell Shipman.[13]

According to Förster, the proposed term alludes to the 'reconstructions of careers that have occurred in a given time and a given place and that have materialized in oeuvres, which comprise a number of roles on stage and on screen, of films and of writings'.[14]

2008, '1920-1929. O cinema "tipicamente português"', in *Cinema Português. Um Guia Essencial*, ed. Paulo Cunha and Michelle Sales (São Paulo: SESI-SP, 2013), 70–92; Henrique Alves Costa, *Breve história do cinema português, 1896-1962* (Lisbon: Instituto de Cultura Portuguesa, 1978); João Bénard da Costa, *Histórias do Cinema Português* (Lisbon: INCM, 1991) and *O Cinema Português nunca existiu* (Lisbon: CTT, 1996); and M. Félix Ribeiro, *Filmes, Figuras e Factos da História do Cinema Português 1896-1949* (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa, 1983).

[11] Vicente Benet, *El cine español. Una historia cultural* (Barcelona: Espasa, 2012); Juan Antonio Cabero, *Historia de la Cinematografía Española, 1896–1949* (Madrid: Gráficas Cinema, 1949); Joan M. Minguet Batllori, *Paisaje(s) del cine mudo en España* (Valencia: Ediciones de la Filmoteca – Instituto Valenciano de Cinematografía Ricardo Muñoz Suay, 2008); Julio Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino (1896–1930)', in *Historia del cine español*, ed. Román Gubern et al. (Madrid: Cátedra, 2010), 19–121; and Alfredo Serrano, *Las Películas Españolas* (Barcelona: Feliu y Susanna, 1925).

[12] Sabina Loriga, 'The Role of the Individual in History. Biographical and Historical Writing in the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Century', in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography. Approaches from History, Microhistory, and Life Writing*, ed. Hans Renders and Binne de Haan (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2014), 75–93; Isabel Burdiel and Roy Foster (eds.), *La historia biográfica en Europa. Nuevas perspectivas* (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico/Diputación de Zaragoza, 2015); and Hans Renders, Binne de Haan, and Jonne Harmsma (eds.), *The Biographical Turn. Lives in History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

[13] Annette Förster, *Women in the Silent Cinema: Histories of Fame and Fate* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017).

[14] Förster, *Women in the Silent Cinema*, 11.

What is interesting about this definition is that 'careerographies' are 'multilayered and interdisciplinary, as well as affirmative and non-hierarchical' by definition, and 'they do not necessarily privilege cinema over other disciplines and media'. This idea of writing a transmedia history that does not hierarchize among the different mediums in which Almeida and Cortesina worked was very compelling to my research and became an important aspect of my work. In fact, the professional careers of film-makers in the early twentieth century were usually transnational and cross-medium, as Gledhill states,[15] which is consistent with the diversification of professional experiences that both Almeida and Cortesina enjoyed during their lifetimes.

The shortage of publications about the two subjects of interest, the generalized lack of information about their lives, and the acknowledged impossibility of analysing the non-extant films (except for *Os Olhos da Alma*, which presents the added difficulty of having several preserved versions with notable differences among them) have defined the methodology of ***Part II*** as one of *archiveology*. The term *archiveology*, coined by Catherine Russell to define 'the practice of reuse, recycling, appropriation, and borrowing of archival sounds and images by filmmakers',[16] describes the non-filmic methodology followed in the (re-)construction of the 'careerographies' of both women, as they have been composed from written fragments and small pieces found in thousands of contemporary press publications and other scattered sources. It has been an arduous task to collect, gather, and reuse other people's writings (mainly those of journalists) to get a glimpse and draw a picture of who these two women were and for what end they used different artistic means of expression and entertainment. First-person descriptions found in their letters and notes also had to be checked, filtered, and assessed.

For that reason, the 'careerographies' that I have sketched in **Chapters IV**, **V**, and **VI** are a patchwork derived from 'a web of identities, none of which is complete in and of itself' of each of the women studied, to use the expression coined by Jeffrey Zamostny in his work on the novelist Álvaro Retana.[17] Zamostny's reflection about his research of an artist's biography during the digital age brought to the surface many elements that are

[15] Christine Gledhill, 'Introduction: Transnationalizing Women's Film History', *Framework. The Journal of Cinema and Media* 51, n. 2 (Fall 2010): 275–276.
[16] Catherine Russell, *Archiveology. Walter Benjamin and archival film practices* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 1.
[17] Jeffrey Zamostny, 'Virtual Álvaro Retana: Recovery and Fandom in the Digital Age', in Jeffrey Zamostny and Susan Larson (eds.), *Kiosk Literature of Silver Age Spain. Modernity and Mass Culture*, (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2017), 157.

present in this dissertation, such as the impossibility of attaining the objective presence of the individual and developing certainties about their past. This situation pushes the researcher to work as a spider, weaving an identity out of a network of diverse and even unrelated threads. This characteristic is even more significant in relation to the digital archive in which images, letters, and digitalized period publications can be found online through search engines, and through which the researcher is exposed to hundreds of results that must be subjected to a selection process to ensure nothing relevant to the research is lost. Zamostny also pointed out the unbalanced relationship that the researcher usually establishes with the studied subject: 'in practice, Retana's thousand pieces exist in his works and in other components of the archive surrounding him. When today's critics highlight one facet of Retana over the others, they actualize certain potentials of this virtual network while leaving others aside.'[18]

Thus, most information used in this research has been extracted from period press publications accessed both physically at the Biblioteca Nacional Española (BNE), Biblioteca Nacional Portuguesa (BNP), Biblioteca Nacional Argentina (BNA), Filmoteca Española, Filmoteca de Catalunya, Cinemateca Portuguesa, Instituto Nacional de Estudios de Teatro (INET) of Argentina, and Escuela Nacional de Experimentación y Realización Cinematográfica de Argentina (ENERC), and through the multiple digital search engines of the abovementioned libraries, Hemeroteca Municipal de Lisboa, Biblioteca Nacional do Brasil, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Gallica), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Austrian National Library – ANNO), Biblioteca Virtual de Prensa Histórica de España, among others. The theatre and cinema programmes and reviews found at Argentores and Museo Nacional del Cine Pablo Dukrós, and the filmic materials such as film versions, music scores, and film scenarios found at the Arquivo Nacional da Imagem em Movimento (ANIM) of Portugal, the Sociedad General de Autores y Editores (SGAE) of Spain, and Bibliothèque Nationale de France, respectively, have also counted among the most valuable discoveries.

Besides this, personal documentation of invaluable importance for my work includes Almeida's personal letters, writings, and photographs in the Biblioteca Nacional Portuguesa, the Fundação Mário Soares, and the Almeida family archive. The multiple personal and professional images of Cortesina gathered during these years have been found mainly at the Filmoteca Española the Archivo General de la Administración in

[18] Zamostny, 'Virtual Álvaro Retana', 157.

Spain and the Archivo Regional de Madrid, the Archivo General de la Nación Argentina, and in the family's private collection.

Biographies and memoires have been useful sources of information, too, as these women's lives were highly interrelated and connected with remarkable figures such as intellectuals and politicians of their time. Therefore, biographies of Manuel Fontanals, Gori Muñoz, Federico García Lorca, and Margarita Xirgu and memoires written by Ayres d'Aguiar, María Carmen Antón, Victorina Durán, María Teresa León, and Santiago Ontañón – all people that they personally knew – have provided both original information and historical and social context that was extremely useful for reconstructing the lives of Cortesina and Almeida.[19]

Therefore, the methodology followed in ***Part II*** has been determined by circumstantial and unexpected events resulting from the specific characteristics of this study and the absolute reliance on archival material. There were threads that followed mere coincidences or simple intuitions, but which led to unexpected and fruitful research paths, and other apparently secure trajectories that were totally sterile. For example, finding a draft drawing portraying Cortesina owned by the Nagasaki Museum in an image Google Search that resulted to have been sketched by the Spanish painter Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida. It was a coincidence that has taken me to the relationship between the painter and the family, the letter exchange between them and the scandal of the short novel *Paloma*, written by Federico García Sanchiz and inspired by Cortesina's life.[20] Also, the encounter with some family members of both studied subjects has opened up possibilities of enrichment and knowledge that were unthinkable otherwise. On the other hand, I have been inexplicably ignored by people that could have provided new data about them. Also, reading Portuguese and Spanish film history was useful in terms of contextualizing and

[19] Rosa Peralta Gilabert, *La escenografía del exilio de Gori Muñoz* (Valencia: Filmoteca de la Generalitat Valenciana, 2002) and *Manuel Fontanals, escenógrafo: Teatro, cine y exilio* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 2007); Ian Gibson, *Vida, pasión y muerte de Federico García Lorca* (Madrid: Biblioteca ABC, 2003); Antonina Rodrigo, *Margarita Xirgu* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1988); Ayres d'Aguiar, *Memórias dos meus tempos de cinema. Primeira parte (de 1923 até 10 de Maio de 40) e cinco páginas de seguimento até ter deixado o cinema* (Unpublished manuscript, Lisbon: Centro de Documentação da Cinemateca Portuguesa); María del Carmen García Antón, *Visto al pasar. República, guerra y exilio* (A Coruña: Editorial do Castro, 2003); Victorina Durán, *Mi vida*, vol. 1, 2, and 3, ed. Idoia Murga Castro and Carmen Gaitán Salinas (Madrid: Residencia de Estudiantes, 2018); María Teresa León, *Memorias de la melancolía,* ed. Gregorio Torres Nebrera (Madrid: Castalia Ediciones, 1999); Santiago Ontañón and José María Moreiro, *Unos pocos amigos verdaderos* (Madrid: Fundación Banco Exterior, 1988).

[20] I am referring to Federico García Sanchiz, *Paloma,* La Novela Corta, n. 85 (Madrid: 18 August 1917). More details about this short novel and its impact in Cortesina's life are supplied in Chapter VIII.

learning about their time but not really productive in terms of finding reliable facts about Almeida and Cortesina's biographies.

In ***Part III. 'The affective familial networks as a springboard to silent cinema'***, I have used a comparatist and analytical methodology in order to find commonalities and differences between the two previously discovered 'careerographies'. Philosophical concepts such as Baruch Spinoza's theory of affections and Herbert Marcuse's 'mature civilization' have helped reflection on the opposition between traditional, pre-modern organization of film-making and its subsequent development into a capitalist industry.[21] The work of feminist scholars, such as Claire Hemmings, on the concepts of 'affect', as well as work by Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar on 'relational autonomy', have been crucial in theorizing the meaning and impact of the caring networks that surrounded and supported Almeida and Cortesina during their lives and careers.[22]

This last part of the dissertation as a whole is based on the triangular relationship between modernity, cinema, and women's position in the first third of the twentieth century in Iberian urbanity, and it partly draws on the first-hand testimonies of intellectuals, writers, and journalists who recorded the realities of the period as an account of their lived experience. Chronicles from contemporary writers such as Carmen de Burgos' *Confidencias de artistas* (1917), (in which she interviews forty-five women from the stage, either dramatic theatre or frivolous shows, thirty-one Spanish women, two from Portugal, and twelve from other countries), Federico García Sanchiz's *Paloma* (1917), and Álvaro Retana's *Historia del Arte Frívolo* (1964),[23] as well as articles from publications of the time by journalists such as Carlo Zappia (1922), Seavon (1929), Juan J. Díaz Morales (1929), and Josefina Carabias (1934),[24] portray a convulsive period of

[21] Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988); and Herbert Marcuse, 'The dialectic of civilization', *Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1966).

[22] Clare Hemmings, 'Invoking affect. Cultural theory and the ontological turn', *Cultural Studie*s 19, n. 5 (September 2005): 548–567; and Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, 'Introduction. Autonomy Refigured', in *Relational Autonomy. Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, ed. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3–31.

[23] Carmen de Burgos, *Confesiones de artistas* I and II (Madrid: V. H de Sanz Calleja, 1917); García Sanchiz, *Paloma*; and Álvaro Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo* (Madrid: Tesoro, 1964).

[24] Carlo Zappia, 'La ilustre escritora portuguesa Virginia de Castro, se decide a escribir argumentos de películas', *El Cine*, n. 557 (Barcelona, 16 December 1922), 1; Seavon, 'Carmen Viance', *Ilustração*, n. 83 (Lisbon, 1 June 1929), 26–27 and 'Cinema espanhol, o que nos diz "La Romerito"', *Ilustração*, n. 85 (1 July 1929), 31; José J. Díaz Morales, 'Las primeras mujeres que en España se han dedicado al "cine"', *La Pantalla*, n. 58 (10 March 1929), 966-967; Josefina Carabias, 'Reportajes frívolos. Dos horas en una fábrica de "vedettes"', *La Voz*, n. 4140 (6 April 1934), 3.

rapid change towards modernization in the histories of Portugal and Spain that directly affected the cultural milieu of cinema and its relationship with intellectuals, artists, and entertainers in a time when visual culture was expanding.

Avoiding a teleological account of the history and the presentation of Spain and Portugal as failed modern states during the first part of the twentieth century (in comparison with other European countries), I have presented demographic, industrial, and literacy data and information on the Iberian territories (local, regional, or national) that have contributed to the framing of Cortesina's and Almeida's presence within the cinematographic structures of their cities. In this sense, articles on social, economic and industrial history, such as those written by the historians Miriam Halpern Pereira, Rui Ramos, Ana Nunes de Almeida, João Ferrão, José Manuel Sobral, Francisco Comín and Pablo Martín Aceña, Cristina Borderías Mondejar, Luis Enrique Otero-Carvajal, and Virginia Baptista and Paulo Marques Alves, among others, have provided useful insights.[25]

As has been stated previously, there is a certain temporal, artistic, and regional unspecificity in this study. Taking advantage of the multiplicity of study fields and theoretical frameworks that underpin this work – such as film studies, feminist studies, biographical studies, and historiography – intersecting relationships have been established without strictly limiting themselves to a certain period or country, or to cinema history itself. In this sense, I believe that it is mainly in these intersections that the reader

[25] Miriam Halpern Pereira, 'Demografia e desenvolvimento em Portugal na segunda metade do século XIX', *Análise Social* VII, n. 25–26 (1969): 85–117; Rui Ramos, 'Culturas da alfabetização e culturas do analfabetismo em Portugal: uma introdução à História da Alfabetização no Portugal contemporâneo', *Análise Social* XXIV, n. 103–104 (1988): 1067–1145; Ana Nunes de Almeida, João Ferrão, and José Manuel Sobral, 'Territórios, empresários e empresas: entender as condições sociais da empresarialidade', *Análise Social* XXIX, n. 125–126 (1994): 55–79; Francisco Comín and Pablo Martín Aceña, 'Rasgos históricos de las empresas en España. Un panorama', *Revista de Economía Aplicad*a IV, n. 12 (1996): 75–123; Cristina Borderías Mondejar, 'La reconstrucción de la actividad femenina en Cataluña circa 1920', *Historia Contemporánea* 44 (2011): 17–47; Luis Enrique Otero-Carvajal, 'La sociedad urbana y la irrupción de la Modernidad en España, 1900-1936', *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea* 38 (2016): 255–283; Virgínia Baptista and Paulo Marques Alves, 'As Mulheres trabalhadoras em Portugal (1890–1970): as representações sobre o trabalho remunerado e o trabalho não remunerado numa perspectiva feminista', *Actas de las XIV Jornadas Nacionales de Historia de las Mujeres y IX Congreso Iberoamericano de Estudios de Género*, ed. Lilia Vázquez Lorda (Mar del Plata: Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, 2019), 523–531 and 'As mulheres de Xabregas: trabalho quotidiano e ativismo (do fim do século XIX aos anos 40 do século XX)', *História do Movimento Operário e Conflitos Sociais em Portugal*, ed. Pamela Peres Cabreira (Lisbon: Instituto de História Contemporânea, 2020), 501–516.

can discover the originality of my work and the contribution that I intend to make to such an interdisciplinary field as can be found in comparative studies.

However, I have been loyal to my two case studies since the beginning of my project, disregarding all other temptations to which I could have succumbed on the journey (for example, doubts produced by a lack or excess of data and information, by other very interesting case studies, by the limits of time and space, and so on). However, I have allowed myself to travel through the broadness of the lives of Almeida and Cortesina, which has led me to unknown and diverse roads such as the history of the Spanish frivolous stage, the dawn of Portuguese aristocracy, the Estado Novo's cultural diplomacy, early Iberian feminist activism and theory, the Argentinian artistic milieu and the experience of the exile, and, of course, silent cinema history in the Iberian Peninsula.[26]

Heather Love made an interesting remark on the multiple projects that are taking place nowadays to 'rescue or save' obscured figures of the twentieth century (in her study on queer figures of the history of literature). According to Love, 'in imagining historical rescue as a one-way street, we fail to acknowledge the dependence of the present on the past', because, in fact, the recovery of researching the past is always motivated 'by a sense of lack in the present'.[27] For that reason, the researchers are not saviours but vulnerable characters who need answers from the past to their present doubts, knowledge gaps and anxieties. Therefore, as Love and Zamostny did, I will avoid (as much as I can) the now common rhetoric of lost and found, of oblivion and recovery, and try to explore the historiographical, methodological, conceptual – and partially political – reasons that prevent these two women from being inscribed in their national cinema histories, beginning by reconstructing their careers. So, coming back to Zamostny's study on Retana and his analysis of recent texts written about the novelist's life and work, he asks

[26] For such diverse topics, I have relied on specific authors. To mention a few that have not been mentioned before: Manuel Aznar Soler has published extensively about the Antifascist intellectuals and their reactions to the political Spanish context during the Republic, the war, and the exile. His books *República literaria y revolución (1920-1939)* (Seville: Renacimiento, 2010), and the collected volume *El exilio literario español de 1939* (GEXEL, 1998) are groundbreaking works about the political involvement of Spanish intellectuals (writers, theatre professionals and so on) during the twentieth century. Also, Nel Diago is an inexcusable reference when writing about Spanish and Argentinian theatre exchanges: 'Buenos Aires: la capital teatral de España (1936-1939)', in *De Lope de Vega a Roberto Cossa: teatro español, iberoamericano y argentino*, ed. Osvaldo Pellettieri (Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 1994) and 'El teatro español en Buenos Aires durante la Guerra Civil española (1936-1939)', in *Dos escenarios. Intercambio teatral entre España y Argentina*, ed. Osvaldo Pellettieri (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 2006).

[27] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward. Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 33–34.

himself the same question that I asked myself regarding my two case studies: how much recuperative scholarship is necessary before we can approach Cortesina and Almeida without staking claims on the urgency of their recovery, and without assuming that readers know little or nothing about them?[28]

Therefore, this dissertation has been written in an effort to avoid recovery and rescue narratives, in contrast with some of my previous writings and with most of the work concerning Almeida and Cortesina. Of course, there have been – and still are – grave injustices committed in film history in particular, and in history more generally, with certain women's impressive and groundbreaking work suffering neglect, oblivion, or even robbery of authorship, and there are true 'recovery' scholars' works. However, this narrative, which puts the researcher in the centre of epic romanticism, is now too well worn, and it no longer seems to be true in the case of either Cortesina – whose incursion into cinema production was short-lived and trivial – or Almeida – whose work in Fortuna Films was truly important for Portuguese silent cinema, creating one of the four main production companies of the time, but whose work is no more forgotten than that of her male counterparts in a country that has only recently begun to pay attention to its silent cinema history. In fact, Almeida's and Cortesina's complete absence respectively from literature and theatre history (and even from the national political histories of the Iberian republics and dictatorships), where they played an important role, is more condemnable and negligent than the indifference shown to them by film history.

Nevertheless, regarding their work in cinema, their being members of the nowadays fashionable club of film 'pioneers' or 'first ones' has granted them a place in film history and women's history (generally considered as an appendix to conventional history, which is mostly centred on male achievements), which mentions them as part of a conglomerate list. Moreover, the name Cortesina has recently been included in a children's book,[29] audiovisual creative projects,[30] and several posts on more or less specialized websites created during the past two years that contain her bio-profile under the jumble of 'pioneers', and always reiterating the same oblivion and rescue narrative. Almeida is also going through a comparable trajectory, entering the same discourse of recovery but in more serious academic works about the role that women played during the First

[28] Zamostny, 'Virtual Álvaro Retana', 159.
[29] Juan Ramón Barat, *Cuentos de 10 grandes pioneras valencianas* (Madrid: Bruño, 2019).
[30] Inés Jiménez, 'Helena Cortesina', *Pioneras muy animadas*, Escuela Artediez (March 2020), Audiovisual Project.

Portuguese Republic.[31] However, her life-story will probably suffer the same tendency of popularization in a few years' time in the Portuguese context, entering the process of commercialization that simplifies the narrative following the same repeated, stereotypical pattern. In any case, both names will likely be known to their respective general public soon.[32]

So far, Almeida's work as a writer has been the object of considerably more attention than her work in cinema.[33] Studies such as the one developed by Glória Maria Lourenço Bastos, 'Fantasía e realidade em Virgínia de Castro e Almeida' (1991), has been of great help in understanding the tension between positivism and imagination that Almeida struggled with all her life. It has the best documented and most complete bibliography written by Almeida, adding an incomplete but long list of articles in international periodical publications. Additionally, there are two dissertations completed in 1994 that explore the different facets of her work as a writer: 'A obra de Virgínia de Castro e Almeida e a emancipação da literatura infantil' by Manuel António Teixeira Araújo (1994), and António Manuel Ribeiro's 'Ficção histórica infanto-juvenil no Estado Novo: colecção "Pátria" de Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (1936–1946)'. Finally, some recent research based on the recuperation of Portuguese women's work on literature and feminism during and before the First Republic have also begun to bring attention to Almeida, for example Isabel Lousada's chapter 'Anatomia de uma autora: Virgínia de Castro e Almeida em tránsitos Atlânticos' in the book *Gênero e literatura: resgate, contemporaneidades e outras perspectivas* (2013).[34]

However, there is only one PhD dissertation that explores her role as screenwriter, analysing her writings and comparing her work with other Portuguese women

[31] Some reference works are Maria Alice Samara, *Operárias e burguesas. As mulheres no tempo da República* (Lisbon: A Esfera dos Livros, 2007); João Gomes Esteves, *Mulheres e Republicanismo (1908-1928)* (Lisbon: CIG, 2008); Zília Osório de Castro, João Gomes Esteves and Natividade Monteiro (eds.), *Mulheres na I República. Percursos, Conquistas e Derrotas* (Lisbon: Colibri, 2011).

[32] In fact, a fictionalized novel of Virgínia de Castro e Almeida's life has been already written by Filomena Marona Beja, *A Duração dos Crepúsculos* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2006).

[33] Glória María Lourenço Bastos, 'Fantasia e realidade em Virgínia de Castro e Almeida' (Master's thesis in Portuguese Literature and Culture, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1991); Manuel António Teixeira Araújo, 'A obra de Virgínia de Castro e Almeida e a emancipação da literatura infantil' (Master's thesis in Education, Universidade do Minho, 1994); António Manuel Ribeiro, 'Ficção histórica infanto-juvenil no Estado Novo: colecção "Pátria" de Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (1936-1946)', *Revista de História das Ideias* 16 (1994): 161–192.

[34] Isabel Lousada, 'Anatomia de uma autora: Virgínia de Castro e Almeida em tránsitos Atlânticos', in *Gênero e literatura: resgate, contemporaneidades e outras perspectivas,* ed. Edilene Ribeiro Batista (Fortaleza: Expressão Gráfica e Editora, 2013), 275–296.

screenwriters: 'Mulheres Guionistas: Uma Definição Dinâmica da Linguagem no Feminino no Cinema Português' by Ana Sofía Pereira (2020).[35] Apart from that, analysis of national cinema histories produces little information about the existence of Fortuna Films, with the notable exception of Tiago Baptista's works in the book *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu. Franceses tipicamente portugueses* (2003), the paper 'Cinema e politica na Primeira República' (2010), and the profile of the film-maker on the *Women Film Pioneers Project* website (2019).[36]

Much of the information on Cortesina's biography presented in this dissertation (mainly her career on stage and on screen before her exile) is the result of previous research conducted during my Master in Spanish Film Studies at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Madrid, defended in June 2013.[37] For that reason, information from my Master's thesis has been revised, translated and updated for this dissertation following my further research. Also, during the researching process, different hypotheses have been presented in international events and published in international journals. For example, in 'Women and the Shift from Theatre to Cinema in Spain: The Case of Helena Cortesina (1903–84)', published in the indexed journal *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* (2018), Professor Begoña Soto-Vázquez and I defended the notion that the powerful position that a few women enjoyed in Spanish theatre during the early twentieth century was not translated into cinema. The main reason was that family networks and culture were the two main pillars on which theatre actresses' decision-making was sustained, and neither of them was considered necessary for cinematography.[38] This hypothesis was illustrated by using Cortesina's career in both mediums as a case in point. Also, Cortesina's silent cinema experience was briefly described in her profile on the *Women*

[35] Ana Sofia Torres Pereira, 'Mulheres Guionistas: Uma Definição Dinâmica da Linguagem no Feminino no Cinema Português' (PhD diss. in Communication Sciences, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, March 2020).

[36] Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*; 'Cinema e política na Primeira República', *Congresso Histórico Nacional. I República e Republicanismo* (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa and FCSH-UNL, 2010), 1–11; 'Virgínia de Castro e Almeida', in *Women Film Pioneers Project* (website), ed. Jane M. Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta (New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2018).

[37] Elena Cordero-Hoyo, *El salto del espectáculo de variedades a la dirección cinematográfica en el cine mudo: el caso de Helena Cortesina en España (1904-1936)* (Master's thesis in Ciencias de la Comunicación, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, May 2013).

[38] It is now common (and desirable) to use inclusive terms in academic writing in English and use a less gendered approach writing the term 'actor', instead of 'actress'. However, given the basis on which I am writing this dissertation, I consider it confusing as the gender of the performers is crucial to understand the argument. To avoid the inconvenience of using the terms 'female actor' and 'male actor', I have opted to maintain the terms 'actress' and 'actor', respectively.

Film Pioneers Project website and in a more detailed form in 'El salto del espectáculo de variedades a la dirección cinematográfica en el cine mudo: el caso de Helena Cortesina en España' (2019). Finally, the evolution of her image as related to classicism, modernity, and exotism was analysed in 'Entre el clasicismo, el exotismo y la modernidad: Helena Cortesina en España' (2020).[39]

Apart from my own work, a few other academic articles analyse Cortesina's life and oeuvre, and they come from very different fields and approaches. Susana Climent's situation as a distant family member of the Cortesina sisters allowed her access to some family documents that resulted in several references in the chapter 'Redes familiares', written with Carmen García Monerris and published in *De l'ofici a la fàbrica. Una familia industrial valenciana en el canvi de segle 'La Maquinista Valenciana'* (2000). Later, she brought to light Helena Cortesina's experience as a film-maker in 'Rescatando desconocidas: Helena Cortés Altabás, una pionera del cine' (2015), one of the first places where Cortesina's real name was stated (apart from in my Master's thesis).[40] In addition, Barbara Zecchi has compared Cortesina's career with that of Elena Jordi from the women's studies perspective in her article 'Dos pioneras entre el teatro y el cine: Elena Jordi y Helena Cortesina' (2013); she also mentioned Cortesina as a pioneer in her book *Desenfocadas: cineastas españolas y discursos de género* (2014), and she has discussed the appropriation of the film *Flor de España* by male film historians during the Franco era in 'Flor de España o la historia de una desapropiación: Rescatando la película de Helena Cortesina' (2019).[41]

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[39] Elena Cordero-Hoyo and Begoña Soto-Vázquez, 'Women and the Shift from Theatre to Cinema in Spain: The Case of Helena Cortesina (1903–84)', *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 45, n. 1, ed. Victoria Duckett and Vito Adrianensis (Journal Sage, May 2018), 96–120; Elena Cordero-Hoyo, 'Helena Cortesina' in *Women Film Pioneers Project* (website), ed. Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta (New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2018); Cordero-Hoyo, 'El salto del espectáculo', 131–142; and Elena Cordero-Hoyo, 'Entre el clasicismo, el exotismo y la modernidad: Helena Cortesina en España', in *La dona visible. Presències de la feminitat a la pantalla. 1895–1920*, ed. Ángel Quintana and Jordi Pons (Girona: Fundació Museu del Cinema – Collecció Tomàs Mallol/Ajuntament de Girona, 2020), 139–147.

[40] Susana Climent Viguer and Carmen García Monerris, 'Redes familiares', *De l'ofici a la fàbrica. Una familia industrial valenciana en el canvi de segle. 'La Maquinista Valenciana'* (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2000), 255–280; Susana Climent Viguer, 'Rescatando desconocidas: Helena Cortés Altabás, una pionera del cine', in *Me veo luego existo: mujeres que representan, mujeres representadas,* ed. Ester Alba Pagán and Luis Pérez Ochando (Madrid: CSIC, 2015): 701–718.

[41] Barbara Zecchi, 'Dos pioneras entre el teatro y el cine: Elena Jordi y Helena Cortesina', in *De los orígenes al a revolución tecnológica del siglo XXI*, ed. Emma Camarero and María Marcos Ramos (Salamanca: Hegar, Ediciones Anatama, 2013), 377–388; Barbara Zecchi, *Desenfocadas: cineastas españolas y discursos de género* (Barcelona: Icaria, 2014); Barbara Zecchi, 'Flor de España o la historia de una desapropiación: Rescatando la película de Helena Cortesina', in *Presències i representacions de la*

Thematic, geographical, and chronological scope

Cinema, as part of a cultural, industrial, and aesthetic system, unavoidably dialogues with other mediums such as theatre, music, literature, and photography, and this relationship is even more evident in temporal periods or geographical regions of instability. Therefore, the hesitant, uncertain, and irregular cinema practice in Portugal and Spain during the first third of the twentieth century, before its systematization and full industrialization, is one of the moments in which these intermedia relations reached their peak.

It is in this transfer among mediums that this dissertation is placed: in the convergence between literature and cinema and in the folding between the stage and the screen. Because it was through these thresholds that Almeida and Cortesina had the opportunity to experiment with film-making and to access creative positions in cinema production. In addition, this dissertation not only considers film from an industrial perspective, it also analyses Iberian cinema culture from its fame-inducing, educative, propagandist, and diplomatic potentialities that attracted certain urban and intellectual or art-driven women into the pseudo-industries of cinema.[42]

As explained in the previous section, I have carried out a complex, intersectional, interdisciplinary, and international number of readings, which have provided a rich network of concepts and theoretical tools that have resulted in a scattered selection of apparently unconnected references. This free-reading, in which some publications lead me to others, has enhanced the creation of a polyhedric dissertation that cannot be totally ascribed to film, biographical, or historical studies. Nevertheless, there have been two elements that have transversed the scope of the whole manuscript – feminism and cultural Iberism.

I ascribe to feminist studies, instead of gender or women's studies for being a critical field that highlights its political and activist side without denying subjectivity and applying it to research work. As it will be further explained in Chapter II, section 2.2,

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dona en els primers anys del cinema. 1895–1920, ed. Ángel Quintana and Jordi Pons (Girona: Fundació Museu del Cinema – Col·lecció Tomàs Mallol/Ajuntament de Girona, 2019), 239–253.

[42] I use the term 'pseudo-industries' to refer to Portuguese and Spanish cinema systems of production in the 1920s, because, as I will detail further in Chapter V, section 5.1, there was a lack of human, technical and economical resources and of a lucrative business-model that prevented from creating economically sustainable and lasting production houses, apart from isolated individual efforts.

feminist studies recognize the scholar's 'locus of speech' and position in the 'matrix of domination', not exactly as an individual but as part of a hierarchical social structure which conforms his or her way of looking at the world – and also at history itself.[43] Even though searching for evidence constitute the basis of this dissertation, as the numerous and extensive footnotes prove, it does not avoid theorizing doubt and uncertainty and admitting speculation as a historiographic method. According to Joan W. Scott, the discussion around the historian's ethics and objectivity must pass through the 'self-reflective examination of the historian's own moral categories'[44] and the explicit self-position as a subject, instead of hiding behind objective data or an invisible method. One crucial difference between the ethics of objectivity and the ethics of critique is that the first 'advances a closed agenda', while the latter endorses 'an undetermined history'.[45]

Regarding the geographical scope, I have mostly compared Portugal and Spain as national geographical entities in an effort to simplify the analysis of the general territory in which multiple, diverse, and particular commercial, cultural, or identarian flows and relations took place. I believe that the particularities of the Peninsula make the approach from an Iberian studies perspective much richer than the isolation of each state as a detached reality, even when the study field applied to film studies is not yet consolidated.[46] For example, the border regions had unique relations and dynamics that should be studied further, and these also affected cinematography. The region surrounding the Miño/Minho, Extremadura, and the Alentejo, and the one south of Andalucía and Algarve, would develop regional connections that were established by common land, maritime, or fluvial routes. It is from those local and regional histories that more data about Iberian cinema history can be gleaned.[47] For that reason, I have tried not only to juxtapose two independent cinema histories but to look at it as a whole in which the

[43] Patricia Hill Collins defines the matrix of domination as the structure that organizes all the intersecting oppressions that work together in producing injustice. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 18.

[44] Joan W. Scott, 'History-writing as critique', in *Manifestos for History*, ed. Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alun Munslow (London: Routledge, 2007), 22.

[45] Scott, 'History-writing as critique', 25.

[46] Santiago Pérez Isasi, 'Iberian Studies: A State of the Art and Future Perspectives', in *Looking at Iberia: A Comparative European Perspective*, ed. Santiago Pérez Isasi and Ângela Fernandes (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 11.

[47] On the first years of the implantation of the cinematograph in Spain in regional accounts, see Juan Carlos de la Madrid (ed.), *Primeros tiempos del cinematógrafo en España* (Gijón: Universidad de Oviedo/Ayuntamiento de Gijón, 1996).

dichotomies urban/rural, literate/illiterate, elitist/popular culture had more weight than the Portuguese/Spanish one. However, lack of time and space have not allowed the detailed consideration of Iberian cinematographic regional relations, and even more so when basic national comparisons between Portuguese and Spanish silent cinema have never been done.[48]

The chronological scope of this dissertation focuses mainly on the first three decades of the twentieth century, and more specifically on the five years from 1920 to 1925 in which Almeida and Cortesina experienced cinema production in their countries of origin. Therefore, as I am referring in this dissertation to certain dynamics that are characteristic of the cinema produced before the incorporation of the optical synchronic sound recording and reproducing technologies that gradually imposed themselves as the norm in cinema projections around 1930, I consider the general and scholarly dismissed term 'silent cinema' (translated as 'silente' or 'mudo' in Portuguese and Spanish, respectively) a helpful category. Although vague, amateur, and inaccurate, it is still the most established term used by the English-speaking population throughout the world, so I am using this expression in this dissertation for the sake of convenience and understanding.[49] Use of the expression 'silent cinema' facilitates communication better than calling it pre-classical or dividing it by modes of production, which are also relevant categories but not so widely understood.[50] However, as my research intends to reconstruct the 'careerographies' of two people, in socio-cultural terms the chronological scope spans almost a century: from the mid-nineteenth century when Virgínia de Castro e Almeida was born until the mid-twentieth century when Helena Cortesina retired from the stage.

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[48] Some remarkable but anecdotal examples of scholarly works are Javier Herrera, 'Presencia de Portugal en el cine español: 1895–1936', 375–386 and Salvato Telles de Menezes, 'Relações cinematográficas entre Portugal e Espanha: 1895–1936', 387–399, both in *Suroeste* 1 (Badajoz: Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales/MEIAC, 2010); Begoña Soto-Vázquez, 'Lo que de real tiene el mar. Sobre 'A tour in Spain and Portugal' (R. W. Paul/H. W. Short, 1896)', in *El Documental, Carcoma de la Ficción. X Congreso de la Asociación española de Historiadores del Cine*, ed. Pedro Poyato Sánchez (Córdoba: Filmoteca de Andalucía, 2004), 205–211; 'Rethinking Boundaries. The first moving images between Spain and Portugal', in *Networks of Entertainment: Early Film Distribution 1895-1915*, ed. Frank Kessler and Nanna Verhoeff (Eastleigh: John Libbey, 2007), 7–15; and 'Extrañezas posibles', 85–93.

[49] It is inaccurate because film screenings were never silent as they usually had sound accompaniment (live music, lecturers, non-synchronic recorded sound, noisy audiences, etc.).

[50] Musser, 'Pre-Classical American Cinema', 85–108.

Objectives

The first general objective of this dissertation is to understand the reasons, motivations, and conditions that allowed Almeida and Cortesina to access film-making during the early 1920s. The in-depth study and comparison of these two cases aim to reveal patterns of behaviour, mechanisms, and aspects of Iberian cinematographies in general, and film production more specifically.

Secondly, it seeks to present issues surrounding the intermedial formation of cinema and the socialization of women professionals, artists, and intellectuals during the first three decades of the twentieth century in the Iberian countries, taking into account the difference among social classes and the political context of the time.

Thirdly, I aim to understand why female film-makers (such as Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and Helena Cortesina) have been left out of silent cinema histories. I believe that the reasons are plural and complex and come from the challenges of the very different natures (historiographical, conceptual, and methodological) that scholars find in their pursuit of writing history. In my trajectory, I have encountered difficulties that have allowed me to empathetically identify common problems for film historians researching the female contribution to silent cinema culture and its social, cultural, and industrial construction. In addition to identifying these obstacles, I aim to present possible theoretical and practical solutions to contribute to the feminist objective of amplifying the academic perspective of non-hegemonic subjects.

To achieve the aforementioned three-pronged, ambitious objectives, a more specific aim to begin with has been the reconstruction of Almeida and Cortesina's 'careerographies'.

Outline of the chapters

Outdated concepts, hypotheses, and conclusions in film studies must be revisited (even those that were useful for research in the past) and new paths must be explored from a feminist point of view. Being a relatively young area of study that is gaining importance, there are still several open discussions among scholars about what the future and goals of historiographic research in silent cinema should be from a critical studies perspective. Fortunately, there is an interdisciplinary scholar effort coming from film studies, history,

biography, and art to find satisfactory methods and theories for searching for those women who have been overlooked by film history but, at the same time, paying attention to the criticisms drawn from queer and postcolonial theories, among others. A selection of the greatest challenges – from my experience in researching the 'careerographies' of Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and Helena Cortesina – is developed in ***Part I. 'Historiographical, conceptual, and methodological challenges to researching women's access to silent cinema'***.

These identified challenges have been classified into three chapters: historiographical, conceptual, and methodological. All of them contribute to obscuring the access to female film-makers' achievements and their inscription into history. Although the classification is subjective and personal, it is consistent with the theoretical, historiographical, and archival work that I have done during the last five years for this dissertation. In addition, ***Part I*** reflects on my specific research path and lets the back of the seam be visible, making the traces of the historical reconstruction as noticeable as possible to let the reader understand where the holes, errors, criticisms, and shortcuts of this dissertation might be.

In **Chapter I. 'Historiographical challenges'**, there is a discussion in which the notions of conventional history's objectivity are called out, and substituted for a narrative and constructive approach supported by the work of historians such as Hayden White, Joan W. Scott, and Elizabeth Deeds Ermath.[51] The alternative approaches also come from cinema historians such as Richard Maltby,[52] who proposes a 'new cinema history from below', and post-colonial and feminist scholars such as Donna Haraway, Patricia Hill Collins, and Djamila Ribeiro, whose notions of 'situated knowledge', 'matrix of domination', and 'locus of speech', respectively, were useful to me in dealing with my own position of power as a scholar.[53]

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[51] Hayden White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York Guildford: Columbia University Press, 1988); and Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, 'The Closed Space of Choice: A Manifesto on the Future of History', in *Manifestos for History* ed. Keith Jenkings, Sue Morgan, and Alun Munslow (London: Routledge, 2007), 50–66.

[52] Richard Maltby, 'On the prospect of writing cinema history from below', *TMG Journal for Media History* 9, issue 2 (2006): 74–96.

[53] Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies* 14, n. 3 (Autumn 1988), 575–599; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; and Djamila Ribeiro, *O que é lugar de fala?* (Belo Horizonte: Letramento, 2017).

The notion of authorship associated with film directors, the homogenization of 'women' as a category of analysis, and the overvaluing of the pioneer are discussed in **Chapter II. 'Conceptual challenges'**. I call into question the category of film 'auteur', basing my argument on the deconstructive approach of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, and the articles of feminist film scholars Geneviève Sellier and Gaines on the field are fundamental for confronting the author's equivalence with the profession of director.[54] Radha Vatsal's proposal of a non-authoritative writing of film history and Dall'Asta's suggestion of focusing on the less heroic figures involved in film-making are presented as possible solutions for breaking the auteuristic approach to cinema history.[55] My objective in this chapter is to move outside of the traditional studied canon full of geniuses, pioneers, and masterpieces.

Secondly, I attempt to problematize the category of 'women' for being too homogenizing for the study of the complexity of female experiences using, paradoxically, the contributions of Joan W. Scott, the person who established gender as a category of historical analysis in the first place.[56] However, concepts such as that of 'series' coined by Iris Marion Young, and rescued by Dall'Asta for film studies,[57] and the learnings drawn from biography writing,[58] are of the maximum interest to my work, allowing me to unify two such different women as Almeida and Cortesina into a single strategical object of study: women.

Finally, I try to overcome the useful but exhausted category of 'pioneer' that promotes a teleological history of cinema that Gaudreult rejects, that reinforces a static

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[54] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University California Press, 1989), 49–55; Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology (Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984, vol. 2*), ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), 205–222; Geneviève Sellier, '*Gender studies* et études filmiques', *Cahiers du Genre*, n. 38 (2005): 63–85; and Jane Gaines, 'Of Cabbages and Authors' in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, ed. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 88–118.

[55] Radha Vatsal, 'Reevaluating Footnotes. Women Directors of the Silent Era', in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema,* ed. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 124; and Monica Dall'Asta, 'On Frieda Klug, Pearl White, and Other Traveling Film Pioneers', *Framework. The Journal of Cinema and Media* 51, n. 2 (Fall 2010): 311.

[56] Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*.

[57] Iris Marion Young, 'Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective', *Signs* 19, n. 3 (Spring 1994): 714; and Monica Dall'Asta, 'What It Means to Be a Woman: Theorizing Feminist Film History Beyond the Essentialism/Constructionism Divide', in *Not so Silent. Women in Cinema before Sound*, ed. Sofia Bull and Astrid Söderbergh Widding (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2010), 39.

[58] Hans Renders, 'The Limits of Representativeness. Biography, Life Writing and Microhistory', in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography. Approaches from History, Microhistory, and Life Writing*, ed. Hans Renders and Binne de Haan (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 136.

periodization that cannot apply globally, as Rosanna Maule points out, and that assumes a rhetoric of heroicism and uniqueness that Kay Armatage criticizes.[59] Agreeing with Soto-Vázquez's proposal, I suggest as a possible alternative to shift the attention from 'singular' women in 'top' creative positions to anonymous collectives that were at the base of the silent cinema system.[60]

In any case, '[b]ecause existing methodologies had been so stunningly successful in overlooking or negating women's films',[61] as Armatage denounces, they have revealed themselves as inappropriate for studying women's access to cinema. For that reason, the chosen sources, the limitation to national borders, and the isolation of cinema as a medium will be analysed in **Chapter III. 'Methodological challenges'** as obstacles that hamper the inscription of female incursions into history.

I first deal with the impossibility of basing silent cinema history – and specifically the stories behind film-makers such as Almeida and Cortesina – on textual analysis due to the lack of preservation of their films or because they exist as multiple versions (edits) of the same film. This apparent obstacle offers the opportunity to diversify the analysis to a broad range of alternative sources such as non-filmic materials, contemporary publications, and gendered documents such as letters or diaries, as Negra notes.[62] In addition, I vindicate traditionally dismissed sources like footnotes, visual merchandising, and even gossip as valuable repositories of information for my study following the recommendation of Vatsal, Judith Thissen, and Irit Rogoff, respectively.[63]

As pointed out by Alonso García, Soto-Vázquez, and Talens and Zunzunegui, not only does cinema production have nationalizing objectives but so also does cinema

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[59] Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction,* 67; Rosanna Maule, 'Feminist Film History and the (Un)problematic Treatment of Transnationalism in Early Cinema', in *Not So Silent*, ed. Sofia Bull and Astrid Söderbergh Widding (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2010), 48–57; and Kay Armatage, 'Roughing It in the Bush: Nell Shipman and Pioneering in the Academic Marketplace' (working paper, *Women and the Silent Screen Conference*, University of Concordia, Montreal, 2004).

[60] Begoña Soto-Vázquez, 'Weaving a cinematographic culture and writing about film, or how to reconstruct the subject of women in Spanish silent cinema', in *Women in Iberian Filmic Culture,* ed. Elena Cordero-Hoyo and Begoña Soto-Vázquez (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2020), 123.

[61] Kay Armatage, *The Girl from God's Country: Nell Shipman and the Silent Cinema* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 5

[62] Diane Negra, 'Introduction: Female Stardom and Early Film History', *Camera Obscura. Early Women Stars*, n. 48, ed. Jennifer Bean and Diane Negra (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2001): 1–7.

[63] Vatsal, 'Reevaluating Footnotes'; Judith Thissen, 'Cinema History as Social History. Retrospect and Prospect', in *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History,* ed. Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby and Philippe Meers (London: Routledge, 2019), 123–134; Irit Rogoff, 'Gossip as Testimony: A Postmodern Signature', *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts*, ed. Griselda Pollock (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

historiography.[64] For that reason, in this chapter I also deal with the challenges that circumscribing cinema histories to the national boundaries of a country present in the research of transnational careers such as those of Almeida and Cortesina. In addition, as pointed out by Gunning, travelling across borders was not a commercial or cultural consequence of globalization trends but an 'essential gestalt of cinema's ambition' in early cinema.[65] In this connection, I remark on the usefulness of comparative methodologies to deal with the borderless or border-crossing careers and practices of early film-making and in writing feminist transnational cinema history.

The final methodological challenge discussed in this chapter is the historiographical approach to cinema's medium specificity. The research of film-making practices in the 1920s, isolated from its relationship and transpositions with other entertainments, crafts, and mediums, compromises its relevance because a medium can only be understood in relation to others, as Gaudreault and Marion point out.[66] Also, this compromises its accuracy because during the first decades of the twentieth century until its systematization and institutionalization, cinema shared resources with other mediums: professionals, venues, audiences, and functions. In order to overcome this obstacle, I argue that, due to its historiographical characteristics and its connection with feminist studies, biography writing is particularly useful for recovering the names of women forgotten or overlooked by conventional history.[67]

Part II, titled ***'The 'careerographies': Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (1874–1945) and Helena Cortesina (1903–1984)'***, applies the above-described historiographical feminist film methods to the case studies of Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and Helena Cortesina to reconstruct both 'careerographies'. The narration follows a chronological order divided into three chapters in which their cinematographic projects as producers is highlighted as a turning point.

Their professional beginnings, in the Portuguese example as a pedagogic writer and theorist (from 1895 to 1915), and in the Spanish one as a dancer and actress on the popular stage (from 1916 to 1921), is described in **Chapter IV. 'Before cinema, the professional**

[64] Alonso García, 'De quimeras, engaños y pendencias', 279–288 and Soto-Vázquez, 'Extrañezas posibles', 85–93; and Talens and Zunzunegui, 'Introducción', 9–38.
[65] Gunning, 'Early Cinema as Global Cinema', 13.
[66] Gaudreault and Marion, 'The Cinema as a Model', 15.
[67] Burdiel and Foster, *La historia biográfica en Europa,* 12–13.

background'. It also contains some personal and family context that is necessary for understanding their personalities and the choices that brought them towards cinema.

After a comparison that draws a general picture of film production in the Iberian Peninsula during the 1920s in which Almeida and Cortesina worked and that shaped the resistance and opportunities they encountered, **Chapter V. 'Incursion in the new medium: the experience of cinema'** is devoted to their experiences in cinema pseudo-industries. It focuses on the period between 1920 and 1925, in which both created their production companies and worked as film-makers, premiering their films. Specifically, this section addresses Almeida's work as screenplay-writer for and producer of the films *A Sereia de Pedra* (1922) and *Os Olhos da Alma* (1923) and as the writer of the screenplay *Noblesse* (1923), a project that was never produced. It also tackles the work of Cortesina as the leading actress in *La inaccessible* (1920) and as the leading actress, producer, and co-director of *Flor de España* (1923).

Lastly, **Chapter VI. 'After cinema, still a long way'** explores their careers after the closure of their production houses, as both case studies continued making inroads in previous and new cultural industries until their death. In the case of Cortesina, whose career prior to exile was previously researched for my Master, the research of her later career in Buenos Aires is the most relevant due to the numerous original discoveries made. This simple structure of their trajectories presented in ***Part II*** allows us to glimpse the working conditions that led women into cinema and to sketch the line that linked all their professional steps, identifying the continuities and discontinuities, advances and regressions, of which life is often made up.

In addition, the research and analysis of the 'careerographies' allowed for comparison between them and with other Iberian cases in ***Part III, titled 'The Affective Familial Networks as a Springboard to Silent Cinema'***, which is divided into two chapters. **Chapter VII. 'The two models of Iberian women's access to silent cinema'** explores the motivations behind Almeida and Cortesina's desire to become film producers, as they came from very diverse mediums and artistic backgrounds. This comparison identifies two different paths of access, but also common aspects between the two women. The first similarity is that both were 'women of action' who were used to earning their living and constructing their own professional careers outside the domestic space and the traditional marriage.[68] And – more importantly – they did not see film-

[68] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida was described as a 'woman of action' in the press. Zappia, 'La ilustre

making as the final objective in their careers but as an instrumental step to attaining other aims in long intermedia careers. What did cinema have to offer a writer with pedagogic ambitions, such as Almeida, and a popular stage performer, such as Cortesina? Almeida's case opens the door for reflection on the relationship between Iberian intellectualism and cinema, and Cortesina's allows comparison of the social role and public personas of variety show, cinema, and theatre actresses in Iberian society of the 1920s. In addition, the models of access that each of them represents, although different from each other, exemplify two patterns that were replicated by other Iberian female film-makers.

In **Chapter VIII. 'The relational autonomy of the familial network'**, two kinds of matrilineal family structures (the 'mother of the artist' and 'lessons from the mother') are presented as the basis of female empowerment in the arts and as sources of independence that allowed Cortesina and Almeida, respectively, to step out of their expected social position and attempt a career in film-making. The central hypothesis is that both film-makers did not achieve that landmark alone. They were supported by a network of family and friends, inherited from pre-corporative systems within which women were able to take professional risks. The key aspect was to conceive the company as a domestic space in which the familiar dynamics of cooperation and mutual help were translated into a pseudo-industrial, non-regulated environment, as can be seen in the film-making of the early 1920s in the Iberian countries.

Familial enterprises disguised in domesticity and tradition provided a sphere in which women could develop interests in areas that were outside their usual spheres of action. Furthermore, affective and caring relationships among individuals and groups have been explored as topics worthy of scholarly attention and theorization, as the work of Claire Hemmings proves.[69] Also, the notion of 'relational autonomy' coined by Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, is fundamental for its rejection of self-sufficiency, individualism, and atomism as characteristics of the 'self-made man'.[70] In opposition, familial relationships and communitarian ties are highlighted as the motor for individual or collective action that greatly influences artistic and economic production and, more specifically, silent film production in the Iberian Peninsula.

Therefore, getting Almeida and Cortesina included in lists of female film-makers is not enough, nor the aim of this dissertation. The final objective is not exclusively to

escritora portuguesa', 1.

[69] Hemmings, 'Invoking affect': 549.

[70] Mackenzie and Stoljar, 'Introduction. Autonomy Refigured', 3–31.

vindicate their work, but to highlight the processes and routes of access to silent cinema that were available for women at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Iberian Peninsula. This approach allowed me to ask much more general questions about the role that women played in the societies in which they lived and the spaces and professional paths they opened for themselves and future generations of women. What attracted them to the cinematograph? What were they searching for? What did they obtain? These are three crucial questions that triggered my investigation, although, unfortunately, were too ambitious to be entirely answered in this dissertation leaving open doors for future research.

Part I. Historiographical, conceptual, and methodological challenges to researching women's access to silent cinema

Chapter I. Historiographical challenges

Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth identifies three ideas in her 'Manifesto for the Future of History' that are fundamental for the understanding of this dissertation:

> [F]irst, and most important, the idea that conventional historical explanation plays a significant role in the general sense of cultural failure; second, that changing definitions of knowledge offer new definitions of individuality and process and therefore new opportunities for historical writing that are not being pursued; and third, that in seeking remedy for our incapacity we must look to method, not information or data or 'facts' which, taken alone, can be worse than meaningless.[1]

For this dissertation, it would not be enough to discover facts about and disentangle the biographical accounts of two Iberian female film-makers, attending to the weight that women's experiences and paths place on film history. Therefore, it would be necessary that these women made their incursion into cinema with their trajectory paralleling that of men (meaning as credited directors, with individual authorial careers producing artistic and/or commercial movies) in order to enter into history. Any other way of accessing cinema or any other artistic career developed towards and around it would be measured against the male standard; therefore, it will be presented as 'the Other', coining the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's concept referring to women's experiences.[2] Those 'othered' realities (as men compel them to assume their status of 'the Other'),[3] compared to the neutral and universal male experience, would be obliged to accomplish certain expected milestones, or otherwise be considered unworthy of historical attention.

For that reason, I consider it necessary to analyse and evaluate the whole historiographic method to identify those aspects of it that challenge the appreciation and recognition of women's careers in cinema as being equally important as those of men, and not as anecdotical, even when they had less presence and measurable achievements in the Iberian context. As Joan W. Scott points out, when we study women's history and give them a separate treatment, it could serve 'to confirm their marginal and particularized

[1] Ermarth, 'The Closed Space of Choice', 50.
[2] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. Howard Madison Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), xxii.
[3] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, xxxv.

relationship to those (male) subjects already established as dominant and universal'.[4] Therefore, if we aim to make a change in history that could contemplate 'othered' experiences as being equally valuable, we must change the whole system of measurement. The same system that history, being a culturally located discourse, helps to construct and sustain, perpetuating the conventional methodology.

1.1 Reflections about conventional history and objectivity

As a discipline, history as a universal, neutral medium was institutionalized in the nineteenth century in the European academia.[5] It was based on 'laborious archival work ordered by conceptual frameworks'[6] and, to achieve the science status attributed to other social disciplines, historians aimed for total precision and objectivity. History was understood as all past events, and it was conceived as a reality waiting to be discovered and accurately described by the historian.[7] As Ermarth describes it, centuries of empiricism have founded the still-prevalent idea that 'historical writing is about the neutral discovery, collation and interpretation of evidence, information or facts'.[8] She continues, 'history in this expanded sense stands for everything that has ever happened and will ever happen, whether we know it or not, whether we record it or not', identifying an almost indistinguishable connection between the concept of history and time itself.[9]

Therefore, the paradigm of history was 'to make visible the invisible', and historians considered themselves notaries of the past.[10] With that objective in mind, they traditionally focused their research on written primary sources, looking for facts about political and economic issues. They dismissed particular and individual accounts (which were out of history's scope) and preferred the history of structures and forces that ordered public life and which should be disentangled and explained. Therefore, their duty was to track power and decision making in monarchical, governmental, military, and

[4] Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 3.
[5] Ermarth, 'The Closed Space of Choice', 55.
[6] Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class. Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 2.
[7] Jane Gaines argues that the popular understanding of history is almost synonymous with the past. Gaines, *Pink-Slipped*, 37.
[8] Ermarth, 'The Closed Space of Choice', 52.
[9] Ermarth, 'The Closed Space of Choice', 54.
[10] Talens and Zunzunegui, 'Introducción', 12.

ecclesiastical documents, rejecting social histories written about minor topics or private issues (such as women's issues), and therefore history as a discipline was constructed 'full of absences and silences'.[11] This kind of history would be named differently depending on its source and perspective, some options being 'positivist history' or 'conventional history'.[12]

In contrast to the scientific vision of history, later theories influenced by deconstructive perspectives have explored the artifice behind it. One of the seminal works in this area was Hayden White's *Metahistory*, partly responsible for the discursive turn of history, in which he defended historical work as being 'a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse'.[13] This means that historians use different linguistic strategies to achieve an 'explanatory effect'. As Donna Haraway poses:

> From this point of view, science – the real game in town – is rhetoric, a series of efforts to persuade relevant social actors that one's manufactured knowledge is a route to a desired form of very objective power. Such persuasions must take account of the structure of facts and artifacts, as well as of language-mediated actors in the knowledge game.[14]

Understanding Haraway's provocative comment as a threat to established disciplines, the importance of White's premise written in 1973 comes to light. It set the basis for a semiological study of historical discourse as for any other cultural artifact with a subjective intention and a construction that was dependent on the data extracted from the sources. This groundbreaking idea provides the tools for analysing and interpreting the historical discourse as a narration from different critical perspectives (such as postcolonial or feminist). White defines history-writing as a 'form of intellectual activity which is at once poetic, scientific, and philosophical in its concerns',[15] in opposition to those who reject the constructiveness and philosophical aspects and focus only on its

[11] Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class,* 1.

[12] Talens and Zunzunegui classified it as 'positivist history' (*historia positivista*), while Ermarth prefers to use the term 'conventional history' and defines it as the history that 'has generally operated according to certain rules and assumptions – that is, conventions'. Those conventions 'are limited to a period of roughly six centuries, between the Quattrocento and 1900, and to a mainly Eurocentric culture'. Ermarth, 'The Closed Space of Choice', 52.

[13] White, *Metahistory*, ix.

[14] Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges': 577.

[15] White, *Metahistory,* xii.

scientific nature to legitimate historical knowledge as factual, autonomous, objective, and neutral, instead of speculative.

White's deconstructive approach has had a long-lasting impact in the field and other historians have supported and contributed to his vision, with Scott's study of gender as a useful category of historical analysis being one of the most relevant. According to her definition, '[h]istory is in the paradoxical position of creating the objects it claims only to discover'.[16] With this assessment, Scott is not arguing that historians make things up but that their work is to construct them 'as legitimate and coherent objects of knowledge'. So, taking into account the criticism raised against 'conventional history', a deconstructive, counterhegemonic twenty-first-century vision on history must oppose the apparent coherence of its study object and be open to a certain degree of instability, ambiguity, and dependence.

1.2 Film history or cinema history

Film history is one of the few histories written simultaneously as the art/industry itself was being developed.[17] Documented by written and visual sources, film historians have had the privilege of easily finding filmed material, used technology, photographs, periodical publications, and detailed documentation with personal testimonies from people involved in cinema's development. Although this can be seen as an advantage, it can also be considered a problem. The lack of distance to the case study and the excess of sources posed conceptual, methodological, and ethical questions for film historians and made even more evident the subjective dimension of film history's construction as a discipline. Despite twentieth-century history being written with its back towards cinema, both are intertwined inseparably.[18]

Following the logic of modernity, cinema changed very fast, taking different routes and pursuing different objectives, and, therefore, several parallel histories could be written at the same time. For that reason, film historians such as Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery in the United States, Michèle Lagny in France, and Jenaro Talens and

[16] Joan W. Scott, 'After History?', in *The Nature of History Reader*, ed. Keith Jenkins and Alan Munslow (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 260.
[17] Román Gubern, *Historia del cine* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2016), 10-11.
[18] Maltby, 'Writing Cinema History from Below': 81.

Santos Zunzunegui in Spain,[19] among many others, have reflected on the fabrication of the histories of cinema (some of them written before the art itself turned even half a century old). Early historians' objective was to measure, analyse, capture and debate the influence and impact of an uncertain medium that was in an endless definition of its aesthetics, uses, technologies, periods, industrial practices, professional conditions, and so on. For that reason, film history lacked the time and distance of maturation, and it must be revised from different perspectives to deal with the above-mentioned 'silences and absences' that, according to Hall, are intrinsic to history as a discipline and to cinema history in particular.[20]

After a period of continuist tendency in the Iberian historiography until the 1990s, recent accounts on cinema histories identify those gaps and absences, and point out the necessity to distance themselves from the previous positivist accounts returning directly to the sources. It is remarkable that, coincidentally, 1949 was the year in which the first efforts were made to write the histories of the national cinemas in Spain and Portugal.[21] The initial Spanish cinema histories were named 'specular or Stendhalian histories' by Talens and Zunzunegui.[22] These authors identify some common characteristics, such as the historian's general lack of historiographic methodology, apart from the authority given by being close to the reported events. Film historians also had chronology and linearity as principles with globalizing and legitimizing pretensions. For that reason, they tended to write narration based on first times, canonical masterpieces, decisive moments, national heroes, and new practices.[23] According to Paulo Cunha, this was also the case in Portugal, where the first film histories were written not by external witnesses but by decision-makers involved in the events as they were occurring.[24] The result was that they

[19] See Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1985); Michèle Lagny, *De l'histoire du cinéma. Méthode historique et histoire du cinéma* (Paris: A. Colin, 1992); Jenaro Talens and Santos Zunzunegui (eds.), *Historia general del cine, vol. I, Orígenes del cine* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1998).

[20] Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class,* 1.

[21] Cabero, *Historia de la Cinematografía Española*; Fernando Fragoso and Raúl Faria da Fonseca (eds.), *A Maravilhosa História da Arte das Imagens, 1895–1939* (Lisbon: Aladino Estúdios Gráficos, 1949).

[22] Talens and Zunzunegui, 'Introducción', 25–26.

[23] Some examples of this initial historiographic writing in Spain would be Juan Antonio Cabero (Huesca, 1890 –Madrid, 1964), the cinematographic journalist and film director who wrote *Historia de la Cinematografía Española, 1896–1949*, and Fernando Méndez-Leite (Porto, 1905 – Madrid, 1986), film critic and historian, founder of the journal *Cinema* in 1931. He also wrote *Historia del Cine Español* (Madrid: Rialp, 1965). However, it was in the 1990s when a more modern and scientific approach was taken in Román Gubern, et al., *Historia del cine español* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2010).

[24] Some examples would be M. Félix Ribeiro (Estremoz, 1906 – Lisbon, 1982) and João Bénard da Costa

transformed their personal vision into the official versions. Therefore, Cunha argues that, nowadays, Portuguese historiographic practice must be problematized and updated, taking into consideration new recovered sources and testimonies that imply unprecedented appraisals of the objects and that 'deal with contextual aspects that have been considered rarely or not at all'.[25] Some examples of the efforts to rewrite Portuguese cinema history from a less conventional perspective are the volumes by Leonor Areal Calvet and Tiago Baptista.[26] The same has happened in the Spanish context, where Emeterio Díez Puertas, Joan M. Minguet Batllori, and Vicente Benet have felt the need to rewrite cinema history from a cultural and social perspective.[27]

1.3 'New cinema histories from below'

Familiarization with the discipline's legitimization efforts as a 'serious business' is essential for developing a later analysis of the methods and concepts from an alternative perspective. Critical movements such as feminism or postcolonialism have things in common, among other aspects the necessity to create new historiographical tools and concepts to support their political agenda, in order to be able to name, analyse, and understand the ideological problems they are dealing with and find proper solutions in the exercise of writing or rewriting film history. In that sense, the scholar Kay Armatage

(Lisbon, 1935–2009). Paulo Cunha describes the first as the 'cronista cinematográfico oficial do reino' (official cinematographic historian of the Kingdom) being director of Cinemateca Nacional Portuguesa and part of the generation that followed António Ferro's project of refounding Portuguese cinema together with António Lopes Ribeiro, Leitão de Barros, Jorge Brum do Canto, and the journalists Domingos Mascarenhas and Fernando Fragoso. Cunha, 'História das histórias do cinema português': 37–38. João Bénard da Costa was a cinema teacher and curator, as well as the director of Cinemateca Portuguesa. Some of his more historical works were written in the 1990s: *Histórias do Cinema Português* (1991) and *O Cinema Português nunca existiu* (1996). Even though his work lacks academicism and is too memorialist and cinephile, his impact on cinematographic culture is still very relevant, as proved by the recent edition of four volumes (out of six) of his life-writings about cinema by the Cinemateca Portuguesa. Teresa Barreto Borges (ed.), *João Bénard da Costa. Escritos sobre cinema* (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa-Museu do Cinema, 2019).

[25] Cunha, 'História das histórias do cinema português': 43. '[a]tendendo a diversos fatores contextuais até aqui pouco ou nada considerados'.

[26] Leonor Calvet Areal narrates how the history of Portugal would be perceived only by looking at its films from the 1950s until 1990 in *Cinema Português. Um país imaginado,* vols. 1 and 2 (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2011), and Tiago Baptista states that Portuguese cinema was not alone in being historically focused on its national identity in *A Invenção do Cinema Português* (2008).

[27] Emeterio Díez Puertas, *Historia social del cine en España* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 2003), Minguet Batllori, *Paisaje(s) del cine mudo en España* (2008) and Vicente Benet, *El cine español* (2012).

established three means of research from a feminist perspective: archival/historical, analytical, and critical/theoretical elements.

> [T]he feminist film enterprise must be a three-pronged initiative. It must include an archival and historical element – the recovery of lost women filmmakers whose work had been overlooked in mainstream film history, and the continuing documentation of the work of contemporary women filmmakers as they emerged. Second, it must be analytical, providing an analysis of films made by women (at the time, we wondered whether certain themes, patterns, commonalities might emerge), and particularly of feminist films. Finally, it must include the critical/theoretical – that is, the development of appropriate theory to deal with women's films.[28]

In addition to what Armatage pointed out, during the 1970s and 80s feminist film theory had mainly studied the interpretation of film materials and had rediscovered 'meaning' from the point of view of structuralism and psychoanalytic theory, for example with the publication of one of the introductory essays on feminist film theory: Laura Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'.[29] This seminal work, published in the British journal *Screen* in 1975, prompted a new range of theoretical articles on film that reflected on spectator reception and women's representation on screen by taking a psychoanalytical approach. However, contemporary film history scholars of the late 1970s – labelled 'new film history' – were still battling cinephile and memorialist narratives of cinema that lacked the most basic historiographical practices, such as going back to primary sources and referencing them.[30] Richard Maltby attributes to that 'new film history' almost the same needs that Armatage pointed out for the critical perspective of feminist cinema. Maltby also presents three objectives:

> [t]o revise and correct the existing, under-researched histories that represented the available overviews of the period; to develop a film history that adhered more closely to the established protocols of academic historiography; and to provide an alternative mode of study to the dominant practices of textual interpretation, borrowed in the main

[28] Armatage, *The Girl from God's Country*, 5.
[29] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 833–844.
[30] Maltby, 'Writing Cinema History from Below': 75–76.

> from literary criticism and inflected with the concerns of semiotic, structuralist and psychoanalytic theories.[31]

While, as stated above, film theory – feminist or not – engaged intensely with structuralism and post-structuralism, film history, with its more practical concerns, did not follow along and, according to Maltby, it remained closely attached to the final products: the films. The result was to shrink all the potential of cinema history into a narrower version corresponding to 'the history of textual relations and stylistic influence' that borrowed 'its methods and rationale from the practices of art and literary history'.[32] The author points out that film history focused predominantly on individual producers, paying little interest to anything else – other than influence – that happened 'after the point of production'.[33] This historiographical trend had the collateral effect of leaving much of silent cinema history aside as the text-centred approaches considered it to be primitive in its form.[34] Also, the fact that only few movies from that period were preserved, catalogued, and made accessible for researchers did not make it an appealing subject for study.

Therefore, the historical/archival element referred to by Armatage of confronting cinema history by inserting the names of female film-makers into their rightful places has not yet been completely undertaken by feminist historians. Anthony Slide, in his 1997 book *Early Women Directors*, one of the firsts monographic work about the female role in silent cinema, had already criticized feminist theorists, suggesting that they had not paid enough attention to the silent period because for them '[i]t was far easier to protest about discrimination against women than to accept that there were more women directors at work in the American film industry prior to 1920, than during any period of its history'.[35] Disregarding the dismissive tone of the quote, it was confirmed that the 'historical turn' of film and media studies only arrived around the 1980s, with the inauguration of the 'new film history'.[36]

The feminist film historian Jane Gaines agrees with Slide's criticism of feminist theorists' victimization, because during the silent cinema period in the U.S. (until 1925,

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[31] Maltby, 'Writing Cinema History from Below': 76.
[32] Maltby, 'Writing Cinema History from Below': 83.
[33] Maltby, 'Writing Cinema History from Below': 83.
[34] Noël Burch, 'A Primitive Mode of Representation?', in *Life to Those Shadows*, trans. and ed. Ben Brewster (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 186–201.
[35] Anthony Slide, *Early Women Directors* (South Brunswick, NJ: A.S. Barnes, 1977), 9.
[36] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped*, 4.

more or less when they were expelled from the industry) they had a prominent place. According to her, scholars failed in imagining the 'unthinkable' as they assumed the inexistence of women in the past by looking at their situation in the 1970s and 80s.[37] Therefore, they did not pay enough attention to silent cinema and its archives until more than one decade later, around the beginning of the millennium. For that reason, the first *Women and the Silent Screen* Conference at the University of Utrecht (Netherlands) in 1999 was a milestone for creating a network that provided the groundwork for the multiplication of publications, theses, and studies considering women's position and access to silent cinema. As Radha Vatsal described soon after, 'we are now witnessing an era of academic film feminism actively engaged with historiographic materials and methods'.[38] Nowadays, film historiography has advanced the recovery of previously forgotten female names and works and made them known to the public. However, it is still dealing with important challenges related to not only conceptual and theoretical issues, but also methodological ones in the pursuit of renaming and reconceptualizing institutionalized film history.

In contrast to the 'new film history' that was focused on building the essential historiographical ground based on films, since 2005 there has been a shift in cinema history which has distanced itself from text-based research and has introduced theories, concepts, and methods from diverse disciplines. This trend has been named 'new cinema history'. Exhibition and reception have been two of the main poles of attention of this new tendency.[39] According to Maltby, 'new cinema history' advocates 'the development of histories of cinema that place audiences, rather than films, at their center, and integrate the quantitative methods of social history with the concrete and particular conditions of experience that are the predominant concern of microhistory'.[40] This trend in 'new cinema history' has connected closely with silent film researchers, as circulation and reception, as well as broader accounts on modernity, have been aspects in which they had engaged before.[41]

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[37] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped*, 196–197.
[38] Vatsal, 'Reevaluating Footnotes', 119.
[39] Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers, 'New Cinema History and the Comparative Mode: Reflections on Comparing Historical Cinema Cultures', *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, issue 11 (Summer 2016): 13.
[40] Maltby, 'Writing Cinema History from Below': 74.
[41] Thissen, 'Cinema History as Social History, 124.

In addition, this shift towards microhistory has been a general historiographic tendency since the 1960s (although, as we have seen, it did not affect cinema history until almost three decades later). Making history out of fragmented pieces of sources and paying attention to the individual rather than the collective has been denominated 'history from below' or 'new historicism'.[42] This concept applies to the history of those considered unworthy of getting into the hegemonic history for class, gender, sexuality, or ethnic reasons, among others. As Vivian Sobchack describes it:

> Grand, coherent, and evolutionary narratives have given way to local and micro histories – and the gaps and ruptures in our knowledge of the past are foregrounded rather than smoothed over (...). [F]ocus has shifted from the much-noted deeds of elite and prominent white men to the less-documented actions and accomplishments of those previously marginalized in historical inquiry. (...) [H]istory has lost its stability as the grounded site upon which knowledge of the past is accumulated, coherently ordered, and legitimated; rather, it has become an unstable site in which fragments of past representations do not necessarily 'add up' or cohere but, instead, are subject to 'undisciplined' (and often 'undisciplining') contestation and use.[43]

Being outside the 'elite and prominent white men' and telling counter-histories that recognize and comment on women's experiences that the single universal history has denied, 'history from below' confronts it and focuses on experiences based on the unique, the particular, and the individual.[44] Therefore, the fragmented narration of alternative histories and the patterning of time subvert the linear structure of the hegemonic institutional history and connect the individual with the collective.

Maltby suggests that applying this 'history from below' to the cinema, among other benefits, would result in an impulse towards a more socio-cultural history – rather than an aesthetic history based on textual analysis – with the effect of mattering more to general history and not being relegated to footnotes.[45] Also, acknowledging the constructionism of history and focusing on anonymous or marginalized individuals rather than important subjects (usually white male so-called geniuses or pioneers), or the

[42] On the characteristics of the 'history from below', see Maltby, 'Writing Cinema History from Below': 86 and on the characteristics of the 'new historicism', see Jaimie Baron, 'Contemporary Documentary Film and "Archive Fever": History, the Fragment, the Joke', *Velvet Light Trap*, n. 60 (2007): 15.
[43] Vivian Sobchack, 'What Is Film History? Or the Riddle of the Sphinxes', *Spectator* 20, n. 1 (Fall 1990/Winter 2000): 9.
[44] Baron, 'Contemporary Documentary Film': 15.
[45] Maltby, 'Writing Cinema History from Below': 85.

concrete rather than the abstract, will provide more significant insights into what cinema meant to most of the people who experienced it during the twentieth century, in the case of this dissertation, as film-makers.

1.4 Locus of speech

As Monica Dall'Asta and Jane Gaines have pointed out, White's metahistorical approach 'that argues that history employs fictional devices' also presents problems.[46] For instance, it can lead to a dangerous relativism that can be very convenient for those in power as it puts into doubt inconvenient historical narratives as being 'made up'. For that reason, and like Dall'Asta and Gaines, in this study I will adopt a critical-historical approach that, at the same time that it rejects the objectivity and hidden construction of traditional history, still believes in and supports itself with archival pieces of evidence, escapes from easy, simplified Manichaean answers, and distinguishes between 'ideological constructions and reliable accounts'.[47] Also, I have adopted some characteristics related to 'new cinema history' and the 'history from below' in my research that I have merged in the previous section's name: 'new cinema histories from below'. For that reason, I have used a comparative methodology for under-researched individual histories in order to speculate about what ways these people used to access film-making, what opportunities and appeal cinema presented to women in the Iberian Peninsula during the 1920s, and what role it played in their careers.

Gaines also proposes tentative and non-authoritative writing in which historians could make the inner gears of history-making visible and show their weaknesses and doubt. She asks herself 'whether it is possible for academics to write less knowingly when they are trained to write more knowingly'.[48] Although there is the risk of breaking the historical narrative and the illusion of an unmediated contact with reality, it would be more honest and would help to construct further knowledge if others were allowed to follow the flow of thought and get to know academics' epistemological base.

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[46] Monica Dall'Asta and Jane M. Gaines, 'Prologue. Constellations: Past Meets Present in Feminist Film History', in *Doing Women's Film History. Reframing Cinemas, Past and Future*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Julia Knight (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 16.
[47] Dall'Asta and Gaines, 'Prologue. Constellations', 17.
[48] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped,* 5.

This position is especially relevant in critical studies such as feminist studies and postcolonial studies, which, in order to produce different results and reach different layers of knowledge, must explore alternative methodological and conceptual paths. As Audrey Lorde argues, 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house', meaning that if we examine reality following the same conventional institutionalized methodologies and theoretical frames than usually, then only 'the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable'.[49] In this sense, Haraway proposes another account of a feminist scientific method that, instead of obscuring the scholar's presence as a godlike discourse-maker, goes for a different discourse based on the location and openness of their explicit ideological position. Haraway denominates this exercise as 'situated knowledge':

> All Western cultural narratives about objectivity are allegories of the ideologies governing the relations of what we call mind and body, distance and responsibility. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object.[50]

Although Haraway's concept of 'situated knowledge' has been one of the most popularized ones, she was not the first, nor the only one to conceptualize this approach. Djamila Ribeiro has also theorized about the concept of '*lugar de fala*' (locus of speech), a derivation of feminist standpoint theory enriched with a postcolonial reading.[51] Ribeiro calls attention to the responsibility of scholars to acknowledge the multifaceted embodied identities from which they enounce their speech. In this sense, agents should identify the different axis that crosses them and locate them at the 'matrix of domination'.[52] Also, they must refuse the existence of epistemological neutrality or universal perspective and recognize the sources of power that allow them to be in the (un-)privileged position of those who are or are not allowed to make their speech heard.[53] Here, the Foucauldian definition of discourse is central. As it is understood by Foucault, 'discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and

[49] Audre Lorde, 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House', in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (CA: Ed. Berkeley, 2007), 110–114.
[50] Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', 583.
[51] Ribeiro, *O que é lugar de fala?*, 58.
[52] 'The term *matrix of domination* describes this overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained.' Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 227–228.
[53] For more on recognized locus of speech and power positions of enunciation, see Gayatry Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader,* ed. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams (New York and Sydney: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 66–111.

by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized'.[54] Therefore, from a structuralist perspective adapted by postcolonial studies, the owner of the language would be the holder of the power of defining, conceptualizing, and cataloguing the experiences of human beings.

One crucial difference between the concepts of 'situated knowledge' and 'locus of speech' is that, even though neither of them refer to isolated individuals, the first refers to communities while the second one refers to groups.[55] The difference in definition of these terms has to do with the agency of the individual to join one or the other. It seems that when Haraway uses the concept of community, she is thinking about a more or less negotiated, free self-definition chosen for its approach to ideology or upbringing (for example, a feminist community or a political conviction).[56] However, Ribeiro's idea of the group is an heiress of the 'feminist standpoint' theory defended, among others, by Patricia Hill Collins as 'historically shared, group-based experiences'.[57] A group is not self-defined and cannot be chosen. It is given to the individual by the structures of power (for example, being assigned to one ethnic group or another, one gender or another) without the individual having any choice in the matter).

> It is common location within hierarchical power relations that creates groups, not the results of collective decision making of the individuals within the groups. Race, gender, social class, ethnicity, age, and sexuality are not descriptive categories of identity applied to individuals. Instead, these elements of social structure emerge as fundamental devices that foster inequality resulting in groups.[58]

Therefore, according to Collins compulsory not-elected identity would locate people in different intersectional groups that would define their life options and privileges. In addition, Ribeiro argues that even when people coming from privileged groups are conscious of their advantages, they cannot avoid benefiting structurally from the oppressions inflicted on other groups, as they enjoy a legitimization of existence and a

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[54] Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse', in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston, MA, London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 52–53.
[55] 'Situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals.' Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', 590. 'Não se trataria de afirmar as experiências individuais, mas de entender como o lugar social que certos grupos ocupam restringem oportunidades.' Ribeiro, *O que é lugar de fala?*, 61.
[56] Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', 590.
[57] Patricia Hill Collins, 'Comment on Hekman's "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited": Where's the Power?', *Signs* 22, n. 2 (Winter 1997): 375.
[58] Collins, 'Comment on Hekman': 376.

voice that is refused to the others.[59] A second difference is that Haraway still believes in the possibility of feminist locatable objectivity, while from Ribeiro's point of view objectivity is impossible.[60]

In any case, these different academic approaches would argue for a similar result: the need for scholars to take responsibility for their own partial discourse and, therefore, relocating hypotheses and conclusions that would allow the possibility of inquiry and criticism. This openness would also allow more dialogical and conversational ways of producing knowledge inside academia, instead of more closed, obscured acts of faith that lead to competition and conflict between schools of thought, theories, and disciplines. For that reason, I intend to write from an open 'locus of speech' perspective and verbalize the privileges that I enjoy as a white Iberian researcher following the genealogy of other Western feminist and film studies academics. I will also state the challenges that I faced in the pursuit of researching and writing my dissertation on women's access to silent cinema in Portugal and Spain.

[59] Ribeiro, *O que é lugar de fala?*, 68.
[60] Ribeiro, *O que é lugar de fala?*, 95.

Chapter II. Conceptual challenges

2.1 The category of film 'authorship'

One of the main challenges to acknowledging and crediting women's contribution to film history is the seemingly indivisible link between the role of the director and the concept of author. As Linda Nochlin described in her controversial 1971 article 'Why Have There Been No Great Female Artists?': '[u]nderlying the question about woman as artist, then, we find the myth of the Great Artist – subject of a hundred monographs, unique, godlike – bearing within his person since birth a mysterious essence (…) called Genius or Talent'.[1] In that sense, film history inherited the art history model in which critics and historians design and study a canonical list of masterpieces and movements created by male 'geniuses'. The main part of film scholars, film criticism, and cinephilia has supported an authorial vision of film history that values the director's role over that of the rest of the crew in a male-dominant system.

Although literary history was not a model of imitation for Western film historians, they adopted a classical concept of 'author' being both individual and 'the signifier of originality, authority and ownership', as Shelley Cobb accurately defines it.[2] In this sense, for film historiography the director could be compared to the solitary writer who, according to the ideal image of the literary author, transmits his confidences, his personality, his history, his passions to the blank paper or, in this case, to the raw film. As Roland Barthes explains it, the author, in which 'contemporary culture is tyrannically centered', is a product of modernity and capitalism which 'emerged from the Middle Ages, inflected by English empiricism, French rationalism, and the personal faith of the Reformation, thereby discovering the prestige of the individual'.[3] Therefore, adopting this perspective, the critic's task in explaining the oeuvre (the film) would be to discover the author's (directorial) voice behind the work.[4]

Focusing on the author/director, film history excluded a more collective authority following the example of theatre (whose authorial credit is usually shared among play-

[1] Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', *Art News 69* (January 1971), reprinted in *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 153.
[2] Shelley Cobb, 'Film Authorship and Adaptation', in *A Companion to Literature, Film, and Adaptation*, ed. Deborah Cartmell (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 112.
[3] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', 49–50.
[4] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', 50, 53.

writers, scene directors, and actors). Moreover, one of the primary purposes of adopting the 'auteur theory' of film history proposed by the *Nouvelle Vague* critics was to get rid of the 'minor art complex', thus establishing a truly cinematographic culture based on a loyal cinephilia. As Geneviève Sellier explains, the cinephile approach was born in France in the 1920s 'as a cultivated look at cinema that, at the time, was still a popular entertainment despised by the elites'.[5] The main aim of this strategy was to upgrade film studies in academia and legitimate its comparison to literary or artistic disciplines.

One of the leading promoters was the film critic and film-maker Louis Delluc, who from the beginning established a gendered difference between American cinema, considered masculine, and the European artistic tradition, judged effeminate. According to Sellier, Delluc 'constructs an equivalence between beauty, virility and abstraction on one side and ugliness, sentimentality and femininity on the other'.[6] For that reason, Nochlin's description of 'the entire romantic, elitist, individual-glorifying and monograph-producing substructure upon which the profession of art history is based'[7] presents several problems to feminist historiography, and even more to silent cinema history.

Although feminist studies scholars were neither the first nor the only ones to reject the 'authorship' concept as applied to film-making, their rejection (mainly and firstly from French academia, but not only) was based on the patriarchal connotation of the term. Part of feminist criticism has vindicated film-making as a collective artistic work and has contributed to the discussion to provide another vision of the production of films, rejecting the role of the white heterosexual male genius and valuing the other professions involved in the process. As Gaines points out: 'there might have been different notions of "maker" preexisting the classic directorial role that would be worth our while to study as feminists'.[8]

Meanwhile, feminists from the Anglo-Saxon sphere (primarily from the United States) considered the study of female authorship fundamental for bringing women's works into the limelight. They argued that deconstructing the concept of authorship in a

[5] Sellier, '*Gender studies* et études filmiques': 64: 'La cinéphilie se construit en France dès les années vingt (...) comme un regard cultivé sur le cinéma qui, à l'époque, est encore un divertissement populaire méprisé par les élites.'
[6] Sellier, '*Gender studies* et études filmiques': 64–65: 'Delluc construit une équivalence entre beauté, virilité et abstraction d'un côté et laideur, sentimentalité et féminité de l'autre.'
[7] Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', 153.
[8] Gaines, 'Of Cabbages and Authors', 90.

moment of discovery of films that were incorrectly credited to male directors would be counter-productive for recognizing women's rightful role in the emergence of cinema. Judith Mayne explains the controversy in opinions among the feminist perspectives towards authorship as:

> The position usually described as 'American' – and therefore empirical and historical – would claim female authorship as basic to the goals of a feminist appropriation of (cinematic) culture, and the position described as 'French' – theoretical and deconstructive – would find 'authorship' and 'appropriation' equally complicit in their mimicry of patriarchal definitions of self, expression, and representation.[9]

However, contemporary scholars from the United States, like Gaines, have become fundamental voices in defending (in an even more radical way) the impossibility of ascribing film authorship to the director: 'more interesting than the equation between author and text is their inequivalence, or, rather, the impossibility of equivalency produced by the layers of intervention and entwinement, both human and mechanical'.[10] Referring to film's layers of intervention enables the understanding of film as a palimpsest and is in line with Barthes' reflection on the death of the author, as he identified the reader as the collector of the different superimposed layers of writing.[11] Regarding cinema, the spectator is the decoder of the levels of meaning contained in a moving picture in which all elements, such as the star-system or genre, count. As Gaines noted, the widespread belief that there existed a directorial 'trace' in the film has eclipsed important aspects such as audience reception and technical advances. This idea stays at the core of the auteur theory, which relies on the concept that there is an atemporal beauty in the film that transcends its socio-historical context of production.[12] This abstract cinematographic essence is a product of the style and genius of its (male) director. As Sellier observes, this notion, reinforced by the *Nouvelle Vague* critics of the 1950s, followed the Christian, bourgeois, and masculine cinephile heritage.

The authorial perspective has produced tangible results for film studies for decades and it is fundamental to our understanding of the art system nowadays, but it has also suppressed relevant possibilities and has produced some deceptive conclusions. For

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[9] Judith Mayne, *The Woman and the Keyhole. Feminism and Women's Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 95.
[10] Gaines, 'Of Cabbages and Authors', 111.
[11] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', 54.
[12] Sellier, '*Gender studies* et études filmiques': 67.

example, it has concealed collaborative work and has left many names in obscurity behind the director's profession. According to 'the film-maker theory', which extends the authorial vision to cover not only the director, but everyone involved in the film-making process, the auteur theory approaches film 'in a distant way from the material conditions in which it was produced and without considering the film-makers' statements'.[13] However, contemporary trends in authorial studies have complexified the notion of author and have added edges to its perception as an individual creator to make it a 'textual and historical product' resulting from socio-cultural trends and which is part of the layers of meaning of the cultural products system, be it literary, filmic, painting, and so on.[14]

In any case, as Minguet Batllori points out, neither 'the auteur theory' nor 'the film-maker theory' applies to the origins of cinema, which he defines as the period of implantation of the new phenomenon into the leisure system of Western capitalist societies.[15] Attending to the particularities of the silent period, few films produced and screened have survived to the present day. For that reason, researchers cannot rely on textual or formal analysis of these films as we will further develop in Chapter III, section 3.1. Furthermore, what attracted the early twentieth-century spectators to cinema was not the names of the director, producer, or actors, nor even the narration, but the whole spectacle and experience of going to the movies.

By the early 1920s, when Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and Helena Cortesina entered cinema, it was in an early process of formal institutionalization, industrial professionalization and cinephile formation in Portugal and Spain and behind the camera routines of film-makers and stars were already gaining public attention.[16] Nevertheless, the distribution of tasks between the different elements of the artistic and technical crews was not yet well established and, therefore, attributing authorship to the director might be misleading. Unravelling who was responsible for what and what part each professional played in the decision-making process becomes an almost impossible task for the

[13] André Rui Graça, Eduardo Baggio, and Manuela Penafria, 'Teoria dos Cineastas: uma abordagem para o estudo do cinema', *Aniki* 7, n. 2 (2020): 67: 'Ler os filmes (ou as obras fílmicas) de forma distante das condições materiais em que foram produzidos, ou sem levar em linha de conta as afirmações dos cineastas.'

[14] Aina Pérez Fontdevila and Meri Torras Francès, 'La autoría a debate: textualizaciones del cuerpo-corpus (una introducción teórica)', *Tropelías. Revista de Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada* 24 (2015): 3.

[15] Minguet Batllori, *Paisaje(s) del cine mudo en España*, 14.

[16] Eva Woods Peiró, 'Acting for the camera in Spanish film magazines of the 1920s and 1930s', in *Performance and Spanish Film*, ed. Dean Allbritton, Alejandro Melero and Tom Whittaker (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2016), 18.

researcher. Moreover, when the production system and the division of roles in Hollywood, the most well-documented industry, do not apply to every cinematography (mainly those that did not achieve the same industrial development as the Portuguese and Spanish ones). In crediting silent films following today's logic, scholars risk relying on a simplified and anachronistic explanation. In this sense, simplifying instead of problematizing the authorship is a shortcut that removes the importance and complexity of the studied period leading to a globally uniformed and standardized cinema history.

Daring to establish an odd parallel, we could call this period of film-making in the Iberian Peninsula the 'Do It Yourself' period. Similar to the contemporary cultural and political movements, this early period of film-making had different 'dynamics of property, distribution, and circulation of knowledge in opposition to the commercialized version of copyright'.[17] In this sense, it is essential to note the contradiction with Foucault's definition of the author as a coactive figure that delimitates and privatizes the infinite potential of fiction: 'since the eighteenth century, the author has played the role of the regulator of the fictive, a role quite characteristic of our era of industrial and bourgeois society, of individualism and private property'.[18] Foucault explains that the notion of author emerged 'as a privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, and literature, or in the history of philosophy and science'. Even now, the role of the author in literary (and film) studies plays a fundamental role in the 'the history of a concept, a literary genre, or school of philosophy'.[19]

In this way, the notion of the author can be linked to industrialism, modernization, and capitalism in the sense that it regulates and delimits the property over the work (fictional or not). Applying this concept to moving images, we could establish some parallelism with the process of definition, systematization, privatization, and regulation of films that occurred during the late 1910s – early 1920s in the Iberian countries and the moment in which the lack of distinction between the professions and the attribution of duties ended.[20] It would be illusory to think that killing off the role of the author/director would recover the freedom of early moving images since other private property regulatory

[17] Laura López Casado, 'Embodied authorship in feminist and queer zines in the Iberian Peninsula', in *Independent DIY Publications and the Underground Urban Cultures*, ed. Paula Guerra and Pedro Quintela (Porto: University of Porto, 2021), 189.
[18] Foucault, 'What Is an Author?', 222.
[19] Foucault, 'What Is an Author?', 205.
[20] This topic will be further discussed in Chapter V, section 5.1 and in Chapter VIII, section 8.7.

systems would substitute it to guide, control, delimitate, and economize the consumption of audiovisual discourses.

As Aína Pérez Fontdevila and Meri Torras Francès note, the author must leave aside their real human nature to perform as an actor on the authorial artistic or literary stage, and they must relate ('adopting, negotiating or subverting') to the diverse authorial figures that precede them in the Western culture.[21] The author, then, becomes a disembodied figure linked to the platonic, Cartesian tradition and must conform to artistic and social values such as 'individuality (vs. collectivity), autonomy (vs. dependency), solitude and singularity (vs. community), originality (vs. repetition or reproduction) or interiority (vs. body)' that are supposed to be compulsory prerequisites for artistic creation. Therefore, according to Pérez Fontdevila and Torras Francès, 'the work produced by subjects associated to the body (as those marked by its gender or ethnia)' is dismissed in the artistic environment for carrying the corporal experience of its creator. As a result, their work, considered partial, specific, and subjective, 'is read as a sample of the experience of the collective' instead of being part of the supposed universal humanism of the arts. This is the reason why the work produced by certain people is always branded as different to the norm: women's cinema, Latin film-maker, African-American director, and so on.

Initially, the aim of some feminist perspectives was finding 'forgotten or obscured' women and reconstructing their careers in order to recover their names and 'expand the canon', but without a real problematization of the existence of the canon itself.[22] Female names are still studied using the structure that they critique, putting film directors and creative authorial positions above the rest of the crew. According to Harold Bloom, author of *The Western Canon,* the selection process to enter the canon is not based on quality and originality anymore but on 'social harmony and the remedying of historical

[21] Pérez Fontdevila and Torras Francès, 'La autoría a debate', 9: 'podemos considerar las diversas figuras autoriales que los candidatos a autor deben encarnar (adoptándolas, negociándolas o subvirtiéndolas) como entramados normativos (...) puede trazarse una correspondencia entre la construcción del sujeto descorporeizado vinculado a la tradición platónica y cartesiana y la individualidad (vs. la colectividad), la autonomía (vs. la dependencia o la sujeción), la soledad y la singularidad (vs. la comunidad), la originalidad (vs. la repetición o la reproducción) o la interioridad (vs. el cuerpo) que se conciben como condiciones, definiciones u orígenes necesarios de la creación artística (Schaeffer, 1997). Frente a éstos, la obra producida por sujetos asociados con el cuerpo (por ejemplo, aquellos marcados por el género o la etnia), (...) es leída como una muestra de la experiencia del colectivo al que pertenece (frente a la pretendida universalidad de lo literario, representativo de lo humano).'

[22] Almost all authorial works about Alice Guy and Lois Weber follow this tendency. For example, see Alison McMahan, *Alice Guy-Blaché: Lost Visionary of the Cinema* (New York: Continuum, 2002).

injustice'.[23] The canon must always be composed of a limited number of authors and oeuvres, and, therefore, it requires a selection to be made. For the canon to be institutionalized and recognized as such, it must be authorized from a position of power, even if the institution behind it shifts over time.

While some women's names might be inscribed, some others would be left out, and the circle of subjective discrimination dominated by elitist institutions to justify their own existence would begin all over again. Moreover, people outside the Western white male heterosexual normative classification could never have a real space inside it, even after their work had been discovered and their names brought to light. They would always be 'the Other'. Quoting Griselda Pollock in her book *Vision and Difference*:

> Token women are merely offered for re-introduction into a canon, whose own construction by expulsion on the grounds of the sex of the artist renders that canon already a gendered and gendering discourse and thus will always position artists who are women as marked, othered, as women artists.[24]

Inserting female directors' names into the canon, which is based on an exclusive capitalist male dominance system, cannot be the solution to the appreciation of women's work during the silent period from a feminist point of view. A critical stance opposing the partiality and inequality in the subjects of history must entail a complete logic apart from the canon. For that reason, the aim of this research (being proudly part of the School of Resentment production, as Bloom named the works coming from feminist criticism, among others) is not to subvert the canon by substituting some people for others in the name of social justice, but to appreciate the existence of the canon and the authors/directors who compose it as the core of a different tradition with its own political agenda and live in its margins.[25]

In addition, feminist film historiography has advocated for a paradigmatic conceptual shift in which a film's director is no longer the centre of the research. The

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[23] Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon. The Books and School of the Ages* (New York, San Diego, and London: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994), 7. Although I disagree that the previous system of canonization was guided only by an aesthetical sensibility over material, social, and cultural circumstances, I agree with him that the infinite 'expansion of the Canon' could mean 'the destruction of the Canon' (although I am not convinced that this shift has already happened because the canon remains relevant nowadays).

[24] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference. Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art* (New York: Routledge, 1988), xx.

[25] Bloom, *The Western Canon,* 4.

scholar's focus has been reoriented towards less 'heroic' roles, as Monica Dall'Asta puts it, 'resulting in a new attention to people considered to be in negligible, unimportant, and marginal roles and practices'.[26] It is in those more ordinary and – until now – unremarkable positions inside film-making that women were numerously and comfortably positioned to develop their professional careers. It is crucial to discover what the female contribution to silent cinema was, even if that means dealing with the added difficulty of identifying the industrial/entrepreneurial/material structures behind film production, which depended on the blurred lines between tasks and positions. Therefore, looking for a better theoretical and historiographical solution, the film scholar Vatsal proposes being open to various interpretations and conclusions, and writing a 'non-authoritative' filmography even though it could destabilize film history. The key approach would be not being afraid to explain the difficulties and nuances of each case study fully and to interpret the information collected from every source regarding the processes:

> Such 'nonauthoritative' filmographies would function not as repositories of incontrovertible fact, but rather as texts that prompt the reader to reach her own conclusions. Instead of being part of an entrenched mechanism underwriting claims of authorship, the filmography would then ironically destabilize that tradition.[27]

Nevertheless, contradictions in humanities exist, and even more within the critical movements that are trying to do things differently, because going against the flow is not easy and, as Lauren Rabinovitz puts it:

> Excavation of women producers initially provoked a conundrum among feminists – we critique the tradition of romantic authorship that has preserved patriarchal authority at women's expense at the same time that we are motivated by our desire to find women's voices, unity of texts (the fiction of the author) that allows for women's subjectivity to speak to us across a text.[28]

Therefore, assuming the possible contradiction of rejecting the institutionalized notions of 'authorship' and 'canon' that may be highlighted by pursuing the case studies in this dissertation, I consider still important to bring their names to the surface of history and

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[26] Dall'Asta, 'Traveling Film Pioneers': 311.
[27] Vatsal, 'Reevaluating Footnotes', 124.
[28] Lauren Rabinovitz, 'Past Imperfect: Feminism and Social Histories of Silent Film', in *Cinémas. Femmes et cinéma muet: nouvelles problématiques, nouvelles méthodologies* 16, n. 1, ed. Rosanna Maule (Quebec: Université de Montréal, Autumn 2005): 27.

reveal more about silent cinema in the Iberian context and the role that women played in it. Indeed, as argued in the next chapters, Almeida and Cortesina's filmic work could never be analysed as authorial as it was based on and supported by the opposite values, and subjected to the collective, mutual dependency, community, repetition, and bodily necessities of the families that they needed to feed and dress. Also, as we have seen, being women, they were confronted with their femininity and had to play with (accepting or denying) the different female models available to them.

2.2 The category of 'women'

The discussion around the category of 'woman' is probably the most difficult to analyse, not only in this dissertation but in gender studies in general. As I have discussed previously, at the beginning of the twentieth century the sexes were still considered two different, watertight compartments based on essentialist natural presumptions. Simone de Beauvoir enounced the well-known sentence 'On ne naît pas femme: on le devient' ('One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman') in the book *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*), published in 1949.[29] The meaning of the sentence breaks the common essentialist assumption of women's nature and describes the female identity as a social construction. This idea radically disrupts all accounts of femininity as an immutable reality and allows us to observe women as a mutable category that changes over time and geography.[30]

However, according to some criticism raised from queer and postcolonial studies, the single category of 'woman' used in academy and politics reproduces oppression as it equates all women under the same white heterosexual and European reality. Iris Marion Young agrees that the institutionalized feminist activism has tended 'to be ethnocentric in its analysis of gender experience and oppression',[31] disregarding the experiences of black, Latina, lesbian, and trans women, among many other invisible groups.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the abolitionist and activist Sojourner Truth had already denounced the different yardstick applied when referring to women inside female white bourgeois groups. In her famous discourse delivered at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron (Ohio) in 1851, she exposed the contradictions between women's

[29] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 273.
[30] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 13.
[31] Young, 'Gender as Seriality': 714.

rights and the hard physical duties that she, as a former enslaved black woman, had endured during her lifetime.[32] While women were discriminated against based on supposed biological characteristics of vulnerability and weakness, Truth compared herself with men and concluded that she could not be defined as a woman as a result of her life experiences and the heavy workload she had to endure.

In this sense, Truth, together with other black women's rights activists such as bell hooks and Audre Lorde, have denounced for years that the single concept of 'woman' has obscured the realities outside a privileged white bourgeois heterosexual group of women whose problems have been universalized and used in feminist activism, or gender and women's studies.[33] Therefore, from the point of view of other critical scholarly fields, feminist film historiography is regarded as a nostalgic methodology looking for the incorporation of a few female pioneer's names in the still hegemonic 'white heteropatriarchal history', only to maintain the status quo while reproducing oppression of other more disadvantaged groups.

As I have shown in the previous chapter, in the 1980s the historian Joan W. Scott denounced the naive definition of history as objective and neutral, and which, therefore, justified the absence of women, racialized communities, or the stories of the working class due to the lack of registered facts.[34] However, even when new documental evidence of their role in the past surfaced, they were still marginalized from the great history narration with its fixed categories and definitions. Thus, Scott found it helpful to use gender as a category of historical analysis to encompass others as race and class to include 'stories of the oppressed and an analysis of the meaning and nature of their oppression'.[35]

As Scott described, when we analyse 'how hierarchies such as those of gender are constructed or legitimized', we are looking for a 'study of processes, not of origins, of multiple rather than single causes, of rhetoric or discourse rather than ideology or consciousness'.[36] It does not abandon attention to structures and institutions, but it insists

[32] There are two different versions of this speech. The most popular one is titled 'Ar'n't I a woman?' and was first published by Frances Gage on April 23, 1863 in the *New York Independent*. However, according to the Library of Congress archive and The Sojourner Truth Project (thesojournertruthproject.com) there was a more accurate previous transcription published a month after the convention in *The Anti-Slavery Bugle* by Marius Robinson (June 21, 1851) in which the sentence 'Ain't I a Woman?' was never said.
[33] For more on criticism of white feminism, see bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman. Black Women and Feminism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2015) or Lorde, 'The Master's Tools', 110–114.
[34] Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 3.
[35] Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review* 91, n. 5 (1986): 1054.
[36] Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 4.

that we need to understand what these organizations mean to people in order to understand how they work. When historiography was recognized as a discursive and cultural artifice dependent on narrative constructions, historical categories were opened, first to be studied and defined and later to be searched for ways of subverting them.[37]

However, the undesirable aspect of the insertion of gender as a category of historical analysis was that it reinforced the general assumption that women had 'inherent characteristics and objective identities consistently and predictably different from men's', and that these generated 'definably female needs and interests', as Scott puts it.[38] Therefore, "'gender" quickly became synonymous, if not with "women", then with an already-known unequal relationship between the sexes'.[39] Thus, according to Scott, gender disturbingly became 'a handy label whose application reassured rather than disturbed us, turning questions into answers before they had even been asked'. Even when the first intention was to use it to destabilize the already known hegemonic history, its institutionalization made it merge into academia as another study field that thereby lost its subversive potential. This is the reason why, as I previously noted, I am not referring here to 'gender studies' or to 'women's studies' but to 'feminist studies'.

Although the institutionalization of critical activism inside academia strengthened the questioning of the category of 'woman' in recent years, it has existed in feminist studies since the 1980s. Teresa de Lauretis had already addressed this subject in 1987 in her text *The Technology of Gender* when she confronted the reproduction that feminist theory was doing of 'sexual difference' and how gender 'bound to the terms of Western patriarchy itself'.[40] The emphasis on the opposition between women and men and male and female would reinforce a conceptual frame of universalized essences and obscure the diversity among people. In a hierarchized social system, those women whose identities occurred in the intersection between oppressions would suffer double or triple invisibility. In fact, the oppression produced by a white privilege feminist theory in the name of the category of 'woman' would be one of them. Furthermore, if we assume that a single universal category of 'woman' exists, we are accepting the existence of 'some archetypal essence of woman or more or less sophisticated impersonations of a metaphysical-

[37] See Ermarth, 'The Closed Space of Choice' and White*, Metahistory.*
[38] Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 4.
[39] Scott, 'History-writing as critique', 21.
[40] Teresa de Lauretis, 'The Technology of Gender', in *Technologies of Gender. Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 1.

discursive femininity',[41] and denying that the female identity is rooted in economic, political, and socio-cultural contexts.

Opposed to this reform of the patriarchal world view, other political movements and critical scholarly fields such as queer and postcolonial theories plead for a more radical (understood as going to the root of the problem) solution. Coming back to Lorde's statement 'for the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house', using the same conceptual frame cannot make a definitive impact on legitimated and institutionalized fields of knowledge that might tolerate opposition while deactivating effective change. Only a shift of historical methodology, or at least a severe theoretical restructuring of the traditional sexual categories, would open up the category of 'women' and would give space to other subjects and agencies outside the universalized white heterosexual privileged collective. This questioning is as exciting and unavoidable as it is challenging for anyone who considers themselves a feminist scholar. The problem of accepting the destruction of sexual binarism for feminist theorists comes from the fear of destroying their own subject of study: the woman. As the film scholar Monica Dall'Asta asked:

> how do we conceive of our work on women film pioneers at a moment like the present, when the very idea of 'women' no longer appears to describe a unified, unproblematic reality and emerges instead as an intellectual artefact or a sociocultural construction?[42]

In the article 'What It Means to Be a Woman: Theorizing Feminist Film History Beyond the Essentialism/Constructionism Divide', Dall'Asta presents theoretical solutions that could help with such an obstacle to feminist historiography. The main proposal is to apply Iris Marion Young's interpretation the concept of 'serial collectivity', coined by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1976).[43] As Dall'Asta explains, the main idea is that:

> to be a woman, in other words – or a feminine subject in the properly Foucaultian sense of one who is subjected – one does not need to recognize herself in any sort of abstract feminine nature, it suffices to be recognized as such from the outside and be consequently subjected

[41] Lauretis, 'The Technology of Gender', 2.
[42] Dall'Asta, 'What It Means to Be a Woman', 39.
[43] Young, 'Gender as Seriality'.

> to a preconstituted set of socially defined rules and material conditions.[44]

According to the above, it is not necessary that a woman actively recognizes herself as a woman, but that she is recognized by society (passively), which thereby includes her in the patriarchal structure of oppression. So, the material and social structures that condition the subject's aspirations would be the ones that would determine their position as a woman and not as an active 'group'. Therefore, the analysis of women in cinema is not conditioned by their subjectivity (do they consider themselves to be women?) but by their passive categorization as female and part of the 'women series'. As Scott highlights, women can be categorized as such not only from a biological perspective but also from a shared experience of externally imposed discrimination. From Scott's point of view, the objective is to 'include women in whatever was considered human, to insist on the androgyny, as it were, of Universal Man'.[45] For that reason, it still makes sense to study women's experiences in silent cinema because they can be analysed as dependent on the binary-sex structure of society that demarcated their access, opportunities, and desires within the film industry.

In this sense, even though this dissertation distances itself from a totalizing narration of reality and, thus, from a universalizing homogenous essentializing concept of 'women', it also intends to escape from total relativism. Focusing only on individuality and difference might disarticulate every critical discourse and drive us to political paralysis, which would hamper any chance of change, even in academic discourse. Respecting difference, heterogeny, and singularity is paramount, but so also is searching for links and establishing bridges of communication that allow generalizations and promote the well-being of the 99 per cent in the current racist hetero-androcentric capitalist system. For that reason, biographical studies (as I will explain further in the following section) offer a pertinent – and still challenging – methodological and theoretical framework for overcoming the problematic dichotomies between singularity and generalization, or between the woman as an individual and women as a heterogeneous 'series', to use Young's term.

Narration of lives (which is what all biographies are) presents enormous paradoxes if our only intention is to enhance the historical figure. The cases of both Virgínia de

[44] Dall'Asta, 'What It Means to Be a Woman', 42.
[45] Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 191–192.

Castro e Almeida and Helena Cortesina have posed more incognita and unanswered questions as I have acquired further knowledge about them. Also, researching them and locating them as part of the narrative of women's international cinematographic history has presented several challenges. However, those challenges are not unique to this study, but an intrinsic issue in feminist studies – to which this dissertation aims to contribute – and to those others that deal with individuals who cannot be approached by any other means than mediated historical discourse. As Gaines sharply noted in her study on women's situation in the U.S. silent film industries, feminist studies on women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often present a schizophrenic narration in which women seem to be everything and anything at the same time.

> Feminism's sometimes two-mindedness sees women as both powerful and powerless as well as progressive and reactionary, ahead of and behind their times. Here, then, is the place to acknowledge how much of a stretch it is for feminism to be all things to all women across class and culture. Undoubtedly, the use of the category *women* to hold both singularity and diversity remains a conceptual challenge, but one that animates this study.[46]

The above quote is especially pertinent because, as I have stressed, the conceptual challenge of the category of 'women' also animates this study. Moreover, Gaines' appreciation of feminism's contradiction in containing both singularity and diversity simultaneously and the difficulty of theorizing about it is completely accurate. As Isabel Burdiel points out in her biography of the Spanish writer Emilia Pardo Bazán:

> Her personality appears categorical and, at the same time, volatile, imprecise, difficult to apprehend, full of aesthetic, emotional, and political ambivalences. In long distance, she is a one-piece character. In short distance, a puzzle. This is something that could be said about almost anybody, but that, in this case, was and is especially disturbing. The traits of coherence and incoherence intersected with one another and often entered into conflict with her life and work.[47]

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[46] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped,* 36.

[47] Isabel Burdiel, *Emilia Pardo Bazán* (Barcelona: Taurus, 2019), 17: 'Su personalidad aparece rotunda y, al mismo tiempo, volátil, imprecisa, difícil de aprehender, llena de ambivalencias estéticas, emocionales y políticas. En el plano largo es un personaje de una pieza. En el plano corto, un rompecabezas. Algo que se podría decir de casi todo el mundo pero que, en este caso, resultaba y resulta especialmente inquietante. Los rasgos de coherencia e incoherencia se cruzaron entre sí y entraron a menudo en conflicto en su vida y en su obra.'

I find this comment extremely useful in my approach to both of my case studies. I have avoided presenting them as victims or victimizers, as powerful or powerless, as ahead or behind their times, mainly because they probably have been all of these and none of them at the same time. My attempt to surpass stereotyping and classifying them into simple categories applies to both cases. As Hans Renders points out, a biographer should 'try more often to interpret facts of life as being deviating instead of looking for a socially valid confirmation of life experiences'.[48] In this sense, looking for a straightforward and monolithic explanation for Almeida and Cortesina's life-choices and events, as well as for their practical absence from their national film histories, only in their *womanness* (their existence as women) would be somewhat artificial and simplistic. This single explanation is what I am trying to overcome and complexify in analysing the conceptual and methodological challenges that I have encountered in my research of these two figures.

Moreover, Gaines notices that 'the term *women* has been categorically overburdened' and that 'gender analysis has less potency than it did when it first disturbed established disciplines nearly forty years ago'.[49] However, I see it as an inevitable effect of the advances that feminist movements and women's studies have tirelessly made in imagining alternative historical contexts and realities in which previously marginalized subjects can have their biographies recovered and narrated. To do so, they have revisited previously established theoretical frameworks and have created new ones.

Coming back to Gaines' accurate statements and the case studies, I argue that a possible solution to the dialectical and conceptual labyrinth of using gender as a historical category and theorizing about 'women' might be the attachment to case studies that can be precisely located in time, geography, ethnicity, class, culture, and sexuality. This solution would let the reader adapt the cases and go from the particular and specific to the general, as much as they are allowed. In any case, the intention of universalizing cases should be discarded, as I will discuss further in Chapter III, section 3.3 where I present biography writing as a historiographical methodology.

Finally, as Gaines asks, 'why undertake another project centered on "women"?' In this, I agree with Gaines that the result of complete relativism makes 'history' itself an impossibility, and it also evidences the impossibility of taking on this exact research

[48] Renders, 'The Limits of Representativeness', 136.
[49] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped*, 36. (Emphasis in the original).

project. However, archival research carried out following a methodology and guided by a theoretical framework has resulted in the work in front of you, which offers new insights into women's contribution to silent cinema in the Iberian cultural contexts.

Moreover, feminist studies are more than a theoretical or analytical scholarly field. Having been born from activism as a political stance, they must keep being strategic and, apart from all appropriate and useful (self-)criticism, it must get into agreements that allow the advance towards common objectives such as the recovery of women's multiple and diverse histories inside Iberian cinematographic culture. For that reason, some feminist scholars such as Gayatri Spivak and Elisabeth Eide argue for the use of a strategic essentialism that downplays differences and assumes a temporarily and precarious unity among the collective in order to achieve specific goals.[50] Otherwise, we will fall into a sterile immobility that will not help knowledge to be widely disseminated. Nevertheless, Lauretis reminds us not to avoid addressing the differences among 'women', that we must not make them disappear, and that 'they coexist concurrently with (though perhaps no longer despite) the provisional unity of any concerted political action or coalition'.[51] Once those differences are articulated and recognized as a constitutive part of every 'female subject of feminism in its very specificity', the only solution is to accept this inherent contradiction and work from the viewpoint of a varied and heterogeneous unity.

While studying women as subjects of history, we must avoid naturalizing identities and lose sight of them as discursive constructions that shift in time and obey discriminatory purposes in the service of the authorities. Therefore, thinking of history as 'the ultimate artifice',[52] we can accept a second artifice, that of the concept of 'woman', as a useful category for analysis for feminist film studies and for the advancement of a 'new cinema history from below'.

Therefore, the use of the term 'women' in this text has nothing to do with physiological realities but with a complex social hierarchized system of oppression that unifies human beings under a binary relation with the subject of history: the 'men' (another artificially constructed category). I also do not intend to unify the experiences

[50] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Criticism, Feminism, and The Institution with Elizabeth Grosz', in *The Post-Colonial Critic. Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 11, and Elisabeth Eide, 'Strategic Essentialism', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies*, ed. Nancy A. Naples (John Wiley and Sons, 2016), 2.
[51] Teresa de Lauretis, 'Feminist Studies/Critical Studies: Issues, Terms, and Contexts', in *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, 1988), 14–15.
[52] Ermarth, 'The Closed Space of Choice', 51.

lived under that category as they were diverse, varied, and intersected by several other aspects of the person's identity. However, I have tried to identify some shared characteristics that put 'women' in a certain position within the cultural environment of the first decades of the twentieth century in Western Europe, and more precisely in the Iberian territory.

As I have tried to prove in this dissertation by comparing and identifying their common characteristics, Almeida and Cortesina were part of a similar environment conformed to by upper or middle-class women who counted on the support of their family (although their families were not normative in a traditional sense). They also had a cultural and artistic background that allowed them to circulate in the public sphere and enter labour activity. From that position, their desires, expectations, and trajectories were delimitated, and this defined their access to silent cinema as professionals. Being real human beings, Almeida and Cortesina's identities were not fixed and stable. Their personalities were contradictory and changed throughout their lives, and their position varied from privileged to unprivileged depending on the context.[53] The difficulty of writing their biographies lies in understanding the complexities of human lives and being able to draw conclusions without obscuring other experiences of access to film-making from less-privileged individuals. For that reason, their cases need to be historized and situated to allow 'constellations' between women film-makers in silent cinema and researchers in the present to be drawn.[54]

2.3 The category of 'pioneer'

The recent academic interest in the recovery of pioneers poses a new conceptual challenge to the discovery of women's role in early film-making. During the first decades of cinema, there were multiple technical, artistic, and social changes, resulting in diversification into several different filmic products with different goals, uses, and techniques. For that reason, film history cannot be seen as a linear chronology of technical inventions, but as a net with different industrial, technological, and artistic interchanges that resulted in the institutionalization of a male-dominated entertainment motion picture studio system

[53] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought,* 18.
[54] Dall'Asta and Gaines, 'Prologue. Constellations', 19.

having its hegemonic geographical centre in Hollywood around 1915.[55] This initial instability of uses, subjects, and functions is commonly called early cinema.

The historiographical interest in the 'cinematography of attractions' resulting from the Federation of International Film Archives (FIAF) annual conference of 1978 in Brighton[56] produced an outbreak of research about early cinema and, most importantly, a renewed concern about film history that established a dialogue with the previous decades of film theory hegemony. Film historians, then, strongly criticized the oversimplified and anthropocentric established narrative of 'film development' as a story of the birth, growth, maturation, and death of an artistic language.[57] Early cinema specifically, and silent cinema more generally, stopped being considered as a primitive, rudimentary period evolving towards classical cinema and developed a fruitful theoretical and historiographic literature of its own.[58]

However, as Rosanna Maule notes, even if early cinema 'is comprised within a fairly rigid time frame, its periodization is marked by flexible chronologies relative to the emergence and life span of specific film systems or techniques'.[59] As I mentioned briefly in the dissertation's introduction, 'silent cinema' (commonly considered to be the period between 1895 and 1929) is a concept that scholars do not accept as a unified reality as it is an oversimplified 'tag' containing multiple and varied processes. Although periodization is always a problematic enterprise, film scholars generally agree on the division of 'silent cinema' into the following phases: one called 'cinematography of attractions' or 'kine-attractography' by André Gaudreault (and Tom Gunning),[60] starting in 1895 and lasting until 1906 or 1908; a second (still considered to be 'early cinema' – 'cine de los orígenes' or 'cine de los primeros tiempos' in Spanish, or 'cinema dos primórdios' or 'primeiro cinema' in Portuguese) starting between 1907 and 1909 and

[55] Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood*.

[56] The 1978 Brighton Conference was 'a crucial moment as historians, archivists, filmmakers, and theorists from Europe and the United States came together to view fiction films made between 1900 and 1906 and to present their initial insights on the pre-Griffith era'. It opened a new era of historiographical work devoted to previously dismissed 'primitive cinema'. Charles Musser, 'Historiographic Method and the Study of Early Cinema', *Cinema Journal* 44, n. 1 (Fall 2004): 101.

[57] Gaudreault, 'From "Primitive Cinema" to "Kine-Attractography"', 88–89.

[58] As a remarkable example of the theoretical and historiographic catharsis that researching early cinema produced in film studies, see Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker (eds.), *Early Cinema. Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990).

[59] Maule, 'Feminist Film History', 49.

[60] For the ground-breaking concept of 'cinema of attractions' and some of the latest discussions, see Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

ending between 1913 and 1916, called 'transitional' or 'system of narrative integration'; and the third from 1916 to 1929, called 'institutional cinema' or 'pre-classical cinema'.[61]

Nevertheless, Gaudreault, in his later work, states that cinema only began in 1910, and before that it could not be considered cinema but 'kine-attractography'.[62] His work rejects the expression *orígenes*/*primórdios* to denominate any period, as it gives the impression of being the source of cinema and, therefore, it establishes an 'evolutionist and mechanical conception of history':

> It is to risk overlooking, consciously or not, the ruptures and continuities that make up history, or to risk not noticing them. It is also to subscribe to a conception of history wherein what comes before necessarily explains what comes after. It is to expose oneself to the dreadful consequences of deceptive hindsight, determinism and teleology.[63]

The rejection of a teleological vision of cinema allows us to escape from fixed universalizing explanations and opens up the debate among scholars about how to recount the first decades of the construction of cinema culture, taking into account different languages, epistemologies, and cultural heritages.[64] For example, from a feminist point of view, Jennifer Bean breaks with all division of periods and posits that 'silent cinema' matches 'early cinema' if we attend to those experiences of cinema that were still present until the end of the 1920s, most particularly in pseudo-industrial cinemas and in cinematic practices conceived outside the male Hollywood paradigm:[65]

> 'early cinema' coincides with 'silent cinema', as it points to discourses, socio-cultural phenomena, and technologies connected with modernity that are still present until the end of the 1920s, most particularly in non-Western cinemas and in cinematic practices conceived outside of the Hollywood paradigm.[66]

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[61] Maule, 'Feminist Film History', 49; and Gaudreault, 'From "Primitive Cinema" to "Kine-Attractography"', 90–91.
[62] Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction*, 67.
[63] Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction*, 3.
[64] For the discussion and evolution of the terminology of cinema prior to 1915 in Spain, see Luis Alonso García, 'Nota española sobre el "cine primitivo"', in *Secuencias*. *Cine de los orígenes: entre la atracción y la revisión*, n. 26, ed. Joan M. Minguet Batllori and Daniel Sánchez Salas (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Second semester 2007): 29–32.
[65] Bean, 'Introduction. Toward a Feminist Historiography of Early Cinema', 8–9.
[66] Maule, 'Feminist Film History', 51.

As Bean states, focusing on gender, feminist film history produces an 'unmistakable shift in praxis' added to the new film history's conceptual and methodological concerns.[67] For feminist scholars, 'early cinema' is not only a historical period but also a critical category, and its differentiation between attraction and narration or monstrative and narrative provides a fertile ground for consideration of sexual and racial differences.[68] To establish its ending in 1917 is to assume some stability afterwards, which was not true either for women's film experience or women's cinema history.

This assertion gives space for new accounts by critical historians coming mainly from postcolonial studies in its intersection with feminist studies that have called into question the current periodization of silent cinema, blaming it for measuring changes according to a Western-centric or, even more specifically Hollywood-centric, system.[69] Also, in the case of Iberian cinematographies, a periodization with clear divisions into the attractions period and institutional narrative cinema does not apply, as the chronological edges were blurred.[70] A proper periodization for Portugal and Spain must pay attention to the long narrative integration transitional period that women stepped into.

According to Heide Schlüpmann, in early cinema's historiography the 'zone of transition is eliminated in favor of a dichotomy'.[71] It was in a phase of transition 'that women increasingly found their way to film and the cinema, both as actresses and as a mass audience', as Schlüpmann states. It is not by chance that both Almeida and Cortesina created their own production companies only one year apart, during the transitional time of the early 1920s. As will be explained further, the novelty of the filmic business, and the effervescence and optimism of that decade in Portugal and Spain provided a medium

[67] Bean, 'Introduction. Toward a Feminist Historiography of Early Cinema', 6.
[68] Bean, 'Introduction. Toward a Feminist Historiography of Early Cinema', 7.
[69] For the different periodization of early cinema in China, see Zhang Zhen, 'An Amorous History of the Silver Screen. The Actress as Vernacular Embodiment in Early Chinese Film Culture', in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, ed. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 501–529. On the periodization in Latin America, see Ana M. López, 'Early Cinema and Modernity in Latin America', *Cinema Journal* 40, n. 1 (Autumn 2000): 48–78.
[70] For Spain, see Román Gubern, 'Precariedad y originalidad del modelo cinematográfico español', in *Historia del cine español*, ed. Román Gubern et al. (Madrid: Cátedra, 2010), 14–15. For Portugal, see Ribeiro, *Filmes, Figuras e Factos*, which establishes 1917/1918, coinciding with the end of I World War, as the breaking point of silent cinema both in Lisbon and Porto with the official recognition of cinema by the creation Serviços Cinematográficos do Exército and the creation of Invicta Film as a feature film production house.
[71] Heide Schlüpmann, 'An Alliance between History and Theory', in *Researching Women in Silent Cinema: New Findings and Perspectives*, ed. Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett, and Lucia Tralli (Bologna: Università di Bologna, 2013), 14.

in which women saw opportunities to thrive. The kind of semi-artisanal film production organization (in which we could frame Fortuna and Cortesina Films) declined a few years later, unable to find commercially profitable solutions for national companies all around the Peninsula.[72] Also, technically and formally, the films produced in Portugal and Spain from 1920 to 1925 were still far from being the complex movie pictures that other more established industries were distributing in the territory.

Nevertheless, it is not only the chronological narration of static cinema periods (understood as an evolution from an original less-developed grammar to an improved cinematic language and technique in classical cinema) that is debated. The 'pioneering' concept has also been called into question as it supports this teleological discourse of the linear evolution of art. According to Andreas Huyssen's analysis, this recounting of art history, defended by Theodor Adorno and Clement Greenberg, acknowledges 'obstacles and detours' while 'only highlighting the dramatic and inevitable path of modernism toward its telos' following a period of decline.[73] This telos in Western film history would be seen as the perfection of cinematic language and form within the Hollywood classical period. In this context, the film pioneer concept has been extensively used to refer to those who worked in early cinema and presumably helped to 'build' the industries from scratch.[74]

Although it initially referred almost exclusively to men, the term 'pioneer' has expanded to encompass women who worked in silent films in various roles. One of the key diffusers of the term was the *Women Film Pioneers Project*, founded in 1993 by

[72] In Portugal, the decline of silent film production happened around 1925 when the four main production companies of silent cinema (Invicta, Caldevilla, Fortuna, and Pátria Films) cancelled their main activities due to lack of profitable industrial organization. In Spain, more specifically in Madrid where most film production occurred during the 1920s, the crisis began at the end of 1928. Before the industry could re-establish itself, the crisis was made worse by the introduction of sound-films. In the Portuguese context, see Tiago Baptista, 'Franceses tipicamente portugueses. Roger Lion, Maurice Mariaud e Georges Pallu: da norma ao modo de produção do cinema mudo em Portugal', in *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu. Franceses tipicamente portugueses*, ed. Tiago Baptista (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa – Museu do cinema, 2003), 94. For the Spanish context, see Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 105.

[73] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide. Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 57.

[74] Although there are exceptions, such as Cecil M. Hepworth's memories, *Came the Dawn: Memories of a Film Pioneer* (London: Phoenix House, 1951), the expression became extensively used for early film professionals from the 1970s onwards, linked to the increased interest in pre-cinema and early cinema. It is probable that one of the most important contributions in popularizing the term was Kevin Brownlow and John Kobal's *Hollywood, the Pioneers* (Los Angeles: Knopf, 1979). However, publications launched around the beginning of the millennium have stretched it to the point of losing its meaning. As an example, the word 'pioneer' appears more than 140 times in Richard Abel, *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2005).

Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta as a project for searching for 'women film pioneers who challenged the established idea of the great "fathers" of cinema'.[75] Although the initial project planned to publish a multi-volume book set, supported by the Center for Digital Research and Scholarship of the University of Columbia, in 2013 it became a digital publication that provides free scholarly work on more than three hundred short career profiles of female professionals who worked in cinema all around the world. Since one of the most prominent findings of the project was that many more women than expected contributed to silent cinema, the project came to be organized around one principle: 'What we assume never existed is what we invariably find.'[76]

Even if there are no specific publications about it yet, the term 'pioneer' has invited criticism in feminist film studies that has been reflected in several papers and public interventions. As Kay Armatage critiqued at the *Women and Silent Screen Conference* held in Montreal in 2004, those championed as pioneers assume the rhetorical tropes of 'deprivation, stoicism, disease, starvation and untold hardship', that tend to be attached to the heroic, unique, and extraordinary.[77] Therefore, in her opinion the search for women pioneers was not coherent with some of the feminist critiques raised against mainstream film historiography.

In the same vein, Rosanna Maule adds that 'while both the pioneers' methods and authorship retain their methodological validity for the study of early cinema, they have little use for comparative analyses of transnational discussions of early cinema'.[78] Maule criticises the extensive use of the term 'pioneer' to refer to every female film-maker (with a known name and career) who worked during the first decades of the twentieth century because, as Catherine Russell points out, there were cases in which 'methodologies of cultural critique are far more appropriate than the assumptions of authorship and innovation within the pioneers model'.[79]

As discussed previously, authorship and innovation are two characteristics that could not be found in most film-makers (male or female) who worked in silent film

[75] Gaines, Vatsal, and Dall'Asta, *Women Film Pioneers Project*.
[76] Gaines, Vatsal, and Dall'Asta, *Women Film Pioneers Project*.
[77] Armatage, 'Roughing It in the Bush': Nell Shipman and Pioneering in the Academic Marketplace', unpublished paper presented at the Women and the Silent Screen Conference (Montreal: University of Concordia, 2004). Cited in Catherine Russell, 'New Women of the Silent Screen: China, Japan, Hollywood', in *Camera Obscura* 60, vol. 20, n. 3 (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, December 2005), 3.
[78] Maule, 'Feminist Film History', 49.
[79] Russell, 'New Women of the Silent Screen', 4.

industries. Framing the historical discourse in these terms hampers the research of anonymous female waged workers of cinema businesses who were more numerous than those who enjoyed central creative, innovative positions within national cinema systems. Therefore, most Iberian female film-makers could be considered no more than a subplot in women's film history if we value uniqueness and pioneership over more common but necessary tasks.

As has been discussed above, from a feminist perspective film history should not be only the history of firsts, great men, and masterworks, and the concept of 'pioneer', using the definition in the Oxford English Dictionary, is the person who 'develop[s] or [is] the first to use or apply (a new method, area of knowledge, or activity)'. Until now, conventional silent cinema has been narrated as an enumeration of 'pioneers' inventing technology and developing techniques, and it has revealed itself as a system that excludes the history of all those who were not the first, geniuses, or pioneers. As Schlüpmann points out in her study:

> The rediscovery of the early cinema in the 1980's brought about a change in film historiography that the women's movement had in essence already proposed in the 1970's. At the time, at issue here were not only women directors, forgotten by film historiography, but also varied and primarily anonymous groups of women working in the realms that classical film history did not register: those working in film laboratories, in film coloring, as film editors, on the screenplay and (not least) as actresses, something that is not identical with the function of stars, shaped by men.[80]

So, apart from the surprise that feminist scholars had about the number of women who worked in early cinema (in those countries with solid cinema industries, for instance the U.S., France, or Italy), they also made another discovery: there were women in every film profession, and also professions that were exclusively (or mainly) female, including, for example, the cutters and colourists of films.[81] The first reason given for this was that those

[80] Schlüpmann, 'An Alliance between History and Theory', 13.

[81] For cutters in the U.S. context, see Kristen Hatch, 'Cutting Women: Margaret Booth and Hollywood's Pioneering Female Film Editors', in *Women Film Pioneers Project* ed. Jane M. Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta (New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2013). For the work of the French colorists, see Joshua Yumibe, 'French Film Colorists', in *Women Film Pioneers Project* ed. Jane M. Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta (New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2013); and for the colorists in the Italian context, see Federico Pierotti, 'Coloring the Figures. Women's Labor in the Early Italian Film Industry', in *Researching Women in Silent Cinema: New Findings and Perspectives*, ed. Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett, and Lucia Tralli (Bologna: Università di Bologna, 2013), 106–

jobs were similar to *couture* and, therefore, women had the ability to work on them using their natural precision and care. However, the main reason was that they were considered tiring and mechanical jobs and did not require a qualified labour force. Women, at that time, were earning less than their male counterparts.[82]

Many of those occupations were hidden from journalists of the time, and from film historians who centred their attention on the 'top' visible creative positions such as stars, directors, producers, and writers without paying attention to the 'lower-level' workers. It took at least a decade of consistent research to 'note the fuller range of new jobs' available for women in cinema.[83] However, as Gaines describes, 'one could argue that they were holding it up from the silent era on', and they stayed in the U.S. industry while 'top' professionals were 'phased out'.[84] Gaines adds that 'closer examination also reveals the two groups as physically proximate, the differences between them often blurry'. Beginning in the mid-1910s, for instance, 'lower-level' workers could be found everywhere surrounding the 'top' women.[85] 'Top' women would be defined as 'those whose profiles were circulated by publicity departments' and, therefore, whose names and faces were known and can be tracked in singular terms. By contrast, the 'lower-level' workers are part of anonymous collectives whose inscription in history would not be made by their individuality but as a faceless and nameless group. 'In the absence of nameable workers or spectators, the historian must extrapolate from the one to the many others', Gaines emphasizes.[86]

Begoña Soto-Vázquez also differentiates between women film professionals as singular cases, when we have details of their complete names and individual careers, and the collectives, being those women who played an essential role in the cinema (pseudo-) industrial factory system.[87] The most challenging aspect of the study of the female collective professions is the intersection between two different reasons for discrimination: gender and social class.

According to Gaines, attributing 'single-handed' creation of a moving picture to an author/director implies the same methodological operations as attributing historical

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[82] Suárez, 'La dona a la indústria cinematogràfica barcelonina dels primers temps', 103.

[83] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped,* 132.

[84] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped,* 133.

[85] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped,* 137.

[86] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped,* 144.

[87] Soto-Vázquez, 'Weaving a Cinematographic Culture', 123.

events to a single person. 'Although "bottom-up" anonymous history is now well established, human accounts of the past remain skewed toward nameable personas as historical agents (...) research on the anonymous first motion picture workers is not equally respected'.[88] For that reason, more research must be devoted to those fundamental professions staffed mainly by women that were at the base of the film practice and the development of the industry, in comparison to those singular women who managed to enter a male-dominated cinematographic system (sometimes for a short period).[89]

So, in order to find new hypotheses, draw new conclusions, and write a film history in which women have the visibility and the voice they deserve, as historians we need to change our priorities and analyse what is valuable to research. It is not enough to substitute or incorporate the singled-out female names into film history (although it is also essential to know their stories). Being depicted as 'pioneers' assures them a place in history, but it also implies that they were exceptional cases. What about the history of normal women, those who had made a daily and continuous difference in the film industry since the beginning? Greater advances in feminist film historiography are still needed because, apart from 'rescuing' the singular names of the female film-makers who made a significant impact on cinematography (very few in the Iberian countries, by the way), it is necessary to look for the anonymous collectives who (being a cheap labour force) built the film industry. We need to establish a discourse that could be generalized and give answers regarding women's position in society, art, and cinema more specifically, without thinking about each of them as a single, separate, exceptional case, but rather as contextualized within their socio-cultural moment. As mentioned before, we need to change the historiographical concepts and methods and shift towards the 'new cinema history from below'.

Moreover, 'pioneer' means not only 'a person who is among the first to study or develop something' but also (as it relates to U.S. history) 'a person who is among the first to enter and live in an area, esp. European Americans in the western U.S.', according to the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary.[90] Thus, being of poor use for the feminist

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[88] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped,* 143.

[89] The publication edited by Melody Bridges and Cheryl Robson, *Silent Women. Pioneers of Cinema* (Twickenham: Supernova Books, 2016) has established a useful precedent for the great number of professions that it portrays, including cinematographers, critics, reformers, and educators. However, the term 'pioneer' is still used as a pretext to talk about women working during the first decades of cinema in general terms but without further reflection on its meaning.

[90] 'Pioneer', *Cambridge Dictionary* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es-LA/dictionary/english/pioneer.

agenda is not the only criticism that the term raises. It also presents a problematic meaning from a postcolonial studies' perspective, as it can be seen as promoting the expansion and colonization of territories. For that reason, the expansion of the term 'pioneer' to include a positive connotation implies a Eurocentric point of view that is being reproduced in film studies.

Another current use of the term 'pioneer' is in the expression 'pioneer status', which is a status that certain individuals or companies receive from some governments for a determined period 'to obtain very favourable fiscal treatment in respect of income derived from promoted activities or promoted products'. Countries such as Malaysia, Nigeria, and the Virgin Islands have implemented this policy that is intimately linked to contemporary capitalist expansion and globalization.[91] As we can see, the word 'pioneer' has not lost its colonialist connotation as it still refers to unequal economic strength in the global context that benefits Western economies. For that reason, and as Maule points out, 'women's presence in early cinema cannot be evaluated through transnational standards of analysis using figures or approaches informed by Western–capitalist–liberal economic standards or aesthetic categories'.[92]

In conclusion, either from a feminist or a postcolonial critical standpoint, I advocate for writing other film histories in which the use of the term 'pioneer' would recover its literal meaning and would not be used as a synonym for any singled-out female film-maker. This conceptual shift implies that the subject of the history would no longer be singular and extraordinary cases, but the footnotes, whereby the collective's working force and creativity would remain at the core of the history. If we believe, as I do, that everybody is the result of their circumstances, then there is no such thing as a person *ahead of their time*, and therefore a 'pioneer'. What does exist is a person – who usually gathers individually the fruits of the collective effort – whose name is inscribed in history.

Coming back to Lorde's denouncement: 'What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable.'[93] In my mind, merely inscribing Almeida and Cortesina's names in their national film histories back to the

[91] 'What is Pioneer Status', Government of the Virgin Islands, http://www.bvi.gov.vg/content/what-pioneer-status; 'Malaysia: Tax-Efficient Sectors. Pioneer Status', LowTax, (9 November 2020) https://www.lowtax.net/information/malaysia/malaysia-pioneer-status.html; 'Pioneer Status Incentive', Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission, https://nipc.gov.ng/pioneer-status-incentive/.
[92] Maule, 'Feminist Film History', 53.
[93] Lorde, 'The Master's Tools', 112.

beginning of the twentieth century is a narrow ‘possible and allowable’ result of using the ‘patriarchy tools’ to dismantle its house. This historiographic tendency has been proven to be easily digestible by patriarchy and capitalism. It allows adding to pre-existing written histories a few female names who are presented as pioneers (exceptional and irreplaceable women uprooted from their socio-cultural context) – possibly highlighted under a purple subheading or part of a conglomerate paragraph – and, therefore, remaining anecdotal and not harmful. This effect can help to fill journal articles for the International Women’s Day, on 8 March, publish empowering drawing books for little girls, or include a session in a film festival, but it will not produce a significant change by seeing its historical disruptive capacity deactivated.

Chapter III. Methodological challenges

3.1 The hegemonic textual approach to filmic sources

The lack of preserved film prints of *Flor de España* (1923) and *A Sereia de Pedra* (1922) and the multiple edited versions of *Os Olhos da Alma* (1923) have posed some methodological challenges to the reliance on film prints as sources of historical knowledge that I would like to explore in this section. Cortesina's and Almeida's careers open up reflection about the imbalance and instability of the film as an object of study and the status that it has enjoyed in film history. As Diane Negra points out, one inevitable solution for researching the first decades of cinema, and more specifically for the biographical reconstruction of star 'careerographies', was the use of non-filmic materials:

> The first element is methodological, involving a mode of response to the difficulties of reconstructing a star persona in the absence of many or even all of the films in which the star appeared. A salient feature of these essays is their resourcefulness in reading nonfilmic materials as repositories of information, particularly in the absence of a filmic record of performance.[1]

Flor de España, as we will further discuss, is only accessible from parallel sources as the music score of the film, the press reviews of the film, and scarce film shots reproduced in the press. Also, the plot of *A Sereia de Pedra* is only available through press summaries, photographs, and written testimonies from people working on the production. Finally, *Os Olhos da Alma* presents another question: the preservation of two 35mm versions, with different editing and duration in the conservation centre of Cinemateca Portuguesa (Arquivo Nacional da Imagem em Movimento/ANIM). The first was restored by Cinemateca Portuguesa in the laboratory of L'Immagine Ritrovata (Bologna) in 1995 and reproduces the original tinting over 1.440 metres. The second version, in black and white, comes from the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée (France) and is 1.524 metres.

In addition, the book *Os Olhos da Alma*, a novel signed by Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, can be found in the library of Cinemateca Portuguesa. It was published by the Annuario do Brasil on 8 June 1925, and it is illustrated with original photographs taken

[1] Negra, 'Female Stardom and Early Film History', 4.

during the filming of the movie. The publication seems to be a novelization of the film written expressly for commercial distribution after making the film, instead of being the novel on which the movie was based. The most probable hypothesis is that Almeida wrote it for promotional purposes adapting the written scenario for the distribution of *Os Olhos da Alma* by Empreza de Films d'Arte Portugueza in the Brazilian territory in 1925 and 1926. All these preserved materials offer different versions of the same story adapted to different mediums and audiences, thus complicating the interpretation of these sources.

In dealing with the kind of problems described above, among others, film studies have primarily focused on the film as an object of study. According to Gaines, the juxtaposition of motion picture film prints to other unique pieces of artwork such as sculptures or paintings initiated a road of legitimation as the film historian's main source.[2] The entering of an object, that was initially only a photo-chemical copy, into the realm of cultural heritage of unique works valued by archives and museums made it rise a 'cultural notch', as Gaines puts it.

In addition, conventional film history and theory have been based on the text-centred analysis of film, as the resultant artistic work of the cinematic process, being converted into the primary source of information and analysis. As Dall'Asta and Gaines point out, in film studies 'the extant 35mm. motion picture print is the historical artifact par excellence, the centerpiece that organizes surviving documents in its orbit', referring, among others, to paper-based documents such as screenplays, account books, or posters.[3] The authors attribute to film the capacity to encourage 'historical narratives while [it] also invites us to find the dreams of its makers and spectators in its realization'. For that reason, textual analysis has also been crucial to feminist film studies in their theorization of gender representation and stereotypes, and to feminist film historians who have tried to find the subjectivity of early women film-makers inscribed in the movie – as if the subject of study could talk to us from the past through the film.

In any case, as Gaines points out, extant films are a fascinating but unstable source considering the multiple versions that we might find and the numerous modifications regarding nationality, preservation, or ways of working that they might have suffered. According to Gaines, we have only recently begun to think critically about researching and relying on film print as an object because it 'is relatively recent as an archival

[2] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped,* 75.
[3] Dall'Asta and Gaines, 'Prologue. Constellations', 17.

phenomenon, newly valued as a source and newly recruited as evidence'.[4] For that reason, the lost-and-found mythological narrative most of the time opens up more questions than it gives answers, although research devoted to interrogating moving images is one of the main activities of film studies.

As a result of the lack of preserved films from the silent period, historians have experienced a significant obstacle to inscribing it into film history.[5] From a theoretical point of view, this period was supposed not to present interesting aspects other than being the cradle of cinema whose epitome for Western academia was classic Hollywood productions. Since most films were inaccessible, thereby rendering fruitful textual analysis of whole periods and locations impossible, film studies dismissed early cinema and part of the pre-classical silent cinema and opted to trust and reproduce those histories written by contemporary witnesses, or eventually to avoid researching deeper due to the lack of their prioritized sources: the films themselves.

However, when a renewed interest in early cinema sprouted after the Brighton Conference of 1976 and silent cinema history offered a fruitful field of revisitation and research, scholars had to deal with the absence of films in a more creative way. As it was previously noted, this tendency increased at the beginning of the twenty-first century when feminist historians realized the existence of women behind the camera and the dimension of their contribution to the formation of cinema cultures worldwide.[6] However, female film workers had been neglected for so long that those interested in researching the topic have found a desert of reliable data and information, being obliged to begin from scratch. The main problem that feminist scholars encountered when relying on publications is that, traditionally, history had not usually considered the specificity of studying unprivileged groups, such as women, queer, and racialized groups. For that reason, the information was usually wrong or distorted by misconceptions and prejudices.

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[4] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped,* 2.

[5] It is estimated that only 15 per cent of Spanish productions between 1896 and 1930 have been preserved. Araceli Uzquiano Román, *Memoria Final del Proyecto 'Inventario-catálogo de películas de cortometraje del cine mudo español 1896-1930*' (Madrid: Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural de España, April 2018), 3. It is claimed that Portuguese silent cinema has been better preserved, although I have been unable to find an approximate percentage. Then, I calculated the percentage of preserved fiction films from 1907 to 1933 with the result of 46,4% of preservation. Although it is supposed that Portuguese silent cinema is better preserved the given numbers are not comparable because fiction and feature films were more valorized in the archives than earlier actualities and views that are included in the Spanish percentage. The calculation was based on the appendix of Tiago Baptista, *Tipicamente português. O cinema ficcional mudo em Portugal no inicio dos anos vinte* (Lisbon, May 2003), 174-178.

[6] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped,* 17.

Therefore, when catalogues, dictionaries, or filmographies refer briefly to women's work, they contain sometimes misleading and incorrect information that must be double-checked.

In fact, the problem relating to female film-makers' productions is not only that they are not preserved, but also that they are incorrectly catalogued. For that reason, the current interest in works in which women professionals had any responsibility began an archival turmoil that resulted in the discovery of uncatalogued films and their attribution to female names. This has opened a range of commercial opportunities, such as the publication of multiple academic and informative books, as well as DVD and Blu-ray thematic packs.[7]

The lack of regimentation that defined early cinema (and even later in some countries) resulted in the situation that 'films are difficult to come by, and textual documentation is extremely idiosyncratic', as Radha Vatsal describes it.[8] For instance, movie credits were usually inconsistent (both for men and women), and professional roles and the division of tasks were undefined.[9] Furthermore, studying women brought up specific issues that did not apply to heterosexual male cinema professionals, such as the difficulty of tracking people who changed their names after getting married, who lied about their date of birth or hid personal facts, or who were erased from the credits when they were part of a working team. For that reason, feminist scholars implemented new methodologies of research that contributed to the knowledge of the development of cinema culture as a whole (not only to the female aspects of it or those present in the feminist agenda).

> [G]ender explains the special difficulties researchers encounter when they attempt to reconstruct these careers through archival searches. In contrast with men, women had more total names – pseudonyms, stage names, maiden names, married names, and acquired aristocratic titles.[10]

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[7] Some recent examples of commercial DVD packs with the theme of female directors are: *Early Women Filmmakers: An International Anthology (1902–1943)* (Flicker Alley, 2017, 652 mins.); *Les pionnières du cinéma* (Lobster, 2018, 579 mins.); *Pioneers: First Women Filmmakers* (Kino Lorber, 2018, 1.797 mins. Blu-ray and 1.522 mins. DVD); *Early Women Filmmakers (1911–1940)* (British Film Institute, 2019, 628 mins.).

[8] Vatsal, 'Reevaluating Footnotes', 120.

[9] Michele Leigh, 'Reading between the Lines. History and the Studio Owner's Wife', in *Doing Women's Film History. Reframing Cinemas, Past, and Future*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Julia Knight (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 43.

[10] Jane M. Gaines, 'World Women: Still Circulating Silent Era Film Prints', *Framework. The Journal of*

Consequently, knowing that the majority of silent films are not preserved (because of negligence, lack of conservation, and fire, among other more complex reasons), and that those that were preserved are still often incorrectly catalogued (omitting female participation or substituting female names with their male counterparts), the methodology for studying women in silent cinema must move away from textual analysis and must be focused on other sources derived from the archive. Consulting printed sources such as periodicals (journals, fan magazines, film reviews and so on), censorship reports, musical scores, cinema-related company records, personal letters and memoirs, and other apparently unrelated archived documents from the beginning of the twentieth century (shipping lists or legal documents) is very important in order to construct an accurate narrative of the first decades of cinema, even when most of these sources have been historically depreciated.

Nowadays, the revalorization of personal documents such as diaries, memories, or letters as a source of history has been a solution to 'the uncertainties and complications in early cinema sources [that] reflect, and result from, the fundamental instability of motion picture production during the period'.[11] Therefore, the information gathered from those informal sources is even more important in the case of women, whose tracks in official or statistical documents were often hidden, and who left their traces in other, more private and gendered sources. According to Joan W. Scott, with their devotion towards statistic and numerical sources being considered 'somehow purer and less susceptible to subjective influences', historians have unwittingly perpetuated notions of nineteenth-century positivist history:

> Even though the language of some social historians, with its hierarchical oppositions between quantitative and qualitative sources, numerical data and literary evidence, scientific and impressionistic analyses, hard and soft documentation, is less compelling than it was several years ago, there remains the tendency to treat numbers as significantly different from words.[12]

Furthermore, documents based on images (such as picture postcards or posters) allow us to access women's private and public image as well as sometimes their intimacy and creativity, in alternative ways. In fact, those sources are becoming fundamental for the

Cinema and Media 51, n. 2, (Fall 2010): 283–303, 289.

[11] Vatsal, 'Reevaluating Footnotes', 119.

[12] Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 114.

work of new cinema historians such as Judith Thissen, whose study on early film exhibition in rural France was inspired by picture postcards. Thissen describes them as 'an extremely rich source of historical evidence to learn about everyday life, not only because of the visual information that they convey but also because of their widespread use as a means of informal communication'.[13] Popular visual merchandizing is even more critical as a source in feminist studies as it is clearly gendered.[14]

Besides changing the sources, it is also necessary to modify the way those texts are looked at and read. As an example, Vatsal stated the importance of footnotes in searching for women's biographical information because that is to where, usually, female names are relegated.[15] Michele Leigh also commented on the value of casual comments to histories, which must 'be pieced together and told, not through a chain of primary sources and personal documents but rather through a mindful attention to a series of asides and offhand comments'.[16] Likewise, Irit Rogoff wrote about the value of gossiping as a subversive source – for being an 'unauthored, untraceable and unfixed narration' associated with the feminine – for disrupting history and breaking with the institutional narrative that is constructed top-down. According to her, 'gossip turns the tables on conventions of both 'history' and 'truth' by externalizing and making overt its relation to subjectivity, voyeuristic pleasure and the communicative circularity of story-telling'.[17]

In summary, feminist film scholars, trying to disrupt and reveal hidden portions of history – such as women's participation in silent cinema – deal with a lack of facts and evidence in those sources considered as 'serious', such as history books, official archives, or extant film prints. In contrast, there are a large number of rumours and clues that sometimes lead to labyrinthic paths and that, seen from a different perspective, can result in new hypotheses or conclusions. In any event, as women have historically been the living archive of the family history, they have always played an important role as memory keepers and storytellers, being responsible for collecting and transmitting personal and family documents through generations.[18] Even though these documents have been

[13] Thissen, 'Cinema History as Social History', 128.
[14] Isabel Clúa notes how commercial photography popularized in the last decades of the nineteenth century contributed to turn the female body into a fetish as never before. Isabel Clúa, *Cuerpos de escándalo. Celebridad femenina en el fin-de-siècle* (Barcelona: Icaria, 2016), 77.
[15] Vatsal, 'Reevaluating Footnotes', 119.
[16] Leigh, 'Reading between the Lines', 43.
[17] Irit Rogoff, 'Gossip as Testimony', 58.
[18] Lynn Abrams, 'Story-telling, Women's Authority and the "Old Wife's Tale": "The Story of the Bottle of Medicine"', *History Workshop Journal* 73 (2012): 102–104.

disregarded from a positivist and scientific view, with the rise of the 'new historicism' and the critical movements, gendered alternative sources such as autobiographic texts, diaries, letters, old photographs, decorative arts, home movies, and so on, have been re-evaluated and have become useful documents for the historiographic methodology.[19] Therefore, critical movements such as the feminist are partly responsible for the increased use of the family archive as a recently recognized creative filmic practice, and the exploration of its possibilities to comment on history from a subversive perspective.[20]

For that reason, in researching Cortesina's and Almeida's 'careerographies', family testimonies, letters, interviews, and so on, have become prominent sources. In the case of Cortesina, her ambivalent relation to classicism, exotism, and modernity is evidenced by the photographs archived at the Spanish *Archivo General de la Administración* (AGA). The images collection (partly of which is presented in this dissertation's Appendix B) documents her early professional life as a variety show dancer and as a theatre actress, as well as other intimate images taken during her public summer appearances and exposition of her domestic sphere. Also, promotional images from the film *La inaccesible* were found in Filmoteca Española, in which aspects of the film that could not be inferred only by reading the summary could be appreciated – for example, the level of luxury of the production. In addition, family members provided some personal photographs of the family that let me glimpse hints of her childhood and adulthood surrounded mainly by her mother, sisters and nieces. Cortesina's career can be partially reconstructed by reading the numerous announcements of her career at the Spanish and Argentinian press archived mainly at the periodical's digital archive of Biblioteca Nacional de España, Filmoteca de Catalunya and Instituto Nacional de Estudios de Teatro of Buenos Aires, together with theatre brochures available in Sociedad General de Autores de la Argentina (Argentores). Finally, as will be shown, the musical score found in the Sociedad General de Autores de España (SGAE) was fundamental in disclosing details about the non-extant film *Flor de España*.

As I have already pointed out, one of the most relevant remaining traces of the existence of *Flor de España* is the score preserved in the SGAE and analysed by Mateo

[19] Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 59.

[20] On the cinematographic use of the family archive to comment on Portuguese recent history, see Elena Cordero-Hoyo, 'Exploring the Portuguese Memory through Appropriation Film: *A toca do lobo* (Mourão, 2015)', in *Women in Iberian Filmic Culture*, ed. Elena Cordero-Hoyo and Begoña Soto-Vázquez (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect Books, 2020), 194–212.

Hidalgo.[21] In this sense, the study of the music of the film has been greatly undervalued in comparison with what it would have meant finding the moving images, even when those two components of the film might be equally revealing about the film as an 'event', to use Rick Altman's expression.[22] However, the hegemony of the visual aspect over the sound and music in cinema has been greatly transferred into film history and theory. For that reason, there was a lack of study of cinema scores until the 1980s, although they are nowadays a consolidated study field (mainly in the Anglo-American context). In this sense, the work done by Manuel Deniz Silva in Portugal is remarkable, and he calls for the 'undisciplinarity' approach to cinema in contributing to an open debate.[23] Also, as a curiosity, *Flor de Españ*a's poster appears as a background decoration in a scene of the film *Corazones sin rumbo* (Benito Perojo and Gustav Ucicky, 1928), which also raises questions about intertextual filmic relations and cultural material history in film studies.[24]

The sources available for reconstructing Almeida's 'careerography' are necessarily of a totally different nature. Her position as part of the aristocracy first, and later as a recognized intellectual and writer, has left behind countless written personal accounts of her life. She expressed her opinions and thoughts in novels, prefaces, and press articles, and she communicated through letters with important personalities in cultural, social, and political spheres, which have facilitated their preservation, archiving, and research. Those letters left traces of her life even when she was living in France or Switzerland, and allowed the researchers to get to know aspects of her life abroad.[25] Her institutional

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[21] The existence of the *Flor de España* musical score archived at the SGAE was discovered by Javier Mateo Hidalgo for a musicology academic journal. This encounter, which is absolutely relevant for my research, confirms the necessity and advantages of interdisciplinarity and interartistic research. Javier Mateo Hidalgo, '*Flor de España o la vida de un torero*: Una partitura para el cine mudo español', *Sineris*. *Revista de Musicología* 25 (Summer 2015): 1-23.

[22] Rick Altman, 'General Introduction: Cinema as Event', in *Sound Theory/Sound Practice* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 1–14.

[23] A remarkable example of this intermedial approach to cinema is the Portuguese research group 'A escuta das imagens em movimento: novas metodologias interdisciplinares para o estudo do som e da música no cinema e nos média em Portugal', coordinated by INET-md from 2010 to 2013 and funded by Fundação Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT) and the monographic dossier of *Aniki*: 'Música e som no cinema', coordinated by Manuel Deniz Silva. Manuel Deniz Silva, 'Música, som e imagens em movimento: por uma perspetiva "indisciplinada" da experiência cinematográfica', *Aniki* 5, n. 1 (2018): 69.

[24] I thank Marina Díaz López for very generously bringing this to my attention. Josetxo Cerdán, 'Mi duda es otra... ¿qué vamos a hacer en España?', *Flores en la sombra. Perojo Gubern: Trayectos de ida y vuelta* (Madrid: Filmoteca Española, 2020), 2. [Brochure]

[25] The letters written by Virginia de Castro e Almeida have been the most valuable source of information for reconstructing her life and career. Most of the ones sent to colleagues or institutions are archived in the Biblioteca Nacional Portuguesa and are available to researchers. However, those sent to the family are kept in the private family collection and I have not read the originals, only the transcriptions made and

participation in the Institute of Culture of the League of Nations is also well documented in official repositories. The fact that most of her publications are available at the Biblioteca Nacional Portuguesa and one of her films at ANIM is very different to Cortesina's case, whose professional life did not leave so many records, taking into account that most of her career took place in the stage, an ephemeral artistic medium.

In both cases, though, contact with the family has been a valuable and fruitful way of discovering hidden aspects of their personal lives, apart from also being an enriching experience. The families have provided photographs and personal documents, but, mostly, unverifiable family myths, rumours, and gossip in informal conversations that have posed methodological and ethical challenges, at the same time as they have given colourful and warm notes to the researching process and have allowed me to know the case studies better.

In summary, visual documentation has been much more important as a source in the case of Cortesina than for Almeida, whose extensive writings have been the basis for biographical research. This fact corresponds with Cortesina's role as an actress, whose external image was a cornerstone of her objective to construct a 'star' persona, an essential part of her career; and Almeida's career as an active, erudite writer whose income depended on her publications and translations. Also, their different ways of living abroad have impacted the availability of sources. The reality of Cortesina as an exile fleeing her country due to civil war and dividing her life between two countries has hindered access to written documentation such as letters, diaries, and other kinds of first-hand testimony. By contrast, Almeida's privileged position as part of the European intelligentsia and as a governmental representative allows us to track her footprints outside her motherland and read testimonies of her experience directly from her.

This fragmentary, varied, unstable, and subjective collection of sources could present a problem of credibility and uncertainty for traditional historiography, as the interpretation and narration exercise is sometimes speculative. Entering a philosophical discussion, what 'new historicism' and feminist film history propose is a valorization of fragmented pieces of information not only because finding complete wholes has revealed itself to be impossible, but also because filling gaps and ignoring absences have contributed to maintaining the illusion of coherence and the hegemony of patriarchal, white, Western institutional history. It reflects a shift from an outdated modern concept

generously offered to me by the family.

of history (historicist, universal, causal, and centred in the past) to a postmodern concept of it (fragmented, individual, semiologist, and centred in the present).

3.2 The nationalistic approach to film history

National histories of the twentieth century have been partly shaped by their reflection on the screen. Using the definitions of a nation as an 'imagined community' and nationalism as a 'cultural artifact' coined by Benedict Anderson, we can imply that cinema, as part of cultural producing media, also plays a role in imagining the community – and constructing the nation – to which individuals feel attached.[26] In addition, cinema systems have irregularly invested in propaganda to pursue two nationalistic objectives: to foster patriotic feeling among the population inside the country and to shape foreign opinion by promoting national culture abroad.[27] This worked mainly through showing what was considered to be 'the essence' of the nation: those visual motives that captured their 'soul'.

It is not only films, as cultural products, that can have a patriotic mission, but also the narrations around them. As Luis Alonso García points out, the nationalizing effect of cinema is 'a double production in two moments': in the practice of cinema in the past (history); and in the discourse about cinema today (historiography).[28] Because, according to Alonso García, 'historiography is always a nationalizing and nationalist activity'.[29] For that reason, traditional film histories have also been defined by their national and/or statal boundaries (that do not always coincide), creating and studying elusive concepts such as 'Spanish cinema' or 'Portuguese cinema', and so on.

Although the notion of national cinema, understood as the story that relates the past of the cinematographic practices of a certain territory as defined by its political, cultural, or geographical borders, is quite broad, it is also quite problematic due to its constructiveness. Begoña Soto-Vázquez explains the institutionalization of national cinemas using metaphorically Anderson's three power institutions that constitute the

[26] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 5–7.
[27] Baptista, '1920–1929. O cinema "tipicamente português', 71.
[28] Alonso García, 'De quimeras, engaños y pendencias', 282.
[29] Alonso García, 'De quimeras, engaños y pendencias', 284: 'La historiografía siempre es una actividad nacionalizadora y nacionalista.'

'imagined communities': the census, the map, and the museum.[30] According to Soto-Vázquez, national historiographies determine a corpus of films and film-makers as the canon of national filmography that works as a census; the museum is the group of institutions devoted to collecting and preserving audiovisual or cinematographic patrimony; and the map is an established territory defined culturally and geographically.[31] Therefore, most Western countries institutionalized their own narrations of film history: explaining the beginning and development of the industry, establishing their own national canon, searching for their own pioneers and masterworks, funding specific institutions, and so on.

Even though the given definition of 'national cinema' refers to those films produced inside a determined territory, usually within the borders of a country the rest of the activities involved in cinema culture – not only the usual suspects of distribution, exhibition, and reception but also formation, academy, and divulgation – should not be forgotten. Minguet Batllori identifies three variables to define what is considered a national cinema on the basis of cinema, culture, and identity: 'the foreign gaze upon us', 'our gaze upon what's foreign', and 'our gaze upon ourselves'.[32] Therefore, national cinemas would always be related to their projection towards an alterity, an external 'Other' and a crossing of gazes that go back and forth in a transnational mirror's game. In addition, currently, attributing a film to a certain nationality is usually conditioned by the origin of its financial support. However, as Minguet Batllori states:

> immersed in the globalization and mixture of capital process, embracing economic criteria to adjust the limits of a national cinematography is neither useful nor matches what the objectives of the cinema historian – analyst or critic – must be.[33]

For that reason, the cultural and symbolic criteria have more weight when ascribing a certain nationality than do the economic ones, as Minguet Batllori demonstrates. According to Minguet Batllori, a cinema can mark its nationality by using a particular

[30] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 163.
[31] Soto-Vázquez, 'Extrañezas posibles', 85.
[32] Minguet Batllori, 'Lo nuestro y lo ajeno', 134–135: 'la mirada ajena ante lo nuestro', 'nuestra mirada de lo ajeno', and 'nuestra mirada frente a lo nuestro'.
[33] Minguet Batllori, 'Lo nuestro y lo ajeno', 132: 'inmersos en al proceso de globalización y de mezcolanza de capital, acogerse a criterios económicos para ajustar los límites de una cinematografía nacional no resulta ni útil ni ajustado a lo que deben ser los objetivos del historiador – analista o crítico – de cine.'

language; initiating a process of cultural symbiosis (for example, by adapting its canonical oeuvres); boosting the presence of historical or sociological motives of the country; making use of emblematic personalities; using anthropological or geographical resources (localizations or costumes used as ethnographic elements, for instance); and looking for common autochthonous formal filmic characteristics that could be attributed to a certain group of film-makers and become identifiable.[34]

As for Portugal and Spain, their national cinemas have undergone very different formation processes that have awoken diverse degrees of contestation. If the existence of an entity named 'Portuguese cinema' to denominate a transparent and geographical reality was almost uncontested from 1896 until 1950,[35] 'Spanish cinema' did not travel a comparable path. According to Tiago Baptista:

> Portuguese cinema never had a dominant genre; nor had it developed its own cinematographic style capable of achieving international relevance. What Portuguese cinema distinguished itself in, as Bénard da Costa stated, was in depicting Portugal, or better, in reflecting the national imaginary in cinema.[36]

Here, Costa puts into words an idea repeated profusely in Portuguese cinema history: that the dominant genre in Portuguese cinema was Portuguese cinema itself. However, from 1950 onwards, the public suffered a disenchantment with a new cinema tendency, known as *Cinema Novo*. This was an elitist reaction against a popular and mainstream national form of comedy and its objectives were to promote an alternative, authorial, modern, and uplifted image of Portuguese cinema abroad. However, in this shift, national cinema lost connection with the public inside the country.[37] The date coincides with the celebrated remark by the film-maker Juan Antonio Bardem in *Conversaciones de Salamanca* in 1955: 'Spanish cinema is politically ineffective, socially false, intellectually worthless, aesthetically non-existent, industrially crippled'.[38] It has been exhaustively quoted (either to agree or disagree with it) for its musicality and simple summary of the feeling of the

[34] Minguet Batllori, 'Lo nuestro y lo ajeno', 137–142.
[35] Tiago Baptista, 'Nacionalmente correcto: a invenção do cinema português', *Estudos do Século XX*, n. 9 (2009): 309.
[36] Baptista, 'Nacionalmente correcto', 307: 'o cinema português nunca tivera um género predominante, nem desenvolvera um estilo cinematográfico próprio capaz de ganhar relevância internacional. Aquilo em que o cinema português se distinguiu, defendia Bénard da Costa, foi em retratar Portugal, ou melhor, em refletir o imaginário nacional no cinema'.
[37] Baptista, 'Nacionalmente correcto', 313–314.
[38] Benet, *El cine español*, 13.

country's intellectuals and critics towards their cinema. It also led to an aesthetic renovation, called *Nuevo cine*, that mirrored European tendencies and looked for artistic recognition abroad.[39]

However, one relevant difference between Portuguese and Spanish cinema and their status as a national representation is that, while in Portugal there is certain agreement and institutional centralism regarding the role of the Cinemateca Portuguesa, in Spain, there are a multiplicity of autonomic institutions devoted to safeguarding the moving image patrimony and constructing the historical discourse that will remain for the future. As Soto-Vázquez states, 'while this fragmentation is politically reasonable, it is questionable from the point of view of an always precarious production, and it is absolutely critical at the moment of establishing the narrative, of constructing the memory'.[40] This particular political division has resulted in an uncommon proliferation of local and regional narratives (sometimes from nationalistic ideological positions) that gave rise to a decentred and fragmented history of Spanish early cinema.[41] However, this multinational history has favoured its understanding as an intertwinement of transnational and regional perspectives and has problematized a nationalistic homogeneous conception of Spanish cinema before other European countries, such as Portugal, have reached a similar position.[42]

Coming back to the scope of this dissertation, as Minguet Batllori highlights, cinematography, in its origins, was an 'essentially stateless medium'.[43] Without verbal language boundaries and being inherently cosmopolitan due to modern understandings of transport, circulation, and travelling, silent cinema was meant to be shared internationally and tour around the world, communicating through the shared iconographic, musical, and visual language.[44] The borderless scenario of the early film was a result not only of the

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[39] Rafael Utrera Macías, 'El concepto de cine nacional. Hacia otra Historia del Cine Español', *Comunicación*, n. 3 (2005): 93.

[40] Begoña Soto-Vázquez, 'El censo, el mapa y el museo', in *Once miradas sobre la crisis y el cine español*, ed. Luis Alonso García (Madrid: Ocho y medio, 2003), 186: 'Esta fragmentación razonable políticamente es más que cuestionable desde el punto de vista de una producción siempre precaria, pero es absolutamente crítica a la hora de establecer el relato, de construir la memoria.'

[41] Minguet Batllori, *Paisaje(s) del cine mudo en España*, 12–13.

[42] For more on the transnational and decentered multinational nature of Spanish cinema, see Jo Labanyi and Tatjana Pavlovic (eds.), *A Companion to Spanish Cinema* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), in particular Part I, 'Reframing the National'. 13–110. Also, Nancy Berthier and Jean-Claude Seguin (eds.), *Cine, nación y nacionalidades en España* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2007).

[43] Minguet Batllori, 'Lo nuestro y lo ajeno', 136: 'el dispositivo cinematográfico es un medio esencialmente apátrida.'

[44] Richard Abel, Giorgio Bertellini, and Rob King, 'Introduction', in *Early Cinema and the "National"*,

internationalization of the practices of production, distribution, and exhibition of the films – and the careers of the professionals who frequently travelled across borders – but also 'it reveals an essential gestalt of cinema's ambition during its era of novelty and innovation', according to Tom Gunning.[45]

Following the same logic, if we are dealing with a global object, as is silent cinema, its historiography and analysis must break the national boundaries of film history and not be exclusively attached to nationalist approaches. For that reason, it is necessary to develop 'critical models that traverse and interrogate nation-bound rubrics', some of those models being the ones proposed from feminist film historiography.[46] For instance, Maule, as one of the key scholars in the area, proposes a transnational approach to silent cinema for its potentiality to offer answers from a different perspective:

> the connotation of transnationalism as a supranational imagined community within which people, technologies, media images, and ideologies circulate, which the theorization of globalization offers, well suits the borderless scenario of early film practices.[47]

Nevertheless, and in spite of its internationalization, it does not mean that early cinema could be interpreted homogeneously, assuming that it meant the same in every geopolitical context and that it underwent the same temporal or cultural processes everywhere. Discursive and methodological approaches must be adapted, and the used conceptual frameworks must be interdisciplinary, coming from both cultural theory and social history.[48] To those conceptual fields, I would add the one coming from comparative studies, because geographically based comparison can reveal much more about cinema's reality than isolated studies within the borders of a single territory. In the case of this dissertation, for example, the Iberian studies perspective helps to open the research to a broader corpus of comparable female experiences of film-making that helps to identify models of access to silent cinema that would be invisible otherwise.

Therefore, the exhaustion of the national model has produced two apparently oppositional tendencies in film historiography: a tendency towards local micro-histories of cinema; and a tendency towards transnational comparative cinema histories.

(New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing, 2016), 2.

[45] Gunning, 'Early Cinema as Global Cinema', 13.

[46] Bean, 'Introduction. Toward a Feminist Historiography of Early Cinema', 11.

[47] Maule, 'Feminist Film History', 53.

[48] Maule, 'Feminist Film History', 50–53.

Furthermore, feminist film scholars' contributions, such as Maule's, have proven to be crucial in establishing and advancing the transnational comparative approach to cinema histories by rejecting 'the Western-capitalist-liberal economic standards or aesthetic categories' and diversifying the methodologies of analysis and conceptual frameworks.[49] Continuing with Maule's reflections about the relation established by feminist scholars between transnationality in early film studies and gender, she argues that:

> The asynchronous and varying articulation of gender and modernity within different contexts of film production and reception around the world is a central issue in the feminist take on transnationalism. Feminist approaches to early cinema underscore the complex articulation of transnationalism by investigating women's participation in modernity at the interface of local, global, subnational, national and global practices of film production and reception.[50]

The nationally centred historiographic tradition has indeed posed a great challenge to finding and inscribing women into silent film histories. The feminist transnational approach to women's participation in modernity brings it to this dissertation as one possible solution to their oblivion and apparent absence and inactivity in the Iberian context. As the feminist film scholar Christine Gledhill argues, the effect of transnationalizing the notion of a 'national cinema' not only liberates it from its geographical borders, 'but extends the conception of cinema beyond the dominance of the fiction feature film to documentary, educational films, amateur filmmaking, and the home movie-areas of discursive filmmaking more readily available to women'.[51]

In this sense, transnationalizing cinema studies would bring value to usually disregarded film practices and professions in which women had a more prominent place. In addition, regarding the case of singular women artists, it was common that their careers and work during the silent period were international.[52] Many of them worked in several

[49] Maule, 'Feminist Film History', 53.
[50] Maule, 'Feminist Film History', 48.
[51] Gledhill, 'Introduction: Transnationalizing Women's Film History': 279.
[52] As Tiago Baptista confirms in an interview about Rino Lupo's international career: 'And if Rino Lupo's career was fantastic, in fact, in the 1920s it was the standard of cinema: internationalism was the norm. The circulation between countries of directors, technicians and actors, not only in Europe, but between Europe and Hollywood too.' ('E se a carreira do Rino Lupo é fantástica, na realidade, nos anos 1920 este era o padrão no cinema: o internacionalismo era a norma. A circulação entre países de realizadores, técnicos como actores, não só na Europa, como entre a Europa e Hollywood.') Ricardo Vieira Lisboa, 'Tiago Baptista: É importante abraçar a diferença entre a película e o digital', *À Pala de Walsh* (11 April 2017), www.apaladewalsh.com.

different countries throughout their careers. So, in their cases, the study of their biographies has been postponed or dismissed because no country has felt totally responsible for the care and preservation of their films and memory. Their partial, sometimes problematic relationship with different nations and states and their border-crossing careers have made them uncomfortable subjects for some countries and institutions that have preferred to invest resources in reconstructing only 'figures and heroes' for their national cinema histories, instead of paying attention to more elusive transnational figures.

In relation to the two case studies of this dissertation, both Almeida and Cortesina developed transnational careers, lived in different countries, and related to different cultures. This reality makes it difficult and artificial to ascribe their biographies to any nationalistic project. Both of them have in common that their work had an impact in more than one country during their lifetime which, at some point, made them 'suspect' of being anti-patriotic from the point of view of their country of origin. Also, their activism in turbulent political times in Europe, and more specifically in the Iberian countries, made them unfit for certain institutional desirable narratives, depending on the period. On the one hand, Cortesina was erased from Franco's regime for being openly anti-fascist. On the other hand, Almeida's closeness to the Estado Novo and her changeable opinion about women's emancipation prevented her from becoming a leading figure to recover for a feminist and progressive agenda. For that reason, reconstructing their careers and comparing their cases have presented several challenges related to the need to break with the exclusive national cinema histories tradition that has been the rule in both the Spanish and Portuguese contexts.

As will be further discussed in *Part II*, Virgínia de Castro e Almeida was one of the most prolific Portuguese literature writers of the twentieth century. Possessed of an excellent work discipline, she experimented with many different styles and genres and wrote for a living more than ninety-six books, three adaptations, translations, and at least three film scenarios. Some of her books were even published after her death, and many others were re-edited, reaching twelve editions in the case of *Céu aberto*, eleven editions for *Em Pleno Azul*, six for *História de Dona Redonda e da sua gente* and five for *Aventuras de Dona Redonda*. Her work has also been published in many different countries such as Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, Macedonia, Spain, the United Kingdom, and, of course, Portugal. Some of them are still relevant today and are re-edited

seventy years after being written, as for Routledge's 2019 edition of *Revival: Conquest and Discoveries of Henry the Navigator: Being the Chronicles of Azurara (1936)*.

However, her case is not only that of a popular writer being translated by others into different languages, but she herself was a translator and interpreter of historical chronicles and canonical works into French. This was a pedagogic action to disseminate Portuguese history abroad, aiming to connect culturally and share her country's history by reaching a large and international audience. Even her romanced biography of Luiz de Camões and the first volume of the collection about the history of the great Portuguese navigators and colonists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had some repercussion in the milieu of French publication. They were reviewed in the *Bulletin de la Société de géographie* in 1935 and the *Hispanique Bulletin* in 1936.[53] She also translated classical works of Miguel de Cervantes, Charles Dickens, Erich Kästner, and George Sand into Portuguese to be published in Portugal and Brazil.

Regarding her cinema career, Almeida was the first production company owner who made a commercial move towards Portuguese cinema's internationalization. She tried to establish unmediated bridges between France and Portugal, creating the Prix de Castro in 1922 and opening company offices in Paris and Lisbon. She also acted as a cultural mediator, bringing French crew to Portugal, which resulted in the creation of important emotional bonds between them and the 'hosting' land.[54] The physical displacement of foreign professionals gave place to an exchange of practices with the result that, learning from their experience, some Portuguese technicians and artists became film-makers in their own right (for example, Arthur Duarte). In addition, one of Almeida's main objectives was to outline Portuguese culture internationally and, most

[53] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, *Vie de Camões. Le Poète de Lusiades et le Portugal de son temps* (preface by Pierre de Lanux) (Paris and Brussels: DuChartres/Louis Desmet Verteneuil, 1935) and *Chroniques de Gomes Eannes de Azurara. La conquête de Ceuta, la découverte de la Guinée. Les grands navigateurs et colons portugais du XVe et du XVIe siècles,* vol. 1 (preface by Marechal Lyantey) (Paris: Duchartres, 1934). In Jean Perez and Joseph Vassal, *La Géographie. Terre, Air, Mer. Bulletin de la Société de géographie*, n. 4 (October 1935): 249 and 262; Georges Le Gentil, 'Le mouvement intellectuel en Portugal', *Bulletin Hispanique* 38, n. 2 (1936): 208–225.

[54] For example, the operator Daniel Quintin stated in an interview: 'My impressions about your land exceeded my expectations. (...) I will never forget this beautiful land' ('As minhas impressões sobre a vossa terra, foram mesmo alem da minha expectativa. (...) [J]amais me esquecerei d'esta linda terra'). In *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 7 (Lisbon, 1 April 1923), 94. Roger Lion told a French journal: 'I have found in Portugal a truly touching welcome' ('J'ai trouvé au Portugal un accueil vraiment touchant'). R. J., 'Ciné-Miroir au Portugal. La Sirène de Pierre', *Ciné-Miroir*, n. 18 (15 January 1923), 23.

importantly, distinguish it from Spanish culture, as the general feeling abroad was that they were interchangeable, or worse, that Portugal was seen as a region of Spain.[55]

The mixed Luso-French professional composition of Fortuna Films, like many other production companies of the time, opened a strong debate from a nationalistic perspective as to whether *A Sereia de Pedra* and *Os Olhos da Alma* could be considered Portuguese productions. The production company was heavily criticized for its '*francesismo*' and for bringing French film-makers to replace national character, talent, and know-how. The press portrayed the efforts to revive the national cinema system of the early 1920s as a battle between 'them' (the French) and 'us' (the Portuguese), censuring the anti-patriotic treason of those who worked with the enemy:

> Do you know a higher offense to our patriotic spirit, to our aspirations to a Portuguese cinematography, than the invasion of those human locusts who seem driven by the same intentions and the same voracity as their insect colleagues, that when they fly away, they have eaten away everything where they passed by? [56]

Also, when Fortuna Films' productions were released in Brazil in 1925, the journal *Fon-Fon* accused them of being a fraud for presenting the productions as Portuguese when they were not, and of obscuring their origin in their promotion:

> First of all, we don't think it is the correct way to negotiate, exhibit a film, taking care before to mask its original saying because... it is in French! Don't give the name of the principal artists because... they are French! And getting to the point of putting D. Virginia de Castro as writer and director when she just wrote, because the director was Roger Lyon... also French![57]

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[55] See, for example, the article in the Appendix A. of this dissertation where Almeida explains what drove her towards cinema: 'There [in Germany] they know nothing about Portugal. 'Portugal?' – they say – 'Ah! I know, it is a Spanish region' I heard that multiple times and I thought to make my country become known'. 'Uma escritora portuguesa', *Diário de Lisboa*, n. 402 (Lisbon, 26 July 1922), 5: ('Lá [na Alemanha] desconhece-se absolutamente Portugal. 'Portugal?' – dizem – 'Ah! Bem sei, uma provincia de Espanha.' Ouvia isto repetidas vezes e pensei em fazer tornar conhecido o meu pais.')

[56] Ernesto de Albuquerque in Snob, 'Ao Soalheiro. Conversa amena', *Cine-Lisboa*, n. 4 (Lisbon, 25 October 1923), 9: 'Quer então maior ofensa aos nossos brios de patriota, ás nossas aspirações d'uma arte portuguêsa no campo de cinematografia, do que a invasão desses humanos gafanhotos que parecem animados das mesmas intenções e da mesma voracidade dos seus camaradas insectos e que, assim, ao levantar vôo devem deixar roido tudo por onde passarem?'

[57] 'Os Olhos da Alma', *Fon-Fon*, n. 26 (Rio de Janeiro, 27 June 1925), 75: 'Primeiro que tudo, não achamos modo correcto de negociar, fazer exhibir um film, tendo-se antes o cuidado de encobrir o seu dizer original, porque ... e está em francez! Não dar o nome dos principaes artistas porque ... são

Even though this discussion might seem banal or unimportant to historiography nowadays, it is not. It has deep contemporary repercussions; one example is the fact that, at least, two different versions of the film *Os Olhos da Alma* exist in 35mm but with different editing and length, and with intertitles in different languages: a French version in black and white, 1.524 meters, around 839 shots, 60 scenes, and 91 intertitles coming from Archives Françaises du Film/CNC, Bois d'Arcy and another a Portuguese tinted copy, 1.440 meters, around 866 shots, 70 scenes and 146 intertitles from Cinemateca Portuguesa/Arquivo Nacional da Imagen em Movimento. Was, then, *Os Olhos da Alma* – which was released in both French and Portuguese cinemas – a Portuguese film, or was it a Portuguese version of the French *Les Yeux de l'Âme*? Only a transnational perspective and international cooperation between archives can give insights about extant copies of silent films nowadays, as working with different versions is the most common situation.[58]

Almeida's activities as writer and cinema producer always had a transnational ambition and she guided her professional choices with an eye outside Portuguese borders. However, I hypothesize that, although she actively promoted cultural exchanges with Northern Europe, and contributed as part of a European network of intellectuals in the work of institutionalizing its common identity, her international activities have not resulted in her being better recognized in Portugal, nor in any other country. Her professional activities outside Portugal were seen first as elitist and anti-patriotic, and afterward as too nationalistic, as she was an active part of the Estado Novo's international propagandistic efforts.

Some of the most relevant recuperation works of Portuguese women intellectuals are coming from transnational/transcultural or comparative studies in an effort that aims to go beyond the narrower scope of national frameworks.[59] Here, much of the insight

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francezes! E chegar ao ponto de dar como escriptora e directora D. Virgínia de Castro, quando ella apenas escreveu, porquanto o director foi Roger Lyon... um francez tambem!' See also 'A Sereia de Pedra', *Fon-Fon*, n. 29 (Rio de Janeiro, 18 July 1925), 61.

[58] As Costa notes in the Prologue of the book *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*, it was only thanks to the cooperation between the Cinemateca Portuguesa- Museu do Cinema (Portugal) and the Archives Françaises du Film – CNC/Bois d'Arcy (France) that the reconstruction of the biographies and filmographies of those three film-makers was possible. João Bénard da Costa, 'Nota de Abertura', *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu. Franceses tipicamente portugueses*, ed. Tiago Baptista (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa – Museu do Cinema, 2003), 11–15.

[59] I will only mention few of the most relevant latest contributions such as Claúdia J. Maia, 'Feminismo e narrativa nacional no Brasil e em Portugal', *Revista de Estudos de Género* 25, n. 3 (Florianópolis: Universidade Federal Santa Catarina, 2017): 1055-1071; Silvia Bermúdez and Roberta Johnson (eds.), *A New History of Iberian Feminisms* (Toronto, Toronto University Press, 2018); and Santiago Pérez Isasi and Catarina Sequeira Rodrigues, 'Escritoras e intelectuales mujeres en las redes de intercambio cultural

comes from scholars, departments, and research groups working on Iberian, Ibero-American or Lusophone studies. Although Almeida regularly published in the Brazilian press and travelled around Spain, her interest was focused on other countries such as France, Switzerland, and England, which she considered closer to the ideal of society and to the Europeanist trend that she envisioned (and which preceded the later confluence and union of the European countries).

However, it is probable that had she developed stronger Iberian and Lusophone relations, she would have been in a more prominent position in Portuguese cultural memory nowadays.[60] This hypothesis is based on the increasing scholarly attention that those intellectuals who left evidence of their professional or personal bonds with Spain and Brazil during the first decades of the twentieth century as cultural mediators are getting nowadays.[61] For example, the Portuguese writer, and Republican activist for women's rights Ana de Castro Osório (Mangualde, 1872–Setúbal, 1935) has been the object of several articles and monographic works for playing an essential role in creating and maintaining cultural networks with Spain and Brazil. Her connections and relationship with other close intellectuals mean she is remembered as an important cultural representative of Portugal.[62] While in Spain, she established a very close friendship with the feminist writer and journalist Carmen de Burgos;[63] in Brazil, where

ibérico (1870-1930): tareas pendientes' in *Senderos que se bifurcan. Alteridad y género en el mundo literario hispánico*, ed. Yasmina Romero Morales, Luca Cerullo and Sabrina Laroussi (Madrid: Silex, 2021) [Accepted for publication].

[60] One noteworthy exception is the work of Chatarina Edfeldt, 'Early Twentieth-Century Portuguese Feminist Writers as Transnational Cultural Mediators: Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and Ana de Castro Osório', in *Portuguese Studies: Transnational Portuguese Women Writers* 35, n. 2 (Modern Humanities Research Association, 2019): 167–184, in which the author explores the cross-cultural relationship between Swedish intellectual Göran Björkman and Ana de Castro Osório; and Virgínia de Castro e Almeida's admiration and dissemination of Ellen Key's feminist literary work.

[61] Some examples of the interest that Lusophone and Ibero-American cultural relations during the twentieth century are arousing in academia are the research project funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme 'Social Networks of the Past. Mapping Hispanic and Lusophone Literary Modernity, 1898–1959', Global Literary Studies Research Group, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, (Spain); and the cluster DIIA-Iberian and Ibero-American Dialogues, Centre for Comparative Studies at the School of Arts and Humanities of the Universidad de Lisboa (Portugal).

[62] She also had a great presence in the Spanish press of the time, where she was presented to Spanish readers as a representative of Portuguese feminist intellectuals: see Julio Nombela y Campos, 'Mujeres notables. Ana de Castro Osorio', *Vida práctica*, n. 3, in *La Última Moda*, n. 950 (Madrid, 18 March 1906), 10–12; and Carmen de Burgos (pseud. *Colombine*), 'Femeninas. Ana de Castro Osório', *Heraldo de Madrid*, n. 9.099 (Madrid, 30 October 1915), 4.

[63] Osório's transnational friendship with Carmen de Burgos (Rodalquilar, 1867 – Madrid, 1932) has been well studied and has become representative of a first-wave Iberian transnational feminist alliance as both

she lived from 1911 to 1914, Osório made great advances for strengthening cultural and political relations, and aimed to create one 'Grande Aliança'.[64] In this sense, her transnational relations with culturally, linguistically or geographically close countries assured Osório a level of academic and editorial visibility nowadays that has no parallel with any other female intellectual.

In any case, attributing the greater popularity of Osório compared to Almeida only to her Iberian and Luso-Brazilian cross-cultural mediation is too simplistic, as there are other reasons for it. One of the most relevant ones might be their different position towards feminist activism and, afterwards, their different political relation with Salazar's regime. Osório has been recently recognized as a symbol of early Portuguese feminism for being the founder of the Grupo Português de Estudos Feministas (1907), Liga Republicana das Mulheres Portuguesas (1909), Associação de Propaganda Feminista (1912), Comissão Feminina 'Pela Pátria' (1916) and Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas.[65] She was also one of the main female figures supporting the Republic's constitution and a crucial agent in drafting the Divorce Act (approved by the Portuguese parliament in 1910) in collaboration with Justice Minister Afonso Costa.

Almeida, who is also considered an early Portuguese feminist by many scholars (although in a quite theoretical, moderate, and highly elitist way) and who supported socialist principles and Republicanism, took a more conservative stance after being disappointed by the First Republic and ended up rejecting feminist and progressive ideals, working as a propagandist for the Estado Novo regime and even proclaiming her

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were linked by their literary work and their fight for the emancipation of women. See Rosa María Ballesteros García, 'Cartas a una amiga portuguesa (Carmen de Burgos y Ana de Castro Osório)', in *Actas del III Congreso de Historia de Andalucía* (Cordoba: Publicaciones Obra Social y Cultural Cajasur, 2002), 21–38; Ángeles Ezama Gil, 'Ana de Castro Osório, una mujer que traspasó fronteras: sobre unos textos olvidados en la española Revista de la Raza', *Revista de Escritoras Ibéricas* (November 2013): 101–128; and Concepción Nuñez Rey, 'Un puente entre España y Portugal: Carmen de Burgos y su amistad con Ana de Castro Osório', *Arbor* 190 n. 766 (March–April 2014): a115, 1–14. It is also addressed in several chapters of Bermúdez and Johnson (eds.), *New History of Iberian Feminisms*. See, in particular, Deborah Madden, 'Feminist Thought in Portugal, 1900–1926', 205–208.

[64] Her Luso-Brazilian connections through publication in the press, editorial work and cross-cultural relationships and friendships with other female Brazilian intellectuals is well studied by Eduardo da Cruz in his works 'Ana de Castro Osório no Brasil: Imprensa periódica, sociabilidade, política e mercado editorial', *Miscelânea. Revista de Literatura e Vida Social* 24 (2018): 193–214; 'Mulheres e feminismo no *Portugal Moderno* (1899-1913)' (Portal da Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, 2019): 1–32; and 'Uma feminista portuguesa no Brasil – a propaganda de Ana de Castro Osório no romance *Mundo Novo*', *Revista Araticum* 19, n. 1 (2019): 39–53.

[65] The Feminist Studies Group (1907), the Republican League of Portuguese Women (1909), the Feminist Commission for the Country (1916), and the Portuguese Women's Crusade.

sympathy towards other fascist regimes in Europe. Almeida's practical, conservative attitude was defined by her friend Osório as a woman who 'never fought for the triumph of social ideals except in the chapters of her novels'.[66] However, as Chatarina Edfeldt points out, both of them shared the patriotic Republican 'idea of the formation of the bourgeois mother as an educator who will ensure the preservation (and hygiene) of the Portuguese race and identity'.[67] This was part of a transnational Western tendency of a 'nationalistic understanding of society as a biological organism',[68] a view that was taken to the extreme by fascist regimes such as Francoism and Estado Novo, which Almeida supported, represented in Portugal by its leader, Salazar.

I hypothesize that Almeida's changeability and openness about her political concerns during her lifetime has made her an uncomfortable and unclassifiable figure of Portuguese history and, therefore, has created uneasiness in her recovery to cultural history from the past. It is difficult to reclaim her as a feminist as she distanced herself from the movement and even claimed to regret writing her book *A Mulher* in 1913, one of the first Portuguese feminist manifestos; it is similarly difficult to classify her as a traditionalist regarding her own life and literary work. She also maintained an oscillation between cosmopolitanism and nationalistic views during her lifetime, which makes her a challenging figure to approach from an ideological perspective. Even though her literary career, trans-artistic mediation, and transnational mediation was important for the country before April 1975, she was a divorced non-heterosexual woman working for a patriarchal, traditional regime that would not make any effort to maintain her memory as a relevant intellectual. In addition, her political position as a supporter of European fascism and a hired propagandist of the Portuguese Imperial history was unacceptable for a post-April 1975 democratic account of the past. For that reason, despite the certain relevance that Almeida enjoyed while living, she was almost forgotten after her death in 1945, and no relevant monographic works have been written to recover her memory.

Helena Cortesina's case might be paradigmatic, too, for a transnational approach to cultural studies and biographies due to her situation as an exile who divided her life between two countries. Although she achieved a place in the Argentinian cultural milieu,

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[66] Ana de Castro Osório, *Portugal Moderno*, discussed in Cruz, 'Mulheres e feminismo no *Portugal Moderno* (1899–1913)', 22: 'também nunca lutou pelo triunfo das ideias sociais senão nos capítulos dos seus romances.'

[67] Edfeldt, 'Early Twentieth-Century Portuguese Feminist Writers', 182.

[68] Edfeldt, 'Early Twentieth-Century Portuguese Feminist Writers', 183.

she always maintained her Spanish roots, promoting cultural exchange between those countries. Her involvement in projects in which she interpreted Spanish characters or even from Spanish cultural roots, such as García Lorca's plays, can be analysed as her efforts to become a cultural ambassador of her motherland, at the same time as she became totally inscribed in the Argentinian culture, as proved by the fact that she never returned to live in Spain, even with the advent of the democracy after the death of the dictator Franco.

Cortesina's exile, and her work in both theatre and cinema, have resulted in almost total oblivion from both countries' cultural histories. Her name is usually absent from the publications recovering the memory of Republican exiles of the Spanish Civil War, even when she was connected by friendship or professional bonds to most artists who are listed profusely.[69] Even though her work did not stand out as part of an authorial or canonical history, her professional experience as part of the Spanish emigrants who worked and contributed to the cultural heritage of Argentina is valuable in itself. However, her position in a liminal space between countries and mediums has left her out of most historical accounts, including catalogues or cast lists of films in which she had a role. This is the case, for example, in the existing promotional brochures for the film *La dama duende* (Luis Saslavsky, 1945) submitted by the distribution company CIFESA to the Spanish censorship board in June 1949 with the intention of exhibiting it in Spain. Although I could not find a list of censored artists' names during Francoism, some facts suggest that Cortesina's name could have been explicitly banned from appearing on Spanish screens after the end of the Civil War. In the aforementioned CIFESA document, there is a list of actors in which Republican supporters' names, such as those of Manuel Collado, Helena Cortesina, and Andrés Mejuto, who took leading roles, do not appear. Also, in the letter of appeal sent by Enrique Songel Mullor, representative of CIFESA, to

[69] In Román Gubern's groundbreaking first study *Cine español en el exilio (1936–1939)* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1976), Cortesina's name is misquoted and she is referred to only once as Helena Cortina, even in the writings of many of her colleagues in the profession and friends such as Alberto Closas, Enrique Diosdado, María Teresa León, Andrés Mejuto, Gori Muñoz, Santiago Ontañón, and Margarita Xirgu, among others. This mistake is partially corrected in Alberto Elena's chapter 'Cruce de destinos: intercambios cinematográficos entre España y América Latina', in *La nueva memoria: Historia(s) del cine español (1939–2000)*, ed. José Luis Castro de Paz, Julio Pérez Perucha, and Santos Zunzunegui (La Coruña: Vía Láctea editorial, 2005), 343, in which he acknowledges the merit of creating the first intended catalogue of exiled Spanish cinema workers, while also recognizing its limitations, and Cortesina's name appears correctly as part of the cast of the film *La dama duende*.

the Junta Superior de Orientación Cinematográfica, which had rejected exhibition of the film in November 1949, he argues that:

> That on July 20, and precisely for specific guidance in this regard, we presented to the Dirección General de Cinematografía y Teatro an exact copy of the technical and artistic credits so that they could indicate to us the names that we had to delete from all propaganda and advertisements, and according to their answer, we ordered the business guides, in the form of the attached copies, and all the advertisements regarding the launch of the film in question, in which not only were the indicated names deleted [María Teresa León and Rafael Alberti, scriptwriters of the film] but also others, leaving only those which were stated on the censorship sheet.[70]

The decision to censor the film's exhibition was ratified by the Junta Superior de Orientación Cinematográfica in January 1950. Franco's regime not only aimed to prevent the Spanish audience from being exposed to 'communist' propaganda, but also wanted to eradicate 'undesirable' figures from cultural memory, removing their names from the public sphere. This attitude, which was maintained for decades, has resonated in national cinema history, leaving some names and events out of sight of historians both during the dictatorship and the subsequent advent of democracy.

Certainly, this was not an isolated case in cinematography. The political indoctrination and erasure of the Republican heritage after the Spanish Civil War was a thoughtfully planned mission undertaken by the fascist government of Franco.[71] The fascists blamed leftist intellectuals for the progressive destruction of Spanish national culture and identity, and its contamination by international and vanguardist forces. In that sense, war against intellectuals was not only openly declared but was fiercely waged, with efforts to destroy physically and metaphorically every trace left by the Republic and its multiple cultural, educative, and artistic initiatives such as the Institución Libre de

[70] Enrique Songel Mullor, letter to the Junta Superior de Orientación Cinematográfica, Madrid, 7 December 1949, 'Expediente de censura. 9.426', Archivo General de la Administración: 'Que con fecha 20 de julio, y precisamente para orientación concreta a este respecto, presentamos a la Dirección General de Cinematografía y Teatro copia exacta de las fichas técnica y artística para que nos indicaran los nombres que habíamos de suprimir en toda propaganda y publicidad, y de acuerdo a su respuesta, se ordenaron las guías de empresario, según copia adjunta, y todas las propagandas pertinentes al lanzamiento, en su día, de la películas en cuestión, en las que no solamente se eliminaron los nombres anteriormente señalados [María Teresa León y Rafael Alberti, guionistas de la película] sino otros más, dejando tan solo los que se hicieron constar en la hoja de petición de censura.'

[71] Allison Taillot, 'A prueba del tiempo: las intelectuales antifascistas españolas entre silencio oficial y lucha por la memoria', *Historia Actual Online* (Spring 2009): 30.

Enseñanza, the Residencia de Estudiantes, La Barraca, and so on. This belligerent attitude towards culture and art, added to the economic catastrophe of the country, made many intellectuals embrace exile as the only possible solution after the war. Most of them travelled to France and others to countries such as Mexico, Chile, or Argentina.

According to Carlos Blanco Aguinaga in his study on literature, what is important to remember is that Spanish culture after the end of the war in 1939 was divided between 'winners' and 'losers'.[72] The winners owned the agency of saying, deleting, and acting, while the losers had severe limitations on their possibilities of saying and acting: they were not allowed to have a 'voice'. This silence was imposed for both kinds of 'losers': the exiled and the *insiled* (an expression used to define those who suffered from the repression of Francoist institutions and 'interior exile'). While those who remained inside Spanish territory had to find an 'allusive/elusive' clandestine literary production, those outside the country had the freedom of writing and publishing openly. Nevertheless, the final result was almost the same: the impossibility of reaching Spanish readers inside the country. This conclusion can be applied to cinema, too, although production was scarce and consisted of only a few movies produced in exile aimed mainly at the Spanish public with the objective of entering into dialogue with the political reality of the time (in more or less subtle ways). This was, for instance, the case for *Bodas de sangre* (Edmundo Guibourg, 1938) and *La dama duende* (Luis Saslavsky, 1945), and both films were banned from being shown to Spanish audiences by Franco's regime.

Blanco Aguinaga additionally commented on the Spanish literature written in exile, saying that he could not imagine that it would not have '*someplace* in some History, because, after all, no human production can be left out of History'.[73] According to Blanco Aguinaga, to find the place in history in which the literature of the exile could be a part, it was necessary 'to invent another way of understanding and inscribing the literature of the Spanish exile of 39 in the history of Spanish literature'; in other words, 'finding a way of narrating history' was still a possibility.[74] This is also my proposal in the case of cinema history: finding an alternative way of narrating cinema history that could embrace those films and people who circulated in the margins outside and across countries' borders and

[72] Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, 'La literatura del exilio en su historia', *Migraciones y Exilios*, n. 3 (2002): 30.
[73] Blanco Aguinaga, 'La literatura del exilio en su historia', 30: '*Algún sitio* en alguna Historia ya que, a fin de cuentas, ninguna producción humana puede quedar fuera de la Historia' [emphasis in original].
[74] Blanco Aguinaga, 'La literatura del exilio en su historia', 30: 'Tendríamos que inventarnos otra manera de entender y de inscribir la literatura del exilio español del 39 en la historia de la literatura española. Es decir: quedaba aún por encontrar la forma de narrar la historia'.

who are not recognized by national chronicles. A non-nationalistic narration of cinema history might open the gates to transnational accounts and histories of films, practices, and exchanges that broaden the comprehension of the processes behind the production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption of films. In the case of Cortesina, her border-crossing across Spanish and Argentinian artistic environments constitutes her as an important transnational cultural mediator instead of a minor figure in the several milieus that she inhabited.

Both researched examples, Almeida and Cortesina, prove that telling cinema history (or any cultural history) from an ideological approach, centring the scope on cinema produced within a region determined by political borders, whose protagonists are a selection of convenient figures for the nationalistic discourse, and conditioned by a political agenda, leave too many nuances and perspectives behind. In addition, feminist film scholars have largely identified the focus on 'nation' and the writing of national cinema histories as part of the challenges that obscure raising questions of gender. For that reason, Gledhill warns of the 'need to develop research methodologies, connect resources in different national archives, and develop new ways of organizing findings'.[75] This methodological shift would 'enable us to research, interpret, and write border-crossing, transnationally interconnected histories' that might shed some light on women's apparent unsuccessful cinema careers. As Gledhill warns, a transnational approach would also imply the need to broaden the range of sources 'outside the film industry such as shipping lists, census records, birth, death and marriage certificates, biographies and autobiographies, fan magazines, and so on'.[76]

By focusing on their international careers and their work from a transnational perspective, this dissertation opens up a wider field of hypotheses and questions that might be asked concerning women's access to silent cinema in the Iberian context based on the examples of Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and Helena Cortesina. It also presents a wide variety of scattered sources found in dispersed international archives that have enabled access to biographical and career information that is otherwise ignored. As Portuguese and Spanish cinema histories have been traditionally restricted to the events circumscribed by their statal national borders, cultural mediators who developed international careers, raised questions about the identitarian hegemonic discourse, and

[75] Gledhill, 'Introduction: Transnationalizing Women's Film History', 276.
[76] Gledhill, 'Introduction: Transnationalizing Women's Film History', 277.

linked people from different cultures, have been underestimated. Also, some professionals who developed their careers in more than one country have had their trajectories blurred and erased, as none of the countries have felt them to be exclusive 'national heroes' and, therefore, their figures have not been reclaimed. This situation fails to do justice to their dynamic position as mediators in transnational processes of cultural exchange. Following this awareness, it is important to note, as Dall'Asta does, that (once again) feminist film historical studies, and their long-lasting romance with comparatism and transnationalism, 'find [themselves] positioned at a particularly advanced point in methodological terms, showing how the inclusion of such apparently unheroic professional figures can also be extremely valuable for non-exclusively women-oriented versions of cinema's histories'.[77]

In this sense, emerging non-nationalistic cultural studies can also benefit cinema studies by broadening the scope of cinema history – not referring only to the films produced in a country, but also to the distribution circuits and exhibition that have shaped the filmgoers' memory. Also, having open political stances and activism, as Cortesina and Almeida had, converted them into uncomfortable figures that could lead to their oblivion and their being erased from different ideologically nationalistic perspectives. This is an important question in a time of historical revision and recontextualization when thinking about the limits of cancellation and censorship, and how to counterbalance the centre and the margins without simply substituting some names for others.

This does not mean that national cinema accounts should be dismissed, as they serve as the basis for inscribing a transnational perspective. The comparison of individual cases is deeply rooted in a previous national analysis of practices and fluxes. However, even using it as a useful platform, it is time to replace the nationalistic approach to cinema, and I argue that comparative biographical work would be a suitable and fruitful alternative. As we have seen, professional work was mainly cross-border and migration was common practice among cinema workers during the silent period, thus dislocating their career stories.[78] Film studies have historically approached transnational careers and experiences of cinema from a nationalistic perspective (both geographically and ideologically) with the visible limitations of scope that this produces. However, exploring 'careerographies' and individual case studies as a way of comparing transnational

[77] Dall'Asta, 'On Frieda Klug', 311.
[78] Gledhill, 'Introduction: Transnationalizing Women's Film History', 277.

practices and cinema cultures is a more productive way of overcoming the national paradigm and establishing diverse conclusions that could be relevant to different societies outside statal or regional borders. Also, those specific histories might be replicated and answer questions that resonate on a more global level.

3.3 The isolated approach to cinema's medium specificity

According to Thomas Elsaesser in his defence of media archaeology as a model for the 'new cinema history', the study of early cinema has been strongly wronged by linear organicist accounts of traditional film history partly because of the historiographical models that have been used. These models 'consigned the period – when narrowed down to a single medium, rather than taking in the entire media-scape – to the stage of infancy and the status of the primitive'. [79] For that reason, changing the historiographical methods and concepts is key for evaluating the early period and, I will add, women's access and contributions to it. As Elsaesser points out, the new models should:

> cope with non-linear developments, with inconsistencies and open questions, with apparent breaks and dead ends, and which [were] able and willing to see the cinema within broader media-formations that could place very different phenomena – as well as the different media – into specific historical contexts.[80]

In this sense, one of the available and most interesting proposals regarding the study of cross-media cinema history is the paradigm of media archaeology proposed by Elsaesser as part of the 'new cinema history' perspective. In my opinion, a comparative approach can link both initiatives, biographical methodology and media archaeology, in order to disturb and re-frame traditional film history, and to open up the space for alternative cinema histories that have been overlooked. Although media archaeology is interested in techno-cultural media processes, this dissertation is concerned with socio-cultural processes and will avoid entering into discussion of technological issues. However, the processes I am dealing with happened in diverse mediums and practices that came from different technological, industrial and creative procedures, such as literature, theatre, variety shows, and cinema, and from women's social position within them. This research

[79] Elsaesser, 'Media archaeology as symptom', 186.
[80] Elsaesser, 'Media archaeology as symptom', 186.

has in common with the media archaeology approach the self-reflexivity and self-awareness as methodological choice that makes the researching process visible and evident for the reader as an exercise of academic transparency.

However, Emeterio Díez Puertas points out that 'film critics and theorists have always preferred to write about the specific and original aspects of the Seventh Art'[81] instead of talking about what it owes to those that preceded it. In its early indeterminacy of functions, cinema was heavily influenced by the more established arts, crafts, and spectacles of the time. However, early cinema probably owes the most to less recognized entertainment: circus and variety shows. From them, it took the objective of fascinating the audience, the desire for unreality, the essence of the attractions, the exhibition spaces, and the popular public.[82] Those important aspects defined cinema's future as a medium intimately linked to modernity, urban life, and the collective experience.

Therefore, I argue that while film history is susceptible to being narrated as a single medium because it focuses on textual, formal, or technological analysis, the cinema culture of the first quarter of the twentieth century can only be approached from an intermedial perspective. No cultural history, neither from the producer's point of view nor from the audience's point of view, can be isolated in one single medium, as they were embedded in others. Also, cultural institutions were usually interconnected and in a constant dialogue with each other's technologies, apparatuses, and languages, as the film historians and theorists André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion point out.[83]

That is why, in this dissertation, I refer to the relevancy of taking into account the relationship and transpositions between entertainments, crafts, and mediums such as the press, popular stage spectacles, literature, theatre, cinema, and so on, as part of the historiographical methodology. I would opt to use the term intermediality instead of interarts (although the first is a subsidiary of the latter) because some of the practices involved in cinema culture cannot be considered artistic per se.[84] Also, because there is a

[81] Díez Puertas, *Historia social del cine en España*, 318: 'la crítica y los teóricos del cine han preferido siempre narrar lo que de específico y original hay en el séptimo arte.'
[82] Gaudreault and Marion, 'The Cinema as a Model', 13–14.
[83] Gaudreault and Marion, 'The Cinema as a Model', 14.
[84] Although it has many different meanings and definitions, intermediality might be seen as a deviation from a more established predecessor in the humanities called interarts studies. However, while the latter has been (and still is) mainly concerned with the study of the texts and the interrelation of literature with the other arts, intermediality has extended the scope of media considered to be worthy of attention and has paid attention to questions of 'production, distribution, function and reception' (mainly in the context of communication studies). Claus Clüver, 'Intermediality and Interarts Studies', in *Changing Borders. Contemporary Positions in Intermediality*, ed. Jens Arvidson et al. (Lund: Intermedia Studies Press,

reasonable doubt that silent cinema in the early 1920s in the Iberian countries could be denominated as art, it seems better to refer to it as a media or a spectacle.

Gaudreault and Marion state that a medium can only be understood if we look at its relationship with other media: 'it is through intermediality, through a concern with the intermedial, that a medium is understood.' [85] Rather than dismiss what is not specific about the new medium, they urge historians and theorists to acknowledge its intermedial heritage, as technological innovation usually appears as subordinated to other previous media demands and cultural institutions. Also, referring to the emergence of 'animated pictures' and the constitution of cinema as a new medium, they say this:

> After the recording device appeared, film production *defined itself as a practice*, making it possible to pass to the next step, the emergence of 'animated pictures'. This is the first 'cinematic' culture, although it is still only tenuously institutionalised. This culture was of necessity intermedial and was characterised by an ongoing institutionalisation – by a hodgepodge of neighbouring institutions which by definition were not 'cinematic'. It was by means of this unstable culture that the *cinematograph* began the process of becoming an *autonomous* medium of expression.[86]

Gaudreault and Marion thus identify three phases of cinema culture's institutionalization that were inscribed between two 'births': its subordination to earlier neighbouring practices and institutions, a movement towards detachment, and a period of insubordination that leads to its own institutional legitimacy and acknowledges its specificity.[87] Therefore, their aim is to identify a model for the genealogy of media inspired by the emergence of cinema in the 'intersection of various already-existing intermedial combinations'.[88] This hypothesis is useful for the importance they give to a changing and negotiated intermediality as an intrinsic characteristic of every process of cultural production. In my opinion, even after cinema's institutionalization, its constant inter-artistic dialogue and integration strongly affected the careers of its professionals, usually making them cross-media. This characteristic assured cinema culture's

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2007), 20.

[85] Gaudreault and Marion, 'The Cinema as a Model', 15.

[86] Gaudreault and Marion, 'The Cinema as a Model', 14. [Emphasis in the original].

[87] Gaudreault and Marion, 'The Cinema as a Model', 14–15.

[88] Gaudreault and Marion, 'The Cinema as a Model', 16.

dependence on other more established mediums such as popular entertainment, theatre, and literature (either taking substance from them or rejecting their heritage).

Nevertheless, in an effort to legitimize the discipline, film studies have denied cinema's intermedial nature and have mainly focused on textual analysis, inscribing it in a cultural studies perspective, in this sense disregarding a comparative approach coming from literature. However, film studies are nowadays making inroads in diversifying the tendencies of cinema historiography. For that reason, cinema is being approached from exogenous study fields that establish connections between the different artistic expressions and identify media intertwinements that influence its history in a contextualized way. For instance, and as we have previously seen, 'new cinema histories' are concerned with decentring the focus from the form of films to their circulation and consumption, and to analysis of audiences and cinemas as places of social interaction.[89] Also, production studies are based on the practical filming conditions and the relationship between audiovisual industries; feminist film studies made great inroads theorizing about film and audiences, and have now contributed to the 'historical turn' of the last thirty years.

As I have described in the previous section, one of the characteristics of the 'historical turn' of feminist early cinema studies has been their interest in international and transnational cinema practices. Adopting a comparative perspective, several geographical centres have been included in film studies, and national cinemas have stopped being the only territorial demarcation, with greater attention being paid to local, regional, or international histories. Also, distribution flows, cultural exchanges, and industrial transnational practices that have greatly impacted cinema in its early years have been noticed. Furthermore, feminist studies' influence on silent cinema has enlarged and systematized the intermedia comparison of cinema with 'other artistic expressions, other kinds of spectacles as other mediums' as a crucial part of biographical research.[90] By

[89] Richard Maltby, 'New Cinema Histories', in *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, ed. Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, and Philippe Meers (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 3.

[90] Rosanna Maule and Catherine Russell, as organizers of the 3e colloque international *Femmes et cinéma muet* which took place in Montreal in 2004, expressed their interest in comparative and intermedia approach to silent cinema: 'les organisatrices souhaitaient mettre en valeur la dimension internationale et transnationale des pratiques cinématographiques du muet, ainsi que les rapports que le cinéma muet entretient avec d'autres formes artistiques, d'autres types de spectacles et d'autres médias. Les textes choisis pour faire partie de ce numéro témoignent de cette démarche comparative et intermédiale.' Rosanna Maule, 'Présentation', *CINéMAS* 16, n. 1 (2005): 14.

finding, describing, and analysing the lives of women who contributed to the cinema industries, feminist early film historians are merging the 'historical turn' and the 'biographical turn' in film studies.

Biographical studies have become a prolific study field in close coordination with or opposition to historical research and literary practice since the 1980s.[91] As Sabina Loriga describes, and I have previously mentioned, history aimed to achieve scientific status by focusing on impersonal facts in the nineteenth century. In addition, the twentieth century brought the division between social history and political history. The first would maintain the impersonal narrative based on the history of structures instead of individuals (as the lower classes would be conceived as a faceless, anonymous mass). On the other hand, political history would keep inscribing leaders and extraordinary figures into history, illustrating moments in which power would play a role. The latter approach has been criticized for being a history obsessed with 'events' instead of researching a more quotidian flux of life,[92] and it was mocked for being the 'white dead male' history.[93]

This division between these two historiographical approaches: the history of the individual in a powerful position, and the history of the anonymous faceless mass remains relevant as it parallels the situation between the singular woman who participated creatively in film-making, and the women's collectives working in laboratories and factories. In this sense, biography writing arrived at the core of history in the last two decades of the twentieth century as an alternative and anti-authoritative look at the past.[94] Later, microhistory went a step further, distancing itself from political history biographies by focusing on people placed at the margins.

Nevertheless, biography has been a dismissed scholarly genre. The heavy criticism borne by biographical studies is directly related to its popularity as a literary genre and its success among non-academic readers. Also, the existing myth of biographies being objective accounts based only on facts has been rejected by a more contemporary post-structuralist approach. Several recent contributions to the field have explored biography writing as a historical method that searches for life-facts, but that also deals with

[91] Renders, de Haan, and Harmsma, *The Biographical Turn*, 3.
[92] Carlo Ginzburg, 'Microhistory. Two or Three Things that I Know about It', in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography. Approaches from History, Microhistory, and Life Writing*, ed. Hans Renders and Binne de Haan (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2014), 142.
[93] Sabina Loriga, 'La escritura biográfica y la escritura histórica en los siglos XIX y XX', in *La historia biográfica en Europa. Nuevas perspectivas*, ed. Isabel Burdiel and Roy Foster (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico/Diputación de Zaragoza, 2015), 32–34.
[94] Loriga, 'La escritura biográfica', 37.

subjectivity and establishes agreements with the reader that are implicitly contained in the literary genre itself. It claims that every event in life can be accounted for and remembered from a multi-focal perspective, and presents a polyphony of voices recalling different accounts of the same story. Even though it was born outside academia, nowadays it presents higher methodological and ethical awareness and debate than other non-fictitious works. This new approach has complexified and problematized biographical work as never before and has obliged the genre to push itself to a more self-reflexive meta-narrative writing style. A good example of this approach is Janet Malcolm's work, *The Silent Woman,* in which the author reflects on the biographies of Sylvia Plath that have been written in recent years and introduces important ethical and formal questions. According to Malcolm:

> Biography is the medium through which the remaining secrets of the famous dead are taken from them and dumped out in full view of the world. The biographer at work, indeed, is like the professional burglar, breaking into a house, rifling through certain drawers that he has good reason to think contain the jewellery and money, and triumphantly bearing his loot away. The voyeurism and busybodyism that impel writers and readers of biography alike are obscured by an apparatus of scholarship designed to give the enterprise an appearance of banklike blandness and solidity.[95]

In any case, biographers must be methodologically aware of the narrative structures implemented in their style, choosing between obscuring the process of researching and writing or making them evident to the reader. Also, when the biographer connects with family or friends who are personally and emotionally involved with the studied subject, many ethical questions arise. Problematizing and showing the flaws of their work in plain light to the reader might break the agreement that they have established when writing and reading a biography. As Malcolm explains:

> As a burglar should not pause to discuss with his accomplice the rights and wrongs of burglary while he is jimmying a lock, so a biographer ought not to introduce doubts about the legitimacy of the biographical enterprise.[96]

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[95] Janet Malcolm, *The Silent Woman: Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes* (London: Granta Books, 2005), 19 [Ebook].
[96] Malcolm, *The Silent Woman*, 20.

In Malcolm's book, many of the ethical problems resulting from biography writing are unveiled and discussed, such as the emphatical position of the writer, the establishment of unprofessional feelings towards the subject of study, the complex and ambivalent power relation with the testimonies, the searching and destruction of sources, the tendency to adjust the biography to a certain narration that is known and expected by the audience, and the control over the public persona of a dead person. As Malcolm poetically describes: 'Biography can be likened to a book that has been scribbled in by an alien. After we die, our story passes into the hands of strangers. The biographer feels himself to be not a borrower but a new owner, who can mark and underline as he pleases.'[97] As proven by Malcolm's example, self-awareness and meta-reflection in biographies have become such important topics of discussion that they have even permeated best-selling biographies for a non-academic audience.

Moreover, as I have previously noted, feminist studies have pioneered this methodology of making evident the subjective dimension of history and showing the reader the inner process of narrating. For that reason, the shift towards researching individual and singular life stories as an interdisciplinary critical-historical method, known as the 'biographical turn', has been 'directly connected with the advance of feminist studies', as noted by Burdiel and Foster.[98] The 'biographical turn' is 'a specific way of looking at the past that leads to a distinctive framework of historical interpretation' from 'the participant's or agency perspective'.[99] So it is particularly handy for recovering the names of women forgotten or overlooked by conventional history. However, it is still considered relatively unimportant and accused of presenting inconsistent research methodologies and theoretical frameworks due to its interdisciplinarity. In this context, feminist studies have legitimized the field, providing much of its theoretical basis as they were the first to conceptualize that 'the personal is political' and that singular stories could be representative of more general social systems responsible for collective experiences that were not obviously connected in the public eye.[100]

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[97] Malcolm, *The Silent Woman*, 275.

[98] Burdiel and Foster, *La historia biográfica en Europa*, 12–13.

[99] Renders, de Haan, and Harmsma, *The Biographical Turn*, 4.

[100] 'The personal is political' is a slogan from the late 1960s that remakes the connection between personal experiences and larger social and political structures. Although the authorship of the slogan is undetermined, it was popularized in the title of a 1969 essay by Carol Hanisch republished in 1970. Carol Hanisch, *The Personal Is Political (with a New Introduction),* (2006).

Concerned by the subjective and self-located use of biographies made by critical fields such as feminism, postcolonialism, or queer studies, specialized scholars have begun to distinguish different trends inside the broad concept of biography. Although there is no agreement among scholars, the area could be divided between biography, microhistory, and life-writing. While the first two enjoy increasing respect in academia (although, as I have said, they are not yet totally accepted), the last is rejected as a popular literary device with poor or absent theoretical and methodological consistency.[101] Nevertheless, it is a matter of discussion as defenders of life-writing consider it an encounter of popular contemporary artistic practice with academia.[102] Much of the criticism life-writing receives from biographical scholars such as Hans Renders or Binne de Haan derives from its experimental and political style that runs apart from a supposedly well-informed, objective, and neutral historical tone. For that reason, works coming from gender, queer, or postcolonial criticism are often dismissed as 'life-writing' for being too ideological or concerned with bringing into the limelight 'individuals and groups of people hitherto neglected by scholarship',[103] instead of paying the needed attention to historical context and historiographical practices.

According to Renders, one of the characteristics of life-writing is an excessive dependence on individual autobiographical sources, while biographical or microhistory works consider all the available sources to understand the general context 'without considering their heroes as representative for large groups'.[104] However, biographies too often have served as simple illustrations of already written conceptions of history. There, the individual would be just a confirmation of a preconceived general picture, according to the author.[105] In my research process, autobiographical documents are just one of the main sources but are submitted to a critical examination in which I have considered the subject's intentionality, context, and reliance. For that reason, even using the theoretical

[101] On the division between biography, microhistory, and life-writing, see Hans Renders and Binne de Haan (eds.), *Theoretical Discussions of Biography. Approaches from History, Microhistory, and Life Writing* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2014), especially chapter 10, Renders, 'The Limits of Representativeness'.

[102] On the defense of life-writing as a legitimate academic field, see Donna Lee Brien and Quinn Eades (eds.), *Offshoot: Contemporary Life Writing Methodologies and Practice* (Crawley: UWA Publishing, 2018).

[103] Renders, 'The Limits of Representativeness', 129.

[104] Renders, 'The Limits of Representativeness', 134.

[105] Renders, 'The Limits of Representativeness', 131.

frame and methodology of feminist studies, I consider my work to lie inside the category of biography (not life-writing) but without the pretension of being neutral or objective.

In any case, I consider life-writing as an umbrella term, dissociated from the criticism of being postmodern that is attributed to its creative origins and that of lacking serious treatment of sources. Therefore, life-writing could be a term in which biography, autobiography, and memoir are contained and can be classified taking into account their diverse theoretical frames, objectives, and methodologies. What all these categories have in common is their unavoidable need to deal with questions of truth, privacy, ethical behaviour, memory, and representativeness. It is remarkable that while biographical studies have largely struggled for recognition as a legitimate historical field fraternally linked to microhistory, life-writing is equally striving to be recognized as a serious practice among biographical work.[106]

Therefore, biography writing is an individual endeavour full of historiographical, methodological, conceptual, and moral questions. It has positioned itself as one of the most prolific and fruitful areas of history in its relationship with micro- and global histories, explaining cultural, social, and political processes in which individuals see themselves involved during their lives. Also, it problematizes exclusive and well-accepted dichotomies as individual/collective or private/public. Usually, individuals are not as easy to categorize as societies or groups, and, therefore, they are interesting case studies for avoiding the oversimplification of trends, positions, or movements. For that reason, some scholars and historians have preferred biography as a way to amend history and to nuance preliminary preconceived and fixed conceptions and thoughts. As Renders, Binne de Haan, and Harmsma describe:

> Using the individual life as a lens or microscope, the research methodology of biography functions as a counterweight to abstract causation and 'conceptual' history, using primary sources and the personal perspective to explore, relativise, confirm or correct existing understandings and interpretations of the past.[107]

However, this corrective function of biographies that unveils details to amend the 'grand' narrative of history is claimed to be utopic by Loriga. In her opinion, biographical work

[106] On the historical struggle and subaltern position of biography among historical studies, see Loriga, 'The Role of the Individual in History'. An edited version in Spanish translated by Mary Solari can be found in Loriga, 'La escritura biográfica', 15–45.
[107] Renders, Haan, and Harmsma, *The Biographical Turn*, 5–6.

based on individuals brings within a 'sense of dizziness' when realizing how inexhaustible the contextualization work is.[108] For that reason, researchers have created two utopias. The first is the biographical representativeness by which the historian can find and describe an individual's life as being representative of a whole group or category (for example, a certain woman's life as representative of all the female gender). The second is the naturalistic approach by which a collection of individual micro-histories put together can respond to a whole reality (Loriga gives as an example Giovanni Levi's suggestion of reconstructing the biographies of all inhabitants of a village). According to Loriga, both utopias would lead the historian to a dead end, and the only solution is based on Wilhelm Dilthey's reflections on the relationship between individuals and communities. The biographer must assume that historical time is neither linear nor homogenous and accept the circular character of knowledge: 'to understand the whole, we have to understand the parts, but to understand these, we have to understand the whole'.[109] Moreover, an even more difficult issue is to welcome 'the unfinished nature of history' and recognize 'that every interpretation implies a hermeneutic art' and must accept 'the importance of historical imagination'.[110]

In film studies, this renewed interest in individual histories of women who have contributed to silent cinema has boosted the relational intermedia approach in early film studies, although it was already there. The reason is that, in the study of women during the silent period, an intermedia analysis is unavoidable, mainly because their careers were highly inter-artistic and many of them developed their careers in different creative expressions during their lives, which is the case for the two Iberian case studies of this dissertation.

However, the challenge that we find when we tackle the writing of film history from a biographical perspective is that those subjects who were entangled in more than one medium or cultural practice get dissolved in the variety of their accomplishments. The multitasking nature of their activities and professions makes it difficult to grasp the dimension of their responsibility and to tag them onto the pre-existing categories and occupations. For that reason, a biographical approach could give scholars the tools to follow and underpin nuances and out-of-the-rule non-hegemonic realities that complexify art and cultural histories, and bring them down to earth by giving the example of actual

[108] Loriga, 'The Role of the Individual in History', 90–91.
[109] Loriga, 'The Role of the Individual in History', 93.
[110] Loriga, 'The Role of the Individual in History', 93.

lives. Otherwise, the way film, theatre, or literary history are traditionally written and divided punishes artistic infidelity with fragmentation and oblivion.

For that reason, it is important to apply intermedia comparative approaches to biography work in which the career of the subjects in question might cross different mediums of expression, and it is key for the historian to understand and be able to contextualize different cultural environments to understand the intrinsic characteristics of each one and the role that they played in the subject's 'careerography'. When making a textual interpretation, it is crucial to have a profound specific knowledge of the medium's aesthetic and language. However, in the case of biography, what contributes more to the discussion is having extensive cross-interdisciplinary knowledge that legitimizes the historian as a proper 'reader' of the transcultural context of the time and location in question.

The 1920s witnessed a fluidity in mediums that has been largely explored in Iberian men artists (mainly modernists and vanguardists) but has been largely overlooked in the case of women. Career fluidity and cross-professional paths were a reality not only in Iberian countries but also in some countries of Ibero-America where, for example, 'the alliance of film production companies with the major national newspapers also contributed to the fluidity with which women crossed between the two professions in the era of silent cinema'.[111] This intermedia perspective was one of the main concerns that resulted in the creation of networks for studying the neglected history of women on film, as is evidenced by the premises written at the moment of the creation of the 'Women's Film History Network – UK/ Ireland'.

In the foundational workshop, one of the questions they asked themselves was if film history was only about film 'given that many women became involved in filmmaking through working in other media'. They enumerate some working 'as writers of adapted material, or as scenario and screenwriters, as designers and costumiers, as theatrical performers and music-hall entertainers, as journalists, critics, fans, and social campaigners, and in the many roles offered by television'. Taking this into account, Gledhill describes the first workshop as a joined endeavour of scholars on film studies 'with experts in literary, theatrical, and publishing history to examine some of the issues raised for women's film history by the relationship between different arts and media'.[112]

[111] Hershfield and Torres San Martín, 'Writing the History of Latin American Women' (website).
[112] Gledhill, 'Introduction: Transnationalizing Women's Film History', 275–276.

Regarding the cases depicted on the website *Women Film Pioneers Project,* we see that most of them crossed and mixed the established divisions and categories and worked not only in different positions within the cinema culture but also in different national realities. Moreover, they expressed themselves in different mediums, the most common ones being the stage, diverse literary activities, and the screen, although this list is not exclusive.[113] In this sense, as Denise K. Mok indicates in her article about Marion Davis' biography, there is a need for the historian to transcend categories and understand transitions to comprehend the reality of those women. Although great advances have been made to relate and put into dialogue the continued intersections between stage and screen, much work still needs to be done to study other bridges between professions coming from other mediums and spectacles.[114] Therefore, my argument is that the traditional stagnated separation between mediums in history neither applies nor provides a proper understanding of the multiplicity that cinema professionals' lives and professions experienced in those early days. In contrast, advancing into biographical comparative work might be one of the best platforms for underpinning the complexity of silent cinema culture also in the Iberian region.

If we limit our study to only those aspects of cinema and film that have been considered noteworthy by Spanish and Portuguese film historians, Helena Cortesina (and to a lesser degree Virgínia de Castro e Almeida) could never become more than a curiosity or a footnote, as their careers during the silent period were short and, to some extent, unremarkable. However, if we consider their stories from an intermedia perspective, they gain much more importance as examples of cultural agents who illustrated the new woman artistic professional with an undeniable and undiscussed presence in the public sphere. For that reason, I believe in the need to surpass outdated media categories in the historical discourse that do not reflect the reality of what cinema looked like for most of

[113] The website *Women Film Pioneers Project* mentions more than 200 different occupations in diverse mediums, businesses, and arts, ranging from singers to painters, photographers, and sculptors. Just to cite a couple of multifaceted examples, see Corinne Griffith (Texas, 1894 - Santa Mónica, 1979), who worked as actress, producer, author, real estate magnate, anti-income-tax crusader, painter, and composer, and Sarah Bernardt (Paris, 1844-1923), who was a film actress, novelist, painter, producer, screenwriter, sculptor, theatre actress, and director. See respectively Tom Slater, 'Corinne Griffith', in *Women Film Pioneers Project*, ed. Jane M. Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta (New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2013) and Victoria Duckett, 'Sarah Bernhardt', in *Women Film Pioneers Project*, ed. Jane M. Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta (New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2015).
[114] The existence of an academic journal such as *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*, produced by Sage Publishing, might serve as an example of the advances in research in and the need to explore further the concept of stage/screen as a single environment.

the people involved, neither the expectations nor the role that it played in their lives. For example, from a film studies perspective we risk overestimating the role that cinema played in Cortesina or Almeida's lives and careers when other mediums such as theatre and literature had greater importance for them.

Also, the subjacent question of biographical works is whether a single case can represent a whole community or, on the contrary, the life of the individual has value by itself as an extraordinary case that led to a change in a certain time and place of history. The whole point of this discussion is whether biographical work should focus on the normal or exceptional, which is not an easy matter to think about. Were Cortesina and Almeida normal women who could be representative of a whole community defined by a certain class, ethnicity, and location and identified as 'the new woman'? Or were both exceptional figures who succeeded in running their own production companies at a time and place when almost no other women managed to do so?

In my opinion, it is important to note that neither Almeida nor Cortesina was representative of the lives of other women. However, they were points of reference for understanding the available paths for 'some' women. Their biographical stories are symptomatic of the reality of certain women who considered cinema as a professional option in the second decade of the twentieth century in the capitals of Spain and Portugal. As Burdiel points out, we cannot talk about 'a time', 'an era', or 'a context' as there are always 'several times in a time, several eras in an era and several contexts that cross, mix up and confront each other'. Burdiel concludes by saying:

> there are always several individuals in each individual, a conglomerate of tendencies and possibilities that can enter into conflict or mutually feed each other; usually both at the same time. With more or less intensity depending on the case, all individuals are potentially crossroads, hybrids, or various conditions, of achieved and lost possibilities.[115]

Moreover, using a comparative intermedia approach to look at their careers leads to the conclusion that they were not exclusive cases without ignoring each individual's specificities and particularities (or to use an expression coined by Loriga, without deleting

[115] Burdiel, *Emilia Pardo Bazán*, 19: 'hay, en potencia, varios individuos en cada individuo, un conglomerado de tendencias y posibilidades que pueden entrar en conflicto o alimentarse mutuamente; casi siempre ambas cosas a la vez. Con mayor o menor intensidad según los casos, todos los individuos son en potencia encrucijadas, híbridos, de condiciones variadas, de posibilidades realizadas y perdidas.'

the fingerprints).[116] Researching and writing their biographies allows the tracing of international patterns that repeat themselves in Almeida and Cortesina's life histories (and that are common to other film-makers in Europe, too, as I will demonstrate later).[117] Some of the main repeated characteristics that I could identify in early female film-makers are that they developed international and inter-artistic careers, were cultural mediators of their environment, were actively involved in and concerned about their countries' convulsive political times, and created untraditional familial structures and surrounded themselves with a trustworthy relational network of family and friends who supported them in their independent and entrepreneurial projects.

Therefore, they might not be just regular cases whose example could be generalized to the whole female situation of their time, but they can help us to draw 'constellations' with other international women and, even with us as researchers. Several women around the Western world followed similar patterns of access to cinema, motivations, desires, and frustrations that can be matched and compared. This constellation might help us make connections and extract alternative conclusions regarding the cinema culture of the 1920s that are hidden by more regular and film-author-event-based cinema historiography, which did not offer a solution to cross-medium transnational singular female biographies.

[116] Loriga, 'La escritura biográfica', 40–41.

[117] For some examples of Western female film-makers (Musidora, Nell Shipman, and Adriënne Solser) who shifted between the stage and the screen; see Förster, *Women in the Silent Cinema*.

Part II. The 'careerographies': Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (1874–1945) and Helena Cortesina (1903–1984)

Chapter IV. Before cinema, the professional background

Even though, early cinema did not have a well-defined industrial structure, film-makers were driven by a compelling attraction to the new medium due to the place in society, modernity, and internationalization that it acquired in the urban centres of Western Europe. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, it became a common topic of discussion in cafés and *tertulias* in the main cities of the Iberian Peninsula.[1] For that reason, adventurers and professionals from different artistic and cultural backgrounds integrated themselves at a certain point of their careers into cinema, just as an experiment, curious about the different options that the medium had to offer to their careers and objectives.[2] Either in Portugal or in Spain, intellectuals could not avoid being interested in cinema, either being enthusiastic about its unimaginable possibilities, or distrusting it for the possible effect it might have on the lower classes (from both conservative and vanguardist positions).[3]

As Vicente J. Benet extensively explained in his book on the cultural history of Spanish cinema, the reasons for turn-of-the-century intellectuals' distrust of the cultural production resultant from modernity were more complicated than mere conservatism.[4] They encountered an irreverent new medium that, from the beginning, was focused on the commercial aspects of culture, aimed at massive audiences and managed mainly by entrepreneurs. They also feared its voraciousness in the way that it recycled all kinds of artistic and literary traditions and synthesized them into simplified formats adapted to its medium and its 'capability to incorporate, renovate and give new visibility to decadent popular forms of distraction'.[5] Benet goes on to explain how the Spanish intellectuality was immersed in an ideological project named 'regenerationist' that focused on pedagogical and educative efforts to elevate the country's cultural level and to create and reinforce national identity, a characteristic that was common to Portugal although each one with its specificities.

[1] H., 'Cinematografite', *Cine-Lisboa,* Ano I, n. 4 (Lisbon, 25 October 1923), 14 and Pérez, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 102.
[2] Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 47–56.
[3] Benet, *El cine español*, 47–49 and Costa, *Histórias do cinema*, 39.
[4] Benet, *El cine español,* 47.
[5] Benet, *El cine español,* 47: 'la capacidad para incorporar, renovar y dar nueva salida a formas de distracción popular en decadencia.'

Therefore, writers as 'poets, playwrights, and novelists' paid attention to the new medium, interested in the narrative possibilities of combining 'all those low and cheap things of the cinema' with 'the magic touch' of their pen, as the Italian writer and critic Matilde Serao reflected in 1916.[6] Likewise, normal people and all kind of performers in the 1920s entered cinema, attracted by new working opportunities in an apparently less competitive world than that of the stage and by a remote idea of international stardom imported by well-developed cinematographies.[7] Finally, consecrate theatre actors saw in cinema the irresistible possibility of printing and archiving their performative creations as a document for the future.[8] The Portuguese actor Eduardo Brazão expressed this general feeling in an interview:

> I like cinema very much. Do you want to know why? (...) There is a sentence by Dumas Father, in 'Kean', that goes like this: 'The glory of the actor goes down with the curtain. His memory disappears with the generation he belongs to...' Well, then. Cinema came to smash those words and its painful truth. Making movies, something of me will remain. And Dumas's sentence no longer has a reason to exist.[9]

As with Brazão, silent cinema attracted theatre actors curious about the option to assuage their fears of being forgotten and erased by preserving their performances on film; and

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[6] Matilde Serao, 'Parla una Specttatrice', *L'Arte Muta*, 1:1 (Naples, 15 June 1926), reprinted as 'A Spectatrix is Speaking to You', translated by Giorgio Bertellini in *The Red Velvet Seat*: *Women's Writing on the First Fifty Years of Cinema*, ed. Antonia Lant and Ingrid Periz (London: Verso, 2006), 98.

[7] Eva Woods Peiró describes how cinema magazines sparked ideas of social mobility and luxury that made cinema 'a magnet for young Spaniards who fled homes in search for acting jobs.' Woods Peiró, 'Acting for the camera', 23. Also, a Portuguese specialized journal proposed to study the statistics regarding the numerous of 'Portuguese artists' who had left the stage for the screen and had triumphed, and those who had failed. 'Notas portuguesas', *Cinéfilo*, n. 2 (Lisbon, 16 July 1928), 23.

[8] In Portugal, cinema attracted a few major figures in theatre, mainly Ângela Pinto (Lisbon, 1869–1925); Palmira Bastos (Alenquer, 1875 – Lisbon, 1967); António Pinheiro (Tavira, 1867 – Lisbon, 1943) and Eduardo Brazão (Lisbon, 1851 – 1925), without taking into account younger performers such as Amélia Rey Colaço (Lisbon, 1898 – 1990). Brazão highlighted the possibility that cinema gave him to criticize his own work for the first time and described silent cinema in his memories as: 'an art which is so complex for the spectator but so simple for the artist'. 'Eduardo Brazão nos Olhos da Alma', *Cinéfilo*, n. 6 (Lisbon, 11 August 1928), 9. Another, less prominent actor, Duarte Silva, who worked in both mediums also highlighted the possibility of analysing his own work and correcting his mistakes as an advantage of cinema opposed to theatre. 'Duarte Silva, actor de Cinema', *Cinéfilo*, n. 2 (Lisbon, 16 July 1928), 7.

[9] Celestino Silveira, 'Gazeta Theatral. Eduardo Brazão: Subsidios para a biographia do grande actor portuguez', *Gazeta de Notícias,* n. 135 (Rio de Janeiro, 7 June 1925), 4: 'Gosto immenso do cinema. Quer saber porque? (...) Ha uma phrase de Dumas Pai, no 'Kean', que diz assim: 'A gloria do actor desce com o panno. Sua memoria desapparece com a geração a que pertence...' Pois bem. O cinema veio esphacelar essas palavras e sua dolorosa verdade. Fazendo eu cinema, alguma cousa ficará de mim. E a phrase de Dumas já não tem razão de existir.'

for writers and playwrights it was a popular medium that offered them the possibility of reaching bigger audiences and fulfil their ambition of raising the cultural standing of films and educating people.[10] The novelty of cinema and the lack of cinema professionals forced it to inherit practitioners from pre-existing mediums or import them from more developed cinematographies.[11] Photography, literature, theatre, or variety shows, among others, provided some of the professionals who learned the cinematographic *métier* through the mistakes they made in their daily work, as well as from more experienced colleagues, similar to the ways in which other crafts are developed.[12] As Luis Alonso García states, the *techné* (technique) of the new trade was absorbed 'depending on the resources and abilities provided by its new makers in each time and place (...) coming from other more or less related fields'.[13] Thus, writing and performance were two common mechanisms of access to cinema during the first third of the twentieth century, as the examples of Virgínia de Castro e Almeida from Portugal and Helena Cortesina from Spain will illustrate. This chapter will explore the familial and professional backgrounds of both Iberian film-makers from birth (Almeida in the nineteenth century and Cortesina

[10] In Portugal, Júlio Dantas (Lagos, 1876 – Lisbon, 1962), Ferreira de Castro (Osseia, 1898 – Porto, 1974) and Amílcar Ramada Curto (Lisbon, 1886–1961) are some examples of men of letters interested in silent cinema, as identified in Roberto Nobre, *Singularidades do Cinema Português* (Fundão: Portugália Editora, 1964), 217–237. In Spain, Jacinto Benavente (Madrid, 1866 – 1954) is a paradigmatic case as he was involved in the adaptation of several of his works for the screen, the creation of two production companies during the silent period (Madrid Cines in 1919 and Benavente Films in 1924) and even the direction of two films. Others who were active in the new medium were the novelist Vicente Blasco Ibáñez (Valencia, 1867 – Menton, 1928), who adapted several texts and co-directed *Sangre y arena* (1917), and the playwright Adriá Gual (Barcelona, 1872–1943), who was responsible for the production company Barcinógrafo (1913–1915). Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 53.

[11] The period from 1918 to 1924 is known in Portugal as 'Portuguese cinema made by foreigners', and in Spain during the same period it was also common to see 'the landing of professionals from other countries in our territory', mainly from France and Italy. Costa, *Breve história do cinema português*, 49 and Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 73.

[12] For example, Arthur Duarte was assistant to the French director Roger Lion and recognized the importance of working with foreign professionals in the Portuguese productions of Fortuna Films to learn technical cinematographic characteristics and to specialize in the new medium. Manuel Joaquim, 'Fortuna Film. Roger Lion e suas impressões', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 5 (1 March 1923), 53 and 'Artur Duarte. Do teatro ao cinema', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 8 (15 April 1923), 100–101. The Portuguese theatre actor António Pinheiro, who directed two silent films (*Tinoco em Bolandas*, 1923 and *Tragédia de Amor*, 1924), had also previously worked with Georges Pallu, who taught him 'the general technique of cinematographic art.' António Pinheiro, *Contos largos. Impressões da Vida de Teatro* (Lisbon: Tipografia Costa Sanches, 1929), 354.

[13] Luis Alonso García, 'Por una historia sin Ángeles, ni Demonios', *Con-Ciencia Social*, n. 18 (2014): 124: 'el hacer adquirido del nuevo oficio – la techné – es necesariamente absorbido según los recursos y habilidades disponibles por sus nuevos artífices en cada momento y lugar – que lógicamente siempre procederán de otros campos más o menos afines.'

in the first years of the twentieth century) until their initiation into the new medium, in order to understand what could drive them to create their own production companies in the early 1920s, given that they came from very different origins and trajectories.

4.1 Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, pedagogic writer and theorist (1895–1915)

Virgínia Folque de Castro e Almeida Pimentel de Sequeira e Abreu (full name) was born on 24 November 1874 in Lisbon. She was the daughter of a prominent aristocratic Portuguese family. Her parents were the first Condes de Nova Goa, an honorific name given by D. Luis I, King of Portugal, in 1864. She had an older brother, Luís Filipe de Castro (Lisbon, 1868–1928), who would become the second Conde de Nova Goa. She was raised traditionally, and her education was the good traditional education received by the women of her time, condition, and country: 'I had foreign teachers who taught me languages, a piano teacher, another for Portuguese, also sculpture.'[14] However, as she recognized in her book *A Mulher* (1913), she felt that her learning was superficial and did not leave a permanent trace in her. What did attract her attention was the 'serious conversation' of the adults about politics, literature, art, and stories from their travels, and the discussions that were taking place in society and shaping public opinion. During her teenage years, she developed a romantic idealization of sacrifice and abnegation, deploring:

> the sickly necessity of a different and exceptional existence, the fatal result of a colourless and sterile education that all women receive and that, awakening in us vague comprehension and blurred ideals, leaves us with an empty soul and does not offer either to our brain or to our heart the fertile actions that we are capable of.[15]

[14] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, *A Mulher: História da Mulher, A Mulher Moderna – Educação* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1913), 11–12: 'Mas a minha educação correu sempre á superficie do meu espirito sem a marcar de traço algum indelevel. Foi a bôa educação vulgar de todas as mulheres da minha classe, do meu tempo e da minha terra. (...) Tive mestras estrangeiras que me ensinaram as linguas, um professor de piano, um de portuguez, um de esculptura.'

[15] Almeida, *A Mulher*, 13: 'a necessidade doentia de uma existencia differente e excepcional, o resultado fatal da educação incolor e esteril que nos dão a todas e que, accordando em nós vagas comprehensões e turvos ideaes, nos deixa no emtanto a alma despovoada e não offerece ao nosso cerebro nem ao nosso coração as applicações fecundas de que seriam capazes.'

As her father was an agronomist, she spent all her childhood and teenage years living most of the year with her parents in Quinta de Bizelga, a rural area close to Tomar, and four months in the family house at Rua Pau de Bandeira in Lisbon. While growing up, she enjoyed contact with nature and had free time to devote to reading, arts, and languages, and it was in the country that she came into contact with the whole strata of social classes: the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, domestic service workers, and family labourers. Being apart most of the year from the social urban circles and people of her own age affected her character, making her both sensitive and changeable: joyful and happy at times but with depressive tendencies.[16]

Almeida's personality surfaces in her abundant correspondence to Raquel dos Anjos Jardim, a neighbour of her own age and eldest daughter of another aristocratic Portuguese family, the Condes of Valença, with whom she developed a very intense and close relationship during their teenage years and with whom she shared all her secrets, fears, and passions. This unique, private, and personal source allows the reader to understand how Almeida's character was formed in the tumultuous transition from childhood to adulthood and understand better the decisions that she took in her early life. Beyond that, it is chiefly a valuable document of the daily life and habits of a young girl of Portuguese high society in the transition from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

When Raquel Jardim became engaged to Virgínia's older brother, Luís Filipe de Castro e Almeida, to whom Virgínia was also extremely attached, she felt displaced and tried to fill the void in 1895 by marrying João da Mota Prego, an agricultural engineer and friend of her brother, fifteen years her senior.[17] After their marriage, they travelled to Paris (which was Almeida's first time abroad) with the aim of treating her husband's incipient blindness. Then they installed themselves in the Almeida's family Quinta da Bizelga for three years, which caused major problems between her husband and her parents. After that, they moved to Santarem where Mota Prego became professor at the Agriculture School. As is evident from her letters to her mother, during that time Almeida had to learn how to manage her own home and also had to work as her husband's

[16] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida's thoughts, worries, and desires from 1888 to 1904 (a time-span when she evolves from a teenager into a married woman and mother of three children) have been documented in the more than 320 letters that she sent to her parents, brother, and best friend, Raquel Anjos Jardim, collected and transcribed by the family in three volumes, to which I had access.

[17] The marriage certificate can be found at the Biblioteca Nacional Portuguesa (BNP) Espólio Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, N.104/cx.3.

secretary, writing and editing his texts, as he had almost lost all his sight. She became a mother when she was twenty-three years old, giving birth to a boy named Luís Manuel de Castro e Almeida da Mota Prego (1897–1982). One year after, they had another boy, José Lopo (Lisbon, 1898 – London, 1956), and a few years later she gave birth to a girl called Luísa Constança (1904–1919).

During that period, she developed a significant concern for children's education, and, being an admirer of materialism and positivism, she rejected the fantasy stories that she considered harmful to the intelligence and development of children. For that reason, in 1907 she created the collection *Biblioteca para os meus filhos* and began to write educative scientific books for children. The most well-known of these were *Céu Aberto* (1907) and *Em Pleno Azul* (1907), although she had previously published the books *A Fada Tentadora* (1895) and *Histórias. Livro para Crianças* (1898) under the pseudonym of Gi.[18] She even wrote in the foreword of *Céu Aberto*: 'Do not tell or let anyone tell your son unbelievable stories (…) Entertaining children is not filling their imagination with lying fantasies, with fictitious beings.'[19]

However, she was not only interested in children's pedagogic literature but also in women's moral education, as seen in other European republican movements of that time. It is therefore impossible not to notice changes and continuations in her discourse between the translations of *Como devo governar a minha casa* (1906) and *Como devemos educar os nossos filhos* (1908), and one of her most fascinating books, *A Mulher: História da Mulher. A Mulher Moderna – Educação* (1913), a commentary of several aspects of women's way of living internationally from a feminist perspective.[20] The first two exalt maternity and sacrifice, describing women as 'weak beings with an intense nervous vibration, with the tendency to exaggerate in affection and dedication, in a good and bad way',[21] even though in those early years she already considered that the wife should not

[18] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, *A Fada Tentadora* (Lisbon: M. Gomes, 1895); *Histórias. Livro para Crianças* (Lisbon: A.M. Pereira, 1898); *Céu Aberto* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1907); *Em Pleno Azul* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1907).

[19] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, 'Prólogo', *Céu Aberto* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1907), n.p. 'Não contes nem deixes contar ao teu filho histórias inverosímeis ... Divertir as crianças não é povoar-lhes a imaginação de fantasias mentirosas'.

[20] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, *Como devo governar a minha casa*. Translation and adaptation of the Italian book by Giulia Ferraris Tamburini (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1906); *Como devemos educar os nossos filhos* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1908).

[21] Almeida, *Como devo governar a minha casa*, 11: 'Somos uns seres fracos, temos uma vibração nervosa intensa, com tendencia ao exagero no affecto, na dedicação, no bom e no máo caminho.'

put herself in a secondary place but be at the side of her husband.[22] However, when she wrote *A Mulher* in 1913, Almeida was already suffering an abusive marriage, and intending to write this book, she escaped temporarily from her life as mother and wife to travel around Europe with her friend Matilde de Sauvayre da Câmara,[23] leaving her children in a school. During the writing process they visited several countries to document how women lived and the rights they enjoyed. Swedish women made a great impact on Almeida, and from then onwards she considered Swedish society the epitome of modern civilization and the prime example of how equality among sexes could benefit the whole of humanity.[24]

This period of travel – together with the book's content in which she vindicates women's labour capacities and praises feminism – may have been the final blow to her marriage, and in 1913 she began a dramatic divorce process that ended in 1917.[25] After several verdicts against her husband, who tried to defame her with accusations of craziness and lesbianism, Almeida was granted a legal divorce and managed to 'clear' her name publicly. However, on a personal level she not only lost many of her friends, but was also rejected by her family. She was forbidden to see her daughter again, who went to live with Mota Prego against the judges' will.[26] Despite the inaccessibility of the court minutes or any other official legal document, the divorce process can be closely followed from Almeida's point of view by reading the correspondence that she exchanged with Ana de Castro Osório, one of the leading public supporters of Almeida during the divorce process.[27]

Osório, apart from one of the founders of the Portuguese Group of Feminist Studies in 1907, was also a children's literature writer.[28] The feminist movement in Portugal was

[22] Almeida, *Como devo governar a minha casa*, 9.
[23] Matilde de Sauvayre da Câmara (Funchal, 1871 – 1957) was a Portuguese composer, writer, playwright and poet.
[24] Almeida, *A Mulher*, 22–23.
[25] The legislation that allowed Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to divorce was one of the first reforms taken by the First Republic (only one month later after its establishment in 1910) putting Portugal at the head of the Iberian countries in the family laws (*Leís de Família*) as divorce was only allowed in Spain in 1931, with the advent of the Second Republic. However, as Madden notes 'it was more symbolic than pragmatic' as it was rarely employed. Deborah Madden, 'Historical Context in Portugal', in *A New History of Iberian Feminisms*, ed. Silvia Bermúdez and Roberta Johnson (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 199–200.
[26] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, letter to Ana de Castro Osório (9 October 1914). (BNP ES A/443).
[27] The correspondence between Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and Ana de Castro Osório from 1914 to 1921 is preserved at the '*Espólios*' reserved area of the Biblioteca Nacional Portuguesa (BNP ES A/443).
[28] On Ana de Castro Osório, see Esteves, *Mulheres e Republicanismo*.

born during the First Republic. Although Almeida was never a militant, she agreed with some of their ideas (mainly regarding the education of women). Therefore, from reading her book *A Mulher*, Almeida may also be considered one of the first feminist theorists in Portugal who wrote several books aimed at educating women in all strands of society about raising children and being a modern woman. Although she was an elitist intellectual, her position was related to her determination that women should be politically involved in the construction of a new society in Portugal. Her book recognized the importance of feminism, which she described as 'a great and generous idea of redemption that advances gravely with the majestic serenity of all the unbeatable forces destined to change the face of the world'.[29] She was also clear on the objective of the political movement that 'wants men to stop considering women as an exclusive agent of pleasure, as a servant, as an instrument, as a luxury object, it wants to make women equal to men and not usurpers of their rights'.[30]

Almeida's publication delved into women's history, the characteristics of the modern woman and her education (themes present in the subtitle *História da Mulher – A Mulher Moderna – Educação*). These topics aligned with the trend in Iberian female feminism that advocated for the education and instruction of women in order to mobilize their political and legal rights in parallel with the social modernization characteristic of the early twentieth century that materialized with the implementation of republican regimes.[31] Therefore, we could identify Almeida as part of a genealogy of Portuguese – and Spanish – erudite female writers concerned about women's legal, social, and cultural conditions during the first three decades of the twentieth century, even though they were diverse in their ideologies, strategies, and demands, as well as their affinities and leaderships, which means that not all of them can be considered feminists.

One of the earliest Portuguese intellectuals to publish about this controversial issue was the aforementioned Ana de Castro Osório, who published *Às mulheres portuguêsas* in 1905.[32] In fact, Portuguese feminists such as Alice Pestana and Olga de Moraes

[29] Almeida, *A Mulher*, 14: 'uma grande e generosa idéa de redempção, que avança gravemente com a serenidade magestosa de todas as forças invencíveis destinadas a mudar a face do mundo.'
[30] Almeida, *A Mulher*, 20–21: 'O feminismo quer que o homem deixe de considerar a mulher como agente exclusivo de prazer, como serva, como utensilio, como objecto de luxo; quer fazer da mulher a igual do homem e não a usurpadora dos seus direitos.'
[31] For Portugal, see Madden, 'Feminist Thought in Portugal', 204–212 and for Spain, see Mayellen Bieder, 'First-Wave Feminisms, 1880-1919', 158–181. Both in *A New History of Iberian Feminisms*, ed. Silvia Bermúdez and Roberta Johnson (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2018).
[32] On the feminist writers in Portugal at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Maria Regina Tavares

Sarmento played a crucial role in linking the movement across the Iberian national border.[33] The first lived in Madrid, where she taught in the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* while maintaining a close relationship with the Portuguese movement. In addition, Moraes Sarmento arranged a conference inspired by another given in the Ateneo de Madrid three years before by fellow Spaniard Concepción Gimeno de Flaquer.[34] Influenced by these examples, the next decade saw several publications written by intellectuals appearing on the Spanish editorial market, for example Emilia Pardo Bazán's *La mujer y otros escritos* (1916),[35] followed by Margarita Nelken's *La condición de la mujer* (1919), and later *En torno a nosotras* (1927).[36] Published in the same year, Carmen de Burgos' *La mujer moderna y sus derechos* (1927) gained much attention due to the popularity of this journalist and writer.[37] The cited texts were brave attempts to publicly denounce the irrationality of the misogynistic barriers imposed on women to prevent them entering the liberal professions and controlling the disposition of their own properties and money. In addition, all of them enhance the complexity and importance of the management of a home, the education of children, and the company of the 'modern man', all of which were required of a cultivated and educated modern woman.[38]

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da Silva, 'Feminismo em Portugal na voz de mulheres escritoras do início do século XX', *Análise Social* XIX, n. 77–78–79 (1983): 875–907.

[33] Alice Pestana (Santarem, 1860 – Madrid, 1929) was a writer and journalist. João Esteves, 'Feminismo, Feminismos e Sufragismo na 1ª República', in *Mulheres na I República*, eds. Zília Osório de Castro, João Esteves and Natividade Monteiro (Lisbon: Colibri, 2011), 41.

[34] Concepción Gimeno de Flaquer (Alcañiz, 1850 – Buenos Aires, 1919) wrote *El problema feminista. Conferencia* (Madrid: Ateneo de Madrid, 25 May 1903) and Olga Moraes Sarmento da Silveira (Setúbal, 1881 – Lisbon, 1948) wrote *Problema feminista* (Lisbon: Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa, 18 May 1906), 43.

[35] Emilia Pardo Bazán (La Coruña, 1851 – Madrid, 1921) was a writer, poet, journalist and lecturer. On her pedagogic work concerning the education of women, see Narciso de Gabriel, 'Emilia Pardo Bazán, las mujeres y la educación. El Congreso Pedagógico (1892) y la cátedra de literatura (1916)', *Historia y Memoria de la Educación* 8 (2018): 489–525.

[36] Margarita Nelken (Madrid, 1894 – Ciudad de México, 1968) was a writer and politician. On her feminist writings: *La condición social de la mujer en España* (Barcelona: Minerva, 1919) and *En torno a nosotras* (Madrid: Páez, 1927), see Helena Establier Pérez, 'El feminismo español en la narrativa de los años veinte: Margarita Nelken y *La trampa del arenal*', *Clepsydra* 3 (January 2004), 47–66.

[37] On Carmen de Burgos regarding women's modernization efforts through short periodical novels, see Michelle M. Sharp, 'Carmen de Burgos: Teaching Women of the Modern Age', in *Kiosk Literature of Silver Age Spain. Modernity and Mass Culture*, eds. Jeffrey Zamostny and Susan Larson (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2017), 311–328.

[38] Comments about the complexity of being a housewife can be found in Ana de Castro Osório, *Às mulheres portuguêsas* (Lisbon: Viuva Tavares Cardoso, 1905), 8; Almeida, *A Mulher*, 21; Carmen de Burgos, *La mujer moderna y sus derechos* (Valencia: Sempere, 1927), 89.

The style used in the essays mentioned above is pedagogic and direct, exposing the clarity with which these authors want to get their message across. The journalist Joaquim Manso in his review of *A Mulher* published in the journal *A Capital,* made special mention of this characteristic of Almeida's writing style: 'as her objectives are direct, she does not need to swerve from pursuit of them, writing chapters or paragraphs for mere effects of decorative composition'.[39] The 'educative purposes' that were common to all Almeida's oeuvre (both literary and cinematographic) were also evident to Manso.

However, Almeida was never easy to classify in any category. While her friend Osório was fighting to achieve voting rights for women in 1918, Almeida sent her a letter regretting having written her book *A Mulher* and having supported with her writings the feminist movement in Portugal, where women 'still for a long time need to be tutored by men'. She argued:

> I think that the best for her is to keep her eyes closed and limit herself to being a good cook, a good seamstress, a good nurse, inside her home, unfolding there the excellent qualities of her heart and her wonderful maternal instinct. The ideas of freedom and the dream of independence are things that can only come after long preparation. If they fall into an unconscious brain, instead of producing good results, they are pernicious. (…) Women's brains, which are the most underdeveloped and imperfect ones, should not be agitated because this confusion can sweep through our nation and threatens to subvert it.[40]

It was not rare that the upper classes were in favour of equality between men and women, but only for the cultured and educated class and, therefore, restricted to a small proportion of women. This opinion is consistent with Almeida's elitist fear of the democratization of freedom around Europe that was emerging at that point in time. The idea of giving rights to people considered 'unprepared' to deal with the responsibilities derived from those rights was thought to be premature, and the need for education of the 'low classes' as a

[39] Joaquim Manso, 'A Mulher', *A Capital*, n. 1.079 (Lisbon: 1 August 1913), 1: '[C]omo os seus fins são directos, ella não tem necessidade de se desviar da prosecução dos mesmos: compondo capitulos ou paragraphos para meros effeitos de composição decorativa.'

[40] Almeida, letter to Ana de Castro Osório (2 April 1918) (BNP ESP. A/453): 'Penso que o melhor para ella é conservar os olhos fechados e limitar-se a ser bõa cozinheira, bõa costureira, bõa enfermeira, dentro do seu lar, expandindo ahi as qualidades excellentes do seu coração e o seu instincto maravilhoso de maternidade. As ideas de liberdade, o sonho de independencia, são coisas que só poderão realizar-se depois de uma longa preparação. Cahindo de repente n'um cerebro ignorante, longe de produzirem bons resultados, tornam-se ruinosas. (...) Os cerebros das mulheres, que são os mais atrazados e imperfeitos não poder ser agitados em que o desnorteamento varre a nação e ameaça subvertel-a.'

necessary precursor was espoused. According to Almeida, this same logic applied to women whose brains were 'the most unprepared ones'.[41] For that reason, she was against universality of the vote for women. As explained by Isabel Baltazar, the anti-feminist voices during the First Republic came from 'varied social classes and political idiosyncrasies', so it was not a concern only of high society.[42]

In this sense, Almeida exposed in *A Capital* her opinion against 'the army of outraged women that is now spreading around the world and that, in England, took the bewildered and absurd path of violence and that, among us, acts in a lamentable and counter producing way'.[43] Her discourse is based in social Darwinist premises inspired by Herbert Spencer arguing the similitude between the animal organisms and the social organisms. According to her, the most basic animals are formed by an exposed external layer in charge of feeding and an internal one responsible for assimilating the aliment and maintaining the full organism alive. Almeida continues stating that this same distinction exists in every society 'from the most underdeveloped to the most civilized': the external layer used for protecting the community in every field is responsibility of men; and the internal one responsible 'for providing to the social body all that is necessary for living' is part of women's duty.[44] Therefore, her conclusion is that the vindications done by radical feminists would never prosper as they are contra-natura. However, she also argues in favour of the judicious feminists who want to achieve equality before the law to protect their homes and children from a man who might be 'undignified, slanderous, hypocrite, cruel, vicious without losing his absolute rights'.[45]

This article in *A Capital* was not an exception in Almeida's career. Since very early in her career Almeida wrote regularly for the press as a columnist. Her contributions to the *Correio da Manhã* under the pseudonym Branca de Santa Iria began in 1890 and, in

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[41] Almeida, to Ana de Castro Osório (2 April 1918).

[42] Isabel Baltazar, 'Vozes antifeministas na 1ª República. Ecos de oposição ao feminismo', in *Mulheres na I República*, ed. Osório de Castro, Esteves and Monteiro (Lisbon: Colibri, 2011), 47.

[43] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, 'Feministas', *A Capital*, n. 1.208 (Lisbon, 10 Dezember 1913), 1: 'Entre o exercito de revoltadas que se espalha pelo mundo n'este momento, que na Inglaterra tomou o desnorteado e absurdo caminho da violencia e que entre nós se manifesta d'um modo tão lamentavel e contraproducente.'

[44] Almeida, 'Feministas', 1: 'Esta distincção fundamental encontra-se em todo o reino animal. É a mesma que divide os organismos sociaes desde os povos mais atrazados até aos mais civilisados; a camada exterior, composta da gente encarregada do ataque e da defeza em todos os campos, cada vez mais vastos, onde se desenvolve a actividade humana; e a camada interior composta da gente encarregada de fornecer ao corpor social tudo que é necessario á vida.'

[45] Almeida, 'Feministas', 1: 'onde os seus filhos se criam sob o dominio exclusivo do homem, que póde ser indigno, calumniador, hypocrita, cruel, vicioso, sem por isso perder os seus direitos absolutos.'

1892 and 1893, it changed to Branca de Santa Iria and Branca d'Alva.[46] However, her most lasting collaboration was with the journal *A Capital*. For one month (from December 1913 until the beginning of January 1914) she wrote a daily column, without acknowledging authorship, called 'Fogos Fatuos' in which she gave female readers advice on diverse matters such as fashion, cooking, management of the home and children's education. In parallel, until 1915 she also wrote a signed opinion column on what were considered to be more serious matters such as literature, arts, religion, archaeology, politics, justice, and so on.

Another valued contribution that Almeida made to Portuguese literature was the so-called 'Bemdita trilogy': *Terra Bemdita* (1907), *Trabalho Bemdito* (1908), and *Capital Bemdito* (1910), which were greatly influenced by republican ideals and reflected on the inequality of privileges among classes in access to land, education, and the centres of power.[47] In these works she captured the misery of a certain social class in Portugal and highlighted the difference with institutions in other countries with which she had become acquainted in her travels.

The trilogy was aimed at young readers, in whom the author had much hope because 'they are still not immobilized by acquired habits, because their heart and their brain are virgin land where the generous, altruistic and enthusiastic ideals that humanity needs to conquer progress and happiness more easily germinate, bloom and bear fruit'.[48] This collection won her the respect of her male peers, even some of the most misogynistic ones, including Mario d'Almeida, who in 1911 published an opinion column titled 'Mulheres de Lettras' in which he denounced women writers as an 'epidemic' and did not spare a single comment to explain why literature authored by women was pernicious:

> During the last ten years – as there is no law that, fiercely, forbids ladies, the use of paper and pen – disturbingly the number of these sadly deplorable accidents has increased. Sadly deplorable because, indeed, there is nothing as hideous as a poetess. (...) If there are repulsive objects in this world, this is, without doubt, one of them; you can never

[46] Bastos, 'Fantasia e realidade em Virgínia de Castro e Almeida', 191.

[47] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, *Terra Bemdita* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1907); *Trabalho Bemdito* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1908); *Capital Bemdito* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1910).

[48] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, *Terra Bemdita* (2º ed. Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1929), 6: 'ainda não immobilisada pela força dos habitos adquiridos; porque o seu coração e o seu cerebro são terrenos virgens onde mais facilmente germinam, florescem e fructificam os ideiaes generosos, desinteressados, enthusiastas, de que a humanidade precisa para a conquista de progresso e da felicidade.'

> imagine a more unbearable punishment or excruciating misfortune than the appearance of a female author.[49]

However, in this column Mario d'Almeida referred to one 'superior female writer' in Portugal that he compared to other exceptions to his rule, such as Madame de Sevingé and Leprince Beaumont. The writer was 'a female author excessively modest with a large publishing market in Brazil' who had written a certain 'blessed trilogy', a piece 'very Portuguese and very modern'. Based on the description that d'Almeida gave of the anonymous female writer, we can suppose without much doubt that he was talking about Virgínia de Castro e Almeida. He continued his passionate praise:

> Everything that the feminine grace can conceive together with a robust and vigorous concept, extremely good, extremely human is condensed in those stirring pages, full of poetry, of pure poetry from nature, covered by a melancholy that is very much ours, with a shine of hope for a better future, in a vast dream of universal happiness. Certainly, this lady has a big heart, and we do not know if all our attention flies to her harmonious balance, to her artistic, gentle, and fine mettle. How many consecrated would not be able to write a particular *blessed trilogy*!... The example is comforting.[50]

The above column published in nine issues in the weekly journal *Vida Artística* (from August to October 1911) gives a sense of the difficulties and barriers that female Portuguese writers were still dealing with in the second decade of the twentieth century. The feminist movement's demands for achieving rights such as divorce or the vote for women had to surpass the fear and aversion of part of the male intellectual sphere that used their journals, stages, and pulpits to disregard and discredit every effort of female liberation, even their access to literature. In that sense, Almeida was a figure who broke

[49] Mario d'Almeida, 'Mulheres de Lettras', *Vida Artística*, n. 22 (Lisbon, August 1911), 2: 'N'estes ultimos dez annos, - por não haver uma lei que, com ferocidade, prohiba ás senhoras o uso do papel e penna, - espantosamente tem crescido o numero d'estes accidentes, tristemente deploraveis. Tristemente deploraveis porque, em verdade, não ha cousa que seja tão hedionda como uma poetisa. (...) Se ha objectos feios n'este mundo este, sem duvida é um d'elles; nunca poderá suppôr-se mais pesado maleficio, mais torturante desgraça do que o apparecimento de uma auctora.'

[50] Mario d'Almeida, 'Mulheres de Lettras', *Vida Artística*, n. 25 (Lisbon, September 1911), 3: 'Tudo quanto a graça feminina pode conceber juntamente com uma concepção forte e vigorosa, extremamente boa, extremamente humana, está condensado n'essas paginas arrebatadoras, repletas de poesia, de verdadeira poesia, a da natureza, envolvidas n'uma melancolia muito nossa, brilhando n'uma esperança de melhor futuro, n'um immenso sonho de felicidade universal. Em verdade esta senhora tem um grande coração e não sabemos realmente se toda a nossa atenção vôa para o seu ponderado equilibrio, se para o seu feitio superiormente artistas e delicadamente sensivel. Quantos consagrados serão incapazes de escrever certa *trilogia bemdita*!... O exemplo é consolador.' [Emphasis in original].

into many male-only spheres and gained their respect, beginning with literature, and later with cinema.

4.2 Helena Cortesina, variety dancer and performer (1916–1921)

Elena Cortés Altabás was the birth name of Helena Cortesina.[51] She was born in Valencia on 17 July 1903 as the oldest of four siblings from an artistic family.[52] Her mother, Manuela García Altabás Alio, was a variety show singer until her marriage and her father, Hernán Manuel Cortés García was, among other professions, an amateur playwright.[53] Cortesina began her professional career as a child dancing in variety shows. Following in her footsteps, her sisters Ofelia and Angélica (who worked as a double-act in variety shows under the name 'Hermanas Cortesina'),[54] and to a lesser degree her brother Hernán Cortés, also became performers.[55]

Helena Cortesina made her professional debut as a dancer in Barcelona on 14 August 1916 (being only thirteen years old) at the Teatro Novedades, where she performed 'among other dances, *Goyescas* (Piano suite), of the failed maestro Granados'.[56] In the following half year, she also performed in other venues such as the

[51] Helena Cortesina's birth name was found in the digital list of emigrant passengers on the boats to Argentina created by the Centro de Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos (www.cemla.com)

[52] Cortesina's date of birth was publicly unknown until 2014 when, finding her birth name, I was able to ask for her birth certificate in the Civil Register n. 2 of Valencia. For that reason, this date is incorrect in my Master's thesis. Although I have published her correct birth date in her *Women Film Pioneers Project* profile and in the articles 'Women and the Shift from Theatre to Cinema in Spain: The Case of Helena Cortesina (1903–84)' (2018) and 'El salto del espectáculo de variedades a la dirección cinematográfica en el cine mudo: el caso de Helena Cortesina en España' (2019), it is still a very common mistake in the few, usually written references to Cortesina that she was born in 1904.

[53] Manuela García Altabas Alio (Ollería, 1886 – Lima, 1956) and Hernán Manuel Cortés García (Valencia, 1878–1921). Climent Viguer, 'Rescatando desconocidas'.

[54] José J. Díaz Morales, 'Los hermanos que trabajan juntos', *Estampa*, n. 180 (20 June 1931), 8–9. The fact that the three sisters worked simultaneously on stage, and that Ofelia and Angélica worked under the name Hermanas Cortesina (without specifying if Helena was involved or not in the act), made it difficult to distinguish the three different careers. For example, in her article 'Flor de España o la historia de una desapropiación', Barbara Zecchi refers to Helena's participation in *La voz de su amo* with Tina de Jarque's company, and Helena's dances with her sisters in a show with Conchita Piquer in the Principal Palace of Barcelona in 1929, but she was not there. Zecchi, 'Flor de España o la historia de una desapropiación', 243.

[55] According to official and family records, the exact birth and death dates were: Hernán Cortés Altabás (Valencia, 21/7/1906 – Caracas, 27/10/1965); Ofelia Cortés Altabás (Valencia, 7/6/1909 – Buenos Aires, 19/7/1982); Angélica Cortés Altabás (23/12/1911 – Buenos Aires, 5/6/1972) (1914 is the birth year given in Angélica's wedding certificate to Juan Bautista Martínez but that date is very unlikely).

[56] 'Espectáculos, Teatro Novedades', *La Vanguardia*, n. 15.711 (Barcelona, 14 August 1916), 7: '[e]ntre

Teatro Tivoli and the Restaurante Excelsior, where she stayed until the beginning of 1917. Her interest in dancing and acting came from her childhood. In an interview to *Cine Popular* (after she had already starred in a film), she said that she had a natural predisposition for performing and that she had wanted to be a dancer 'since my sweet childhood'. She explained to the interviewer:

> The babysitter to make me happy, she had to dance with me all the *schotixes* and *pasodobles* that she knew. I barely walked, and when my mother was playing dancing songs on the piano, I followed the right rhythm to the amazement of family and friends who exclaimed: This girl is going to be a famous dancer![57]

When she started appearing in variety shows, she specialized in dancing to music by recognized Spanish nationalistic composers such as Isaac Albéniz, Manuel de Falla and Enrique Granados, as well as to international composers such as Robert Schumann and Frédéric Chopin.[58] Her dancing style, inspired by Isadora Duncan,[59] drew from natural movements, showing her almost-nude body covered by semi-transparent veils. One dance referenced the classic Olympic games, carrying scenography elements such as the thyrsus, the dagger, and the crown of roses and vine shoots.[60] Also, for promotional and artistic purposes, she added an 'H' to the beginning of her name and changed her surname – Cortés to Cortesina – adopting from an early age her stage name that the family would keep until the end of her life.[61]

This commercial strategy, combined with visual, musical, and narrative elements, aimed to inscribe her artistic persona in the illustrated Western cultural tradition, with its connections to Classical Greek style and the myth of Helen of Troy, as one of the most beautiful women. The symbolic imagery inspired by mythology allowed her to perform

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otros bailables, Goyescas (Suite de piano), del malogrado maestro Granados.'

[57] 'Actrices del cinematógrafo. La Venus Valenciana', *Cine Popular*, n. 12 (Barcelona, 18 May 1921), 6: 'Desde mi más tierna infancia. La niñera para contentarme, tenía que bailarse conmigo los 'schotixes' y pasodobles que sabía. Apenas andaba, cuando mi madre tocaba al piano bailables, yo seguía el ritmo adecuado, ante el asombro de parientes y amigos, que exclamaban: ¡Esta niña será una bailarina famosa!'

[58] José Escofet, 'España pintoresca. Danzarinas', *La Vanguardia,* n. 16.750 (Barcelona, 19 July 1919), 8. For more on early twentieth-century Spanish musical nationalism and its relation to cinema, see Benet, *El cine español*, 98.

[59] On the dances and style of Isadora Duncan (San Francisco, 1877 – Nice, 1927), see her autobiography *My Life* (1927), rev. Joan Acocella (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2013).

[60] Escofet, 'España pintoresca', 8.

[61] The actress signed her name 'H' and thus we respect it as her stage name. However, it created some controversy in period publications of the time because it was not common in Spanish. Luis Araújo-Costa, 'Veladas teatrales', *La Época,* n. 28.113 (Madrid, 5 February 1930), 1.

in a liminal space between erotism and respectability. The metaphors in the press referring to her body as 'sculptural' or 'marbled', and her participation as a model for the painting *Danzarinas griegas* by Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida (1917),[62] gave her the nickname of 'Venus valenciana' (the Venus of Valencia). This label was commonly used by the press to advertise her acts in the variety shows (sometimes in a highly sexualized way, even though she was only a teenager).[63]

Her debut in Madrid, where variety shows had a longer tradition and greater public success than in Barcelona, was at the beginning of February 1917 in the famous Teatro Romea, which specialized in a kind of popular frivolous show offering 'cinema and varietés' for the middle and lower classes. The Romea was one of the first establishments in Madrid where spectators could watch films as they had installed a Pathé projector that from 27 October 1896 was used during the night sessions, so we can be sure that Cortesina knew early on in her career the public interest that the cinematograph attracted.[64]

Cortesina's dances drew the attention of the press, who announced her first promotional photograph dressed in a classic Greek costume,[65] and in the review in *El Día* she was described as 'sculptural creature, great beauty, very classic in her dances, an artist in her presentation'.[66] The full Romea programme in which Cortesina took part included heterogenous acts by *cupletistas*, skaters, singers, acrobats, flamenco dancers, and comic sketches, among other performers. The Romea programme was a success, chiefly the acts of Cortesina, the *bailaora* La Checa, and the singer Carmen Flores,[67] who were selected

[62] *Danzarinas griegas* (Sorolla, 1917), Museo Sorolla, Nº inv. CS/81877.
[63] Federico García Sanchiz, 'La quietud en las inquietudes', *Nuevo Mundo*, n. 1.217 (Madrid, 4 May 1917), 25.
[64] Josefina Martínez, 'Un antecedente en Madrid del color y del sonido: el Salón de Actualidades', in *El paso del mudo al sonoro en el cine español,* ed. Emilio García Fernández (Madrid: Complutense/Asociación Española de Historiadores del Cine, 1993), 185–191.
[65] 'Helena Cortesina', *La Nación*, n 104, (Buenos Aires, 5 February 1917), 7.
[66] 'Noticias', *El Día*, n. 13.238 (Madrid, 2 February 1917), 6: 'escultural criatura, belleza grande, muy clásica en sus danzas, muy artista en su presentación.'
[67] La Checa, stage name of Emilia Gómez (Madrid, 1903–unknown), and Carmen Flores, stage name of Carmen Pereira Barrera (Almendralejo, 1896–Madrid, 1969), were very popular variety show performers during the first decades of the twentieth century. On Carmen Flores, see Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 62.

to perform in the aristocratic sessions[68] and at public festivities such as the Carnival parade.[69]

In March 1917, Cortesina stopped performing at the Romea and began a tour for two months around the Spanish stages including the Teatro Circo of Albacete, Sevilla's Teatro Llorens and Edén Concert in Barcelona. In May she came back to Madrid, this time to the Trianón Palace, another well-known *varietés* establishment, the temple of the *ínfimo* genre,[70] which opened in 1911 and was one of the most exclusive venues because they exhibited new films each day and released Spanish productions, taking care over the programme's selection.[71] Cortesina's fame as a variety dancer had already conquered Madrid, and her name usually appeared in the press, even in humoristic contexts. As an example of the kind of jokes that mixed frivolous with political content, *El Día*, suggesting that the country would be better ruled by variety show performers, assigned the Spanish ministries to the most prominent ones at the time, such as Pastora Imperio, Tórtola Valencia, Raquel Meller, La Chelito, La Goya, La Argentinita, Carmen Flores, La Gioconda, and Helena Cortesina, who was included in the list.[72]

A few days later, she switched the Trianón Palace for the Music Hall del Palace, and that summer she left Madrid to perform in her city of birth, Valencia, at the Teatro

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[68] The aristocratic spectacles were special sessions financed by the nobility. They were used as a promotional device, so sometimes the list of the personalities who would attend was published. According to Dru Dougherty and María Francisca Vilches, the presence of aristocracy at theatrical functions was a sign of the acceptance and success of the theatre. Dru Dougherty and María Francisca Vilches, *La escena madrileña entre 1918 y 1926. Análisis y documentación* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 1990), 19.

[69] 'El Carnaval. Renovación, no mal gusto', *La Acción*, n. 358 (Madrid, 20 February 1917), 5.

[70] Although there is not total agreement regarding the definition of genres, the ínfimo genre (which might be translated as 'low status' genre) was a shorter variety-show spectacle composed of unconnected risqué songs in popular venues such as *cafés-cantantes* or low-class theatres (mainly for an audience composed only of men). Javier Barreiro, 'Los contextos del cuplé inicial. Canción, sicalipsis y modernidad', *Dossier feminista*, n. 10, 'Espais de bohèmia. Actrius, cupletistes y ballarines', Seminari d'Investigació Feminista (Alicante: Universitat Jaume I, 2007), 85–100 and Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 23–24.

[71] Pascual Cebollada and Mary G. Santa Eulalia. *Madrid y el cine. Panorama filmográfico de cine años de historia* (Madrid: Consejería de Educación. Comunidad de Madrid, 2000), 377.

[72] All the following were *cuplé* singers or flamenco dancers who were successful during the golden era of variety shows (from 1910 to the mid-1920s) and who raised the profile of the genre: Pastora Imperio, stage name of Pastora Rojas Monje (Sevilla, 1887 – Madrid, 1979); Carmen Tórtola Valencia (Sevilla, 1882 – Barcelona 1955); Raquel Meller, stage name of Francisca Marqués López (Tarazona, 1888 – Barcelona, 1962); La Chelito, stage name of Consuelo Portela (Cuba, 1885 – Madrid, 1959); La Goya, stage name of Aurora Mañanós Jaufrett (Bilbao, 1891 – Madrid, 1950); La Argentinita, stage name of Encarnación López Júlvez, (Buenos Aires, 1898 – New York, 1945); and La Gioconda, stage name of Teresa Mandrí Jaufrett (unknown – Madrid, 1983). About Carmen Flores (see Chapter IV footnote 67). See Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 170–171, 90–91, 60, 176–177, 58–59, 74–75, and 84 (respectively), and 'Pequeñeces …', *El Día*, n. 13.337 (Madrid, 13 May 1917), 1.

Martí. Also in 1917, Cortesina performed her dances abroad, and on 13 November she danced in Lisbon where, according to the Spanish journal *El Imparcial*, 'the Portuguese people, so sensitive to art, have been captivated by the wonderful live statue that is Elena Cortesina, who revives Greece'.[73]

During the spring of 1918, Cortesina continued touring the north of Spain, performing at the Salón Vizcaya in Bilbao, the Victoria Eugenia in San Sebastián – where she participated in a benefit show for the victims of the wreck of the *Nuestra Señora del Carmen* fishing boat that had sunk after colliding with a First World War bomb[74] – the Teatro Robledo in Oviedo, and the Salón Pradera of Santander, where she participated in a photography session by Petelló for the journal *La Nación*.[75] In this northern city, she modelled again, this time for Gerardo de Alvear, who portrayed her as Electra on the ceiling of the Teatro Pereda in 1919, again reinforcing the connection with mythology and Classic themes.[76]

Two-and-a-half years after her debut and after a tour during which she danced in different music halls around the country and neighbouring European countries, Cortesina had attained high visibility in the press thanks to her popularity as a performer at a national level. According to *El Imparcial*, she even toured across North America:

> The nymph of art, the 'Valencian Venus', as the distinguished Sorolla appropriately called her, has come back from her triumphal tour around all North America, where she obtained a success never seen by any other artist of her kind, achieved because of her high, unique and brilliant style. Matching the beauty of her mysterious and sculptural figure with the extraordinary expertise of her voluptuous dances, Helena Cortesina achieves universal fame, bringing to her homeland the recognition of her sublime art. The public of Madrid will be able to admire her art, her sheer and magnificent dress, her figure, her charm.[77]

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[73] 'Elena Cortesina en Lisboa', *El Imparcial*, n. 18.232 (Madrid, 13 November 1917), 4.

[74] 'Función benéfica. El naufragio del pesquero 'Nuestra Señora del Carmen'', *La Acción*, n. 4.680 (Madrid, 18 April 1918), 19.

[75] 'El veraneo de las artistas', *La Nación*, n. 637 (Madrid, 14 August 1918), 4.

[76] Esther López Sobrado, *Pintura cántabra en París (1900-1936). Entre la tradición y la vanguardia* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, June 2012).

[77] 'Cines y Variedades. Helena Cortesina, en Madrid', *El Imparcial*, n. 18.666 (Madrid, 24 January 1919), 5: 'La ninfa del arte, la Venus valenciana, que la llamó con gran acierto el insigne Sorolla, ha regresado de su triunfal excursión por toda la América del Norte, en donde obtuvo éxitos no igualados por ninguna de las más célebres artistas de su género, conquistados por su elevado estilo, único y genial. Enlazando la hermosura de su misteriosa y escultural figura con las voluptuosas danzas de su escuela extraordinaria, Helena Cortesina consigue renombre universal, trayendo a su patria la consagración de su excelso arte. El

El Imparcial announced her return to the Romea stage in Madrid, where she performed together with Russian dancers, acrobats, singers, and *cupletistas* and premiered the dance 'Marcha al suplicio'. She was praised as 'a new priestess of the pagan rite of the dance who every day offers her worship to the divine art of dancing in the Byzantine amphora of her body that, dancing, seems to float among the shadows of the tapestry and the limelights'.[78] In March, she performed at the Reina Victoria Theatre in Madrid, and in April her fame as a dancer was so great that she performed at the benefit show for the Casa de Socorro of the Teatro Español with King Alfonso XIII among the audience.

The year 1920 was crucial for Cortesina's career, as this was when one of the most talked-about photoshoots took place at La Concha beach, where she dressed in the innovative all-black bodysuit wore by Musidora in *Les Vampires* (Louis Feuillade, 1915).[79] The resulting images were given full-page prints and several columns in the press, and were sold as postcards to the public.[80] In addition, performing in *El Príncipe de Carnaval* (J. J. Cadenas, 1920) at the Teatro Reina Victoria boosted her career.

This play is a fable of a young prince who lives in an eternal Carnival and, from Madrid, he initiates a fantastic journey around the biggest Carnival parties in the world: Paris, Madrid, Venice, and New York. According to the analysis by Dougherty and Vilches, it was a pretext for the public to see a series of flashy independent acts parading in a lavish ode to sensuality and pleasure that was characteristic of Carnival (sex, drugs, and urban cosmopolitanism).[81] This variety show, influenced by Paris revues, can be considered a step in Helena Cortesina's trajectory as a *vedette*, because it was a titled and established production (instead of the untitled, fragmented, and disconnected sketches of traditional Spanish variety shows). Although it was considered a little bit outdated by

público de Madrid bien pronto podrá admirar su arte, sus trajes vaporosos y regios, su figura, sus encantos.'

[78] M. Álvarez, 'Romea. Cambio total de programa', *La Acción*, n. 1.067 (Madrid, 2 February 1919), 3: 'es una nueva sacerdotisa del rito pagano de la danza, que diariamente ofrece su culto al divino arte de la danza en la ánfora bizantina de su cuerpo, que, al bailar, parece que flota entre la penumbra de los tapices y luces de la escena.'

[79] According to family testimonies, the black bodysuit was designed and ordered by her mother and manager Manuela Altabás to keep the bodies of her daughters pale during the summer and in optimum condition for its exhibition on stage. However, it is a bodysuit full of erotic and disruptive symbolism, as analysed in Vicki Callahan, 'Screening Musidora: Inscribing Indeterminacy in Film History', in *Camera Obscura. Feminism, Culture and Media Studies. Early Women Stars*, n. 48, ed. Jennifer Bean and Diane Negra, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 59–81.

[80] Some examples can be seen in the Appendix B. of this dissertation. 'Elena Cortesina', *La Correspondencia de España,* n. 22.823 (Madrid, 17 September 1920), 12.

[81] Dougherty and Vilches, *La escena madrileña entre 1918 y 1926*, 95.

theatre critics, it had very significant public success, selling out every night at the Teatro Reina Victoria in the 1920–1921 season (with 242 performances). The production was mounted again in 1921 and 1923, with Helena Cortesina's debutant sister Ofelia replacing her.[82] According to the critics, Cortesina and La Yankee's performances were a huge success, with them appearing in different acts of the show.[83] One of the most talked-about scenes was the provocative 'Los trajes de la comparsa veneciana', in which Cortesina danced surrounded by blue veils, 'as a transparent cloud over the marbled tones of her skin'.[84]

Juan José Montijano Ruiz and Rosa Peralta Gilabert have also attributed Cortesina as being the first artist to perform a full striptease on the Spanish stage, although Peralta Gilabert clarified that she might have been wearing a very tight bodysuit.[85] However, there is no reference to this in the press, and it is doubtful that in the tradition of frivolous dances, no one had been naked on stage before. Moreover, there are references to Cortesina dancing naked at the beginning of her career in the Teatro Romea:

> She exhibits all her nude body, but nobody knows her soul (…) The girl has eyes made of glass and a mouth of porcelain. It is impossible to catch by surprise the ambitious accent in the pupils, the sentimental word on the lips. Only her body is exhibited nude, all nude, without tights, not even hair in her armpits.[86]

Helena Cortesina then continued with her career as a variety dancer with classic and exotic influences, but, at the same time, she was weighing up her options and was securing an artistic reputation for herself. She even began taking singing lessons to expand her performing opportunities and advance her professional career.[87] In fact, having performed in variety shows since the mid-1910s, she was familiar with the venues and the public

[82] 'El Teatro. Reina Victoria. Debut de Ofelia Cortesina', *La Acción,* n. 1.668 (Madrid, 25 January 1921), 5.
[83] La Yankee, stage name of the dancer Consuelo Reyes Castizo (Sevilla, 1903 – unknown). See Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 249 and 'Diversiones públicas. Reina Victoria', *La Época*, n. 25.161 (Madrid, 16 December 1920), 3.
[84] A., 'Veladas teatrales. El Príncipe Carnaval', *La Época*, n. 25.163 (Madrid, 18 December 1920), 1.
[85] Juan José Montijano Ruiz, *Historia del teatro olvidado: la revista (1864-2009)* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2009), 362 and 984; Peralta Gilabert, *Manuel Fontanals, escenógrafo*, 134.
[86] García Sanchiz, 'Helena Cortesina, la quietud en las inquietudes', 25: 'Exhibe todo desnudo su cuerpo, pero nadie conoce su alma. (…) La niña tiene los ojos de cristal y la boca aporcelanada. Imposible resulta sorprender la tilde ambiciosa en las pupilas, la palabra sentimental en los labios. Sólo su cuerpo se exhibe desnudo, todo desnudo, sin mallas, sin tan siquiera vellosidades en el nido de sus brazos.'
[87] 'Entre bastidores. Helena Cortesina, tiple', *La Acción*, n. 1.644 (Madrid, 16 November 1920), 5.

who were interested in the cinematograph, which gave her a privileged position to try acting in silent cinema, as it was an open medium where no professional performers were established yet.[88]

Well-known theatre performers usually dismissed cinema once they had overcome their curiosity about the new medium.[89] Some common complaints raised by theatre actors and actresses about cinema were the limitations imposed by the lack of verbal expression, the filming of scenes out of chronological order, and, most importantly, the need for human connection with the audience. In addition, while some journalists asserted the need to make the most of the talent of experienced theatre performers, others exposed incompatibilities between theatre and cinema acting, which made dramatic actors and actresses insecure about their abilities and photogenic qualities for the screen.[90]

Iberian cinema in 1920s mainly hired theatre actors and debutants, and what was lacking were professional cinema performers.[91] Therefore, there was space for anonymous people, new faces, and those not-so-well-known stage performers to try their luck in the so-called 'art of silence'.[92] For that reason, coming from dancing in variety shows, Cortesina's chance to improve her career by succeeding as a cinema actress was very high: either she could triumph as a cinema star, which could bring fame and fortune,

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[88] Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 50.

[89] For instance, the Catalan actress Margarita Xirgu justified in an interview her clear preference for theatre, even when she had starred in several films during the second decade of the century: 'Artistically, I will always miss the emotivity of a theatrical representation. When we are in front of the public, the actors form with the public a group that vibrates with the impulse of the same emotion that we have managed to transfer. In cinema, you know that we film the scenes that take place in a same set one after the other, even if they belong to very distant moments of the play. The artist therefore lacks the increasing warmth, the unity of action, the coherence of the plot and the spectator'. Joan de Llob, 'Margarida Xirgu a Badalona', *Imatges*, n. 6 (Barcelona, 16 July 1930), 24: ('Artísticament, hi mancarà sempre l'emotivitat pròpia d'una representació teatral. Quan estem davant del públic, els actors formem amb el públic un conjunt, que vibra a l'impuls de la mateixa emoció que havem aconseguit transmetre-li. Al cinema, vostè sap que es filmen seguides les escenes que es desenrotllen dins un mateix escenari, encara que pertanyin a dos moments ben distanciats de l'obra. Forçosament l'artista ha de trobar a mancar l'escalf ascendent, la unitat d'acció, la cohesió entre els fonts de l'argument i l'espectador.')

[90] Amélia Rey Colaço (see Chapter IV footnote 8), the recognized Portuguese theatre actress, said that she thought she did not have the 'touch' for cinema, and António Pinheiro recounts in his memoires the difficulties that he had in understanding the cinematographic style of acting in his first experience. Humberto de Mergulhão, 'Amélia Rey Colaço. E as suas opiniões sôbre o cinema', *Imagem*, n. 114 (Lisbon, 18 March 1935), 15 and Pinheiro, *Contos largos*, 352–354.

[91] 'Crie-se artistas!', *Cine-Teatro*, n. 8 (Lisbon, 15 January 1930), 5.

[92] During the 1920s there were regular schools of acting and contests in the press to try to find undiscovered talent for the screen, in which they asked for photographs and short bio-note of the entrants. For example, see 'Escola Cinematográfica Artistica', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 7 (Lisbon, 1 April 1923), 91 and 'Concurso artístico de Cinematografia', *Cine-Teatro*, n. 4 (Lisbon, 15 October 1929), 15.

or she could raise her profile as an actress and go back to the stage, but at a more respected level, which was what happened when she joined the company of Gregorio Martínez Sierra.

Chapter V. Incursion into the new medium: the experience of cinema

5.1 A comparative history of Iberian silent cinema (1918–1928)

Cinema provoked strong opinions among intellectuals and was introduced as a topic of discussion in the main urban centres of the Iberian Peninsula (Porto, Barcelona, and Valencia as industrial cities, and also the capitals Lisbon and Madrid). During the first three decades of the twentieth century, it was portrayed as a promising business for fearless entrepreneurs or unknown actors seeking novelty and excitement and who wanted to make money quickly as part of the wave that was agitating the cultural circles in the cafés. This fever of being at the centre of the film-making world was named sarcastically '*cinematografite*' in an article published at *Cine-Lisboa*:

> We enter a café, and we are soon approached by someone, with signs of the epidemic. It [the illness of *cinematografite*] presents itself with different symptoms, attacking the entire brain. This one will create a colossal enterprise, with celebrated directors. That one is the heartthrob in the first film of another company … Another, who never 'posed' [in front of the camera] thinks about a future role with which 'tout le monde' will be astonished, etc. Is this not an epidemic? (…) In the ladies, fortunately, there are fewer verified cases.[1]

The ironic description in the above quote gives an idea of the projects and dreams that were being discussed in the cafés in Lisbon in 1923, discussions about a business that seemed promising and open to experimentation. This modern epidemic could be summarized as the 'desire to make movies' that affected many men – and some 'ladies' – who risked their capital to produce films or other related works.[2] However, those enthusiastic individual efforts did not turn into an effective industrial production system

[1] H., 'Cinematografite', 14. 'Entra-se num café, e não tarda que sejamos abordados por alguém, con indicios epidémicos. Apresenta-se ela com sintomas diferente, todo o cerebro atacando. Este, vae fundar uma empreza colossal, com capitaes mirabolantes. Aquele, é galã no primeiro film doutra empresa … fantastica. Outro, que nunca 'posou' pensa num future papel com o qual 'tout le monde' ha de ficar atonito, etc. Não será isto uma epidemia? (…) Nas senhoras, felizmente é em menos numero os casos constatados.'

[2] Jane Gaines theorizes about the 'desire of make movies' or 'movie-making desire', describing it as the 'wanting-to-produce-phantasies' that involved numerous people in the formative years of the film industry. Gaines, 'Of Cabbages and Authors', 101.

in the Iberian Peninsula. According to the account of Alfredo Serrano in *Las Películas Españolas*, one of the first Spanish cinema histories written in 1925, the national production houses that had been created up to that point had worked 'without any method, in complete anarchy'.[3] The journalist described Spanish production as totally improvised and driven by amateurs with a passion for cinema 'who have spent 48 hours in Paris and have seen many movies' but who had no experience or idea of the cinema trade:

> Almost all editing houses have been constituted based on a gentleman without capital, who has managed to convince one or more capitalists, totally unconnected to the business, to create the entity that would make, according to him, high revenues, thanks to the fabulous profits of this beautiful industry.[4]

Serrano continues that, as a result of improvised and unprofessional film-making techniques which produced poor results, the movies made in this way were shown to the specialized and trade cinema press, who praised the result more out of a desire to be patriotic than because the films had any artistic merit. Finally, the films were not widely distributed and were exhibited in only a few cinemas, producing a good result for the director but a significant economic loss for the capitalists, who would no longer place trust in the film industry. The ones to blame for the 'shameful state of this country [Spain] as a cinema producer' were, nevertheless, to a great extent, the '*queridas*' (mistresses of film producers) who were objects of 'favouritism and gallantry', since the only reason many films were made was to give them leading roles and transform them into film stars.[5]

Serrano's description might be exaggerated as Barcelona had hosted the golden years of Spanish production in the 1910s with examples of (ephemerally) successful production companies being Hispano Films, Studio Films, and Barcinógrafo S.A., which were at their peak during the First World War.[6] However, film director Rino Lupo agreed with Serrano's analysis and, according to him, the described 'un-industrial' system was not exclusive to Spain. Although having better conditions, Portugal also suffered from a

[3] Serrano, *Las Películas Españolas*, 57: 'sin método alguno, en completa anarquía.'
[4] Serrano, *Las Películas Españolas*, 58: 'Casi todas las sociedades editoras se han constituido a base de un señor sin capital, que ha logrado convencer a uno o más capitalistas, ajenos por completo al negocio, para que formasen la entidad que había de realizar, según él, magníficos ingresos, gracias a las fabulosas ganancias de esta bella industria.'
[5] Serrano, *Las Películas Españolas*, 68: 'Las 'queridas' – perdónese la frase, pero es la verdadera que le corresponde al caso -, que significan favoritismo y galantería, ajeno a toda seriedad de un 'studio', han tenido no poca culpa del vergonzoso estado de este país como productor cinematográfico.'
[6] Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 58–73.

lack of resources and a failure to create economically sustainable and lasting production houses.[7] Lupo can be considered an authority on Iberian film matters because he was one of the few who directed films in both countries. He developed an important part of his career in Portugal during the 1920s, but also made some incursions into Spanish film culture, directing the film *Carmiña, Flor de Galicia* (1926) and founding cinema schools in some Spanish cities such as San Sebastián.[8] This experience in both countries, added to his international experience in other cinematographies in Italy, France, Germany, Russia, and Poland, made him a privileged witness of the state of cinema around Europe during the silent period and allowed him to theorize about cinematography as the unique combination of art and industry, an already clichéd definition. However, as he stated in both countries' press in 1926 and 1927, neither Spain nor Portugal had managed to join art and industry into a single element:

> Of those two big factors of the cinema: art and industry, only one, art, has given flashes of activity, enthusiasm, faith (…) for being [Spain and Portugal separately] a land where emotion vibrates, where beauty is felt. And the other factor? Non-existent, completely non-existent.[9]

This definition of cinema between 'two contradictory ideals – the seventh art and the nth industry – and a semio-technical reality: the narrative integration of the chain of images in its pure mostrative attraction',[10] as Alonso García puts it, was adopted during the

[7] It might be argued that Invicta Film, which operated from 1910 to 1931, was the clear exception to this rule. However, until 1917 it was not constituted as a capitalist feature-film production company (an activity that began one year later with the investment of a financing entity) and from 1924 onwards its activity was exclusively the production of intertitles for foreign films distributed in Portugal. For the story of Invicta Film, see M. Félix Ribeiro, *Invicta Film, uma organização modelar 1917-1924* (Lisbon: Cinemateca Nacional, 1973).

[8] Despite being a Spanish production by Hispánica Film, *Carmiña, flor de Galicia* was a remake of a Portuguese film *Mulheres da Beira* (Rino Lupo, 1922), and while its exteriors were filmed in Galicia, the interiors were filmed in the Invicta Film studios in Porto. See Baptista, *As cidades e os filmes*, 128–137.

[9] Rino Lupo, 'El capital y la cinematografía', *El Pueblo Vasco* (Bilbao, 2 January 1926), in Baptista, *As cidades e os filmes*, 220–221: 'De estos dos grandes factores de la cinematografía: arte e industria, uno solo, el arte, da relámpagos de actividad, de entusiasmo, de fe, por ser España tierra donde la emoción vibra, donde la belleza se siente. Y el otro factor? Nulo, completamente nulo.' Rino Lupo 'A cinematografia e a tradição ética de cada país', *Semana Portuguesa* (Lisbon, 28 April 1927), in Baptista, *As cidades e os filmes*, 229–230: 'Desses dois grandes factores da cinematografia: a arte e a industria, só um, a arte, dá relâmpagos de actividade, de entusiasmo, de fé, de tentativas heróicas, por ser Portugal terra onde a emoção vibra, onde a beleza se sente. O outro factor? Nulo, completamente nulo.'

[10] Luis Alonso García, 'De arañas y moscas: la formación del sistema cine y los principios de la distribución cinematográfica en España', *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, n. 66 (October 2010): 131: 'el 'sistema-cine' tal como lo hemos entendido durante la mayor parte del siglo XX, un medio definido universalmente entre dos ideales contradictorios – el séptimo arte y la enésima industria – y una realidad

formation of the 'cinema system' from 1906 to 1915 in Spain (and from 1909 to 1918 in Portugal).[11] The author highlights that a liminal existence between art and industry was not an intrinsic condition of the artefact 'but the result of multiple social factors that surrounded the concrete ways of making and watching movies, both in the semio-technical sphere of creation, diffusion, and reception, as well as in the political-economic sphere of production, distribution, and exhibition of cinema'.[12] Therefore, from the beginning cinema theory and history were tensioned by the two poles of art and industry, including in the Iberian countries. Despite the exact wording of both articles in which Lupo described the Portuguese and Spanish non-industries as having the same virtues and the same deficiencies (which makes us doubt the accuracy of his statement), it seems that Iberian film-making systems, that I have named 'pseudo-industries' in this dissertation, were quite comparable at that time, as exhibition and filming ran in parallel in both countries even with differences and disconnections.

Spain and Portugal began their experience with the new medium by having their territories filmed by foreigners and through individual attempts of local entrepreneurs such as Aurélio da Paz dos Reis from Porto and Eduardo Jimeno Correas from Zaragoza.[13] While animated photography exhibition began almost at the same time in both Iberian capitals and main cities – and soon after than in the European metropolises including

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semio-técnica concreta: la integración narrativa de la cadena de imágenes en su pura atracción mostrativa.'

[11] The given dates for the formation of the 'cinema system' in Portugal were chosen for being the production year of *Os Crimes de Diogo Alves* (Lino Ferreira and João Freire Correia, 1909), the considered first attempt to produce an independent fiction film (that was not a sketch of a *revista*), and 1918, the year when continuous feature-film production 'directed by foreigners' began. José de Matos-Cruz, *O Cais do Olhar. O cinema português de longa metragem e a ficção muda* (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa/Museu do Cinema, 1999).

[12] Alonso García, 'De arañas y moscas': 131: 'Contra lo que suele sostenerse, dicha definición del cine no fue consecuencia de condiciones intrínsecas del artefacto sino el resultado de múltiples factores sociales que rodearon los modos concretos de hacer y ver las películas, tanto en el ámbito semio-técnico de la creación, difusión y recepción como en el ámbito político-económico de la producción, distribución y exhibición del propio cine.'

[13] The first Spanish views were filmed by Alexander Promio with the cinematograph of the Lumière company, but he did not cross the border into the neighbouring country, whose first views were shot by Henry William Short with the R. W. Paul animatograph. Begoña Soto-Vázquez hypothesis is that Lumière's preference for the Spanish market, as opposed to the success that Paul's device, the animatograph, had in Portugal, might be the result of the historical European economic and commercial relations that linked English maritime transport with Portugal and French road connections with Spain, rather than any logic of exclusive national demarcation. Soto-Vázquez, 'Extrañezas posibles', 90, and Ian Christie, *Robert Paul and the Origins of British Cinema* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 125–129.

Paris, Saint Petersburg, London, Vienna, Brussels, and Rome[14] – regular national production took time to become established.

The decade of the 1920s was turbulent in terms of changing objectives, centres, and systems of production all around the Iberian Peninsula. From 1918 to 1924 it was the era of Portuguese cinema 'directed by foreigners' (three Frenchmen and one Italian). All of them were contracted by the four most prominent production companies established in the two main cities of the country, Porto and Lisbon: Georges Pallu and Rino Lupo for Invicta Film; Maurice Mariaud for Caldevilla and Pátria Films; and Roger Lion for Fortuna Films.[15] The feature films produced in those five years were heirs of a realistic literary and visual tradition, and the most popular ones were adaptations of popular novels by some of the most well-known Portuguese writers, such as Eça de Queirós, Camilo Castelo Branco, and Júlio Dinis.[16] These four companies had ended their production activity by 1925, when the lack of a profitable business plan for distribution and exhibition of films made this kind of semi-industrial silent feature film production economically unsustainable.

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[14] In May 1896, two different ticketed spectacles of projected moving images were competing in Madrid. The first one to be presented to the public on 12 May at the Circo Parish was the theatrograph or animatograph, a projector invented by the Englishman Robert William Paul, brought to the Peninsula by the Hungarian showman Edwin Rousby. The day before its public presentation, the animatograph had been shown to journalists in an exclusive session and, since that time, was promoted as 'the last wonder of the century'. Two days later, on 14 May, Lumière's cinematograph was presented on the ground floor of the Hotel Rusia at 34 Carrera de San Jerónimo by Jean Busseret. The quality of the cinematograph's animated photography relegated the less 'perfect' Rousby spectacle to a marginal space in the press. This imbalance was further deepened by the favour that the Royal family gave to the cinematograph, attending the spectacle at least three times during June 1896. Although Rousby maintained his show in Madrid for three more weeks, he signed a contract with António Manuel dos Santos Jr. and ended up moving to Lisbon, on 18 June, when he presented the animatograph to the Portuguese public in the Real Colyseu at the Rua da Palma. Without competition from other more impressive projectors, it was much more successful, even being visited by King Carlos II, and the device also was presented in Porto, Espinho, and Figueira da Foz. For two weeks, there was another animatograph in the Teatro D. Amelia, whose even bigger projections ended abruptly on 30 August because of a fire. Thus, Rousby's stay in the Lusitanian country lasted until January 1897. The cinematograph stayed in Madrid until mid-July 1896 and only arrived in Lisbon on 12 February 1897. On the arrival of moving images devices to the Iberian Peninsula, see Jean-Claude Seguin, *Historia del Cine Español*, trans. Joaquín Turia (Madrid: Acento editorial, 1995), 7 and Amândio Videira Santos, *Para a História do Cinema em Portugal* (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa, 1990). On the reception of both devices in Spain, see the press articles 'Espectáculos para mañana', *La Época*, n. 16.503 (Madrid, 12 May 1896), 4; 'La fotografía animada', *La Justicia*, n. 2.949 (Madrid, 16 May 1896), 3. On the life history of Edwin Rousby, see Luis Guadaño, 'Edwin Rousby. Un misterio desvelado', *Filmhistoria online* 24, n. 2 (2014): 1–31.

[15] See Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu* and *As cidades e os filmes*, 128–137.

[16] Helena Carvalhão Buescu, 'Ler romances nos filmes. Considerações sobre *Amor de Perdição* e *Os Fidalgos da Casa Mourisca*', in *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu. Franceses tipicamente portugueses*, ed. Tiago Baptista (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa – Museu do cinema, 2003), 126–127.

The year 1925 was particularly inscribed in Portuguese cinema history as proof of the failure of national production of silent cinema by being called 'Ano Zero'.[17] The reason for this was that in this year not a single feature film was produced in Portugal.[18] However, it was an exceptional year in terms of international cinematographic distribution in the culturally relevant market of Brazil, as the Empreza de Films d'Arte Portugueza arrived in that country with eighteen Portuguese films (among them feature films, panoramic views, and short newsreels) to exhibit. This paradox raises historiographical questions about the hegemony of the study of production in film history to the detriment of other processes of cinema culture such as distribution, exhibition, and reception. Also, in his research of traditional film history, Paulo Cunha contends that this narrative has dismissed as unremarkable the newsreels and short films produced during the decade.[19] The author accuses this assumption of being limited and based on a concept of cinema that inherited its stylistic perspective from art history, and which considers the feature film as the only object deserving of attention.

The establishment of the military dictatorship in Portugal one year later bolstered a 'modernized' nationalistic ideology that also permeated into cinema, and a new generation of film-makers closer to the regime took charge of national production. Then began a period in which production companies, inspired by cosmopolitan and modern trends in European cinema, categorically rejected the form that national production had taken thus far, dismissing it for not being very cinematographic and being too influenced by theatre and literature.[20] However, these companies did not manage to maintain this structure for more than one or two titles. Among them, the most celebrated director was José Leitão de Barros, whose films had a vanguardist and soviet leaning character.

In Spain in 1923, the advent of the military regime of Primo de Rivera resulted in the transfer of the national cinema centre from Barcelona to Madrid and the reign of the main production company, Atlántida Films (1920–1926). Apart from strong capital support from the national aristocracy, the company's popularity and survival was based on the adaptation of famous and popular zarzuelas for the screen in a constant search to find a product that could be autochthone, commercial, and culturally appreciated at the

[17] Ribeiro, *Filmes, Figuras e Factos,* 215.
[18] Baptista, *A Cidade e os Filmes*, 130.
[19] Paulo Cunha, *Uma nova história do novo cinema português* (Odivelas: Edições Outro Modo, 2018), 19–20.
[20] Baptista, 'Franceses tipicamente portugueses', 94–95.

same time. During the 1920s, adaptations of literary sources such as theatre plays, zarzuelas, novels, stories, and popular periodic publications (*folhetins/folletins*) constituted most Iberian feature film productions in both Spain and Portugal.

Also, it is remarkable that, between 1926 and 1928, the type of production that took place in Madrid was close to the experience of Cortesina Films. This system was characterized by multiple production companies created by debutant director/producers (often also actors) who financed their companies to launch one or two films to raise their fame, and they then disappeared soon after.[21] The funding of those unstable companies, as Cortesina's, was highly dependable from the savings, network and prestige of the responsible.

It was around 1920 that a national idea of what Portuguese and Spanish cinema should be was established.[22] However, by 1928 the Iberian cinematographies had not developed their industries in the manner expected by those working in the craft.[23] The expectations of the cultural press, producers, and distributors were disappointed by the meagre production, limited distribution, and poor reception of most of the films made in their territory. As an example, the article 'Cinema em Portugal' argued that:

> We are in 1928. For thirty years cinema has existed all over the world. All nations work at trying to improve the technical processes, and stamp, so to speak – their cinematographic personality. We do not (...) Everything needs to be done (...) It is necessary – for the first time among us – to make cinema. The fact that five or six films have been made in Portuguese landscapes means nothing.[24]

It is remarkable that, according to António Lopes Ribeiro, all previous production until 1928 was irrelevant, breaking with any previous attempt of constructing a national cinematography. Also, that same year the *I Congreso de Cinematografía Española* took place in Madrid. The result of the discussions there was very much influenced by the

[21] Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 99.
[22] Alonso García, 'De quimeras, engaños y pendencias', 279–288.
[23] Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 109; Costa, *Histórias do cinema*, 38.
[24] António Lopes Ribeiro (pseud. Luiz Raul), 'Cinema em Portugal', *Imagem*, n. 2 (Lisbon, July 1928): 'Estamos em 1928. Há trinta anos que o cinema existe em todo o mundo. Todos os povos trabalham, procurando renovar os processos técnicos, e marcar, por assim dizer - sua personalidade cinematográfica. Nós não (...) Está tudo por fazer (...) É preciso – e pela primeira vez entre nós – fazer cinema. O facto de se terem feito cinco ou seis filmes em paisagens portuguesas não quer dizer nada.'

dictatorial regime and the conclusions were not taken into account by official institutions.[25]

The common assertion made by those patriotic writers eager to see their national film industries take off and travel the globe with great success was based on the artistic superiority of the Portuguese and Spanish races. In both countries, the writers would ask themselves how it was possible that, in a country with such landscapes, such literary, musical, and painting tradition, and such exotic historical customs and beautiful women, the cinema industry could not have achieved a remarkable position in global cinematography. Assuming all the cultural and natural requirements for developing a visual art like cinema existed, what was lacking in their countries that others, such as the U.S., had, even though, from the point of view of Alfredo Serrano, they lacked taste and lifestyle, the Latin artistic heritage, natural beauties, and cultural refinement?

> It is a country that has made cinema more an industry than an art; a potent, formidable industry but not because of the qualities or the spiritual values of the race, but for its entrepreneurial, businessperson, and daring character, that knows how to not skimp on the means to achieve its aims. And if Cinema is the seventh Art, and art has a more perfect seat in Europe and from Europe, for traditional reasons and racial richness, of this Latin race, superior to the Anglo-Saxon, in Spain, couldn't our country overtake North America in a few years?[26]

In Portugal, the discussion in the press was the same. There was a generalized lament about how Portugal, having a natural predisposition towards cinema thanks to its magnificent history, architecture, and landscape, did not have the technical knowledge, financial possibilities, and institutional support to create a national film industry without the help of foreigners.[27] The debate in the press revolved around considering the required capital investment in cinematography as a necessary patriotic act or an ignorant

[25] Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 102–104.

[26] Serrano, *Las Películas Españolas*, 114: 'Es un pueblo que ha hecho del cine, más una industria, que un arte; una industria potente, formidable, pero no por las cualidades, por los valores espirituales de la raza, sino por la mecánica de un carácter emprendedor y negociante, audaz, que sabe no escatimar los medios para lograr lo que se propone. Y si el Cine es la séptima de las Artes, y el arte tiene más acendrado asiento en Europa, y de Europa, por razones tradicionales y de riqueza de raza, de esta raza latina, superior a la anglosajona, en España ¿no podrá nuestro país superar al norteamericano dentro de unos años?'

[27] See, for example, José Climaco, 'Portugal ... na Arte do Silencio', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 3 (Lisbon, 1 February 1923), 34; Mario Ximénes, 'Considerações', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 9 (Lisbon, 1 May 1923), 128–129; and Avelino de Almeida, 'Cinematografia nacional', *Cinéfilo*, n. 4 (Lisbon, 14 July 1928), 3.

megalomaniac impulse. All of this was linked to a revalorization of the national cultural heritage that film producers were not able to translate into moving images.

The extended perception of cinema as part of an artistic genealogy benefiting from the influence of painting, literature, and music tradition means that producers and directors still had not figured out the trajectory of cinema and where its attraction came from. For instance, the editor of *Jornal dos Cinemas*, Augusto Claro, argued against hiring theatre actors for the screen, taking into account only their name or recommendation and disregarding the importance of their merits and the photogenic quality required for the new medium. In his article, he gave the formula of success: 'calling for the position of artistic directors and metteur-en-scene artists who are painters, literary men or actors, but Portuguese artists, not foreigners from whom we at most only need to receive lessons in the laboratories'.[28] Also, he recommended shooting three or four films at the same time for economy of effort, and he recommended that plots should be updated to contemporary themes while still maintaining their Lusitanian touch. In summary, what Portuguese cinematography needed was 'more action men than artists'.

Despite the scarcity of information about the cinematographic relationship of Spain and Portugal during the silent period, except for some very concrete studies mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, there is a general presumption that the relationship was non-existent, in the same way that there has been a belief that Iberian cultural relations were mostly characterized by a lack of communication and a tendency to 'turn their backs' on each other. However, publications, including the book *De espaldas abiertas. Relaciones literarias y culturales ibéricas (1870-1930)* by Antonio Sáez Delgado and Santiago Pérez Isasi, have proved that the barriers of collaboration were not totally closed but were permeable and, from 1870 to 1930, sporadic but intense relations never stopped:

> Only from this perspective, which places on the same gaming board relationships of a different nature and intensity, but that interact in a visible way in every corner of the Iberian poly-system, is it possible to think and reconstruct the image of a Peninsula with 'open backs' that

[28] Augusto Claro, 'Palavras', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 5 (Lisbon, 1 March 1923), 54: 'Chamar aos cargos de directores artisticos e metteur-en-scene, artistas quer sejam pintores, literatos ou actores, mas artistas portugueses e não estrangeiros dos quais só precisamos receber lições nos laboratorios: quando muito. (...) Nós até diriamos sem exitar que os atelieres lusitanos precisam mais de homens de 'acção' que de artistas. Não será assim?'

> lead the adventure of literary modernity from the fertile sociocultural tension that is at the base of its historical nature.[29]

While cinematographic relations during modernism had little to do with the literary ones that were better established in both countries and were heirs to a longer cultural and historical tradition, it is interesting to note that they existed, and that they shared some of the characteristics pointed out by Sáez and Pérez Isasi. First, they were dispersed in an Iberian poly-system in which not only the capitals had the power but in which the centre switched between Barcelona, Porto, Lisbon, Valencia, and Madrid, depending on the changes that occurred in the silent cinema pseudo-industries.[30] In fact, it is notable that there was an oscillation between the periods of creation and extinction of film production in the various main cities of each country – movement that has been described by historians as a 'geographical zig-zag' between Barcelona and Madrid and 'rotation' between Porto and Lisbon.[31]Also, other regions such as Andalucía, Galicia, Ribatejo, Minho, or Douro were considered to be the purest folkloric representation of their respective nations, and they became important filming locations for capturing images of landscapes and traditional costumes.

However, probably the main difference is that the filmic relations were not so much driven by cultural or political reasons but by industrial ones, and were also impacted by international forces. It was the geographical unity (and isolation) of the Peninsula which forced much of the commercial cinematographic influx of actors, technicians, celluloid support, copies, and so on across the border to assure film production[32] and, most

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[29] Antonio Sáez Delgado and Santiago Pérez Isasi, 'El segundo modernismo portugués y la generación del 27: Apuntes abiertos', in *De espaldas abiertas. Relaciones literarias y culturales ibéricas (1870-1930)*, ed. Antonio Sáez Delgado and Santiago Pérez Isasi (Granada: Comares, 2018), 147: 'Solo desde esta perspectiva, que sitúa en el mismo tablero de juego relaciones de naturaleza e intensidad diferentes, pero que interactúan de forma visible en todos los rincones del polisistema ibérico, es posible pensar y reconstruir la imagen de una Península de espaldas abiertas, que protagoniza la aventura de la modernidad literaria desde la fértil tensión sociocultural que está en la base misma de su naturaleza histórica.'

[30] There has been extensive publication of very specific studies about regional production in Spain during the first decades of the twentieth century. Although there are many relevant monographs devoted to many regions of Spain that I could cite, I will mention José Ramón Saíz Viadero (ed.), *Los primeros rodajes cinematográficos en España* (Santander: Consejería de Cultura, Turismo y Deporte del Gobierno de Cantabria, 2005) and De la Madrid, *Primeros tiempos del cinematógrafo* for combining many studies in one publication. However, I have not found a similar publication covering Portugal.

[31] Gubern et al., *Historia del cine español*, 14 and Ribeiro, *Figuras, Filmes e Factos*, 67.

[32] There were also a few early production that crossed the border, such as the short comedy episodes starring Charlot's imitator, 'Cardo' (from Barcelona's Studio Film) made in Lisbon in 1916: *Chegada de Cardo as Charlot a Lisboa*, *Cardo as Charlot no Politeama*, and *Uma conquista de Cardo as Charlot no Jardim Zoológico de Lisboa* (Ernesto de Alburquerque, August – September, 1916). Matos-Cruz, *O Cais*

importantly, film distribution and exhibition, taking into account that cinema as a spectacle quickly spread to every city on the Iberian Peninsula and Islands.

Therefore, in regard to early international film distribution, Spain and Portugal were considered almost a single market during part of the silent period.[33] For that reason, already in 1910 we can find in Barcelona more than seven branches of film companies (mainly from Rome, Berlin, Paris, and Los Angeles) that distributed their productions in both Iberian countries. Factory representatives such as Ribas y Vila, J. Verdagué, J. Llopis, Jaime Firmat, Dogliotti and Cia., Casanovas and Arderius, and Coix and Cia, among others, managed the international exportation of film copies and made sure that they arrived directly at the movie theatres or other regional distributors in Spain and Portugal.[34] In Portugal, the most important distribution companies during the silent period were the Companhia Cinematográfica de Portugal (1912), Sociedade Raul Lopes Freire (1918), and J. Castello Lopes Lda. (1916). The latter company was the only one to have an autonomous agreement with the Pathé house in France to receive copies of films; the other two received copies through the aforementioned distribution houses in Barcelona.[35]

The centrality of Barcelona as the gateway for films into the Iberian Peninsula caused some problems for Portuguese exhibitors, who would receive most of the copies with Spanish (or even French) intertitles. This situation raised some complaints among the Portuguese public, not only because it made it difficult to follow the plot, but also because of its nationalizing component, as was described by M. Félix Ribeiro in his exhaustive study of film distribution in Portugal up to 1939.[36] The fear of losing audiences or provoking the disillusionment of a still volatile public made the exhibitors hire national translators. They also demanded measures from the government that in 1917 prohibited the exhibition of films with intertitles in any language other than Portuguese.

Although the more robust Western cinema industries took almost all the exhibition screens as well as the attention of the public and critics, the sector that made some inroads into creating a common Iberian cinematographic identity was the cinema press, in particular some modern and cosmopolitan publications of the 1920s such as *Popular Film*

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do Olhar, 16–17.

[33] On the Spanish distribution companies from 1906 to 1921, when the branches of international companies, mainly from the United States, conquered the distribution market from national houses, see Alonso García, 'De arañas y moscas'.

[34] 'Alquiladores', *Arte y cinematografía*, n. 2 (Barcelona, 10 October 1910), 25.

[35] Ribeiro, *Invicta Film,* 82.

[36] M. Félix Ribeiro, *Os mais antigos cinemas de Lisboa, 1896-1939* (Lisbon: Instituto Português de Cinema/Cinemateca Nacional, 1978), 252–253.

in Barcelona, *La Pantalla* in Madrid, and *Ilustração Portugueza* in Lisbon.[37] Their proposal was based on an ideological and strategic goal to resist the unequal conditions of the international film market that allowed more developed cinema industries to conquer the Iberian screens and public. As Javier Herrera illustrates in one of the few articles that explore Portuguese cinema presence in Spain before 1936, some period publications:

> [w]ill play an important role in the establishment of more significant contact between both countries (…) contributing to what could be defined, in a quite vague way, as a recovery of the ideological Iberianism, which means: thinking more about the mutual benefit of production and the technical improvements than in the profitability of the more or less unitary exhibition–distribution of foreign films: for similar structural problems in the industry – one thinks – there must be similar remedies.[38]

In spite of the efforts of journalists and cinephiles to break through the ignorance that both countries had regarding their neighbour's film production, this was not translated into an effective exchange. Although screenings of national films across the border were rare, exchanges were constant during the silent period.[39] Notably, among the few exceptions were Cortesina's *Flor de España* (which was screened in 1925 under the translated title of *Flor da Espanha*), and Almeida's *Os Olhos da Alma* (released with the title of *Los ojos del alma* in April 1926, in the Madrilenian cinemas Real Cinema and Principe Alfonso, and the following month in Monumental Cinema).[40]

So, the press made many petitions, not only to the government to support national production, but also to entrepreneurs to begin discussing and promoting co-productions

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[37] Herrera, 'Presencia de Portugal en el cine español: 1895-1936', 379.

[38] Herrera, 'Presencia de Portugal en el cine español: 1895-1936', 379: 'Sin embargo comienzan a aparecer en el horizonte otras opciones más modernas y cosmopolitas que van a poder expresarse en dos nuevas revistas – la barcelonesa *Popular Film* y la madrileña *La Pantalla* – que van a jugar un importante papel en el establecimiento de un mayor contacto entre los dos países (…) contribuyendo a lo que podría definirse, si bien de una manera un tanto difusa, como una recuperación del iberismo ideológico; es decir: pensar no tanto en la rentabilidad de la distribución-exhibición más o menos unitaria de películas extranjeras sino en un beneficio mutuo de cara a la producción y a las mejoras técnicas: a similares problemas estructurales en la industria – se piensa – deben corresponderle similares remedios.'

[39] On the Spanish titles that were distributed in Portugal, see Menezes, 'Relações cinematográficas entre Portugal e Espanha', 395–396.

[40] The screening of *Flor de España* in Portugal is referenced in Menezes' article, 'Relações cinematográficas entre Portugal e Espanha: 1895-1936', 395. The screening dates for *Os Olhos da Alma* are in 'Gacetillas. Dos estrenos', *La Voz* (28 April 1926), 2 and 'Monumental Cinema', *La Libertad*, n. 1.915 (13 May 1926), 7. I could not find any information about the Spanish screening of *A Sereia de Pedra*.

between Portugal and Spain that could capture the potential market in Ibero-America and African colonies.[41] The possibility of an Iberian cinematographic union was still being debated in theoretical terms on both countries a decade later after the advent of sound.[42] It seems that the cinematographic press established itself as the only point of dialogue between the countries and tried to acquire the status that the literary press had in the promotion of names of important authors and books across the border.[43]

This Iberian effort had very few results after 1930, apart from Leitão de Barro's Spanish version of his film *Bocage* (1936) titled *Las tres gracia*s (1936),[44] which had been preceded by some other exceptions such as Rino Lupo's version of *Mulheres da Beira* (1921), titled *Carmiña, flor de Galicia* (1926) for Hispanica Film productions,[45] and the earliest known Iberian co-production between Portugal Film, created by the well-known theatre actor Nascimento Fernandes and his wife Amélia Pereira (one of the first Portuguese female producers but quite unknown) and Royal Film. In 1919, Fernandes and Pereira went to Barcelona, then the principal production centre in the Peninsula, and signed a contract with Ricardo de Baños to produce four comic shorts directed and starring the actor with the collaboration of his wife: *Nascimento, Músico*; *Nascimento, Sapateiro*; *Vida Nova*; and *Nascimento, Detective por Amor* (1919).[46]

However, it is interesting to note, as a proposal for further study, the 'illusional' and 'willingness' role played by the cinema press in relation to the existence of an Iberian cinema. In both countries there was a double game of criticizing the state of national film production – blaming lack of finance, the low quality of the films, and the lack of support from public institutions that left national production in a disadvantaged position and unable to resist international intrusion – and a positive certainty that the situation was about to change for national industries, which would become well known and competitive

[41] An example of this linking effort is Eduardo Gómez's article in *Popular Film*, in which he lamented the lack of resources of Portuguese cinema and expressed his desire to see an Iberian union that would put its production among 'the world cinematographic vanguard'. Eduardo Gómez, 'Estado actual de la industria cinematografica en Portugal', *Popular Film*, n. 112 (Barcelona, 20 December 1928), 13.

[42] The Portuguese specialised journal *Imagem* expressed disagreement with the idea of the Iberian co-production being called for by various people in Spain and Portugal. The director of the journal, João Novarro, feared that the Spanish would take advantage of the Portuguese. João Novarro, *Imagem*, n. 116 (Lisbon, 15 April 1935), 3.

[43] Saéz Delgado and Pérez Isasi, 'El segundo modernismo portugués', 140.

[44] Herrera, 'Presencia de Portugal en el cine español', 382 and Menezes, 'Relações cinematográficas entre Portugal e Espanha', 393.

[45] Baptista, *As cidades e os filmes*, 133.

[46] Menezes, 'Relações cinematográficas entre Portugal e Espanha', 394.

in the export market. This optimistic prediction, which is defended as a sign of patriotism, produces an expectation in the reader that 'cinema is about to arrive' (*um cinema por vir*) which is based more on 'intentions' than on pieces of evidence and that 'was rehearsed – forged' by the press, as is described by Joana Isabel Fernandes Duarte in her work on the Portuguese cinematographic press from 1930 to 1960.[47]

This pseudo-industrial cinema was the platform on which Cortesina and Almeida tried to develop their own production companies, supported by the family structures that accompanied them professionally. The lack of production documentation and first-hand testimonies, mainly in the case of Cortesina, makes it impossible to be conclusive on this point. However, from analysis of the bigger picture of their professional and personal lives, it is a plausible hypothesis. The problem is that, even when Iberian cinema was not developed enough in 1922/1923 to see their advances towards cinema production as economic suicide, the tendency of cinema culture was already directed towards a male-centred industry with no space for family-based production companies.

As Serrano pointed out, Spanish cinema's future had to pass through the conglomeration of production houses and the unification of efforts. The multiplication of ephemeral production houses would be seen as neither desirable nor proof of healthy cinematography. So, the solutions proposed by Serrano were the creation of production conglomerates that could attract larger investments and produce more expensive films of quality. For that, he suggested the creation of statal prizes of 100,000 pesetas or the creation of a Bank of Cinematographic Credit that would lend money to well-established credible enterprises whose attractive projects could assure future rentability.[48]

Also at the end of the decade in Portugal, journalists argued in favour of the internationalization of production (a kind of co-production system or, at least, cooperation between countries) and for strong official support for particular initiatives, but 'previously knowing the suitability of those who request it'.[49] This dependency on large investors such as banks or the State would aim to convert the semi-improvised and collective cinematographic enterprises of Spain and Portugal into industries. But also, as in Hollywood, it would erase any possibility for women to take part or experiment in such

[47] Joana Isabel Fernandes Duarte, *Se não se podem ver filmes, leiam-se as revistas. Uma abordagem da imprensa cinematográfica em Portugal (1930-1960)* (Porto: Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Porto, 2018), 9.
[48] Serrano, *Las Películas Españolas*, 101.
[49] Almeida, 'Cinematografia nacional', *Cinéfilo*, n. 4 (Lisbon, 14 July 1928), 3.

a competitive, modern, individual-centred, and structured capitalist system that substituted the hand-crafted, familial, inefficient small production houses that Cortesina Films and Fortuna Films embodied.

5.2 Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, scenario writer and film producer (1922–1925)

The Portuguese First Republic was a political project that sought to build the national definition of a modern state using art and education as its tools. To create, develop, and support its ideal of patriotic essence, it asked all forms of art to contribute to searching for the 'soul of the country' and promoting the 'typically Portuguese culture'. Although cinema was devalued by the government, which did not immediately recognize the propagandistic possibilities of the new medium, it was during the First Republic that Portuguese silent cinema production was developed.[50] Fortuna Films, Caldevilla Film, Invicta Film, and Pátria Film were the four main production companies responsible for almost all of Portuguese fictional silent cinema between 1918 and 1925.

In 1922, the Portuguese writer Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, who by then was settled in Paris, showed her interest in cinema as a sponsor and cultural promoter. She created a cinematographic prize in France of 5,000 francs to be awarded to the best picture of the year. The award was named Prix de Castro, and it was bestowed on the film *Jocelyn* (M. Léon Poirier, 1922).[51] Her decision was severely criticized in the Portuguese press, which considered it antipatriotic as the French cinematographic industry did not need incentives in the way that Portuguese cinema did.[52]

Previously, Almeida had shown an interest in cinema and its effects as a spectator of and commentator on cultural affairs in the press. Eight years before the Prix de Castro, she had published an analytical and cautionary article about the new medium, comparing the situation in Portugal with the measures taken in Switzerland and Germany against the damage that films could do to children's education by exposing them to crime and vice. In her column 'Cinematographos' in *A Capital*, she reflected on film's power of

[50] Baptista, 'Cinema e política na Primeira República', 5.
[51] R. L. 'Jocelyn de Léon Poirier reçoit le prix de Castro', *Le Petit journal*, n. 21.981 (Paris, 23 March 1923), 4.
[52] Ribeiro, *Filmes, Figuras e Factos*, 202.

suggestion and how it could be taken advantage of 'as a teaching and moralizing element through films that are lessons or others that show the abyss where vice can take its victims'.[53] In her article, she wrote about her experience in the 'dark movie theatre (where the foul atmosphere with the smoke and respiration of hundreds of viewers is already in itself poisoning)'. She described it as a place where 'a heterogeneous public, with all their sensitive faculties and intelligence captivated by an illuminated screen, see a series of moving dramas or ridiculous farces parade'.[54] Merged into the audience, she tried to analyse the public's reactions to what they were watching as an external anthropologist.

In her opinion, at the cinema 'the poor sewing girl or serving maid' learns that prostitution 'can lead to luxury and grandeur'. In addition, 'the secondary-school student or the store employee' learns that to succeed and make a fortune, they need 'audacity and lack of scruples' instead of persevering with an honest job. Finally, the worker can learn the systems of 'revolt and crime'.[55] Although these films story ended with a moralizing message, she was afraid that the public – constituted in her opinion mainly by illiterate and ignorant people – could not understand the concept and would become startled by the temptations of money, seduction, and crime. After being captivated by their first experience of moving pictures, they 'do not understand, they do not link the facts, they lose their sensitivity and get used to scenes of horror, they become weak and demoralized with the vision of refined vice and the morbid spectacle of guilty love'.[56] The 'unexpected, frightening and abnormal' examples of people laughing during tragic scenes or whistling at moments of tender love alarmed her as they were 'symptomatic manifestations' of the decadence and demoralization of a race.

Almeida's remarks, in this and another article (in which she complaints about the uncomfortable situation of having a child who has not paid for a ticket to the

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[53] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, 'Cinematographos', *A Capital*, n. 1.384 (Lisbon, 10 June 1914), 1: 'Poder de sugestão aproveitado como elemento de ensino e de moralisação por meio de fitas que são lições de coisas o outras que mostram os abismos onde o vicio pode levar as suas victimas.'

[54] Almeida, 'Cinematographos', 1: 'Um publico heterogeneo, com todas as suas faculdades de sensibilidade e de intelligencia presas á tela iluminada, vê desfilar a serie de dramas emocionantes ou de farças ridículas.'

[55] Almeida, 'Cinematographos', 1: 'Ali a pobre costureirinha ou a creada de servir aprende que a prostituição pode conduzir ao luxo e ás grandezas; o estudante do liceu ou o empregadinho do commercio aprende que mais valem, para fazer fortuna rapidamente, a ousadia e a falta de escrúpulos, do que a perserverança no trabalho honesto; o operário aprende a revolta e o crime.'

[56] Almeida, 'Cinematographos', 1: 'Depois não entendem, não ligam os factos, perdem toda a sensibilidade, habituam-se ás scenas de horror, amollecem e desmoralisam-se com a visão do vicio requintado, com o espectaculo das scenas morbidas do amor culpado.'

animatograph sitting on your knees),[57] demonstrate the uneasiness that cinema's democratizing effect produced in the cultural elites. Although mixed audiences were not exclusive to cinema, during the second decade of the twentieth century this was taking it a step further.[58] In most established cinemas the audience would not be segregated by social class inside the venue, but it would be segregated by price, localization (centre-periphery) and kind of programme (first release or rerun, for example).[59] She was surprised by the collective experience in a closed space with people of different social classes enjoying the same entertainment. She perceived the dark room as threatening, being a hypnotizing and tempting environment for people without judgement. Therefore, in Almeida's opinion cinema was a dangerous place where an unqualified public could be easily influenced, unlike a cultured audience who would be able to maintain their higher morals and informed opinion in front of the big screen.

The comparison of the cinema screen with the public forum or the church pulpit was often used by the Portuguese intellectual class. They foresaw the nationalizing and educative effects that films might achieve by gaining the attention of the general public (many of them being illiterate) and influencing their habits and decisions. However, in her column Almeida criticized the cultured public's indifference to what she felt as a sense of alarm. Therefore, her solution was to take charge of this powerful tool. Changing her status from an anonymous spectator and analyst to film judge (remember the Prix de Castro), screenplay writer, and producer, she would control the discourse again. She would remain in a powerful position to shape the 'moralizing' narrative and distribute her pedagogic message through cinema as a tool to inspire people's acts and habits.

Hence, she decided to invest her own money in the creation of the production company Fortuna Films with the purpose 'of showing abroad through cinema that today is the most powerful medium of propaganda, the natural beauties of Portugal, its monuments and popular traditions, things that are often unknown and, unfortunately,

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[57] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, 'Fogos-fatuos. Os filhos dos outros', *A Capital*, n. 1.231 (Lisbon, 4 January 1914), 2.

[58] Although, as Begoña Soto-Vázquez points out in her text 'Lo nuevo y lo viejo', that this effect was not exclusive to cinema, and it was a reality in many provinces of Spain (excluding the big centres such as Madrid and Barcelona) where people from different social classes were already sharing spaces in theatrical spectacles. Begoña Soto-Vázquez, 'Lo nuevo y lo viejo. El cinematógrafo y la resistencia al cambio de los espacios teatrales', in *Actes del V Seminario internacional sobre los antecedentes y orígenes del cine. Cinema i teatre: influències i contagis*, ed. by Ángel Quintana and Jordi Pons (Girona: Museu del Cinema, 2005), 52.

[59] For the Portuguese film-going reality, see Tiago Baptista, 'Cinemas de estreia e cinemas de bairro em Lisboa (1924-1932)', *Ler História* 52 (2007): 29-56.

sometimes even disregarded'.[60] As Almeida stated, she wanted to foster a patriotic feeling among the population. Still, her main objective was to promote Portuguese culture abroad for touristic purposes and the internationalization of Portuguese cinematographic production. Her opinion about national films until that time was that they were imperfect as 'sometimes the action is slow-paced, the plot is banal for large audiences used to seeing beauty and art, hearing music composed expressly for what they are watching'.[61]

With those objectives in mind, and considering that the Portuguese cinema industry was not developed enough, she hired French cinema professionals: the film-maker Roger Lion, his wife, the actress Gil Clary, the actor Maxudian, and two technicians, Daniel Quintin and Marcel Bizot.[62] Being one of the first known efforts to internationalize Portuguese cinema, Fortuna Films was registered on 9 August 1922 in Portugal, and its offices were based at 166 Rue Montmartre in Paris and 165 Rua Áurea in Lisbon.[63] Because of her literary adaptations for cinema, she was compared with the Swedish writer Selma Lagerloff by the historian Roberto Nobre. The difference was not just that Almeida showcased the traditional and rural aspects of her country, but that 'she risked her own money'.[64]

5.2.1 A Sereia de Pedra (1922), an adaptation of an Almeida's story

By February 1922, Almeida had asked her friend Alberto Figueira Jardim (Funchal, 1882–1970) to write a scenario for a film adapting her story *Obra do demónio* published in the compilation book *A Praga* (1917) and she was thinking about producing the film herself. However, Almeida and her sons Luís Manuel and José Lopo were newcomers to the field of cinema. They had to begin by immersing themselves in the new medium, learning about the economic and logistical practicalities as well as the market possibilities of internationalizing films in different countries to create a production company. In a letter

[60] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, *Olhos da Alma, Romance (com as fotografias do film)* (Rio de Janeiro: Edição do Annuario do Brasil, 1925), 7–8.
[61] 'Films portugueses. Sereia de Pedra', *Cine-Revista*, n. 63 (Lisbon, August 1922), 9: 'Por vezes, a acção é arrastada: o entrecho banal para as grandes plateias acostumadas a ter sob os olhos beleza e arte, ouvindo uma musica feita expressamente para o que estão vendo'.
[62] Roger Lion (Troyes, 1882 – Paris, 1934); Gil Clary, professional name of Jeanne Fernande Conte (Bordeaux, 1894 – Paris, 1968); Max Maxudian (Smyrne, 1881 – Paris, 1976). Biographical information about Daniel Quintin and Marcel Bizot was not found.
[63] Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*, 48, and annex Fortuna Films/Cronologia, 218–220.
[64] Nobre, *Singularidades do Cinema Português*, 33.

to one of her sons, she sent a list of questions to answer before she would invest her money in a film company. Some of the issues were related to the price of making a film 'that has around 1,500 metres and whose plot does not need a big expenditure on stars, crowds, *mise en scène* …';[65] what kind of contract was needed for renting or selling film productions; the legislation regarding importation into Germany and the number of films available in Germany, as she knew that 'in America, there is an excess and in France a lack'.[66] They eventually lost interest in Germany because 'France does not allow the import of German films'.[67] With this new project, she predicted to her son that she was entering 'a new phase of my life, which you must enter with me'.[68] For this new enterprise, she decided to invest her own money, but also to seek support from some investors outside the cinematographic medium.[69]

During March and April 1922, the writer and close friend of Almeida, Alberto Figueira Jardim, doctor Lopes Vieira, Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, and her son José Lopo, worked very hard hiring artists, fundraising, and looking for partnerships with Augusto de Castro (owner of Portugália Film and *Diário de Notícias*). They also had to hire a director for the film, who would end up being Roger Lion. Looking for actors, they tried to get Amélia Rey Colaço, an important theatre actress, and Brunilde da Costa, who had had previous experience acting in theatre and film. However, for some reason for the role of Bemvinda they ended up hiring virtual newcomer María Emília Castelo Branco, whose only experience on screen was in *O Destino* (George Pallu, 1922). After looking for a Portuguese actor to play Diogo Dias, they hired the French actor Maxudian because they trusted him more than 'any fumbler who ruined the film either because he is an established national actor coming from a too important lineage; or because he does not know the trade and makes stupidities'.[70]

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[65] Almeida, transcription of the letter to one or her sons (Paris, 23 February 1922). (Private family collection/PFC): 'que venha a ter uns 1.500 metros e cujo enredo não necessita grande despeza de estrellas, multidões, mise-en-scéne…' As said in the introduction, all letters coming from the private family collection have been transcribed and provided by Almeida's family and I have not had access to the originals.

[66] Almeida to her son Luís Manuel (Paris, 21 February 1922) (PFC): 'na América há excesso, em França falta'.

[67] Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 1 March 1922) (PFC).

[68] Almeida to her son Luís Manuel (Paris, 23 February 1922) (PFC): 'julgo que entrei numa phase nova da minha vida, onde terás de entrar comigo'.

[69] Tiago Baptista identifies Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, Lopes Vieira, Alberto Jardim, Vieira de Castro and Matilde Bensaúde as the capital investors in Fortuna Films. Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*, 223.

[70] Almeida to her son Luís Manuel (Lisbon, 13 May 1922) (PFC): 'trapalhão qualquer que no dê cabo do film ou por prosápia demais como um actor bom d'aqui; ou por estupidez se fôr um homem fora do

At that early point in the production, Almeida was already set on the idea of internationalizing it. She said in one letter: '[w]hat has been done in Portugal as films are worthless and no one has tried to make films as we do for the whole world.'[71] The plans were to begin filming in Lisbon and Tomar and bring the French director Roger Lion and his wife, Gil Clary, in on 10 May. Some days later, two camera operators and a developer (Daniel Quintin, Marcel Bizot, and Charles Mallet) suggested by Lion joined them in Lisbon.[72] In April, Fortuna Films had the following financial investors: Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (with 20 *contos*, probably borrowed from her friend Matilde Bensaúde); Dr. Lopes Vieira (with 30 *contos*), and Vieira de Castro (with ten *contos*).[73] Almeida thought that they still needed to double that amount, but she recognized that 'everything is going well, and I keep the same ardent faith, the same absolute certainty of a complete success'.[74]

In the beginning, they faced several practical problems such as having the film stock that they had ordered from the Kodak branch in Lisbon detained at the border. To solve this problem, which had stopped filming with resulting production costs, she asked Luís Manuel to buy the film directly from Sr Schmidt (a contact of Lion) in the Kodak branch in Paris and to bring 5,000 metres of film to Lisbon himself.[75] Another solution to get film from Paris without the involvement of Kodak in Lisbon was to send it by the Sud-Expresso's parcel service.[76]

Fortuna Films had already reached an agreement with Portugália Film to use their studio in Lisbon to film interiors.[77] Exteriors would be shot from the end of May to the end of June in Tomar, a village 150 km to the north of Lisbon, where the technical and artistic crew (Almeida included) had settled. Once shooting was concluded, Almeida had almost no money, so she was forced to mortgage some land that she owned in Golegã to pay her debts.[78]Also, to maximize profits for Fortuna Films, as well as filming *A Sereia*

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ofício'.

[71] Almeida to her son Luís Manuel (Funchal, 15 April 1922) (PFC): 'O que se tem feito em Portugal como films não presta e nunca se tentou trabalhar films como nós para o mundo todo'.

[72] Almeida to one of her sons (Funchal, 20 April 1922) (PFC).

[73] *Conto* is a monetary expression that means a thousand Portuguese *escudos*, the coin that was in use at that time.

[74] Almeida to one of her sons (Funchal, 27 April 1922) (PFC): 'tudo marcha bem e continuo com a mesma fé ardente, a mesma segurança absoluta no êxito complete'.

[75] Almeida to one of her sons (Lisbon, 12 May 1922) (PFC).

[76] Almeida to one of her sons (Lisbon, 3 July 1922) (PFC).

[77] Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*, 80.

[78] Almeida to her son Luís Manuel (Tomar, 19 June 1922) (PFC).

de Pedra, they shot extra exotic and picturesque content – some scenes in Barquinha and Tomar and a bullfight – to sell separately.[79] This content may have been commercialized under the title of *Tomar Pitoresco* by Fortuna Film for screening in foreign cinemas.[80]

Maintaining her hope that the company she had founded months before would survive, at the beginning of July, Almeida brought to an end her professional relationship with Portugália Film and searched for more investment. She entered into negotiations with the Banco do Minho to set the foundations for 'a serious enterprise with a capital of 80,000 *escudos*'. However, she reasserted her independence and control over artistic direction: 'keeping for myself the artistic direction and the full working freedom that I require and entering with plenty of capital'.[81]

As there are no extant copies of the film (not even a fragment), the plot of Fortuna Films' first feature film *A Sereia de Pedra* is nowadays only discernible through literary sources. In this way the press reviews, the long plot summary reproduced in *Jornal dos Cinemas,* and the story that inspired the screenplay have been remarkably useful. Also, the promotional photographs in the press are a source of information that show which aspects of the film were highlighted in which context. However, as Almeida explained in an interview, the differences between the literary work *Obra do demónio*, the initial screenplay written by Jardim, and her and Lion's adaptation are significant, which resulted in the creation of a very different cultural product 'to the point of supplanting the other in my heart'.[82] The resulting film differed so much from the original story that they even felt the need to change the title.

The plot that can be intuited following the press description of the film and the photographs printed in the press is a love-triangle story that takes place in Tomar. The desired Maria (María Emília Castelo Branco) is a cold, malicious, and mercurial orphan who is symbolized by a Stone Mermaid statue situated at the Templarios convent up in the hills where she lives with her adoptive father, Pedro (Maxudian). Because of her,

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[79] Almeida to one of her sons (Lisbon, 3 July 1922) (PFC).

[80] The reference to this extra filmed material in her letter can be related to the reference to material titled *Tomar Pitoresco*, produced by Fortuna Film and comprising a single part filmed in 35 mm, black and white. Matos-Cruz, *O Cais do Olhar*, 36.

[81] Almeida to one of her sons (Lisbon, 6 July 1922) (PFC): 'se lavrem as bases de uma empresa a valer com um capital de 800.000 escudos, conservando eu a direção artística e inteira liberdade de trabalho que exijo e entrando com bastante capital.'

[82] Virginia de Castro e Almeida, 'France-Portugal. Une romancière portugaise vient au Cinéma', *Le Petit journal* (Paris, 7 July 1922), 4: 'Sur les données de ma nouvelle, Roger Lion et moi (lui surtout), nous avons bâti une oeuvre diverse qui me passionne à présent au point de supplanter l'autre dans mon coeur. Elle a même changé de nom et s'appelle maintenant «Sirène de pierre»'.

Claudio (played by Néstor Lopes) is killed by Pedro (Maxudian), the man who raised them both, and after that terrible crime, he suffers from apoplexy, which leaves him bedridden until his death. In the end, Maria regrets her cruel and selfish actions towards men and marries Miguel (Arthur Duarte), an engineer who is not from the village.

Comparing the two-page press synopsis of *A Sereia de Pedra* published in *Jornal dos Cinemas* in 1923 (based on the film)[83] with the tale *Obra do demónio* written in 1917 by Almeida,[84] it can be seen that the cinematographic adaptation resulted in a more complicated and softened version of the literary source. Character names were changed, and secondary sub-themes only mentioned briefly in the story were given more importance, adding folkloric notes to the screen. For example, new elements in the film were a bullfight resulting in the bullfighter's death and also a love story and a wedding between a wealthy farmer and a beautiful peasant. Those anecdotal moments of the plot were chosen as promotional photographs for the French press to reinforce the romantic and legendary archaic imaginary attached to Portugal for foreign spectators.[85] In contrast, *Obra do demónio* was a gothic tale that was a quite dark and sexual warning about the influence that the devil could have in weak and non-virtuous people's lives. There is no punishment for evil actions or rewards for good ones, and almost none of the characters have a sincerely good heart. Hence, essential adaptations to the plot were necessary to make the film accessible to all audiences and be a saleable product for an international market. For instance, the end of the film was adapted to suit stricter moral codes, and the characters become righteous.

Maria is described as 'candid and pure' in the press film-novella. Therefore, she was not aware the passions that she awakened in the men around her (a passion that provoked Pedro's jealousy and resulted in Claudio's murder and Pedro's attack of

[83] 'A Sereia de Pedra: Novela – Síntese', *Jornal dos Cinemas,* n. 1 (Lisbon, 1 January 1923), 6–7.
[84] Almeida, 'Obra do demónio', in *A Praga* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1917), 95–188.
[85] For instance, the *Ciné-Miroir* promotional full-page article (that is included in the Appendix A.) was illustrated by three moments of the film: the bullfighter's death in the arena assisted by four colleagues dressed in traditional bullfighter dress accompanied by the legend 'In the bull ring: the bullfighter has been mortally injured by the bull' ('A la plazza: le toréador vient d'être blessé à mort par le taureau'); a courtship moment between a chevalier and a woman on a balcony in a narrow white street of the village: 'a sweetheart, a horse, an rendezvous given by his love' ('un amoureux, a cheval, au rendez-vous donné par sa belle') and the actress Gil Clary dressed as a Portuguese villager standing at the stone archway of the temple carrying a *cántaro* in her head: 'a water carrier, at the doorstep of an old monastery sitting as an eagle nest int he slope of a mountain, and that was formerly inhabited by a community of warrior-monks, the Templars.' ('une porteuse d'eau, au seuil d'un ancien monastère perché comme un nid d'aigle au flanc de la montagne, et qu'habitait jadis une communauté de moines guerriers, les templiers'). R.J. 'Ciné-Miroir au Portugal', *Ciné-Miroir*, n. 18 (15 January 1923), 23.

apoplexy). In contrast, in the written tale, Bemvinda (the name of the main female character) is compared to the devil: 'it was the devil tempting him; the same devil that spied for so many years through Bemvinda's eyes (...) the same devil that had already caused so much misfortune and certainly would still do much more'.[86] In addition, Miguel's character is totally changed for the screen, switching from a presumptuous liar and lascivious man who chases Bemvinda until he gets her, and then leaving the village afterwards, into an 'elegant and perfect gentleman' who marries Maria after saving her from a sexual attack.[87] Although *A Sereia de Pedra* was still promoted as 'a violent drama of love and jealousy, which all the friends of cinema are fond of',[88] these modifications fundamentally changed the dramatic and terrible story into a romance with a happy ending considered appropriate for large audiences.

Filming of the interiors at the Portugália Film studio was completed on 23 July 1922. Almeida was pleased with the results: 'the film is being developed, and we hope to finish this work by 5 August. It is lovely and of great clarity and perfection. We have a splendid collection of photographs.'[89] *A Sereia de Pedra* was first screened at the Cinéma Artistique in Paris on Saturday, 21 October 1922 under the title *La Sirène de Pierre* (also named *Le Fantôme d'Amour*).[90] It was screened again on 7 August 1923 in the Cinema Select. However, its official release in France was almost one year later, on 9 November 1923 at the Opéra. The film was also previewed in Lisbon, on 9 December 1922, in a special screening for press and selected guests, but it was not until 2 April 1923 that it premiered to the public in the Salão Olympia of Lisbon. The decision to show the film first in France probably presented several benefits, such as taking advantage of the contacts already made from the Prix de Castro experience (both in terms of promotion in the press and available exhibition houses). It would also legitimize the film in Portugal after being praised in the 'European cinematographic centre'. Consequently, some

[86] Almeida 'Obra do demónio', 188. 'era o demonio a tental-o; o mesmo demonio que espreitava havia tantos anos pelos olhos da Bemvinda (...) o mesmo demonio que já fizera tantas desgraças e que decerto faria ainda muitas mais.'

[87] 'A Sereia de Pedra: Novela – Síntese', *Jornal dos Cinemas,* n. 1 (Lisbon, 1 January 1923), 6.

[88] R. J., 'Ciné-Miroir au Portugal', *Ciné-Miroir*, n. 18 (15 January 1923), 23: 'Dans ce cadre d'un admirable romantisme se noue un violent drame d'amour et de jalousie, comme en sont friand tous les amis du cinéma.'

[89] Almeida to her son Luís Manuel (Lisbon, 25 July 1922) (PFC): 'A película está sendo revelada e esperamos acabar esse trabalho lá para o dia 5 de Agosto. Está lindíssimo e de grande nitidez e perfeição. Temos uma colecção explêndida de fotografias.'

[90] Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*, annex *A Sereia de Pedra*, 193.

journalists considered Almeida's efforts with this film to be 'patriotic and intelligent propaganda' of Portugal designed to be distributed abroad.[91]

As noted, *A Sereia de Pedra* was also conceived as an effort to internationalize Portuguese cinema. According to Jardim, the film's scriptwriter, Almeida's main objective was to make Portugal known abroad by using cinema as a medium of propaganda:

> Being abroad, she became enthusiastic about cinematography, considering it – as all cultivated people do – as a valuable means of propaganda, and she decided to take advantage of it to make Portugal better known abroad, contributing commendably to elucidating the foreign ignorance that has considered our country to be a Spanish province.[92]

After an efficient advertising campaign, the film received attention from French cinematography publications and Portugal was referred to in favourable and exotic terms of identification. For instance, *Ciné-Miroir* stressed its differentiation and independence from Spain, placing it on the European map: 'we willingly assume that Portugal does not differ in any way from Spain. *La Sirène de Pierre* will destroy that mistake showing the deep originality of Portugal, its inhabitants, its traditions that, despite being its neighbour, owe nothing to Spain.'[93] An encounter between two lovers, people dancing the fandango played on the accordion and the mandolin, and a mortal duel between two men, among others, were the 'details' used as the primary tool of promotion of the film, showing 'the quotidian life of Portuguese peasants'. The article continued with an interview with the director Lion. He highlighted the hospitality of the Portuguese people and the deep love and admiration that Portugal had for France in an exercise to strengthen relations between the countries, creating a sense of unequal cultural connection. He remarked that even though Portuguese culture was unknown to the French public, many Portuguese could speak French, and France was considered their 'second homeland'.

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[91] 'Jazz-Band Mundial', *Jornal dos cinemas*, n. 13 (Lisbon, 1 July 1926), 215.

[92] 'Films Portugueses. Sereia de pedra', *Cine-Revista*, n. 63 (Lisbon, August 1922), 9: 'No estrangeiro, entusiasmou-se pela cinematografia, considerando-a – como toda a gente culta – um precioso meio de propaganda - e resolveu aproveita-la para tornar Portugal mais conhecido lá fora, contribuindo assim louvavelmente para elucidar a ignorancia estrangeira que tem tomado o nosso país como uma provincia de Espanha.'

[93] R. J., 'Ciné-Miroir au Portugal', *Ciné-Miroir*, n. 18 (15 January 1923), 23: 'Nous nous imaginons volontiers que le Portugal ne se différencie en rien de l'Espagne. La Sirène de pierre détruira cette erreur en nous montrant l'originalité profonde du Portugal, de ses habitants, de ses mœurs qui, malgré le voisinage, ne doivent rien à l'Espagne.'

The film had a successful reception in Portugal, being praised by the press for its superior artistic and technical quality compared to average national productions. In a review in *Jornal dos Cinemas* the journalist Barrere said that '[*A Sereia de Pedra*] is without any doubt the best Portuguese film, more perfect from an artistic point of view than any others already presented'.[94] Barrere also appraised Lion's adaptation work and direction, saying that it resulted in 'a modern work, of odd moving beauty, and a very interesting regional plot'. On the technical aspects of the film, he said 'the direction has some flaws, that the artistic beauty completely dissipates'. Among these mistakes, the critic pointed out the lack of knowledge that the French operators Quintin and Bizot had of Portuguese 'sunlight'. However, he trusted that they would improve for their next film as he considered their photographic work the best that had been done 'among us'.

In addition, Barrere praised the acting of the French professionals Maxudian and Gil Clary in portraying 'that kind of rude Portuguese type, difficult for a French person to understand'. And among the Portuguese, he highlighted the work of Néstor Lopes, that 'apart from his colossal acrobatic work, had nice expressions', while he perceived room for improvement in the work of Arthur Duarte, whose 'gesture is not yet completely cinematographic; you notice that he still suffers from the influence of the stage'. Finally, he considered that María Emília Branco was not right for her character, although as a debutant to the 'difficult Art of Silence' she acted well. In summary, Barrere described it as 'the best Portuguese film of the year'.

Other reviews also praised the work of the Portuguese actors, especially Castelo Branco. Manuel Joaquim defined her as 'one of the best actresses of Portuguese cinematography, if not the best, playing the main character of *A Sereia de Pedra* much better than some Italian, French or American actresses – very much admired by our public – would do it'. She was described as photogenic, elegant, and 'of a characteristic Portuguese beauty'.[95]

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[94] A. Barrere, 'As nossas películas. 'Sereia de Pedra' da Fortuna-Film', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 2 (15 January 1923), 19–20: '[*Sereia de Pedra*] é sem duvida o primeiro film portuguez, dos até hoje apresentados, mais perfeitos sob o ponto de vista artistico'; 'um trabalho moderno, de uma rara beleza emotiva, e de um entrecho regional interessantissimo'; 'a direcção do film teve algumas falhas, que a beleza artistica dissipa completamente'; 'aquele tipo de portuguez rude, dificil de ser compreendido por un francez'; 'alem do seu colossal trabalho de acrobacia, teve expressões felizes'; 'gesto ainda não está completamente cinematografico; nota-se que sofre ainda a influencia do tablado.'

[95] Manuel Joaquim, 'Emilia Branco', *Jornal dos Cinemas,* n. 3 (1 February 1923), 30: 'María Emilia Castelo Branco, marcou, como uma das nossas melhores actrizes cinematograficas senão a melhor, fazendo a creação da protagonista da Sereia de Pedra muito superiormente a que fariam certas actrizes italianas, francezas e americanas bastante admiradas pelo nosso publico.'

Nevertheless, the presence of the French professionals in every area of the production was continuously pointed out by an exercise of comparison and differentiation. In most of the reviews, *A Sereia de Pedra* was not considered to have lost its Portuguese identity, and the French participants were praised and considered to be a benefit to the film as they had offered their technical and artistic knowledge. It was appreciated that they had faced the difficulties of understanding and reproducing what was specific to Portugal, such as the Portuguese rudeness and unique temperament. Therefore, the aim to reproduce an idea of a national specificity in cinema was still present and had to be balanced with the admiration of French expertise. However, the debate around Portuguese technical and industrial inexperience continued, which served as an excuse for the production houses of the early 1920s to hire foreigners (mostly French) to ensure an acceptable standard.

Despite the good reviews, it was difficult to sell *A Sereia de Pedra* in France, according to Ayres d'Aguiar. He was a former colleague of Almeida's sons at the *Escola Técnica* (Technical School) who became an essential employee in France of Fortuna Films and, later on, a successful film distributor himself. As he wrote in his memoires, Almeida's cinematographic inexperience and imprudence put Fortuna Films in an economically unsustainable situation. She had begun the second production, *Os Olhos da Alma*, without effectively selling the first one. Therefore, Almeida was obliged to sell or mortgage some of her inherited properties to pay Fortuna Films' debts and finish the second movie.[96]

Aguiar's explanation of this mistake was the illusion produced by the good reviews that *A Sereia de Pedra* had received from the French press preview due to the friendly relations that journalists had with Almeida resulting from the Prix de Castro event. The cinema reviewer of *Le Temps* had promised Almeida to sell the production in France and other European countries (apart from Portugal and Brazil), which would result in a good profit. However, this deal was revealed to be a mirage and the film 'did not attract great interest' among the distributors or exhibitors. After knocking on many distributors' doors, Aguiar and Renée Valée, another Fortuna Films employee in Paris, managed to interest a minor distributor, Kastor et Lallemand, who would pay them a percentage of the profits. The result was that both films obtained a low yield in France.[97]

[96] Aguiar, *Memórias dos meus tempos de cinema*, 3–4.
[97] Aguiar, *Memórias dos meus tempos de cinema*, 6.

5.2.2 Os Olhos da Alma (1923), an original moralist film-scenario

Almeida's second film, *Os Olhos da Alma* (Lion, 1923), was also a story by Almeida, directed by Lion. However, this time, it was an original screenplay written especially for cinema, instead of being an adaptation of an existing literary source. The experience of *A Sereia de Pedra* had showed Almeida the difficulties and disappointments that a writer suffers from the adaptation of their work for screen due to each medium's particularities. Therefore, in an interview in *Le Petit Journal*, she claimed the need to use original stories for the screen:

> I begin to understand the cinematographic art; this art is so complex, so powerful, so fascinating that it differs so much from the others and synthesizes them. (...) [I] have understood an essential thing: it is not necessary to draw the scenarios from literary oeuvres, because cinematography is an art apart which, to be perfect, demands as all the authentic arts do, that we serve it exclusively. In cinema, there must be scenarios created specifically for cinema. The adaptations of novels, theatre plays, are a grave mistake, in my opinion, and they do not do anything else but hamper and delay the development of this new and admirable art.[98]

The idea of original stories for the screen was not evident in a time when films were seen as a complementary medium directly linked to literature, whose primary function was 'giving life' to traditional stories for entertainment but also had patriotic or educative purposes. At this point, cinema's narrative function had been standardized in the industry together with the exhibition of *actualités* (newsreels) for the documentation and distribution of relevant national and international events. In this sense, Almeida's remark on the specificity of the medium and its need to liberate itself from adapting consecrated literary works went against the grain and meant the recognition of cinema's value and independence from the supposed 'high art'. While the paradigm of a typical Portuguese silent feature film of the early 1920s included, as one of the main characteristics, being

[98] Almeida, 'France-Portugal', *Le Petit journal* (Paris, 7 July 1922), 4: '[J]e commence à comprendre l'art cinégraphique, cet art si complexe, si puissant, si passionnant qui diffère tellement des autres et les synthétise. (...) [J]'ai compris une chose essentielle : qu'il ne faut pas tirer les scénarios d'oeuvres littéraires, car la cinégraphie est un art à part qui, afin d'être parfait, exige comme tous les arts véritables, qu'on le serve exclusivement. Pour le cinéma, il faut des scénarios expressément créés pour le cinéma. Les adaptations de romans, de nouvelles, de pièces de théâtre sont une grave erreur, à mon avis, et ne font qu'entraver et retarder le développement de cet art nouveau et admirable.'

an adaptation of a well-known naturalistic novel of the nineteenth century (mainly written by Camilo Castelo Branco or Júlio Dinis), it is relevant to note Almeida's modern approach.[99]

Os Olhos da Alma was filmed in Nazaré and told the story of two rival fishing families: the Souza and the Dias. The Souza family is composed of the mother Catarina (Emília de Oliveira) and the son Álvaro (Jean Murat), both virtuous characters who take care of the people of the village through their charity. When the film begins, Álvaro is walking through the forest with the old clairvoyant miller Dionisio (played by Eduardo Brazão). Only the wise man can see the dangers and temptations 'invisible to the eyes' that stalk Álvaro's life ready to tempt him away from the proper path.

In contrast, Diogo Dias (Max Maxudian) is their nemesis, an ambitious and arrogant man who does not value Nazaré's humble lifestyle and aims to rule the country as the leader of a political party in Lisbon. For that reason, he plans a *coup d'état* against the Republican regime during a national festival (the film uses newsreels for this sequence). When it fails, he seeks refuge at Rodrigo de Menezes' (João Lopes) house, an honourable politician who lives with his daughter Inez (Gil Clary). They hide Diogo, and a few days later Rodrigo dies and leaves a letter for his daughter, saying that their fortune comes from a bank robbery that he committed while in the colonies. As Diogo witnesses everything and gets to read the letter, he uses it to seduce Inez, and later he flees to Spain, hoping to get amnesty for his failed political conspiracy. Anxious to retain Inez and her fortune for himself, he blackmails her, stealing the letter and threatening to make it public, thereby tarnishing her father's name.

As Inez is now alone in the world and miserable, she is taken in by her aunt Catalina Souza, who she does not know, to live in her house in Nazaré. Being pure and innocent, Inez and her cousin Álvaro fall in love. However, afraid of Diogo's reaction, she is hostage to his will and not free to love anyone. In the meantime, Diogo receives an amnesty and returns to Nazaré to learn that Inez is there with his enemy Álvaro de Souza. Diogo then threatens to publish the letter if she does not marry him. However, in the meantime a young couple of villagers loyal to the Souza family, Rosária and Manuel (María Emília Castelo Branco and Néstor Lópes), steal the letter from Diogo and take it to Álvaro. He, discovering everything, must resist the 'passions' of revenge, fear, and anger and choose the right path in life. On the contrary, when Diogo's plans do not work

[99] Baptista, '1920-1929. O cinema 'tipicamente português'', 71.

out, he loses his mind and lets the 'passions' overtake him, dying in a fire produced by a thunderbolt, symbolizing divine rage. In the last scene, Álvaro and Inez are walking through the forest again with Dionisio who, this time, can clearly see how the temptations have gone away, opening their way to happiness.

Coordinated by her sons, the filming of the exteriors of Fortuna Films' second production in Nazaré, Batalha, and Alcobaça had finished by the end of January 1923. Trying to save money, they filmed the interior scenes with the French actors first (because of their higher cost to the production) and later the scenes with the Portuguese actors. However, the biggest star in the production was Brazão, one of the most recognized theatre actors, who played the mystic miller Dionisio. For extras, they engaged local people of the region and the technical crew, including the operators Bizot and Mallet, who appeared briefly in the film as police officers.[100]

A copy of *Os Olhos da Alma* is preserved at ANIM, the film archive of Cinemateca Portuguesa. However, as stated previously in Chapter III, section 3.1 about the methodological challenges regarding the sources in the early decades of the twentieth century, there are two different versions in 35 mm, with different editing and lengths (one produced by the Cinemateca itself in 1995, with the original tinting and Portuguese intertitles, and the other in black and white with French intertitles from the *Archives Françaises du Film – Centre National de la Cinematographie*), and multiple re-edited copies. It is difficult to work out the processes of approval and distribution for the different versions that resulted in the narrative differences of each copy.

Already in 1923, there were several edits of the film made in different phases by Lion, Almeida, and Ayres d'Aguiar (whose version of the film to be exhibited in France was considered the final version by Almeida).[101] Although Almeida was much more satisfied with the result and the work of the cast in *Os Olhos da Alma* than in *A Sereia de Pedra*,[102] when the French delegates of the production company, Aguiar and Renée Vallée, showed the new Fortuna Films' production to Kastor et Lallemand, the distributors of *La Sirène de Pierre* in France, they were not interested, and the film had to be re-edited.

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[100] José Lopo de Castro e Almeida to his mother, Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (Nazareth, 26 January 1923) (PFC).

[101] Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*, 89–91 and Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 23 September 1923) (PFC).

[102] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 26 July 1923) (PFC). She adds in the letter: '[O]ne of the beauties of our film is the homogeneity in the work of the artists, all being excellent in their roles.' ('[U]ma das belezas do nosso film consiste na homogeneidade do trabalho dos artistas todos excelentes cada qual no seu papel.')

As Aguiar recalled, the impossibility of locating the director Lion, who was on holiday, and the failure of a contractor called Fouquet to make the edits (he took the seven cans of film and brought back twelve cans with the film cut into small pieces),[103] obliged Aguiar to take the film to the Laboratorio Pathé and, together with a *colleuse*, re-edit the film, shortening some scenes and inverting the order of others.[104] Two weeks later, they returned to show the new edition of the film to the distributors, who this time agreed to buy it. For that reason, the synopsis of the film in the Brazilian press and the novelization revealed themselves as useful sources for comparison, at least to clarify which version was closer to the one exhibited in Portuguese-speaking cinemas.[105]

The novelization preserved at the Cinemateca Portuguesa was not the source material for the film as it was published in Rio de Janeiro on 8 June 1925 (the same day as the release of the film in the city) as merchandising to promote the distribution of the film in Brazil by the Empreza Films d'Arte Portugueza Limitada. The book was a high-quality publication in hardback and illustrated with twenty images from the film, instead of a more popular format of novelization as *folhetins*. If we look at the Spanish context, according to Palomo the growing popularity of cinema gave rise in the 1920s 'to multiple cheap collections of popular publications in which the premiered films were transmuted into short narrations, with poor photographs of some scenes'.[106] The commercial novels based on films – and probably sold cheaply as they were available from tobacco shops – were also often seen in Portugal, as we find them in advertisements in cinema journals.[107] One of them was *Novelas do Cine*, a collection published every two weeks in which the authors were journalists who specialized in cinema.[108]

It is interesting to see how, with almost the same plot, the three different media (two film versions and the novelization) focus on different aspects and, therefore, the narration

[103] Aguiar, *Memórias dos meus tempos de cinema*, 4.
[104] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 9 October 1923) (PFC).
[105] Almeida, *Os Olhos da Alma*, 1925.
[106] Mª del Pilar Palomo, 'Colombine y el cine mudo en España (La mejor film)', *ARBOR Ciencia, Pensamiento y Cultura* CLXXXVI (Extra June, 2010), 24: 'Al calor de la popularidad y creciente interés que suscita, el cine ha dado lugar, en torno a la década de los 20, a numerosas colecciones de baratas publicaciones populares en las que se transmutaban en cortas narraciones las películas estrenadas, con paupérrimas fotografías de alguna de sus escenas.' Some publications that Palomo mentions in her article are *La Novela Frívola Cinematográfica, La Novela Cinematográfica del Hogar, Biblioteca Film, La Novela Femenina Cinematográfica, La Novela Íntima Cinematográfica, La Novela Film, La Novela Metro-Goldwyn* and *La Novela Semanal Cinematográfica.*
[107] *Cine-Teatro*, n. 5 (Lisbon, 1 November 1923), 4.
[108] 'Projecções Rapidas …', *Cine-Lisboa*, n. 4 (Lisbon, 25 October 1923), 1.

varies. For example, it is clear that in the book the main plot is the journey that Álvaro de Souza makes from being a virtuous boy to an adult fighting against the passions such as Desire, Rage, Vanity and Fear that will tempt him during the 'journey'. Those same passions will challenge Diogo Dias and take control of him, culminating in his grisly death. On the other hand, if we were to watch the French version of the film, the main plot is not the life journey of the two men but the love triangle and the moral growth of Inez, who learns though suffering and sacrifices to be an adult woman. In the Portuguese version, however, prominence is shared between the plots and the folkloric scenes of Nazaré. The village and the locals have more importance than in the French version, and shots of the landscape and fishermen at work are included to emphasize the realist environment. Secondary characters interpreted by Portuguese actors and actresses also have more presence on screen. For that reason, although the Portuguese version is more confusing as the plot is not focused exclusively on the central love story (interpreted by the three French actors), it is also more picturesque, showing real aspects of Nazaré lifestyle. However, both versions of the film and the novelization have too many differences to allow a conclusive opinion to be drawn about which version was exhibited in which regions.[109] To do so, it would be necessary to make a further analysis to film prints as an archival artifact to reconstruct the 'internal history of the copy', which is 'a chronicle of the physical changes that a motion picture print has undergone'.[110]

Tiago Baptista notes that this was one of the first Portuguese films that showed urban spaces and had a political discourse.[111] As artistic director and producer, Almeida used cinema as a tool for promoting her ideological discourse against progressive ideas of breaking the boundaries between social classes and denouncing the corrupt and chaotic condition of politics in Portugal. For that reason, the evil character decides to enter politics, symbolizing the corruption, violence, and chaos that come with the loss of identity, the depth of family roots, and the disgrace derived from seeking equality among all men, disregarding their inherited 'social position'. They shot a scene involving a terrorist attack on the stairs of the parliament, and Almeida and Lion had to explain themselves in front of the Civil Government and had the material confiscated.

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[109] As evidence of the difficulty of obtaining a conclusive opinion about what happened to the editing of the two versions preserved at ANIM/Cinemateca Portuguesa, I would say that the novelization that was published in Brazil in 1925 included elements of both versions of the film (the French and the Portuguese ones).

[110] Paolo Cherchi Usai cited in Gaines, *Pink Slipped*, 72.

[111] Baptista, 'Cinema e política na Primeira República', 1.

After several cuts and edits of the film in which Almeida took an active part, it was released to the general public on 18 January 1924 at the cinema Select in Paris; on 30 March 1925 at the cinema Tivoli in Lisbon; on 13 May 1925 at Salão Jardim da Trindade, Novo Salão High-Life e Batalha of Porto; and on 8 June 1925 in Rio de Janeiro. However, the film had been previously screened on 11 and 24 December 1923 in Paris.[112] It was also distributed, in Spain, Austria, Germany, the United Kingdom, Chile, Algeria, and Egypt.[113]

Almeida's cosmopolitanism and internationalization were severely punished by some Portuguese journals and intellectuals, who saw in her an intrusive and proud character who involved herself in national politics and issues but from a comfortable, external position. Despite good reviews in the press, the film was criticized for focusing on the dark sides of national confrontation in the form of chaos and terrorism, and Almeida was called 'anti-patriotic' for showing this political instability abroad.[114] The movie was also the subject of critique in the press which accused Lion of cultural appropriation and the dismissal of Portuguese technical and artistic capacities:

> [F]ilms, that according to this same man's indications [Roger Lion] can only be edited in Paris (that is his homeland) I suppose that it is because in Portugal there does not exist a table, a *enroladeira*, a bottle of glue, scissors and a brush, or maybe because it was an exhaustive work to cut so much *gros-plan* and so many scenes with Portuguese artists, whose work harmed the faked stars that were brought over from France.[115]

The suspicion towards Lion for harming Portuguese performers was increased by the actress Castelo Branco's complaint to the press stating that Gil Clary had received

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[112] Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*, 194.

[113] The film was screened in the United Kingdom in November and in Algeria in December 1924. 'Os Olhos da Alma', *CinePT. Cinema Português* (website Universidade da Beira Interior), http://www.cinept.ubi.pt/pt/filme/2020/Os+Olhos+da+Alma and *L'Oued-Sahel*, n. 212 (Bougie, 11 December 1924), 4. Also, references to Fortuna Films' productions and the figure of Virginia de Castro e Almeida were found in press articles of Spain, France, Austria, Germany, United Kingdom and Brazil. On the other hand, the exhibition in Austria, Egypt and Chile was mentioned by Almeida in a letter. Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to her son Luís Manuel (Funchal, 15 September 1924). (PFC).

[114] Baptista, 'Cinema e política na Primeira República', 9.

[115] Joan de Souza Fonseca, 'Cousas Nossas. Un escandalo. Em Terra Conquistada', *Cine-Lisboa*, n. 4 (Lisbon, 25 October 1923), 3: '*films* que segundo as indicações do mesmo senhor [Roger Lion] só poderam ser montados em Paris (que é a terra dele) suponho que por não existir em Portugal uma meza, uma enroladeira, um frasco de cola, uma tesoura e um pincel, ou talvez porque era trabalho exaustivo, cortar tanto *gros-plan* e tanta scena aos artistas portuguêses, cujo trabalho prejudicasse os *estrelos* armados no ar que trouxe comsigo lá das Galias.'

favourable treatment in the final cut of the film for being the director's wife.[116] This criticism increased the suspicion raised by the film for its excess of Frenchness.

In January 1924, Virgínia de Castro e Almeida was suffocated by the long waiting periods and the debts: 'I see the days passing by, and the interest increases, and nothing positive appears. If it were not for the debts, everything would be fine. But the debts suffocate me.'[117] So, in order to pay the costs of producing *Os Olhos da Alma*, she had to again sell her properties, against the will of her son Luís Manuel. To deal with his unsupportive attitude, she wrote a letter defending herself from his accusations of not having earned millions with cinema, being mistaken in her first calculations and being forced to sell their future inheritance.[118] However, she still maintained the hope of saving her lands with the money that she would receive monthly from the two films that 'were already sold in many countries'. Among others, they received an order for thirteen copies of *Os Olhos da Alma* from France, where it was screened simultaneously in several cinemas in Paris (which was a success for a small production company).[119]

Almeida's sons also tried to attract new capital, and to link their production company to Portugália Film by changing its name to Rosy Films and hiring the actor Arthur Duarte in his first work as author and director, giving him the possibility of learning to be behind the camera in collaboration with Lion. Duarte and Almeida's relationship was a close friendship, as he described in an interview that 'it was in Fortuna where I began to see the making of cinema as I dreamt it to be, with meticulousness, with perfection', describing Fortuna Films as a step forward for Portuguese cinema production.[120]

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[116] Augusto Claro, 'Emilia Branco, A silhueta da sua vida', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 9 (Lisbon, 1 May 1923), 118.

[117] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 11 July 1923) (PFC): 'Vejo passar os dias e os juros aumentam e nada de positivo aparece. Se não fossem as dívidas tudo ia bem. Mas as dívidas sufocam-me.'

[118] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 3 January 1924) (PFC): 'Acusas-me do crime de não ter ganho milhões no cinema? De me ter enganados nos meus primeiros cálculos? De trabalhar como uma moira para endireitar a minha vida? (...) Não penses um instante que tenho empenho em vender qualquer das minhas terras'.

[119] For instance, during the week from 18 to 24 January 1924 *Les Yeux de l'Âme* (French title for *Os Olhos da Alma*) was exhibited in, at least, five Parisien cinemas at the same time. See for example 'Cinemas', *Comœdia,* n. 4.050 (Paris, 19 January 1924), 6.

[120] 'Artur Duarte', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 8 (Lisbon, 15 April 1923), 100: 'Foi na Fortuna que comecei a vêr fazer cinema como eu sonhava, com meticulosidade – com perfeição.'

However, Almeida was never totally involved in Rosy Film and, after Fortuna Films' second project, Almeida acknowledged that she was worn out.[121] She had had the idea of making a third feature film, and she even wrote the screenplay, titled *Noblesse* and registered in 1924 at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Alongside this, she had tried to negotiate an agreement with the production house Invicta Film, based in Porto, to share costs by allowing her to hire out their studios and, in return, she would establish connections between Invicta Film and French professionals interested in co-producing.[122] However, after Invicta rejected this offer, Fortuna Films ended all its cinematographic activities in 1924.[123]

The only known film produced by Rosy Film was a promotional comedy, *O Castelo de Chocolate* (1923), sponsored by the *Fabrica de Chocolates Suissa* that even distributed bonbons at the press premiere of the film in the Salão Olimpia.[124] The cast was composed of the acrobat Henrique Lira, Aurora Merval, Alvaro May, Jeany Nauceray, António Duarte, F. Romer, Octavia Navarro, Luis Afonseca, and Fernando and Alvaro Lira. Released on 27 June 1923, *O Castelo de Chocolate* was the only title written and directed by Duarte before the advent of photographic synchronized sound. Duarte directed more than twenty feature films after this.[125]

5.2.3 Noblesse (1923), an unfilmed project

In silent cinema, and even more in discussing women's access to it, it is imperative not only to refer to those projects that became films but also to write about the 'unfinished projects', those films that existed only as a desire, a plan, a script, filmed unedited material, a finished film that was never distributed, or a screening without spectators. As Dall'Asta explains, drawing on Godard, the history of women's cinema has to deal with 'the films that were never made', that is 'projects that remained at the fantasy stage,

[121] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to her sons (Paris, 30 October 1923) (PFC) and Augusto Claro, 'D. Virginia de Castro e Almeida', *Jornal dos Cinemas,* n. 7 (Lisbon, 1 April 1923), 83.
[122] Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*, 219 and Ribeiro, *Invicta Film*, 81.
[123] Ribeiro, *Filmes, Figuras e Factos*, 207.
[124] Donanfer, 'O Castelo de Chocolate', *Portugal Cinematografico*, n. 1 (15 July 1923), 12.
[125] On Arthur Duarte's international career, see Luis de Pina and José de Matos-Cruz (eds.), *Arthur Duarte: 1895-1982* (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa, 1981); and Rui Santana Brito, 'Duarte, Arthur', in *Diccionario de Cine Iberoamericano. España, Portugal y América*, vol. 3, ed. Emilio Casares Rodicio (Madrid: Sociedad General de Autores y Editores/Fundación Autor, 2011), 347–348.

stories that were just imagined and never accomplished'.[126] Taking into account the difficulties of film-making, it is as essential for historians to reveal, analyse and value the creation process, independent of the stage at which the 'film' ceased existence as a commercial and artistic finished product. This kind of history 'is based on the premise that what came into factual existence is just a minimal portion of all that was attempted – of all that was dreamed and desired', as Dall'Asta notes. For that reason, if we want to map the whole territory of female access to cinema, we cannot focus only on the actual making but must also theorize the 'desire to make movies', to use Gaines' expression.[127] Thus, in this case study I will also refer to the last cinematographic project of Fortuna Films: the French screenplay of *Noblesse* by Virgínia de Castro e Almeida that she finished writing in Paris on 10 September 1923, and registered in 1924 at the Bibliothèque Nationale Française.[128] In fact, in her description Gaines points out a characteristic of this 'wanting-to-produce-phantasies' as a desire 'to produce them in the plural and to produce them for others'. I note this remark on the plural, as Almeida's written and registered screenplay is an obvious sign of her hope to overcome the financial crisis and her willingness to continue producing films. In this sense, this unfinished project is the proof of a frustration or an 'unaccomplished desire' that is also an important part of Iberian film history.

Noblesse is a story of the decadence and extinction of the aristocracy that she strongly critiques. Almeida wrote about the loss of meaning of moral principles and spiritual nobility that were no longer exclusively linked to tradition, genealogy, or family names. 'You have proven to me that a man of your race can be as noble as one of mine', says the wealthy Count of Angra to his loyal servant after giving him his only daughter Izabel in marriage for saving her honour.[129] In this scenario, the servant Denis, a young, honest, and hardworking son of domestic workers, is the hero in antithesis to the troublemaker, the frivolous and lazy Affonso, the eldest son of the Count, who tries to sell his own sister's honour to pay his gambling debts.

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[126] Dall'Asta, 'What It Means to Be a Woman, 47.

[127] Gaines, 'Of Cabbages and Authors', 101.

[128] The existence of this scenario was mentioned in Ana Sofia Torres Pereira's PhD dissertation, in which she detailed the restrictions she found on her access to the document due to author's rights. However, at the time of writing, the manuscript of the scenario is available on the Bibliothèque Nationale Française website for a small fee. Pereira, 'Mulheres Guionistas', 202.

[129] Virgínia de Castro e Alemeida, *Noblesse* (Unpublished film scenario, Paris, 1923), 47: 'Tu m'as prouvé qu'un homme de ta race peut être aussi noble qu'un homme de la mienne'.

What Almeida is narrating in *Noblesse* is the end of the Angra family name, as the Count dies after the marriage of his daughter (and thus adopts her husband's surname) and following the emigration of his repudiated son, who adopts a new identity: 'The Count is left alone, he walks unsteadily to the paintings of his ancestors, he looks at them at length... "You and me, we are nothing more than ghosts!"... He rubs his eyes, staggers on his feet, holds onto a piece of furniture, falls dead'.[130] In this story of aristocratic family decadence, Almeida is referring to an environment of nobles and vassals that she knew well during her youth, and she is confronting this past reality with the modern era of the beginning of the twentieth century in which names, traditions, and promises had lost their traditional value. She is also denouncing the closed mindset (described as from the Middle Age, *moyennageuse*) of the Count who paid little attention and gives only a basic female education to his daughter as she would not keep the Angra name when she married.[131] In this way, Almeida might be reproducing certain injustices that she experienced from the different treatment and freedoms that she had in comparison to her brother, who was allowed to travel, for example.

The screenplay also has picturesque scenes of traditional costumes of the Porto people, including several moments in the urban environment of a *fado* tavern and the rural *diaffa* festivities. The latter is the recompense that the servants receive after the hard work at the end of the grape harvest season, and it is explained in great detail by Almeida, who even gives explanatory notes on costumes, practices, and the essential elements that must compose this scene. She knew the effect that both these colourful scenes could have on foreign audiences, and she wrote instructions for the type of characters that she wanted to show on screen:

> Party at Pilar's house. Heterogeneous people: *Afficionados* (non-professional lovers of bullfights), fado singers wearing tight trousers, short jackets, men in shirts, men smoking, women of the neighbourhood with many skirts one on top of another, wearing lots of gold around their necks, guitar-players. We sing, and we dance the fado. We drink. We play cards. Scenes, sets, and very typical characters.[132]

[130] Almeida, *Noblesse*, 47: 'Le comte, resté seul, se dirige d'un pas mal assuré vers les portraits de ses ancêtres, les regarde longuement... "Vous et moi ne sommes plus que des fantômes!"... Il passe la main sur ses yeux, vacille sur ses jambes, s'accroche à un meuble, tombe mort'.
[131] Almeida, *Noblesse*, 2.
[132] Almeida, *Noblesse*, 37: 'La fête chez Pilar. Monde hétéroclite : Afficionados (amateurs passionnés des courses de taureaux), fadistas aux pantalons collants, à la veste courte, hommes en bras de chemise,

One of the secondary characters is a female *fadista* called Pilar. Almeida aimed to show a turbulent but attractive aspect of her country, portraying a genuinely romanticized Portuguese urban type and explaining what *fado* was for an international audience: '*Fadistas* means players and singers of *fado*, who sing voluptuous and sad laments that tell passionate love stories of jealousy and death, of an obsessive and charming sentimentality and that have an extraordinary attraction for the dreamy and nostalgic soul of Portuguese people.'[133] Therefore, *Noblesse* continued the genealogy of Fortuna Films' productions: historical high-budget films portraying local dramas for an international audience and showing picturesque regions and traditions of Portugal with the double objective of promoting her country abroad and educating the national public with moralizing endings.

5.2.4 Empreza de Films d'Arte Portugueza (1924–1926), a modern distribution company

Since the beginning, Almeida and the other investors had had the idea of exporting and exploring the exhibition of their films in Brazil, idealizing that possibility as a very lucrative enterprise. In 1924, Almeida had planned a trip across the Atlantic to sell the Fortuna Films' productions and earn money as a lecturer, taking advantage of her popularity as a writer, translator and intellectual. They even began preparing the publicity, designing posters for the films, printing promotional photographs, and creating intertitles in Portuguese (as the originals were in French).[134] However, by October 1924 she began to give up the idea of travelling that year, even when the negotiations were still going on. Although she was convinced that they would 'earn a lot of money there', she was conscious that travel needed substantial investment and preparation 'to leave with every chance of success'.[135]

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homme en smoking, femmes du quartier aux nombreuses jupes superposées, portant beaucoup d'ors sur la poitrine, des joueurs de guitare. On chante et on danse le fado. On boit. On joue aux cartes. Scènes, décors et personnages bien typiques.'

[133] Almeida, *Noblesse*, 25 bis: 'Fadistas, c'esta à dire joueurs et chanteurs de fados, complaintes voluptueuses et tristes, qui racontent des histoires d'amour éperdu, de jalousie et de mort, d'une sentimentalité maladive et charmeuse et qui a une extraordinaires attirance pour l'âme rêveuse et nostalgique des portugais.'

[134] Almeida to Alvaro [probably Alvaro Jardim] (Paris, 18 February 1924). (PFC).

[135] Almeida to her son her son Luís Manuel (Madeira, 1 October 1924). (PFC): 'Quanto a este problema

In addition, in January 1925 in Paris she was visited by two delegates, Aurélio Rocha Brito and Arnaldo Miranda Guimarães, of a new distribution enterprise called Empreza de Filmes d'Arte Portugueza Limitada to negotiate the selling of the distribution rights of Fortuna Films' production. Their objective was to distribute and exhibit eighteen Portuguese productions in Brazil.[136] The twelve chosen feature films were: *Os Olhos da Alma* and *Sereia de Pedra* (Roger Lion, 1923 and 1922, Fortuna Films); *As Pupilas do Senhor. Reitor* (Maurice Mariaud, 1924, Caldevilla Film); *O Faroleiro da Torre de Bugio* (Maurice Mariaud, 1922, Caldevilla Film); *Mulheres da Beira* (Rino Lupo, 1922, Invicta Film); *Claudia* (George Pallu, 1923, Invicta Film); *Lucros... Ilícitos* (George Pallu, 1923, Invicta Film); *Tempestades da Vida* (Augusto de Lacerda, 1923, Invicta Film); *O Mais Forte!* (George Pallu, 1919, Invicta Film); *Os Lobos* (Rino Lupo, 1923, Iberia Film); *O Fado* (Maurice Mariaud, 1923, Patria Film); and *A Morgadinha de Val-Flor* (Augusto de Mello, 1923, Braga Film and Lisboa Film). Also, at every screening they offered to the public a collection of landscape views of Portugal such as cities, cathedrals, castles, monuments, and museums, as well as some traditional cultural scenes including religious processions, fairs, street festivals, and military exercises, together with the main Portuguese newsreels.[137] The announced objective of this enterprise was presenting 'not only the natural and architectural beauties of Portugal but also its more traditional and picturesque costumes'.[138]

The new distribution company was composed of wealthy businessmen who had invested around 6,000 *contos* in the company and who had connections with a theatre owner in Rio de Janeiro.[139] After some pressure from them, Almeida felt that she had no

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[Brasil] não o vejo de fácil realização este ano. Estou convencida que vou ganhar lá bastante dinheiro, mas preciso gastar bastante e preparar-me para partir com todas as probabilidades de êxito.'

[136] For more on the Empreza de Filmes d'Arte Portugueza Limitada, see Elena Cordero-Hoyo, 'Empreza de Films d'Arte Portugueza, una distribuidora a la conquista de Brasil', *Vivomatografías* 6, (December 2020): 207–237.

[137] *Rino Lupo. Mulheres da Beira. Os Lobos* (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa–Museu do Cinema, 2017), 26. [DVD brochure].

[138] Aureliano Machado, 'Novidades na tela. Films Portuguezes', *A Scena Muda*, n. 218 (Rio de Janeiro, 28 May 1925), 5: 'não sómente as bellezas naturaes e architectonicas de Portugal como seus costumes mais pittorescos e tradicionais.'

[139] Empreza de Films Portugueza Limitada had offices in Porto (Galeria de Paris, 82) and in Rio de Janeiro (Rua 7 de Setembro, 111, 2º), and Aurélio Rocha Brito and Francisco Pereira Lemos were its delegates, who travelled to Brazil in 1925 to distribute the Portuguese films. Its other members were Arnaldo Mirando Guimarães (socio-manager of Wandsheider Cª Ltea e Weber e Cª, Porto), Raul Monteiro Guimarães (Moagens and Diario de Notícias, with offices in Paris), Carlos Malheiro Dias (writer with family and connections in Brazil), and José Loureiro (businessman and theatre owner in Rio de Janeiro, as well as a cinema producer). 'Portugal no Brasil', *Jornal do Brasil*, n. 112 (Lisbon, 10 May

other option than to sell Fortuna Films' productions (both feature films and a documentary or documentaries made from scenes filmed during the filming in Tomar, Nazaré, and maybe Lisbon) for the Brazilian market.[140] 'If these people take hold and I do not sell our films now, you can be sure that they will create all sorts of conflicts with us over there if we try to explore them in any other way', she wrote in a letter to her son Luís Manuel at the beginning of 1925.[141] She was also conscious of the risk of their films becoming technically and aesthetically outdated and looking old to the public and critics, and she was afraid that if this initiative failed, it would affect the press reception of other Portuguese films that later came to Brazilian screens. However, she felt the need to justify her decision as she was letting down the rest of the investors who had 'fabulous dreams of profits in Brazil':

> In these circumstances and considering that I have already sacrificed hundreds of *contos* and months and months of work and strenuous struggles alone with everything behind me, and my health is already deteriorating, and I am fifty years old, I do not think it is reasonable nor fair that you require more from me, above all, a trip to Brazil with all its fatigues and risks (which I will have to endure on my own) to search for a quite hypothetical gold mine.[142]

Therefore, Almeida closed a deal that she described as 'modest, much less than were our expectations, but with some prospect of money'.[143] She ended up accepting 80 contos (80,000 escudos) for all of Fortuna Films' productions for the Brazilian market, which were well received in Brazil when they were screened in 1925.[144] In addition to selling

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1925), 11.

[140] There are several references to documentary or scenes for sale abroad in Almeida's letters to her sons, including one filmed by Charles Mallet under the supervision of Luís Manuel Castro e Almeida. Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*, Annex Fortuna Films/Cronologia, 218–220.

[141] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 7 January 1925) (PFC): 'Se esta gente prosperar e eu não lhes vender os nossos films agora, podes ter a certeza que nos farão lá a guerra possivel se tentarmos explorar-los de outro modo.'

[142] Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 7 January 1925) (PFC): 'sonhos de fabulosos lucros no Brasil'; 'N'estas condições e considerando que tenho já sacrificado centenas de contos e um trabalho de meses e meses e de lutas extenuantes, sozinha e com tudo ás minhas costas, e que a minha saúde já se ressente e tenho cinquenta anos, não me parece razoável nem justo que se exija mais de mim, além de tudo, uma viagem ao Brasil com todas as suas canseiras e riscos (que serei a única a correr) para ir procurar uma bem hipotética minha de oiro.'

[143] Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 7 January 1925) (PFC): 'um negocio modesto, muito áquem das nossas esperanças, mas com algum dinheiro á vista'.

[144] *Os Olhos da Alma* was the first film for being screened because one of its main actors, Eduardo Brazão, was the main marketing appeal as he was well known in Brazil and had passed away that year on 29 May. The film was screened from 8 to 14 July 1925, in the Ideal and Palais cinemas in Rio de Janeiro,

the films, Almeida was convinced to invest in the company and to be production director (with 40,000 escudos and 40,000 more for her close collaborator Aguiar) and to use their knowledge and experience for the future transition of the distribution company into film production.[145] Although this new function was never confirmed and there is no evidence of her participation in the enterprise, her name appears as part of it in the promotional documents of the distribution company in Brazil.[146] In fact, both Fortuna Films' productions were announced by the press as being linked exclusively to Empreza de Films d'Arte Portugueza without referring once to the actual production company's name, while the other productions coming from Invicta Film and Iberia Film were correctly accredited.[147]

Although Almeida took the managerial decisions for her best interests freely, the reality was that Fortuna Films was already in a terrible financial situation and, by contrast, Empreza de Films D'Arte Portugueza was a well-organized, strong business with modern systems. Thus, the negotiations between them were highly unequal in terms of commercial strength. On the one hand we have a new enterprise belonging to an industrial capitalist model with a high-scale distribution *modus operandi* and, on the other hand, a semi-artisanal family-based production company that had struggled with economic problems almost since the beginning, as did most production companies in Portugal in the first decade of the twentieth century. This difference is evident in the composition of the company, the design of the project, and the strategy of negotiation that Almeida described like this:

> They bought very cheap all the Portuguese films that interested them; they have money; they have theatres and cinemas at their disposal; they have the name of Malheiro Dias [which assured them publicity in the

followed by a programme of views of Portuguese picturesque landscapes such as Gouvea, Serra da Estrela and Amarante. The sessions were accompanied by music in the waiting hall: by the Banda da Colonia Portuguesa in the Ideal cinema and by a group of guitarists playing Portuguese music in the Palais cinema. *A Sereia de Pedra* was screened in the Cine Ideal from 6 July. Both films were also shown in São Paulo, Manaus, and Recife, at least. This list of screenings is far from being exhaustive and it would be interesting to do further research on the exhibition circuit of the Portuguese films. 'Cinemas. Duas obras primas no Ideal', *O Imparcial*, n. 4.574 (Rio de Janeiro, 2 July 1925), 6.

[145] Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 11 January 1925) (PFC).

[146] 'Empresa de Film d'Arte Portugueza. Portugal no Brasil' (Rio de Janeiro, 1925). [Promotional brochure. Biblioteca Nacional Portuguesa, Área de Música].

[147] 'Os Olhos da Alma', *Correio da Manhã*, n. 9.311 (Rio de Janeiro, 6 June 1925), 12 and 'Helvetica Cine Theatro. A Sereia de Pedra', *Diario de Pernamuco*, n. 285 (Recife, 11 December 1925), 8.

> press]. The plan was presented with intelligence and clarity (...) The Brazilian market for Portuguese films in now theirs, and only theirs.[148]

In any event, the results were not as expected because less than one year later (by 31 May 1926) the delegation from the Empreza Films d'Arte Portugueza closed in Brazil, leaving only a delegate and a debt with the Banco Ultramarino.[149]

As has been seen, Virgínia de Castro e Almeida tried to keep Fortuna Films alive as long as she could, but the debts, the changes in business methods, and the lack of income from the exploitation of its films made this impossible. This entrepreneurial 'failure' was common among contemporary production companies because of the lack of an efficient Portuguese industrial model.[150] Even though *Noblesse* became an unfinished project, and she returned to being a full-time writer, Almeida continued her links to the world of cinema through a new film distribution company managed by Aguiar, her former employee at Fortuna Films. The name of the company was Gray (acronym of the names Gi, Renée, and Ayres). This last connection to cinema ended quite soon after, because the company was not exclusively devoted to cinema. It also exported Portuguese products to France, a fact which her close friend and adviser Afonso Costa did not like and whose opinion influenced Almeida very much. According to Aguiar's testimony and Almeida's letters, she was profoundly influenced by his opinions on the economy, politics, and even spiritual matters.[151] Notably, he approved that she took part in a society that worked with films, but he found it 'unworthy that the name of Dona Virgínia de Castro was associated with a Society that sold – cod!'[152] Consequently, she sold her part of the business to Aguiar and never returned to cinema.

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[148] Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 11 January 1925) (PFC): 'Compraram muitíssimo baratos todos os filmes portugueses que os interssavam; teem dinheiro; teem teatros e cinemas á sua disposição; teem o nome de Malheiro Dias. O plano foi apresentado com inteligencia e clareza (...) O mercado do Brasil para filmes portugueses é agora d'elles e só d'elles.'

[149] 'Empreza Films d'Arte Portugueza', *A Noite*, n. 5.216 (Rio de Janeiro, 31 May 1926), 7 and Manuel Deniz Silva, ''Para que mais ressaltassem todas as scenas do emocionante drama': a música de António Tomás de Lima (1887-1950) para o filme Os Lobos', in *Rino Lupo. Mulheres da Beira. Os Lobos* (DVD Brochure, Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa – Museu do Cinema, 2017), 29.

[150] Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*, 94.

[151] It is probable that in the mid-1920s he even introduced her to spiritualism circles in Paris in which he was a prominent member. The main objective of those encounters would have been contacting their respective dead daughters. Joaquim Fernandes, 'Afonso Costa, o 'médium' improvável', in *Portugal insólito. Enigmas, crenças, experiências sobrenaturais e outros mistérios* (Lisbon: Manuscrito, 2016), 92–97.

[152] Aguiar, *Memórias dos meus tempos de cinema*, 15.

5.3 Helena Cortesina, cinema star and film producer (1920–1923)

In 1920, Helena Cortesina was a celebrity in the entertainment world in Madrid; as mentioned previously, she was successfully performing at the Teatro Reina Victoria while making her screen debut. Her experience and fame as a dancer were considered as an advantage to her shift towards silent cinema in 1920. Comparing her to a Greek sculpture, *La Esfera* published an article, illustrated with photographs of Cortesina on stage and on screen, which praised her for having 'as no other modern dancer, a sense of pose, a clear concept of what gives nobility, and rhythm and grace to human beauty'.[153] According to the journalist, her control and expressiveness on stage would be an advantage in film, as it 'retains the secret of expression and makes the fugitive flair of posture eternal'. It ended by stating that 'the beautiful artist' had found in 'silent theatre the path to true success' and had created the opportunity for Spanish cinema to make an impact internationally. '[Cinema] will be for Helena Cortesina a stamp of glory and Spain will be proud to see the name of one of our more famous artists join the elite of successful artists who on screen compete in fame and art before audiences around the whole world', the journal predicts. Thus, Cortesina's control of bodily movement and her non-verbal skills as a dancer made her more suitable to be a cinema actress in the 1920s than other more recognized theatre actresses, whose dependence on voice and diction was a hindrance in the new medium. This reveals connections between two apparently detached worlds – the classicism of dancing and the modernity of cinema.

5.3.1 La inaccesible (1920), the construction of a star

As outlined above, 1920 was a productive year for Helena Cortesina, harmonizing her work both on stage and on screen. At the age of 17, Cortesina made her cinema debut as an actress in the film *La inaccesible* (José Buchs), produced by Atlántida Films with

[153] 'Artistas españolas. Helena Cortesina', *La Esfera*, n. 381 (Madrid, 23 April 1921), 23: 'Tiene, como ninguna otra danzarina moderna, un sentido de la pose, un claro concepto de cuanto da nobleza, y ritmo, y gracia á la belleza humana. (...) Creemos que la bellísima artista ha encontrado en el 'teatro mudo' el camino verdadero del triunfo. El film, que retiene el secreto de la expresión y eterniza la fugitiva gracia de la postura, será para Helena Cortesina un timbre más de gloria y para España un orgullo al ver una de nuestras más famosas artistas incorpora su nombre á la élite de triunfadores que en la pantalla rivalizan en fama y en arte ante los públicos del mundo entero.'

financial support from the Spanish aristocracy, including King Alfonso XIII.[154] The film premiered on 11 April 1921 at the Real Cinema in Madrid, and one month later at the investors' meeting of the failing production house Cantabria Cines in Santander.[155] However, the film was not a success, according to its director José Buchs in part because it was a cheaper copy of what was being done in Italy, instead of focusing on local themes.[156] Nevertheless, Cortesina's performance received particular praise and she was considered the main incentive to see the film. As an article in *La Correspondencia de España* points out, she was advertised as the star of the film:

> Elena Cortesina, as beautiful as the most beautiful cinematographic stars, elegant, refined and distinguished, can be listed as one of the most elegant. Her aptitudes as a cinematographic actress are genuinely extraordinary. Her features are perfect for the screen. Her movements are precise. The triumph of Elena Cortesina in this film is definitive. Less beautiful, elegant and gifted actresses were presented in Spain as real 'stars' and, as such, they were accepted, and we are watching them every day and every day we hear about their fabulous contracts.[157]

In the same article the journalist M. R. recommended that the 'first-rate star not stray far from cinematography and not mistake it as a secondary art'. Putting cinema on a level plain with theatre or other arts, M. R. suggested Cortesina make cinema 'the main career move for her future, a future full of glory, popularity, and fabulous contracts'.[158] It is interesting to note the advice that cinema should not be viewed as a 'secondary art'. At

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[154] King Alfonso XIII bought the first 600 shares in the production house Atlántida in 1919 and, on many occasions, he allowed them to use royal properties in Madrid or Aranjuez as locations for filming. Josefina Martínez Álvarez, 'La participación de las élites madrileñas en la industria cinematográfica'. *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma* 5:3-1 (1990): 357–363.

[155] As has been pointed out, the fusion between the production houses Cantabria Cines and Patria Films resulted in the creation of Atlántida S.A. José Ramón Saiz Viadero, *El cine de los realizadores cántabros* (Santander: Tantin Ediciones, 1990), 13.

[156] Cabero, *Historia de la Cinematografía Española,* 18.

[157] M. R., 'La producción nacional. 'La inaccesible' obtiene un éxito ruidoso', *La Correspondencia de España,* n. 23.001 (Madrid, 13 April 1921), 3: 'Elena Cortesina, hermosa como la más hermosa de las estrellas cinematográficas, elegante, de refinada y sencilla elegancia, de distinción exquisita, puede en el arte de vestir figurar como una de las más elegantes. Sus aptitudes de actriz cinematográfica son verdaderamente extraordinarias. Sus facciones para la pantalla son correctísimas. Sus movimientos, precisos. El triunfo de Elena Cortesina en esta película es definitivo. Actrices muy inferiores en belleza, en elegancia y en talento se nos presentaron en España como verdaderas 'estrellas' y como a tales las recibimos y como a tales las estamos viendo a diario, y a diario se nos habla de sus fabulosos contratos.'

[158] M. R., 'La producción nacional', 3: 'Nosotros nos atrevemos a aconsejar a la ya estrella de primera magnitud que no se aleje de la cinematografía, que no tome este arte como cosa secundaria en donde puede distraer algunas horas, sino como base fundamental de su porvenir, de un porvenir lleno de gloria, de popularidad y de fabulosos contratos.'

that time, recognized stage actresses were reluctant to perform for the camera, and those who did 'experiment' in the new medium did so as a way of reinforcing their preconceived idea of the superiority of theatre or, as has been mentioned, as an opportunity to record their performance and archive it for the future to ensure they would not be forgotten.

La inaccesible is a comedy in three parts that tells the story of a successful and beautiful artist who had never had a love affair and had turned down all her admirers. A select club of gentlemen, called the 'Great Club', worried about this peculiar situation, sets up a contest in which the man that touched the heart of Elvira Montes (played by Cortesina) would receive a silver cup and the recognition of the other members. Florian Rey[159] played the young man who, pretending to be desperate for many reasons, tries to commit suicide in front of Elvira. Elvira had previously had her ego bruised by her friend Blanca Morales, who mocked her for never having had a man commit suicide for her in an act of love. She sees the opportunity to take advantage of the situation and proposes an agreement with the supposedly suicidal suitor. He would postpone killing himself and would declare that he was in love with her. After spending time together and being saved from a robbery by the brave gentleman, when the moment of the suicide finally arrives, Elvira begs him to stop as she has fallen in love with him. He then tells her the truth and declares that he has always been an admirer of hers. Finally, he wins the silver cup and the love of 'the *inaccesible*', and she wakes up from the fantasy that she could be happy without a man by her side.

Although the film is not preserved, the full plot written by Carlos del Mudo can be ascertained by reading the promotional summary of the comedy. Also, the cinema critic and historian Juan Antonio Cabero states in his *Historia de la Cinematografía Española*, that *La inaccesible* was a grand production with one of the most significant budgets up to that point and effective marketing. It was decorated with luxurious furnishings, and there were scenes of the cabaret in which ten bottles of real champagne were opened, with waiters from the Ritz being brought in as extras.[160] The film's visual quality is developed in a distinguished environment with fight scenes, guns, and an automobile driving around, as the description of the scenes in the plot and the still images preserved at Filmoteca Española suggest to us. Also, the character played by Cortesina is a fashionable and

[159] Florián Rey, whose birth name was Antonio Martínez del Castillo (Zaragoza, 1894 – Benidorm, 1962), was a Spanish actor who became an important director. He played his debut on-screen role in *La inaccesible*.

[160] Cabero, *Historia de la Cinematografía Española*, 207.

modern woman with financial independence and who smokes (an aspect that is condemned by her male counterpart because 'he does not like women who smoke' or women who go to cabarets).[161] The film was shown again in 1926 at the Cinema Argüelles, when it was presented as a Helena Cortesina film, evidencing, once again, advertising appeal of the leading actress over the film director. It was screened from 1 to 3 July.

While most of the press considered her performance in *La inaccesible* as her debut in cinematography, Cabero (and after Cabero, many other Spanish cinema histories)[162] mentioned that Cortesina had previously worked in *La venganza del marino*, also directed by Buchs, in 1919. This assertion could have been a mistake as there are very rare references in the press that Cortesina was part of the cast.[163] *La venganza del marino* was a drama in three parts, written by the actress María Comendador and produced by Atlántida Films in 1919, that was released on 15 June 1921 at the Real Cinema and Príncipe Alfonso in Madrid. The cast included Asunción Santana (Circe), Constante Viñas, José Montenegro, José Buchs, José Codina, Leopoldo Suárez, and, among others, according to some historians (although I have doubts), Helena Cortesina.[164]

After starring in *La inaccesible*, Cortesina's professional future became an enigma, and there were rumours that she had been offered a contract in America, or that she would go to France, leaving Spain and its persistent lack of investment in cinema. This news induced the indignation of the press and intensified the debate about the weakness of the Spanish film industry:

> If it were true, it would be to think that we do not have a remedy and that here we will never do anything in cinema, as we have done nothing in other aspects. We have artists, and they are contracted by foreigners (…) Elena Cortesina has proven her worth, that she can compete with the good actresses; and as this has not been considered in Spain, it has

[161] The plot of the film in English by Carlos del Mudo for the press promotion was found on the todocoleccion website and corresponds to the ten photographs preserved at Filmoteca Española (some of them shown in Appendix B.).
[162] Cabero, *Historia de la Cinematografía Española*, 214, and José Enrique Monterde, 'Cortesina, Helena', in *Diccionario del Cine Iberoamericano. España, Portugal y América*, Vol. 2, ed. Emilio Casares Rodicio (Madrid: Sociedad General de Autores y Editores/Fundación Autor, 2011), 894–895.
[163] 'Espectáculos y deportes. La venganza del marino', *ABC*, n. 5.753 (Madrid, 15 June 1921), 21; 'Correo de teatros', *La Libertad*, n. 478 (Madrid, 15 June 1921), 7; and 'Espectáculos. Reina Victoria', *El Telegrama del Rif*, n. 8.049 (Melilla, 16 August 1923), 3.
[164] José Ramón Saiz Viadero, *Diccionario cinematográfico de/en Cantabria 1896-2000* (Santander: Tantin Ediciones, 2013), 278.

> been in other countries, she will leave her home, (…) and we will repeat again: We do not have artists! What we do not have is any rectification![165]

However, Cortesina did not leave Spain at that time. Instead, she established her family production house, Cortesina Films.

5.3.2 Flor de España (1923), a Madrilenian production

At this point in her career, Cortesina was the closest she would ever come to being considered a 'star' (or, at the very least, to imagining that she could become one), boosted by the enthusiastic reviews of her acting skills published in the cinema press that was keen to set up a national star system.[166] For that reason – and enjoying her economic independence, supported by her family, and motivated by the success of *La inaccesible* – she decided to invest in her own film production company, Cortesina Films. She may have acquired some production experience by being on film sets, although we cannot know how much involvement she had in other professional areas aside from playing Elvira Montes. It is possible that having a leading part in the film allowed her to be present at various points of the production and acquire knowledge that she could later apply to her film production company.

In an interview for *Cine Popular* in May 1921, Cortesina revealed her future professional project: 'in this four years [since her professional debut] I have achieved many triumphs in my artistic career; but now I want to conquer them in cinematography,

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[165] 'Cinematografía. ¿Es cierto?', *La Correspondencia de España*, n. 23.010 (Madrid, 23 April 1921), 3: '¡Tendría gracia! Nos han asegurado que una Casa americana, que está terminando de establecer su estudio en Francia, ha ofrecido a la hermosísima artista Elena Cortesina, principal intérprete de La inaccesible, un contrato fabuloso para impresionar varias películas. Se nos dice que la notable actriz ha aceptado el contrato y, que en breve marchará a Francia. Si esto fuese cierto, sería cosa de ir pensando en que no tenemos remedio y que aquí nunca haremos nada en cinematografía, como nada hemos hecho en otros aspectos. Tenemos artistas, y éstos son contratados por los extranjeros. (...) Elena Cortesina ha demostrado que vale, que puede competir con las buenas actrices; y como esto, que no lo han sabido ver en España, lo han visto fuera de casa, de casa se marchará (...) y después volveremos a repetir, una vez más: '¡No tenemos artistas! Lo que no tenemos es enmienda.'

[166] In 1921 Helena Cortesina was one of Spain's favourite actresses. This was reflected in a poll launched by *Cine Popular*, in which the readers had to choose their favourite actors and actresses. Cortesina (along with Lola Paris) had the greatest number of votes as a national artist. 'Nuestro Concurso', *Cine Popular,* n. 28 (Barcelona, 7 August 1921), 3.

where I definitely aim to triumph.'[167] To achieve this, the artist told the journalist that she had established a 'movie house' in which she was the director, first actress, and screenplay writer.[168] She planned to hire a company of her choosing to film her first popular film with a 'Madrilenian theme' in which she would play a chorus girl. The resulting film was *Flor de España*, a melodrama that she produced (and directed or co-directed), which was the first and only film by Cortesina Films.

In establishing this company, she joined other international examples of actresses who became star–producer–owners, founding their 'star name company' in a premeditated and entrepreneurial marketing movement that took advantage of their popularity as stars to promote the films in which they invested.[169] The periodical *Mundo Gráfico* encouraged Cortesina's entrepreneurship, announcing the creation of her fledgling company by stating:

> Gentlemen: we have a new Madrilenian film production company. The beautiful dancer Helena Cortesina, praised for her successful role in *La inaccesible*, is jumping into the arms of the cinematographic industry. Like the North American film stars, she will produce her own films and choose her own cast. We sincerely hope to see beautiful Helena, if she has success, as she is bound to, to take this enterprise to a successful conclusion.[170]

Flor de España was a melodramatic film portraying the story of the bullfighter Juncales (Jesús Tordesillas, a prominent Spanish actor), from the beginning of his career until he

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[167] 'Actrices del cinematógrafo. La Venus Valenciana', *Cine Popular*, n. 12 (Barcelona, 18 May 1921), 6: 'En estos cuatro años [desde su debut profesional] he conseguido muchos triunfos en mi carrera artística: pero ahora quiero conquistarlos en el cinematógrafo, donde me propongo triunfar definitivamente.'

[168] The credited scenario writer of *Flor de España* was José María Granada, so this might be a previous decision, a simple exaggeration, or a marketing strategy.

[169] A few examples of star-name production companies in the United States are: the Mar-Leon Corporation (1913), Helen Gardner Picture Players (1911), and Gene Gauntier Feature Players Company (1912). See Gaines and Vatsal. 'How Women Worked in the US'. In Europe: Turner Films (1913) in the UK; Bertini Films (1918) in Italy; Egede-Nissen-Film Compagnie (1917) in Germany; and Société des Films Musidora (1919) in France. See Julie K. Allen, 'Doing It All: Women's On- and Off-screen Contributions to European Early Silent Film', in *Silent Women. Pioneers of Cinema*, ed. Melody Bridges and Cheril Robson (Twickenham: Supernova Books, 2016), 109–130.

[170] Carmen Prada (pseud. Duquesa de Borelli), 'Peliculerías', *Mundo Gráfico,* n. 499 (Madrid, 25 May 1921), 31: 'Señores: ya contamos con una nueva entidad madrileña productora de películas. Helena Cortesina, la danzarina hermosa, lisonjeada por el éxito alcanzado en La inaccesible, se lanza definitivamente al cinematógrafo. Y, á imitación de muchas "estrellas" norteamericanas, producirá las obras por su cuenta, estando formando un elenco artístico escogido al efecto. Esperemos con fe, dispuestos á aplaudir á la bella Helena, si acierta, como es de esperar, á llevar su nave por los mares del éxito.'

achieves success. Having achieved his dreams, he becomes tired of his fame and marries the dancing star '*Flor de España'* ('the Flower of Spain', Helena Cortesina), who, years before, as an insignificant flower girl called Paloma, had been his girlfriend. The film finishes with a colossal bullfight, in which Juncales says goodbye to the public and his profession to devote himself to his family together with the *cuplé* singer, 'renouncing mundane glories to fully enter into matrimonial love'.[171]

The film is lost, and the only remnant of it is a single frame of a close-up of Helena Cortesina's face preserved at the Filmoteca Española.[172] We know about the theme of the film through its promotion in periodicals and press reviews. In addition, one of the main sources that provided a lot of detail on the film's development has been the music score of the film archived in the SGAE.

As mentioned in Chapter III, section 3.1, the score was found and analysed by Javier Mateo Hidalgo, who published his work in an academic musicology publication, highlighting the fact that music scores have been an undervalued and unknown source for film studies until very recently.[173] However, this research can be used not only from a musicologist perspective but also as a tool to reconstruct the action of films that have been lost and little described in the documents found in other filmic archives.[174] Mateo Hidalgo pointed out that while most film screenings had live music accompaniment, not many films had an original score written and adapted by a composer with specific instructions for the musicians to follow.[175] This kind of cinematographic and musical documentation in the form of scores is also scarce in Spanish archives because of their fragility: 'being original handwritten documents, they were used a great number of times (as many as the number of film screenings), being damaged and lost through time.'[176]

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[171] 'Flor de España o la historia de un torero', *Arte y Cinematografía,* n. 257 (Barcelona, 1 August 1922), 19.

[172] The frame (from a nitrate-tinted copy) is preserved in the collection known as 'Cuaderno de Fernández Cuenca' in Filmoteca Española. Fernández Cuenca collected the portraits of Spanish female on film in an album and I must thank Encarni Rus for this information.

[173] Silent cinema has become a field within film music studies because of its revival of silent film exhibitions with – sometimes original – live music accompaniment that brings today's experience for the public close to the original spectacle. See Kevin J. Donnelly and Ann-Kristin Wallengren (eds.), *Today's Sounds for Yesterday's Films: Making Music for Silent Cinema* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) and Claus Tieber and Anna K. Windisch (eds.), *The Sounds of Silent Films. New Perspectives on History, Theory and Practice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[174] Mateo Hidalgo, 'Flor de España', 22.

[175] Mateo Hidalgo, 'Flor de España', 4.

[176] Mateo Hidalgo, 'Flor de España', 7: 'Al ser manuscritos originales, fueron utilizados un gran número de veces (tantas como número de proyecciones se realizasen de la película), deteriorándose o

Although it gives some incorrect information about Granada being the director of the film and Cortesina's birth date, the article has been one of the most useful texts about *Flor de España* that I have encountered during my research because it opens up narrative and visual elements and detailed scenes of the plot that were undocumented in any other written source. But not only this. As Mateo Hidalgo says, it also gives information about the historical and sociological context: 'in this sense, the annotations made expressly with the aim of favouring the synchronization of the cinematographic images are very illustrative of the artisanal and genuine trade of the cinematographic musicians.'[177]

Analysing this alternative source, we learn that the film was composed of eighteen musical numbers divided into four parts. Also, following the description, the titles and the instructions given to the music accompaniment that played live during the film screenings allow some of the locations to be inferred, such as Seville, Paloma's home, a café with entertainment, the interior of a train, a hospital, the Royal Palace, a church, a bull ring. The selection and photography of these locations were praised in the press, which said that 'the most beautiful places of Madrid have been selected with great skill'.[178] In addition, we know that a stereotype of Romani people (*gitanos*) from the South of Spain had a comical role in the film and they seem to take centre stage for several of the musical numbers, as well as a fight in a café and the theft of a watch. Also, there would be a couple of scenes in which the characters of Spanish King and Queen would appear and other scenes in which Paloma, Juncales, and other characters would ride horses. All these disconnected fragments would have involved different characters, extras, interior and exterior locations, or animals, confirming the impression that *Flor de España* was a production with a big budget.

The musical adaptation, which was finished on 24 November 1922, was by Maestro Mario Bretón (son of the important musician Tomás Bretón), although most of the music was taken from pre-existing popular *zarzuelas* and operas written by other composers: Eduardo López Juarranez, Vicente Romero, Gerónimo Giménez, Santiago Lope, Federico Chueca, Ramón Roig, and Tomás Bretón. The scores were written for a septet or a full orchestra. In the film there are different folkloric regional dances such as *paso doble*,

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extraviándose con el paso del tiempo.'

[177] Mateo Hidalgo, 'Flor de España', 6: 'En este sentido, las anotaciones realizadas expresamente con el fin de favorecer la sincronía con las imágenes cinematográficas resultan muy ilustrativas del oficio artesanal y genuino de los músicos cinematográficos.'

[178] 'El mundo de la cinematografía. Una película española', *El Cine*, n. 499 (Barcelona, 5 November 1921), 8.

foxtrots, *chotis-cuplé*, and waltzes, and popular music such as *La Verbena de la Paloma*, *Loin du bal*, *La Giralda*, *Marcha andaluza*, and also original music by Mario Bretón: *Paloma*, *El Juncales*, *Cosas de Madrid* and *Flor de España*. In summary, the film had original music but also musical moments that were familiar to the public and inspired by the popular stage that Cortesina knew well.

Common topics in Spanish culture directly influenced both the storyline and the *mise-en-scène*. This probably was a decision taken by the scriptwriter, Granada,[179] who agreed with the extended idea that stereotypical representations of local culture constituted the best strategy for selling Spanish culture abroad, exploring their preconceived stereotyped idea instead of fighting it.[180] The professional collaboration between Cortesina and Granada, both inexperienced film-makers from different areas of the stage world, would bring much confusion regarding who directed the film. Was it directed by Cortesina or by Granada? Or was it directed by both of them? Although some Spanish cinema histories attribute the direction of the film exclusively to Granada, and give him credit as being responsible for the film with Cortesina being linked only to her physical appearance and her career as a dancer,[181] the press reviews of the time divided the credit among the many members of the crew: the screenplay and script are attributed to Granada, the photography direction to Enrique Blanco, and the music to Mario Bretón, but the film itself is essentially attributed to Cortesina.

In the very few press articles published in the 1920s that openly mention the word 'direction', credit is given to Cortesina. For example, *Arte y Cinematografía* stated: 'Elena Cortesina, who has directed the piece, has nailed her role in the different manifestations in which she appears, and ensures that the vision of the author of the screenplay, D. José Granados [*sic*] has been nuanced with all the notes needed to exalt the artistic subject'.[182] However, *El Cine* attributed the artistic direction to Granada: 'the

[179] José María Granada (Granada, 1893–1960, birth name: José María Martín López) was an ex-clergyman who became a bohemian playwright and film-maker. His most famous play is *El niño de oro* (1922). Rafael Cansinos Assens, *La novela de un literato (1914-1921)*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2005), 159–160.

[180] María Dolores Fernández Fígares, 'Flamenco y cine. Apuntes para una perspectiva histórica y etnográfica', in *VI Congreso de la Sociedad Española de Antropología Aplicada. Simposio: El sentido práctico de la antropología*, ed. José Antonio González Alcantud and Manuel Lorente Rivas, (Granada: 2002), 260. [Before its publication by the Universidad de Granada in 2005].

[181] Méndez-Leite, *Historia del cine español*, 179, 185, 199.

[182] 'Lo que hemos visto', *Arte y Cinematografía*, n. 261 (Barcelona, December 1922), 78: 'Elena Cortesina, que se ha dirigido la obra, ha bordado su papel en las diferentes manifestaciones en que aparece, y eso hace que el pensamiento del autor del argumento, D. José Granados, haya sido matizado

theme and the artistic direction by José M. Granada have revealed the man that the Spanish cinema needs to aspire to, to soon become what it ought to be.'[183] In any event, being responsible for the film's production, the advertising and the press also attributed creation and decision-making to Cortesina: 'Elena Cortesina has given life to this new Spanish jewel. The plot, that is of little relevance, maybe the dullest play that José María Granada could write, has been saved thanks to the masterful direction of the film.'[184]

In one of the very few academic articles published about the film in 2019, Zecchi supports the view that Cortesina was the director and author of *Flor de España,* after dissecting the press reviews of the time.[185] Although I agree with Zecchi's attribution of the film to Cortesina, as I have discussed above, in my opinion there is an absence of reliable data to confirm that the direction of the film was exclusively done by Cortesina. I do think that Cortesina should be credited as director or co-director, as it is certain that Granada was not the main person responsible for the decision-making and creation of the film; Cortesina was the producer and star and he was barely mentioned in the press sources as screenplay writer, as Zecchi's pertinent analysis proves.

However, at the risk of being overzealous, I consider that stating that Cortesina was the sole director is a speculative interpretation of the sources where this is presented as a certainty, without even defining what can be considered to be film direction in Spain in the early 1920s. The categorical position is tempting when it benefits women, as their contributions have historically been ignored. In this specific case, Cortesina's authority over her film has been diminished in many Spanish cinema histories, such as Cabero (1949), Vizcaíno Casas (1968), Méndez Leite (1965), González López and Cánovas Belchí (1993), and Aguilar (2007),[186] but, as I have argued in Chapter II, I believe that

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con todas las notas que apeteciera para realzar el sujeto artístico.'

[183] 'El mundo de la cinematografía. Una película española', *El Cine*, n. 499 (Barcelona, November 1921), 8: 'El asunto y la dirección artística de José M. Granada nos han revelado al hombre que necesita el cinematógrafo español para aspirar a ser pronto lo que debe ser.'

[184] Luna, 'De nuestros corresponsales. Flor de España', *Arte y cinematografía*, n. 266 (Barcelona, 1 May 1923), 33: 'Elena Cortesina ha sabido dar vida a esta nueva joya española. El argumento, que es de poca importancia, quizá lo más soso que haya podido escribir José María Granada, se ha salvado merced a la dirección maestra de la película.'

[185] Zecchi, 'Flor de España o la historia de una desapropiación', 248–252.

[186] Those Spanish histories in which Granada is mentioned as the only or the main director of *Flor de España* leaving Cortesina in second place are: Cabero, *Historia de la Cinematografía Española*, 214; Méndez-Leite, *Historia del cine español*, 179; Fernando Vizcaíno Casas, *Diccionario del cine español 1896-1966* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1968), 69, 130; Palmira González López and Joaquín T. Cánovas Belchi, *Catálogo del cine español. Volumen F2. Películas de ficción 1921–1930* (Madrid: Filmoteca Española, 1993), 70–71; Carlos Aguilar, *Guía del cine español* (Madrid: Cátedra. Colección Signo e

deconstructing direction as the main profession of Iberian film productions can be more productive in terms of female recognition and presence in history than vindicating a questionable authorship that may be subject to discussion and reinterpretation in light of future data.

In summary, I consider that there is not enough evidence to say whether or not Cortesina was the director or co-director of the film. What matters to me is that *Flor de España* was the first and only production of Cortesina Films. Therefore, I propose to substitute the term 'director' with 'film-maker', which is a broader and less misleading concept that can serve as a shorthand where we do not have more information on the film-making process of *Flor de España*, as Radha Vatsal proposed in her article 'Reevaluating Footnotes. Women Directors of the Silent Era'.[187]

The title itself has also been an object of analysis by Zecchi, as three or four different titles have been attributed to the film over the years: *Flor de España*, *Flor de España o la vida de un torero*, *Flor de España o la historia de un torero* and *Flor de España o la leyenda de un torero*. According to Zecchi, this change may have been a strategy to disempower the character of Flor de España (the vedette played by Cortesina) and give importance to the role of the bullfighter Juncales (played by Tordesillas), thus obscuring Cortesina's responsibility for and prominence in the film, or as a commercial strategy to sell the film as a bullfighting film, which were popular at the time.[188] Although there is an advertisement from 1922 with the name of *Flor de España o la historia de un torero,*[189] it is true that the film's poster and brochure and most of the press reviews of the time promoted the film titled only as *Flor de España*. So, Zecchi's hypothesis that a later historiographic revision of the title chose the longer title to attenuate the importance of the part a woman played in the film can be neither confirmed nor totally dismissed.

Furthermore, there is a film titled *Flor de España o La vida de un torero* that was released on 5 June 1928, advertised without mentioning Cortesina's name and in which the main attractions were the bullfight scenes of Belmonte and el Gallo, and the songs by Emília Vez which were included in the version from 1923.[190] Therefore, it is probable that several versions of the same film, could be distributed and released under different titles,

Imagen, 2007), 447.

[187] Vatsal, 'Reevaluating Footnotes', 122.

[188] Zecchi, 'Flor de España o la historia de una desapropiación', 247.

[189] 'Flor de España o la historia de un torero', *Arte y Cinematografía*, n. 257 (Barcelona, 1 August 1922), 19.

[190] 'Películas y cines. Pavón', *Heraldo de Madrid*, n. 13.209 (Madrid, 30 May 1928), 5.

or even different films with the same title, making it even more difficult to trace the history of this work.

Flor de España was officially released on 13 February 1923 at the Cine Royalty and Cine Ideal in Madrid. However, on 12 December 1922 the distributor Ernesto González had given a public screening in the Salón Cataluña in Barcelona, probably looking for buyers and exhibitors. It was then screened occasionally until 1924, and it was shown again in 1928 (but, as I pointed out above, without mentioning Cortesina and with a longer title).[191]

Flor de España received mixed reviews and entered directly into the discussion around Spanish identity and *españolada* (a complex concept usually used in pejorative terms to refer to cultural expressions of a clichéd image of Spain).[192] Nevertheless, there were more positive than negative reviews from cinema critics. *Cinema Variedades*, for instance, commented that 'the movie was a complete failure, not just because, being the first film, it had its defects but because it is a hateful work for Spanish eyes: it is, without doubt, the worst *españolada* that our eyes have seen',[193] and *El Sol* also opted to keep a 'merciful silence', obliged by their paternalist 'gallantry' towards Helena Cortesina in order not to give their real opinion about the film.[194] On the other hand, the *Boletín de información cinematográfica* considered that 'Flor de España, in terms of environment and characters of a genuine Spanish *sainete,* has been a resounding success (...) being a

[191] The screenings that have been identified so far were: in Granada in January 1923 (during six days, with *La verbena de la Paloma* (José Buchs, 1921); in Madrid, Cine Royalty (13–21 February 1923, at 16:30 and 18:30); Cine Ideal (13 February 1923, at 16:30, 18:30 and 22:00, and 28–31 August 1924 at 18:00 and 22:00); Cinema X (5–12 December 1923, at 17:00 and 21:45); Cinema Argüelles (7 July 1924 at 22:30); Jardín del Cinema Goya (26 July 1924 at 22:30); and Cine Doré (16–17 December 1924, at 17:00 and 22:00) presented as a big success. In Barcelona, Principal Palace (13–15 and 29 November 1929) announced it as a very interesting Spanish film. And, under the name *Flor de España o La vida de un torero*, in the Pavón in Madrid (5–10 June 1928 at 18:45 and 22:30), but without any mention of Cortesina.

[192] The concept was first coined in France, *espagnolade,* referring to a romantic archetypical vision of Spain that represented it as exotic, picturesque, popular, and primitive. It was assimilated into Spanish culture and raised much debate, being either criticized as a reactionary manifestation or praised as the expression of popular culture. The use of the term *españolada* in the press during the silent period is discussed in Leandro Alarcón, *Sombra en las sombras: La Españolada cinematográfica entre 1896-1920. Un acercamiento desde la prensa cinematográfica* (Master's thesis, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, 2010). Also, for a review of *españolada* through the years, see María Luisa Ortega, 'De la española al *fake*. Estereotipos de la españolidad, identidad y diálogos transnacionales', in *El juego con los estereotipos. La redefinición de la identidad hispánica en la literatura y el cine postnacionales*, ed. Nadia Lie, Silvana Mandolessi, and Dagmar Vanderbosch (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2012), 99–118.

[193] 'Flor de España, por Helena Cortesina', *Cinema Variedades* (Madrid, 9 November 1921), n.p.

[194] 'Una película de Helena Cortesina. Para alusiones', *El Sol*, n. 1.337 (Madrid, 20 November 1921), 8.

work of art with a very interesting plot, that has nothing of *españolada*',[195] and *La Correspondencia de España* considered that:

> we should encourage this recently created and already successful company because we finally have in Spain a talented artist who escapes from the stupid topics exported by the foreigners and who will know and show to the World our costumes, monuments, and beauties. The most fervent congratulations to the Empresa Cinematográfica Cortesina.[196]

The supposed failure of *Flor de España* is the main reason given to explain why Cortesina ended her career as a film producer, as I have discussed in previous works.[197] Even though most publications on Spanish cinema have stuck to the repeated discourse of *Flor de España*'s 'failure' (which, depending on the source, was attributed to financial unsustainability, artistic negligence, or the public's dislike of the film), and therefore Cortesina's failure as director and producer, to justify the end of her career in cinema, there is a lack of evidence to support these assessments.

In my opinion, there is a systemic lack of research of, and reference to, primary sources that leads to the frequent repetition of known narratives from one history book to another. Apart from knowing that the film was distributed in Cataluña and the Balearic Islands by the company Casanovas Malet, in Portugal and, possibly, also in South America and Occidental and Central Europe[198] (this was announced in *Arte y Cinematografía* in a promotional advertisement, but I could find no evidence in any of those countries' newspapers), the lack of exhibition and distribution data leaves us with press articles and reviews as the only source of information. So, acknowledging that the film received more positive than negative reviews, the statements made by Pérez Perucha, asserting that 'the critical reticence that the film caused and its late premier (two years later) prevented Helena Cortesina continuing her cinematographic involvement',[199] and

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[195] 'Noticiario cinematográfico', *Boletín de información cinematográfica*, n. 8 (Barcelona, 1 March 1923), 34: 'Flor de España, de ambiente y personajes de sainete genuinamente español, ha sido un éxito clamoroso (...) se trata una nota de arte con un interesantísimo argumento, que no tiene nada de española.'

[196] 'Flor de España. Un triunfo de Helena Cortesina'*, La Correspondencia de España*, n. 23.172 (Madrid, 29 October 1921), 4.

[197] Cordero–Hoyo, 'El salto del espectáculo de variedades' (2019), 139–140.

[198] 'Flor de España', *Arte y cinematografía*, n. 261 (December 1922), 33, 78, 88, 89.

[199] Julio Pérez Perucha 'Cortesina, Helena', in *Diccionario del cine español,* ed. José Luis Borau (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1998), 255: 'la reticencia crítica que suscitó la película y su tardío estreno (dos años más tarde) frustraron la continuidad cinematográfica de Helena Cortesina.'

Chuvieco, who says that 'the first woman to direct in our country and to know failure, as the film took two years in being premiered with box office returns',[200] cannot be confirmed by actual data.

Also, there should be a comparative analysis of the number of exhibitions of contemporary films to conclude if *Flor de España* was adequately distributed and exhibited in comparison to the standard at the time. Therefore, given the press reception of the film and without information about the number of copies, and the extent of the distribution and financial profit of the film, this supposed 'failure' is a hurried conclusion that, nevertheless, has been taken for granted for decades in Spanish cinema history.

The fact that the film was made and shown to the press in 1921, but was not released until 1923, almost two years later, was a common problem in the Spanish cinema pseudo-industry of the time.[201] In this specific case, it might have been aggravated because it was too ambitious a project. For instance, it featured real bullfights. The exterior scenes were filmed in Madrid and Aranjuez, and the interior scenes in a gallery located on Calle Verónica in Madrid that was shared with another production company, Atlántida S.A.[202] It is also possible that the enterprise had some financial or technical problems that delayed the editing of the final version. When they were interviewed for the Spanish cinema weekly publication *La Pantalla* in 1929, Cortesina's sisters, Ofelia and Angélica, explained some of the difficulties they faced:

> One of the first movies that were filmed in Spain was called *Flor de España*. It is a synthesis of our *panderetesca* life [literally, 'Spain of the tambourine', an expression referring to the stereotyped representation of Spain]: cocky boys, Andalusian gardens, bullfighters, etc. It was produced by the Cortesina sisters as 'stars' and as entrepreneurs.
>
> [Ofelia and Angélica Cortesina]: It was impossible, believe us, completely impossible to make a film in Spain. Even more, because we were women. But we were so enthusiastic that we decided to create our enterprise. We mounted laboratories, galleries …[203]

[200] Enrique Chuvieco, *Mujeres de cine: La mirada de 10 directoras españolas* (Madrid: Rialp, 2014), 13: 'la primera mujer en dirigir en nuestro país y en conocer el fracaso, pues la película tardó dos años en estrenarse con escasa acogida en taquilla.'

[201] Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 121.

[202] G. M. Vargas Machuca, 'Historia del Cine Español. Memorias de un veterano', *La Libertad,* n. 2.763 (Madrid, 26 January 1929), 6.

[203] In the original text, the interviewer poses the question, but it is unclear who answers. That is why the names of both sisters are included here.

> [Ofelia:] No one can imagine the amount of effort it took to finish *Flor de España*.
> [Angélica:] It was very much liked. You see, now it is being filmed in South America.[204]
> [Ofelia:] But we ended up very tired, fed up. So much so that when it was finished, we sold everything: machines, lights…
> [Angélica:] The director was my sister Elena, who also was Paloma, the main character.[205]

Whether it was because of some negative reviews, because of production problems, or because Helena Cortesina preferred to take other paths in life, this was the end of the short-lived cinematographic entrepreneurial experience of the Cortesina family. While she continued her career as an actress both in cinema and theatre, she would never be involved in film-making again. In any case, it cannot be considered a failure in terms of professional legitimation. Building her popularity in the press based on the sexualization of her body through semi-naked dances in variety shows,[206] her short cinematographic experience as cinema actress and film-maker allowed Cortesina to transition to a professional career in theatre, where she enjoyed more personal prestige and artistic recognition. For that reason, in the 1920s Cortesina's career in the theatrical world pushed her further away from the film-maker's profession.

[204] This information could not be verified.
[205] Morales, 'Las primeras mujeres que en España se han dedicado al cine', *La Pantalla*, n. 58 (Madrid, 10 March 1929), 966: 'Una de las primeras películas que se filmaron en España se llama Flor de España. Es una síntesis de nuestra vida panderetesca: chulillos, jardines andaluces, toreros … La hicieron las hermanas Cortesina como 'estrellas' y como empresarias. [Ofelia and Angélica:] Era imposible, crea usted, completamente imposible, hacer una película en España. Además, estábamos mujeres solas. Pero era tanto nuestro entusiasmo que decidimos formar una empresa. Montamos laboratorios, galerías … Angélica y Ofelia hablan en su cuartito coquetón y oriental estableciendo turnos: [Ofelia:] Nadie puede figurarse el esfuerzo que hicimos hasta ver filmada Flor de España. [Angélica:] Como gustar, gustó muchísimo. Ya ve usted, ahora la están rodando en América del Sur. [Ofelia:] Pero quedamos muy cansadas, muy hartas. Tanto que cuando se terminó de hacer vendimos todo: máquinas, focos… [Angélica:] La dirección era de mi hermana Elena, que también hacía de Paloma, la protagonista.'
[206] García Sanchiz, 'Helena Cortesina, la quietud en las inquietudes', 25.

Chapter VI. After cinema, still a long way

At this point I would like to go back to Ermarth's first and most important idea of her 'Manifesto for the Future of History': 'that conventional historical explanation plays a significant role in the general sense of cultural failure'.[1] This historical narrative of 'failure' commonly guides the discourse around female film-makers' careers in early cinema.[2] However, when we look at Almeida and Cortesina's experiences in cinema under the prism of failed projects, we are somehow supporting a certain triumphalist narrative that places more value on some achievements than others.

In the context of this dissertation, I see the need to reframe the notions of failure and success from a non-capitalist, non-patriarchal perspective – one that interprets the dichotomy of 'failure' and 'success' in terms separated from financial loss. We can even ask ourselves: who failed? Did Almeida and Cortesina fail for not having financially successful and lasting enterprises? Or did the cinema system fail for not retaining talent or allowing the development of women's initiatives (and also, those of many men) inside their structures? To answer this, we must retell the history, searching for alternative explanations for what happened and what it meant to the subjects involved.

In addition, it is not only necessary to reconceptualize the notion of 'failure' but also to measure the proper impact that it has in one's life. Is there any possibility that failure could mean something positive? Dall'Asta, for instance, invites historians to re-evaluate the discourse around women's failed incursions into early cinema by coining the concept of 'beautiful failures'.[3] These are supposed failures of women who did not manage to match the expectations that society put on them, but whose stories can be reformulated as fruitful accounts of struggle and passion.

Therefore, Cortesina's experience of failure as film producer was an undeniable success in upgrading her career from variety show dancer to legitimate theatre actress, as will be discussed further. And on the other hand, while Almeida's film productions were much more financially efficient and appreciated artistically, her true objectives of Portuguese internationalization were not followed up for some years after Fortuna Films ceased production. In addition, taking into account the oblivion into which her work has been cast, we might say that it was not her failure, but historiography's.

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[1] Ermarth, 'The Closed Space of Choice', 50.
[2] Dall'Asta and Gaines, 'Prologue. Constellations', 21.
[3] Dall'Asta, 'What It Means to Be a Woman', 45–47.

For that reason, the purpose of Chapter VI in this dissertation, even though it is chronologically and thematically distant from silent cinema, is to demonstrate how Almeida's and Cortesina's careers continued following their professional experience as film-makers. As becomes evident, both developed very long and inter-artistic careers after their supposed failure in cinema. So, considering the whole picture of their lifetime 'careerographies' and looking backwards from a feminist prism instead of from a 'conventional history explanation', to use Ermarth's expression, the concept of 'failure' can be reformulated based on the narrative of their life achievements, their expectations, their desires, and their limitations.

6.1 Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, cultural representative and disseminator (1925–1945)

As has been previously discussed, Virgínia de Castro e Almeida's professional career as a philanthropist and writer brought her the exceptional respect of her peers, and also some male intellectuals, as she was considered one of the best female authors (or even one of the few good ones). For this reason, added to her professional and political contacts (especially with Afonso Costa, who was the first delegate from Portugal), in 1925 she was chosen as correspondent of the journal *O Século* to the League of Nations Conference in Geneva to report on the matters discussed, which included international cohesion, disarmament, slavery and children's rights, and education, among others.[4] Also, in June 1925, introduced by the physicist Paul Langevin and the ethnologist Paul Rivet as a 'writer and owner', Almeida entered the Association Française pour l'Avancement des Sciences, a non-profit organization founded in 1872 to link erudite people, bankers, and businessmen to promote science among the general public.[5]

At that time, Almeida was a fervent supporter of the principles and values of internationalization. Therefore, she expressed her objection to extreme nationalism, a message of modernization that she tried to promulgate in Portugal through her job as a journalist for *O Século*:

[4] 'D. Virginia de Castro e Almeida', *O Século* (Lisbon, 31 August 1925), 1.
[5] 'Sociétaires Nouvellement Inscrits', *Bulletin Mensuel de L'Association Française pour l'avancement des Sciences*, n. 63 (Paris, July 1925), 25.

> While more clever nations educate their new generations, infusing them the fundamental notion that every individual, to serve his country efficiently, has to be a good world citizen, we are developing, among us, an exaggerated nationalism that isolates us more and more … and leaves us behind.[6]

She also presented the League of Nations to her readers as a noble and modern institution that was the only hope for peace in a global society still traumatized by the First World War. Following this experience in the heart of international diplomacy, in 1926 she was chosen as a delegate to represent Portugal at the League of Nations' International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation in Paris, where she was one of the few women present.[7] There, she reinforced her conviction regarding the necessity of advanced international cultural cooperation and the need for improved education for children.

Culture, education, and instruction were areas on which Almeida placed the most importance and never treated them as minor themes, recognizing the crucial role that women could play in them, especially primary and secondary female schoolteachers. In a collection of articles in the journal *O Século*, she proposed to involve them in a new initiative to connect children from different countries through exchanging letters and exposing them to other cultures and languages.[8]

She trusted education for the construction of children's minds and ethics that would result in a new concept of patriotism removed from the familiar war between neighbours, stating: 'the true efficient patriotism cannot exist, as it is blind and deaf to the manifestations from outside our borders'. In the same article, published in 1931, she would maintain a vision of the world as a connected ecosystem that foresaw the future of globalized relations: 'today's network of economic, technical, scientific, political, artistic

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[6] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, 'Sociedade das Nações. Primeiras palavras da ilustre escritora D. Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, enviada especial do 'Seculo'', *O Século* (Lisbon, 1 September 1925), 1: 'Enquanto nações mais clarividentes educam as suas gerações novas, incutindo-lhes a noção fundamental de que cada individuo, para eficazmente server sua patria, tem de ser um bom cidadão do mundo, nós vamos desenvolvendo, entre nós, um exagerado nacionalismo que a mais e mais nós isola… e nos atraza.'

[7] Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century* (Walnut Creek, Oxford, New York, Lanham: Altamira Press, 2003), 199.

[8] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, 'Cooperação Intellectual', *Serie de seis artigos enviados para 'O Seculo'* (Paris, 22 January 1931) (BNP, Esp. 104/cx. 1): 'o verdadeiro, o eficiente patriotismo, não pode hoje em dia existir emquanto se conservar cego e surdo ás manifestações de além fronteiras. A rede das actuaes condições econômicas, technicas, scientificas, polticas, artisicas e outras, abrange e envolve de tal maneira o mundo que os paizes que se contentam com a sua vida interior são paizes condemnados á morte.'

and other conditions encompasses and encloses the world in such a way that countries that limit themselves to interior lives are countries condemned to death'.

In addition to her role as the Portuguese delegate at the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, on 16 April she was appointed a member of the National Commission of Intellectual Cooperation of Portugal together with politicians, writers, artists, and university professors such as Gomes Teixeira, Júlio Dantas, António Sergio de Souza, and Celestino da Costa, among other men (Almeida being the only woman). In addition, she was a temporary delegate of the League of Nations as the representative of Portugal from 19 April to 31 May 1926, and subsequently from 27 September to 9 October 1926.[9]

Despite her multiple assigned positions and tasks, she was constantly concerned about her financial situation until her death. Trying to assure herself a salary and a place to live would become a recurrent topic in her letters. For that reason, she acted on her own behalf and maintained a regular professional correspondence with members of the government, such as President Salazar, the director of National Propaganda António Ferro, and the Minister of Education Mario de Figuereido, among others. She proposed to them different collections and publications that she thought could improve the Portuguese people's knowledge of their history, and knowledge of Portugal abroad, following the same logic she had previously used in cinema.

One of the most successful examples was the collection *Les grands navigateurs et colons portugais du XVème et XVIème siècles* that was planned to comprise eight tomes (one per year), each of them dedicated to one episode of Portuguese colonial history. However, because of the Second World War the collection was cut short at the sixth tome. It was published by French publishing house DuChartres and the Belgian publisher Louis Desmet Verteneuil, and it was translated into different languages (at least Portuguese and English, and there was an attempt to translate it into German). Here, again, we can find the propagandistic effort that Almeida pursued to promote her country's 'glorious' past and have its fundamental contribution to Western civilization during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries recognized by the other European nations.[10] Therefore, foreseeing the potential of culture as a tool of international affairs, she used literature for projecting a specific constructed national image, trying to change the collective imagery of Portugal

[9] See League of Nations Search Engine 'Virgínia de Castro e Almeida', http://www.lonsea.de/pub/person/5124.
[10] Almeida, 'Cooperação Intellectual', 15.

inside and outside its borders. This shows her great understanding of international relations and the use of 'soft power' to improve the position of her country in the global arena.

The implementation of the regime of the Estado Novo, after the *coup d'état* in May 1926, presented new professional opportunities to Almeida. After many financial constrictions, she assured herself a salary as a delegate and an employed propagandist writer, adapting the Portuguese historical past to popular and children's literature. As she recognized in a letter to Mario de Figueiredo, Minister of National Education, despite being used to earn and manage her own finances and properties, she also needed the help of the government as an employer to live: 'I live exclusively from my work, and I work more than many men, but besides my strong will and sturdy health, I cannot overload myself with one more task, if the State does not help.'[11] In the same letter, she sent him some non-signed *romances de cordel* that she had written, and she informed him that she had been awarded the Légion d'Honneur by the French government as she 'had contributed with unprecedented and very useful elements to the documentation of the history of our civilization'.[12]

In 1936 the National Secretariat of Propaganda (*Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional* – SNP) of the Estado Novo began editing the 'Colecção Pátria'. The SNP exerted their control over the editions and the printing; the organization of national events and festivities; and the use of radio, cinema, and theatre to achieve their propaganda objectives.[13] In 1944, the SNP became the National Secretariat of Information, Popular Culture, and Tourism (*Secretariado Nacional de Informação, Cultura Popular e Turismo* – SNI). The collection 'Pátria' was composed of forty-three volumes published over ten years (1936–1946) and aimed to tell the institutional history of Portugal in order to control, reinforce, and legitimize the dictatorial regime.

Almeida's nationalistic effort to exalt the history of Portugal in the collection has been the object of analysis by António Manuel Ribeiro in his work 'Ficção histórica infanto-juvenil no Estado Novo. Colecção 'Pátria' de Virgínia de Castro e Almeida'.

[11] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to Mario de Figueiredo, Ministry of National Education (Quinta da Marinha, 19 February 1941). (BNP N104/cx. 3).

[12] I could not find her name in any official list of Légion d'Honneur recipients. Almeida to Figueiredo, Ministry of National Education (Quinta da Marinha, 19 February 1941). (BNP N104/cx. 3): 'O Governo francez, por intermédio do Instituto internacional de Cooperação intelectual deu-me a Legião de Honra por eu ter contribuído com elementos inéditos e muito uteis para a documentação da história da nossa civilização.'

[13] Ribeiro, 'Ficção histórica infanto-juvenil no Estado Novo', 172.

According to Ribeiro, the Estado Novo had a particular concern about the indoctrination of children, so they created specific legislation in April 1931 to control the textbooks used in secondary education. The objective was to educate children to be proud of being Portuguese, and they condemned the 'pessimistic and defeatist' vision of their history told to children in the existing textbooks, which 'only [make] the Portuguese dislike being Portuguese'.[14] On the contrary, they considered that the objective of history was to demonstrate that Portugal 'is the most beautiful, the noblest and most valuable of the homelands, that Portuguese people cannot have any other feeling except that Portugal is above everything'.[15] In order to achieve this patriotic feeling, history had to become an exaltation of the past, reinforcing the successes and diminishing the failures.

Thus, according to Ribeiro the Estado Novo tried to 'make History profitable by creating a legitimizing memory that fulfilled a reproductive and strengthening function of the socio-political regime'.[16] In his analysis, Ribeiro highlighted Almeida's style of the fiction-history in which the origin of Portuguese history is justified by God's providence, linking Portuguese destiny to its will in the sense of indivision between one and the other. Also, there is an exaltation of obedience and a defence of the authority principle based on historical facts. So, through literature for teenagers Almeida was sending political messages against democracy, against equality, against working-class rights, and promoting the ideal of the Estado Novo and specifically the figure of Salazar as a messenger of God.[17] This presents a remarkable contradiction between the exaltation of the Portuguese imperial past to increase national pride and international recognition in 1930s and 1940s, and her previous writings in *O Século* published in 1925. There, more than a decade before, she had reported on the League of Nations Assembly, insisting on the necessity of presenting Portugal as an open and modern nation instead of recreating the paralyzing fixation on its identity as 'discoverers and conquerors':

[14] Ribeiro, 'Ficção histórica infanto-juvenil no Estado Novo', 165: 'Péssima foi a semente que lançou no espírito da nossa mocidade escolar a obra histórica de alguns escritores, mais artistas e filósofos do que críticos e historiadores, nada mais fazendo que desgostar os portugueses de serem portugueses.'
[15] Ribeiro, 'Ficção histórica infanto-juvenil no Estado Novo', 165: 'Portugal é a mais bela, a mais nobre e a mais valiosa das Pátrias, que os portugueses não podem ter outro sentimento que não seja o de Portugal acima de tudo.'
[16] Ribeiro, 'Ficção histórica infanto-juvenil no Estado Novo', 163: 'O Estado Novo procurou rentabilizar a História criando uma memória legitimadora e que cumprisse uma função reprodutora e fortificadora do regime sócio-político.'
[17] Ribeiro, 'Ficção histórica infanto-juvenil no Estado Novo', 186.

> The relative prestige and importance that we still maintain in front of the other nations do not come from our past glories. Who cares nowadays, in the face of the modern conception of values, that we were the discoverers and conquerors of new worlds; that we were centuries ago, the pioneers of future splendid civilizations, if we let go of the formidable elements that we held and which others valued for the benefit of the progress of humanity, and if today we present the sad spectacle of continuous and petty internal struggles, which are incomprehensible to the eyes of a Europe educated by war and united in an immense desire for peace? [18]

The Estado Novo offered Almeida new representative positions at the League of Nations in Geneva, where she appointed as a substitute for the Seventeenth Assembly from 21 September to 10 October 1936.[19] In addition, Almeida was required to substitute for Dantas in his post as a Portuguese representative at the nineteenth and twentieth International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (from 12 to 17 July 1937, and from 11 to 16 July 1938, respectively).[20] She was appointed one of the seven experts on the Committee of Experts on Slavery, created in 1931 (although the first meeting was on 4 May 1932 in Geneva) and intending to create a permanent commission that could examine evidence and submit annual reports about the situation of slavery around the world.

Her appointments pleased two camps: the Portuguese government (who wanted to have a position on the Committee to be informed about its activities and to protect Portugal's colonial interests), and the women's groups such as the Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations (who advocated that 'slavery was a particular concern to women').[21] Two years later, she was replaced by José d'Almada

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[18] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, 'Sociedade das Nações. A questão da escravatura', *O Século* (Lisbon, 20 September 1925), 1: 'O resto, de relativo prestígio e importância que ainda mantemos perante as outras nações não vem das nossas glorias passadas. Que importa, hoje em dia, perante a concepção moderna dos valores, que fossemos nós os descobridores e conquistadores de mundo novos; que fossemos nós há séculos, os pioneiros de futuras e esplendidas civilizações, se deixámos perder os elementos formidáveis de que eramos detentores e que outras valorizaram em proveito do progresso da humanidade, e se hoje damos o triste espectaculo de continuas e mesquinhas lutas intestinas, incompreensíveis aso olhos de uma Europa esclarecida pela guerra e unida num desejo imenso de paz?'

[19] See League of Nations Search Engine 'Virgínia de Castro e Almeida', http://www.lonsea.de/pub/org/1427

[20] 'International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation. 19th session (Paris, 12–17 July 1937), United Nations Archives at Geneva, (Register n. 5B/27757/1976) and 'International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation. 20th session' (Paris, 1 July 1938), United Nations Archives at Geneva, (Register n. 5B/30969/1976.)

[21] Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, 199–200.

because she had taken 'little part in the Committee'.[22] At that point, Almeida's anti-communism and anti-semitism, and the turbulent political events that were taking place in Europe, brought her closer to the ideals of the Estado Novo and other fascist regimes. Living in Paris and being well informed by her contacts within the League of Nations, she was a privileged witness of the historical developments that resulted in the Second World War, topics that she wrote about to her sons, making her position clear:

> Poor France, in a deplorable condition, governed by a communist Jewish multimillionaire [Léon Blum] and by half a dozen puppets without principles, heads towards the fate of Spain. Communism spreads, as always, among the less interesting classes of humanity; the reaction emerges among the righteous workers who understand they have been cheated; the Croix de Feu, the people from the French Section, the Right with different viewpoints join in confronting a common danger; my acquaintances sell properties and keep the money close by so they can flee to safety at the first sign of danger, others send their beautiful furniture and art pieces to England in a rush to protect them from iconoclasts. There is a hectic restlessness, a precursor to serious events. Is it going to be tomorrow, during the 11 November demonstrations? Is it going to be later? In any case, the bomb is going to explode. And it should come because poor France is in need of a good purge. How am I happy to be right here, in the centre of the bonfire![23]

As previously pointed out, being difficult to classify due to her ideological, professional, and personal trajectories makes Almeida an uncomfortable personality from many different perspectives. Her changeable and unconventional choices disrupt the typical categories in which she could be framed and analysed, and, thus, her example disrupts a linear narrative of the feminist heroine challenging the established order or using her

[22] Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, 218.

[23] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to her son Luís Manuel (Paris, 10 November 1936), (BN ESP. E37/5027): 'A pobre França, em estado deploravel, governada por um judeu comunista archi-milionario e por meia duzia de bonecos sem principios, encaminha-se para a sorte da Espanha. O comunismo alastra, como sempre, entre as classe menos interessantes da humanidade; a reação emmenta entre os próprios operarios honrados que percebem que foram enganados; os Croix de Feu, a gente da Setions française, as direitas de vários tons unem-se para fazer frente ao perigo comum; pessõas minhas conhecidas vendem propriedades e guardam o dinheiro na mão para se porem a salvo a primeira voz, outros mandam a toda a pressa para Inglaterra moveis preciosos e objetos d'arte afim de os porem ao abrigo dos iconoclastas. Sente-se uma inquietação febril precursora de acontecimentos graves. Será amanhã, durante as manifestações do 11 de Novembro? Será um pouco mais tarde? - Seja como for, a bomba vae rebentar. E venha ela, que a pobre França está precisadissima de uma bõa purga. Como estou contente de me encontrar agora aqui, mesmo no centro da fogueira!'

privileges to free other women – the romantic ideal that could fit Ana de Castro Osório and María Lamas, for example. Also, her attachment to fascist European regimes excludes her from certain narratives written after '*O 25 de Abril'* (the Carnation Revolution). However, few Portuguese women of her time had the prominence that she had during her life. Her social, political and cultural position allowed her to own the discourse and shape Portugal's historical image both inside and outside its borders.

One aspect of her character that re-emerged in her sixties was her role as a children's literature writer. Worried about the low quality of Portuguese children's literature, she proposed to the director of the Institute of High Culture (*Instituto de Alta Cultura*) the publication of a new book that would contribute to the moral and intellectual formation of men. 'It is indispensable and urgent to prepare the small ones for the fights that are awaiting them, arm them for today's and tomorrow's battle, instead of for yesterday's ones', Almeida argued.[24] This is how the successful collection of *História de Dona Redonda e da sua gente* was born.[25]

As she admitted in the prologue of the book, her opinion about fantasy books had changed, and she embraced elements that were 'invisible to the eyes',[26] writing a collection that was full of imagination and magic, but which still strongly criticized political issues such as communism. She also allowed herself to be playful, and she created two alter-egos of herself (Dona Redonda) and the illustrator of the books, Pamela Boden (Dona Maluka), who would rule the narration. Remarkably, she considered children's literature as 'high culture' when almost everybody else considered it a minor genre of literature. This highlights her trust in the power of education and the influence of the first texts to be read for the formation of the future population in creating a 'spiritually balanced, healthy, and strong country'.[27] The Dona Redonda collection was Almeida's last big public success in writing a book that is still sold and read today.[28]

Almeida moved from Paris to Cascais (close to Lisbon) in November 1939 with the beginning of the Second World War, along with her life partner, the English sculptor and illustrator Pamela Boden (Derbyshire, 1905 – California, 1981). They met in Paris in

[24] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to Celestino da Costa (16 June 1941), (BNP N104/cx. 3).
[25] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, *História de Dona Redonda e da sua gente*, 3rd edition (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1941).
[26] Almeida, *História de Dona Redonda*, n.p.
[27] Almeida to da Costa (16 June 1941).
[28] The most complete list of Virgínia de Castro e Almeida's writings (books, articles, tales, translations, etc.) is in Bastos's Master's thesis, 'Fantasia e realidade em Virgínia de Castro e Almeida', Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1991.

1931, and their relationship lasted until Almeida's death on 22 January 1945 at the age of 70. When she died, her obituaries highlighted her patriotic efforts in popular moralizing literature (for women and children) and in the promotion abroad of Portuguese history through translations and her work as a Portuguese representative to the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations. However, she was also presented as the widow of João da Mota Prego, thus obscuring her efforts to be an independent divorced woman.[29] Finally, none of the obituaries mentioned her valuable contribution to the foundations of Portuguese cinematography, nor her pedagogic efforts in the moving image medium.

6.2 Helena Cortesina, an actress

6.2.1 In Spain (1921–1936)

As we have seen, in 1921 Helena Cortesina was moving away from popular stages and entering the more legitimized spectacles of cinema and theatre. Thus, she began her first collaboration with a renowned theatre group, the Catalina Bárcena and Gregorio Martínez Sierra Company. She was probably introduced to the company by her sister Ofelia, who, in November 1921 had signed a contract with the company and had staged the annual performance of *Don Juan de España*.[30] After that, Helena maintained an intermittent professional relationship with that company for eight years.

Gregorio Martínez Sierra was a theatre manager and an important figure in the cultural environment of Madrid. He was a recognized author of theatre plays, articles, and translations. However, in recent years the figure of his wife, María Lejárraga has been recovered as the real author of most of the texts published under the name of her husband Martínez Sierra – he had the prestige and the social skills, while she was the creative force.[31] Their artistic collaboration – and a kind of friendship – continued until he died in

[29] 'D. Virgínia de Castro e Almeida', *O Século* (Lisbon, 23 January 1945), n.p.
[30] Contract between Gregorio Martínez Sierra and Ofelia Cortesina (Madrid: Sindicato de Actores Españoles, 26 November 1921) (Colección Sánchez Vigil).
[31] María Lejárraga (San Millán de la Cogolla, 1874 – Buenos Aires, 1974) was commonly known by her married name, María Martínez Sierra after being married with Gregorio Martínez Sierra (Madrid, 1881 – 1947). Antonina Rodrigo, *María Lejárraga. Una mujer en la sombra* (Madrid: Algaba Ediciones, 2005).

1947, even when they separated after he had a son with the leading actress of the company, Catalina Bárcena.[32]

Cortesina's incursion into Martínez Sierra and Bárcena's company opened a door to a cultural environment held in a higher regard by society than the one she began in. Her role as a dancer and actress was critiqued in a different way by the press, which recognized her evolution from dancer to actress: 'Elena Cortesina, the beautiful dancer is *becoming an actress* and she played her role very well' – a professional recognition of her artistic evolution.[33] It was not only her body and nakedness that were now valued, but also her dramatic skills and acting.

The 1920s would be an unstable and experimental professional phase in Cortesina's life. She would make her first incursion into cinema, join respected companies on stage, meet her partner Manuel Fontanals, travel around Europe, and give birth to her daughter. For that reason, it is one of the most obscure decades of her career with several years in which her residence and work are unknown. For example, her participation in Martínez Sierra's company had two different phases: the first from 1921 to 1922 and the second from 1928 to 1930, and maybe a third in 1926 at the time when the company toured in Latin America, although I have been unable to confirm Cortesina's participation. The cultural and artistic recognition as a dramatic and comedy theatre actress came in a later phase of her collaboration with the company, while during the first years of the 1920s she appeared in plays such as *La Linterna Mágica* by María Martínez Sierra, *Santa Isabel de Ceres*, by Vidal y Planas, and José María Granada's *Manolito Pamplinas*.

The first production in which Cortesina participated was *Linterna Mágica*. It had no pretensions of being a high art performance, but was instead a luxurious entertainment comprising a mixture of genres that synthesized comedy, vaudeville, and operetta. It premiered on 16 December in the Teatro Eslava, and the public enthusiastically received it in Madrid. For this production, Cortesina acted as dancer and choreographer, together with María Esparza, using their experience from variety shows.[34] The scenery was designed by Fontanals, Bürmann, and Barradas – three very important scenographers of the time in Spain and who were responsible for the scenery in most of Martínez Sierra's

[32] Catalina Bárcena (Cienfuegos, Cuba, 1888 – Madrid, 1978) was one of the most important theatre actresses and entrepreneurs of her time who also played some roles on screen.
[33] A., 'Veladas teatrales', *La Época,* n. 25.627 (Madrid, 16 February 1922), 1. [Emphasis added].
[34] María Esparza (1898- Madrid, 1978) was a Spanish dancer. 'Espectáculos y deportes. Linterna Mágica', *ABC*, extra issue (Madrid, 18 December 1921), 30.

spectacles. Cortesina's debut at the Eslava was acclaimed in the press as a 'resounding success', and they praised her work above the other colourful and aesthetic numbers in *Linterna Mágica*: 'The dances and mimicry of the beautiful artist triumph on the stage of the Eslava, always revealing Helena Cortesina as a great actress of delicate spirit and strong temperament.'[35]

Although Martínez Sierra and Bárcenas' company was an established theatrical company, they integrated the dynamic elements of variety shows, such as the inclusion of dances, as in *Linterna Mágica*, and cinematographic elements into their plays. In the controversial *Santa Isabel de Ceres*, for example, Martínez Sierra included an intermedia attraction: he introduced a plain white screen on which was projected some of the author's words to introduce the play: 'Don't be afraid. Sir, I am good, and I must talk to you in the name of justice, charity, and love … Alfonso Vidal y Planas.'[36] That play became a big success. Despite always having a supporting role to the main star, Catalina Bárcenas, this company allowed Cortesina to show her skills with dramatic roles on stage for the first time.

It was probably through the company of Martínez Sierra that Cortesina met the scenographer Manuel Fontanals with whom she had a fifteen-year relationship.[37] They had a daughter called Rosa María and a son called Juan Manuel.[38] A possible conflict about the paternity of Juan Manuel, the early death of Rosa María from a heart condition when she was only thirteen years old, and the beginning of the Spanish Civil War could be reasons why the relationship ended in September 1936. Afterwards, they would follow different paths to exile: Cortesina to Argentina and Fontanals to México, where he married Diana de Subervielle, an aristocrat.[39]

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[35] 'Espectáculos y deportes. Helena Cortesina en Eslava', *ABC*, n. 5.921 (Madrid, 28 December 1921), 19: 'Las danzas y la mímica de la bellísima artista triunfan en el escenario de Eslava, revelando siempre a Helena Cortesina como la gran actriz de delicado espíritu y recio temperamento.'

[36] Dougherty and Vilches, *La escena madrileña entre 1918 y 1926*, 128.

[37] According to Manuel Fontanals' biographer, they never officially married. Peralta Gilabert, *Manuel Fontanals, escenógrafo*, 59. However, in Ontañón's memoires we read: 'Manolo Fontanals, who was married to Helena Cortesina'. Ontañón and Moreiro, *Unos pocos amigos verdaderos*, 125; and, in the memoires of writer González-Ruano, he says: 'Fontanals, Spanish, married to the artist Elena Cortesina'. César González-Ruano, *Memorias. Mi medio siglo se confiesa a medias* (Seville: Renacimiento, 2004), 97. So, it is possible that they got married at some point, or it could be a conventional way of referring to their committed relationship.

[38] The two children that Cortesina had were Rosa María Fontanals Cortés (Madrid, 1922 – 1935) and Juan Manuel Fontanals Cortés (Madrid, 2/10/1935 – 11/2/1989).

[39] There are a few publications, like the *Diccionario del cine español* edited by Borau, that wrongly assert that Cortesina joined Fontanals in exile in México and that they married afterwards. Pérez Perucha,

Cortesina's integration in Martínez Sierra and Bárcena's company and her relationship with Fontanals were important milestones for her social and professional life: she became involved with the intellectual elites of Madrid, making friends with some of the most renowned artistic figures of the time including the famous Generation of '27. She was acquainted with Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, María Teresa León, and Santiago Ontañón (with whom she maintained a friendship after their exile to Buenos Aires), among others.

At this point, in 1922 Cortesina's gradual transition from dancer to actress gave her a higher degree of popularity, with regular appearances in the press and interviews about the most diverse topics. For instance, she was invited to take part in a debate about the suitable length for women's skirts[40] and in a fan contest in which the readers had to guess the owner of the feet in several photographs (her feet were one of the images to guess).[41] Also, as part of the cultural environment of the capital, she often participated in social events with intellectuals, performers, and artists.[42] However, from 1923 onwards it is difficult to follow Cortesina's 'careerography' because the references to her in the Spanish press disappear, except for some summer photos taken in La Concha in San Sebastián which reinforced her celebrity status. In addition, the film *Flor de España* began to be screened in some movie theatres in Madrid.

In these careerographical gaps, methodologically we try to find Cortesina by looking at other people's biographies. In this case, the most useful one is that of Manuel Fontanals. During the season 1924–1925, Peralta Gilabert situates him in Milan, working 'as artistic director of an Italian theatre company that, like the Eslava, had the ambition of becoming a Teatro del Arte: the Teatro d'Arte del Convegno'. Having a two-year-old daughter, it is reasonable to think that Cortesina could follow him to Italy and support his professional career while keeping the family together. In December 1925 they moved to Paris because Fontanals was hired to design the scenery for several companies for the

'Cortesina, Helena', 255.

[40] Joaquín Verdaga, '¿La falda corta ó larga?', *Nuevo Mundo*, n. 1.479 (Madrid, 26 May 1922), 8–9.

[41] 'Soluciones al concurso de los pies', *Blanco y negro* (Madrid, 26 February 1922), 39.

[42] For instance, she was invited to the dinner hosted by Luis de Tapias in honour of La Argentinita in the Palace Hotel to celebrate her tour around America and return to Madrid, or to perform in a show organized by Law and Philosophy and Letters students for the benefit of the Red Cross in the Teatro Princesa (among other singers and dancers). 'El banquete a la Argentinita', *La Voz*, n. 621 (Madrid, 24 June 1922), 3 and 'Espectáculos y deportes. Para la Cruz Roja', *ABC*, n. 6.004 (Madrid, 4 April 1922), 25.

International Exposition.[43] During this period in Paris, Cortesina worked as a dancer in the successful zarzuela *La Calesera*, which premiered in June 1926 at the Apollo Théâtre and then in Théâtre de l'Avenue.[44] She then appeared in the Parisian repetition of *Le septième ciel*,[45] which premiered at Théâtre de l'Avenue in November 1926, and which was another big success, as a result of which Cortesina's name even crossed the Atlantic, appearing in a chronicle in the Brazilian press that described her as a 'threat' to Mistinguett, Josefine Baker, and Ivonne Valle on the Parisian stages.[46]

From 1926 to 1929 there is another gap in Cortesina's 'careerography', in which she again disappears from the press. During this period, she could have toured Europe with her sisters and brother with their 'Gran Compañía Cortesina', but this could not be confirmed. Another option is that she went on tour around Argentina with Martínez Sierra and Bárcena's company.

On 20 November 1929 Cortesina reappeared with the same company on the Spanish stage in the premiere of the play *Triángulo* at the Teatro Barcelona and on 4 February 1930 at the Teatro Infanta Beatriz in Madrid.[47] As has already been stated, *Triángulo* was a courageous play that proposed an innovative open ending. The plot is about a man (played by the actor Manuel Collado) who, having lost his first wife Diana (Catalina Bárcena) in a boat wreck during their honeymoon, is about to marry Marcela (Helena Cortesina). However, soon after his second marriage Diana reappears, and he has to choose between these two beautiful wives. Being incapable of choosing, it must be the public who decides with which wife he should remain. Although the comedy had good reviews, the public did not completely understand the innovative concept of the play.[48]

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[43] In Paris they lived at rue des Pyrinées, 173 bis. Peralta Gilabert, *Manuel Fontanals, escenógrafo*, 96.
[44] 'Espectáculos y deportes. 'La calesera' en Madrid', *ABC*, n. 7.324 (Madrid, 22 June 1926), 32.
[45] 'Le 'Gaulois' au theatre', *Le Gaulois*, n. 17.937 (Paris, 14 November 1926), 6.
[46] 'Gazeta Theatral. O theatro no estrangeiro. Helena Cortesina, um grande astro da revista', *Gazeta de Notícias*, n. 39 (Rio de Janeiro, 15 February 1927), 5.
[47] Peralta Gilabert, *Manuel Fontanals, escenógrafo*, 116.
[48] Although there are neither academic studies nor critical comments to confirm that *Triángulo* was adapted to Hollywood, it seems evident that its plot could have served as inspiration for the film *My Favourite Wife* (Garson Kanin, 1940), starring Cary Grant, Irene Dunne, and Gail Patrick, and the remake *Move Over, Darling* (Michael Gordon, 1963) with James Garner, Doris Day, and Polly Bergen in the main roles. This hypothesis is plausible as *Triángulo* (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1931) is registered as a Martínez Sierra play in the *Catalogue of Copyright Entries of the Library of Congress*. Part 1, Group 3, Dramatic Compositions and Motion Pictures, Vol. 5, 1932, n. 1–12, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1933), 497, and Martínez Sierra received an offer to buy the screen adaptation agreement for *Triángulo*, but the proposal was rejected by the dramaturg, as he explained in a letter to his wife Maria Lejárraga, who was the true author of the play. Zecchi, 'Flor de España o la historia de una desapropiación', 244.

The play was written by Lejárraga, although it was attributed to Martínez Sierra, and shocked the cultural sphere because Martínez Sierra and his wife and the actress Bárcena were also known to be in a love triangle. It was well known that Martínez Sierra and Bárcena had a parallel relationship that would end with them having a daughter and the theatre director leaving his wife and professional colleague. In general, Cortesina received good reviews.[49]

On 22 February 1930, Cortesina gave her first performance in verse in the Álvarez Quintero brothers' play *Mariquilla Terremoto* at the Teatro Infanta Beatriz in Madrid. In this play, the authors came back to the Andalusian theme full of stereotyped characters and themes (such as the girl from Seville becoming an artist, the playboy who would be redeemed by love, the simple but warm maid, the grouchy but sweet old man, the typical Andalucian *patio*, the easy joke, etc.) that they had written about many times before in their careers.[50] The reviews of performances were very positive, with Bárcena's work receiving the best reviews.[51]

In the spring and summer of 1930 the Company of Martínez Sierra toured across Argentina and Uruguay.[52] They staged Lejárraga's *Sortilegio* on 18 July in the Teatro Martí,[53] and *La hora del diablo*, together with the Spanish version of Félix Gandera's comedy *El hombre que necesito* at the Teatro Ópera of Buenos Aires, among others. The theme of *Sortilegio* was provocative at the time because it narrates another love triangle, this time involving the man in a heterosexual married couple and another man. The husband, realizing that he can never make his wife happy as she deserves, ends up killing himself. Martínez Sierra defended this play as an attempt to move away from the two conventional approaches to homosexuality, either outrage or mockery, instead showing comprehension and humanity.[54]

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[49] Floridor [pseud.], 'Informaciones teatrales. En Madrid. 'Triángulo', *ABC*, n. 8.459 (Madrid, 5 February 1930), 38; and Enrique Díez-Canedo, 'Información teatral. Infanta Beatriz. 'Triángulo', de Gregorio Martínez Sierra', *El Sol*, n. 3.895 (Madrid, 5 February 1930), 5.

[50] *Patio* is a pavimented exterior area in the interior of the houses that in Andalucía has a special architectural, cultural and social importance. Don Quintín [pseud.], 'Mariquilla Terremoto', *Mundo Gráfico*, n. 957 (Madrid, 5 March 1930), 25.

[51] Enrique Díez-Canedo, 'Información teatral. Infanta Beatriz. 'Mariquilla Terremoto', de los señores Álvarez Quintero', *El Sol*, n. 3.911 (Madrid, 23 February 1930), 7.

[52] José Montero Alonso, 'Entrevista a Martínez Sierra', *Nuevo Mundo*, n. 1.930 (Madrid, 16 January 1931), 29.

[53] Juan Aguilera Sastre, 'Apéndice. Epistolario de María Lejárraga con George Portnoff', in *El exilio literario de 1939, 70 años después*, ed. María Teresa González de Garay and José Díaz-Cuesta (Logroño: Universidad de La Rioja, 2013), 239.

[54] Montero Alonso, 'Entrevista a Martínez Sierra', *Nuevo Mundo*, n. 1.930 (Madrid, 16 January 1931), 29.

This tour marked the end of Cortesina's collaboration with the company of Martínez Sierra and Bárcena. In January 1931 the *Heraldo de Madrid* announced that Cortesina was joining one of the most respected companies in Spain:[55] that of the Hispano-Argentinian Lola Membrives.[56] With this company, Cortesina would perform in numerous plays by famous Spanish and Argentinean playwrights and develop a long but intermittent career that continued until her retirement from the stage in the 1960s. Their collaboration during this first Spanish phase from 1931 to 1935 included plays such as *Madreselva* and *Cancionera* by the Álvarez Quintero brothers; *Proa al Sol*, by Ángel Lázaro; *Pepa Doncel*, *Los andrajos de la púrpura* and *Santa Rusia* by Jacinto Benavente; *Carmen y Don Juan*, by Manuel Villaverde, and *Teresa de Jesús*, by Eduardo Marquina.

The company of Lola Membrives was very much centred around the figure of the principal actress, dubbed by the journal *Heraldo de Madrid* as the 'distinguished glory of our stage'. Although the reviews of the plays were very positive, the presence of the diva was so strong that the rest of the cast had little space to shine on stage and gain the attention of the press. Therefore, they received short sentences such as 'Helena Cortesina, Joaquina Almarche, Trinidad Carrasco, Ana de Siria, Delfina Fuentes, each performed very well in their respective roles',[57] while Membrives captured the complete attention of the reviewers.

In the last months of 1932 the company, with Cortesina as supporting actress and Fontanals as scenographer, staged at least four plays, among them the controversial *Santa Rusia* by Jacinto Benavente. The play premiered on 6 October at the Teatro Beatriz, and it opened a window on the hard life of a group of revolutionary migrants from Moscow in 1903 London. The play divided the ideologically polarized press that mirrored Spanish society at that time. *Santa Rusia* ended with a group of children singing 'The Internationale' and unfolding the red flag. According to Araújo-Costa, journalist at *La Época,* 'the mastery of Jacinto Benavente in scenic arts could not sustain a theatrical piece nor find credible arguments in favour of Soviet Russia. It was impossible. From extreme barbarism, the light of truth and love can never emerge.'[58] By contrast, Manuel Machado

[55] 'Sección de rumores. Se dice:', *Heraldo de Madrid*, n. 14.027 (Madrid, 14 January 1931), 7.
[56] Lola Membrives (Buenos Aires 1885–1969) was a very important Argentinian theatre actress who worked profusely in Spain. She also began her professional career as frivolous stage performer. See, Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 196–197.
[57] J.G.O. 'Información teatral. Anoche en el Beatriz', *Heraldo de Madrid*, n. 14.562 (Madrid, 1 October 1932), 5: 'Helena Cortesina, Joaquina Almarche, Trinidad Carrasco, Ana de Siria, Delfina Fuentes, muy bien cada una en sus respectivos papeles.'
[58] Araújo-Costa, 'Veladas teatrales. Beatriz', *La Época*, n. 28.113 (Madrid, 5 February 1930), 1: 'La

wrote in *La Libertad*, 'all the words of the wonderful oration to Russia, performed by Benavente himself as a prologue to his piece, are anointed by a saintly love of Humanity, which is the true deep soul of our great dramaturg'.[59] Machado followed this by praising the cast's performance, describing Cortesina as 'precise, sober, natural and beautifully expressive'. Both journalists also disagreed on the future success of this risky production. While Machado predicted that 'all Madrid will go many times to watch *Santa Rusia*', Araújo-Costa said that *Santa Rusia* 'would not fill the theatre many nights nor will its posters grow old'.[60] Machado was right, and *Santa Rusia* became a success.

In the theatrical trade there was a tradition, among the so-called companies of verse, to devote some days of each season prior to 3 November to the *Tenorio* of Zorrilla. For that reason, Membrives' company premiered a verse comedy in three acts, *Carmen y Don Juan* by Manuel Villaverde, on 29 October. The play was well received, as was the following production, *Cancionera*, written by the Quintero brothers and staged on 18 November. At the end of the season in 1932, Cortesina played Doña Beatriz Espina in Eduardo Marquina's *Teresa de Jesús*. As it was a success both in the eyes of the critics and the public, it was performed on many occasions.[61]

In 1933 the full Lola Membrives' Company crossed the Atlantic and toured around Argentina with a new repertoire that had already been staged in Spain but was unknown to the demanding public of Buenos Aires with an important theatrical tradition. They opened the season with *Teresa de Jesús* by Eduardo Marquina, followed by *Los fracasados* by Lenormand, Benavente's *Santa Rusia, Aquella noche* by Lajos Zylani and Denis-Amiel (translated by Pablo Suero), *Los medios seres* by Ramón Gómez de la Serna, and, in the Teatro Avenida, *La novia de Reverte* by Manuel de Góngora and Francisco Serrano Anguita, among others. However, one of their riskier gambles was the presentation of Federico García Lorca's work as playwright. They staged *Bodas de sangre*

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maestría de Benavente en las artes escénicas no ha conseguido poner en pie una obra de teatro, ni fundar sobre argumentos serios un alegato en favor de la Rusia soviética. Era imposible. De la extrema barbarie no puede brotar nunca la luz de la verdad y del amor.'

[59] Manuel Machado, 'Los teatros. Beatriz', *La Libertad*, n. 3.916 (Madrid, 7 October 1932), 3: 'Todas las palabras de la magnífica oración a Rusia, dicha por el propio Benavente a manera de prólogo de su obra, están ungidas de un santo amor a la Humanidad, que es el fondo verdadero del alma de nuestro gran dramaturgo.'

[60] Araújo-Costa, 'Veladas teatrales. Beatriz', *La Época*, n. 28.113 (Madrid, 5 February 1930), 1: 'Santa Rusia no llenará el teatro muchas noches, ni se hará vieja en los carteles. Así hay que deseárselo al maestro Benavente, porque de lo contrario, ¿quién ataja el correr del pensamiento?'

[61] M. Rodríguez Codolá, 'Música y teatros. En el Barcelona. 'Teresa de Jesús'', *La Vanguardia*, n. 21.500 (Barcelona, 21 January 1933), 24.

in the Teatro Maipo in Buenos Aires on 29 July 1933, almost at the end of the season (the play had been premiered on the Spanish stage at the Teatro Beatriz on 8 March 1933 by the company of Josefina Díaz de Artigas and Manuel Collado, but Membrives had promised Lorca that she would perform the role of *La Madre* on the Argentinian stage).

In August 1933, the Spanish vanguardist writer Ramón Gómez de la Serna made his debut with the company in *Los medios seres*, a *greguería* in three acts in which he developed the original idea of cutting the characters of the play vertically in the middle, leaving one half of the performer in colour and the other totally painted in black. The reviewers regarded the play as a joke, following Gómez de la Serna's continual intention to 'alarm the good bourgeois'.[62] So, although its originality was duly appreciated, it was not taken seriously as a piece of theatre. The playwright Eduardo Marquina was also invited by Lola Membrives to come from Spain and join them to premiere *Teresa de Jesús* in June 1933. The play was also very well received by the press, which praised the biographical profile of the Saint of Ávila and valued the company as a homogeneous ensemble of leading actors, including Cortesina in her difficult role of Beatriz de Espina.[63]

Some months later, and after overcoming his reluctance, on 13 October García Lorca and Fontanals (who had been responsible for the costumes and scenery) joined the Company de Alta Comedia de Lola Membrives in Buenos Aires to commemorate one hundred performances of *Bodas de sangre*. The critic from *La Nación*, Octavio Ramírez, considered it the highest quality piece from the repertoire chosen by Membrives and paid particular attention to Cortesina's characterization of *La Novia*. He described the role as 'the greatest responsibility of her on-stage career so far', noting that she performed 'the untamed female, in love and wild, sensual and pure, who burns with love without shedding a tear, as in an auto-da-fé'.[64]

The tour in Argentina and Uruguay (Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Rosario, and Córdoba) furthered the international acclaim for the poet, who achieved great fame as a playwright and high box office returns for the company. They staged *Bodas de sangre* around 150 times, *La zapatera prodigiosa*, around 70, and *Mariana Pineda* 20 times,

[62] Octavio Ramírez, *Treinta años de teatro 1925-1955* (Buenos Aires: Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 1963), 427–430.
[63] Ramírez, *Treinta años de teatro*, 395–396.
[64] Ramírez, *Treinta años de teatro*, 455–457: 'Helena Cortesina, en el papel de la novia, sin duda el de mayor responsabilidad de su carrera escénica, fue la hembra bravía, enamorada y rebelde, sensual y pura, que quema el amor sin arrancarle una lágrima, como en un auto de fe.'

while *La niña boba* was performed around 200 times.[65] This success boosted not only the popularity of the poet but also his friendship with Cortesina.[66] Also, Cortesina and Fontanals' daughter Rosa María, who toured with her mother, played a role in the company's productions, having entered the family trade early in her life. Although there are several surviving photographs from this time, Cortesina's most famous image is the one taken with García Lorca in front of the puppet theatre made by Fontanals in the Teatro Avenida[67] on 25 March 1934 to represent *El Retablillo de Don Cristóbal*, two days before the poet and the scenographer departed on the ship *Conte Biancamano*, arriving in Barcelona on 11 April.

However, the company stayed longer in South America, until 18 January 1935, when Cortesina returned from Buenos Aires with her daughter and Membrives, who were both unwell. Fontanals, García Lorca, Marquina, and other intellectuals were waiting for the company to arrive at the North Station in Madrid and prepared a reception in Membrives' honour at the Hotel Nacional in February 1935.[68] The constant rumours in the press of Cortesina's new contracts with other theatrical companies were proof of the solid reputation that the dramatic actress had already gained.[69] However, the reality was that Cortesina stayed with Membrives until 1935 and appeared in *Casa del olvido* by Luis Fernández de Sevilla[70] and *María, la famosa* by Quintero and Guillén.[71]

Although she was in the midst of one of her best professional moments, the return from Buenos Aires brought important changes to Cortesina's personal life. On the one

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[65] Gibson, *Vida, pasión y muerte*, 488.

[66] The actress, the scenographer, and the poet had been good friends since the end of the 1920s, and they lived very close to each other: the couple with their home on Calle Goya, 89, and García Lorca living at Calle Alcalá in Madrid (Peralta Gilabert, *Manuel Fontanals, escenógrafo,* 135). In a letter to his family, the poet said about Cortesina: 'is a true phenomenon of beauty. You cannot imagine the voice she has and the passion she puts in her role of La Novia'. Federico García Lorca in *Epistolario completo*, ed. Andrew A. Anderson and Christopher Maurer (Madrid: Cátedra, 1997), 777: ('la Cortesina, que está a mi lado es un verdadero fenómeno de belleza. No os podéis imaginar qué voz tiene y qué pasión pone en el papel de la Novia.')

[67] This photograph is archived at the Huerta de San Vicente. Postal nº 155. See Appendix B.

[68] 'Información teatral. El homenaje a Lola Membrives', *Heraldo de Madrid*, n. 15.279 (Madrid, 28 January 1935), 4. There is also a photograph of the homage archived at the Instituto Nacional de Estudios de Teatro in Buenos Aires (Fondo Jacobo de Diego). See also Appendix B.

[69] During the entire time that Cortesina worked at Membrives Company, the press associated her name with contracts in multiple other theatre companies including those of María Luisa Rodríguez and Francisco París, Margarita Xirgu and Benito Cibrián.

[70] Enrique Díez-Canedo, 'En el Coliseum, 'La casa del olvido', de D. Luis Fernández de Sevilla', *La Voz*, n. 4.440 (Madrid, 3 April 1935), 3.

[71] 'El teatro en provincias. Una función de homenaje. Zaragoza', *Heraldo de Madrid*, n. 15.357 (Madrid, 17 May 1935), 8.

hand, her son Juan Manuel Fontanals Cortés was born on 2 October 1935,[72] and on the other, her daughter Rosa María died only a few months later from coronary disease.[73] The couple that she formed with Fontanals was famous enough that the news of this dramatic event was covered by the press: 'The admirable scenographer Manolo Fontanals and his wife, Elena Cortesina, are going through a moment of immense pain having lost their daughter, a beautiful girl of thirteen years old, María Rosa. Our sincere condolences to the grief-stricken parents.'[74]

However, this did not stop their social, and professional life. A photograph taken on 29 March 1936 immortalized an encounter of the Madrilenian intellectuals, commemorating the publication of Luis Cernuda's *La realidad y el deseo* in the Restaurant Casa Rojo (nowadays called Los Galayos) on Calle de Botoneras in Madrid. In the photograph Eugenio Imaz, Helena Cortesina, Manuel Fontanals, Santiago Ontañón, María Antonieta Agenaar Volgelzanz, Concha Méndez, Luis Cernuda, Maruja Mallo, La Argentinita, Enrique Moreno Báez, Vicente Aleixandre, Federico García Lorca, Pedro Salinas, Rafael Alberti, Pablo Neruda, José Bergamín, Manuel Altolaguirre, María Teresa León, and Víctor María Cortezo are recognizable. This was probably the last time that many members of the group known as *Generación del 27* were officially together. The Spanish Civil War erupted three months later, causing the deaths or exile of many of the group.

Cortesina, Fontanals, and many other intellectuals and artists positioned themselves on the side of the Republic, and they considered that theatre, among other arts, could serve as a weapon during the war. For that reason, 'at the end of August 1936, the Anti-Fascist Intellectuals for the Defence of Culture began a Theatrical Division with three acts: *Nueva Escena*, *Teatro de Arte y Propaganda*, performed by María Teresa León, the *Guerrillas de Teatro*'.[75] Cortesina joined the Alliance in September, although she only took part in *Nueva Escena*.[76] One of the main concerns of the Alliance was to disseminate

[72] Juan Manuel Fontanals exiled in Buenos Aires with her mother during the Spanish Civil War being only two years old. Years after, he began his professional career as founder and director of the Televisión Argentina. Later, he came back to Spain where he worked at Televisión Española with his friend and famous TV director Narciso Ibañez Serrador (Montevideo, 1935 – Madrid, 2019). He died on 11 February 1989. 'Necrológicas. Juan Manuel Fontanals', *ABC* (Madrid, 12 February 1989), 55.

[73] Ontañón and Moreiro, *Unos pocos amigos verdaderos*, 125.

[74] 'María Rosa Fontanals', *La Libertad*, n. 4.969 (Madrid, 4 March 1936), 7: 'El admirable escenógrafo Manolo Fontanals y su esposa, Elena Cortesina, pasan en estos momentos por el inmenso dolor de haber perdido a su hija, preciosa niña de trece años, María Rosa. Nuestro sincero pésame a los afligidos padres.'

[75] Peralta Gilabert, *Manuel Fontanals, escenógrafo,* 207.

[76] 'Mitin de intelectuales antifascistas', *El Sol,* n. 5.961 (Madrid, 29 September 1936), 3.

their ideas internationally and to garner support for the Republic's cause in a rejection of the principle of non-intervention agreed between the French and British governments. According to the researcher and director of the *Grupo de Estudios del Exilio Literario* (GEXEL), Manuel Aznar Soler, 'the Alliance developed a great many public activities, organizing political speeches where they displayed the militant attitude of intellectuals against fascism and in defence of culture'.[77]

The first gathering of the Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals for the Defence of Culture took place in the Teatro de la Zarzuela of Madrid on 27 September 1936. Important personalities from the political, cultural, and artistic sectors came together to highlight the union between the intellectuals and the people, and the need to hold back the advance of fascism and build 'a different Spain to the one that is dying'.[78] Among them, Cortesina read an emotive poem by Emilio Prados devoted to the memory of García Lorca, whose execution on 15 August was feared but there had been no official confirmation.[79] The event ended with the intervention of the Subsecretary of Public Instruction, Wenceslao Roces, giving the Ministry's support to the Alliance and promising to devote effort and budget to the education of the people, to dismantle the classes and *castas*: 'the Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals for the Defence of Culture are constituted by men who are the vanguard of the intelligentsia, the militia of steel, the shock force and the firmest supporting point of our culture, whose flag, the flag that is also that of Federico García Lorca, will lead us to definitive triumph.'[80]

According to Aznar Soler, 'most of the Spanish intelligentsia had assumed an anti-fascist commitment in defence of the Republican legality', since the Popular Front had won the election on 16 February 1936.[81] The rejection by intellectuals of the fascist government was justified by its declared anti-intellectualism and hostility towards

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[77] Aznar Soler, *República literaria y revolución*, 434: 'La Alianza desarrolló una gran actividad pública, organizando mítines en donde se manifestaba la actitud militante de la inteligencia contra el fascismo y en defensa de la cultura.'

[78] 'Los actos de mañana', *El Sol*, n. 5.959 (Madrid, 26 September 1936), 2; and 'Mitin de intelectuales antifascistas', *El Sol*, n. 5.961 (Madrid, 29 September 1936), 3.

[79] Read the full poem written by Emilio Prados and recited by Cortesina in 'Romancero de la Guerra Civil. A Federico García Lorca', *El Mono Azul*, n. 4 (Madrid, 17 September 1936), 4.

[80] 'Mitin de intelectuales antifascistas', 3 and *El Mono Azul*, n. 6 (Madrid, 1 October 1936), 7, in *República literaria y revolución*, Aznar Soler, 434: 'La Alianza de Escritores Antifascistas para la Defensa de la Cultura la constituyen unos hombres que son la vanguardia de la intelectualidad, la milicia de acero, la fuerza de choque y el punto de apoyo más firme de nuestra cultura, cuya bandera, esa bandera que es también la de nuestro Federico García Lorca, nos llevará al triunfo definitivo.'

[81] Aznar Soler, *República literaria y revolución*, 414: 'Para la inteligencia española había asumido mayoritariamente un compromiso antifascista en defensa de la legalidad republicana.'

intelligence as one of its main pillars of thought. The fascists attributed to cultural and artistic figures (and especially the Freemasonry) the responsibility for the Spanish moral decline, Catholic disaffection, and the rupture of the country due to its multinational and multilingual identity.[82]

The development of the war and the existence of two different Spanish governments convinced the intellectuals to commit themselves to the Republic with surprising fervour. This resulted in the creation of the Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals in several Spanish regions, who moved around the country depending on the progress of the war and ended up in exile, surviving for many years holding onto the hope of returning. First, they believed in the certainty of the Franco regime's collapse after the Second World War and the fall of other fascist regimes. With the advent of democracy and confirmation that no international intervention would happen in Spain, hope turned into resignation. This transition is evident in Cortesina's professional trajectory in exile, where she maintained her commitment to the Spanish Republic and the Popular Front. However, she oscillated between political companies and repertoires, following the influence of the Alliance, and more apolitical ones, as I will further describe.

The end of 1936 saw the final separation of Cortesina and Fontanals that resulted in the return of the scenographer to Catalonia while the actress stayed in Madrid, at least until the premiere of *Nueva Escena* in the Teatro Español on 20 October 1936. After that, the most plausible, yet unconfirmed, hypothesis is that Cortesina left Madrid when most politicians and intellectuals did in November 1936. The next information that we can find about her is that in April 1937 she, together with her sisters Ofelia and Angélica, tried to get a visa to work in Paris, but we infer that they did not manage to find a work contract, and that is why they left for Buenos Aires.[83] In this way, the Spanish Civil War halted Cortesina's career in Spain and she was forced into exile.

[82] The main symbolic incident that illustrates fascist hate towards the intelligentsia and intellectualism was that between Millán-Astray, the founder of *Legión Española*, and the writer Unamuno at the University of Salamanca on 12 October 1936, in which Millán-Astray ended up shouting to a crowded auditorium: 'Death to the intelligence!', followed by 'Death to the intellectuals!' and 'Long life the Death!' (¡Muera la inteligencia!', '¡Mueran los intelectuales!', '¡Viva la muerte!') Aznar Soler, *República literaria y revolución*, 417–422.

[83] Carte d'Identité de 'travailleur', Cortes Altabas (20 April 1937), [National archive of France, cote 19950437/365 n. 33347].

6.2.2 In Buenos Aires (1937–1966)

Helena Cortesina arrived in Buenos Aires on 3 June 1937 together with her sister Ofelia and her niece Paloma aboard the ship *Lipari* from Le Havre.[84] Ship passenger registrations have been a source of information about the history of Spanish exiles where I was able to find the complete real name of Cortesina and her family, as well as their ages and the different routes they took across the Atlantic.[85] The day after her death on 7 March 1984, the daily journal *La Nación* remembered how some months after her arrival they received a handwritten note from Cortesina presenting herself in the new country:

> I have black hair, am one metre and sixty-five centimetres tall, hawk-nosed, black eyes, and I am around 28 years old. As for nationality, Spanish and Valencian, cinema actress and very happy to work in Buenos Aires in the García León–Perales company and as a leading actress, nothing less than that! And nothing else, because I do not aspire to anything but to become 60 years old in this company.[86]

According to Norma Saura, whose PhD dissertation on the participation of Spanish exiles in the cinematographic industry in Argentina between 1936 and 1956 is a groundbreaking

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[84] The rest of the family would arrive during the following year. Arriving from Marseilles on the ship *Alsina*, her mother Manuela Altabás (with her own younger daughter Hada Altabás and her granddaughter Diana Cortés) landed in Buenos Aires on 27 September 1937. As they were both under-age (Hada was fourteen and Diana was eight years old) and as Manuela was not Diana's legal tutor, they were held back at the border. However, knowing that Diana's father was the influential artist Roberto Fugazot, Manuela ordered the authorities to bring her father to identify his daughter (whom he had never seen before) and he took her to live with him and his wife, one of the most famous women in Argentina, the actress and singer Maria Esther Lamas. This anecdotical entrance to the country was recalled by Diana Cortés Fugazot's widower, Alberto Giaimo, in an informal conversation on 5 October 2019 at the Confitería La Ópera of Buenos Aires. Angélica Cortesina (Diana's mother) arrived by herself on 3 October 1938 on the ship *Kerguelen* from Casablanca, as she had spent some months working as a variety show performer in Morocco in some of the events organized in support of the Spanish Republic. 'Amis de l'Espagne républicaine de la C.R.E.', *Le Petit Marocain* (Casablanca, 26 August 1938), 5.

[85] In May 2019, remembering the eightieth anniversary of the Spanish diaspora, the Asociación Hijos y Nietos del Exilio Republicano Español launched a new online database called *Barcos del Exilio Republicano Español* where researchers can find a ship's partial list of passengers, family testimonies, and photos. As it is a work in progress, the information is as yet incomplete. http://www.barcosdelexiliorepublicano.com/

[86] 'Murió Helena Cortesina, aplaudida actriz española', *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 8 March 1984): 'Soy morena, tengo un metro sesentaicinco de estatura, nariz aguileña, ojos negros y rodeo los 28. En lo de nacionalidad, española y valenciana, actriz de cine y muy feliz de trabajar en Buenos Aires con la compañía de García León- Perales y primera actriz ¡nada menos! Y nada más, pues no aspiro a otra cosa que a cumplir los 60 en esta compañía.'

text with very little follow-up research, the port of Buenos Aires was not an easy one to arrive at: 'the official regulations did not allow disembarkation. Condemned to wait, (…) until the arrival of the international train to take them to Chile. Or until a friend's hand appeared to interfere in the dispositions.'[87]

When Cortesina's family arrived in Buenos Aires, they integrated into the Republican environment in the capital, which, in 1936, had around 325,000 Spanish inhabitants (which was 13 per cent of the population of Buenos Aires).[88] In fact, traces of the Civil War could be seen in the Avenida de Mayo where sometimes the authorities had to intervene in the Republican meetings in the Bar Iberia and those of the Franco supporters in the Bar Español on the other side of the street.[89] This confirms the continuing ideological battles among the two factions that permeated to Argentinian society, who took sides in the conflict. By contrast, politically opposed exiles were linked by the common experience of the drama of being far from their homeland and needing to begin a new life in a foreign country. As is shown in Bárbara Ortuño Martínez's PhD dissertation, 'on numerous occasions [the Spanish emigrants] left aside the political differences that had fractured the collectivity to help their compatriot, which demonstrates the strength of the ethnic networks'.[90] For that reason, the political conversation in those cafés was the starting point of many cultural and artistic projects, since those who frequented them brought their cultural baggage and their professional know-how with them.

Cortesina entered the Argentinian cinematographic industry as an actress early in her professional career in exile. Already by 1938 she had participated in *Bodas de sangre*, a unique project as the first cinematographic adaptation of one of García Lorca's plays. The poet had been executed months earlier, and Xirgu, who had been a friend of García

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[87] Norma Saura, 'La presencia de exiliados españoles en el cine argentino entre 1936 y 1956. Las redes de la supervivencia' (PhD dissertation, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2013), 84: 'las disposiciones oficiales no les permitían el desembarco. Condenados entonces a esperar, (…) hasta que llegara el tren internacional que los llevaría a Chile. O hasta que apareciera una mano amiga que interfiriera en esas disposiciones.'

[88] Bárbara Ortuño Martínez, *El exilio y la emigración española de posguerra en Buenos Aires, 1936-1956* (PhD dissertation, Universidad de Alicante, 2010), 53. The author notes that, when mentioning Spanish collectivity or community, she is referring not only to the Spanish natives but also their descendants, who recognized themselves as so and benefited from migrant institutions and networks.

[89] Ortuño Martínez, *El exilio y la emigración española*, 58.

[90] Ortuño Martínez, *El exilio y la emigración española*, 379: '[E]n numerosas ocasiones dejaron a un lado las diferencias políticas que habían fracturado la colectividad para ayudar a sus compatriotas, lo cual demuestra la fortaleza de las redes étnicas.'

Lorca and one of the principal stage performers of the playwright's leading female characters, decided to organize this translation to the screen. Her presence on screen was the main draw of the film in publicity terms, due to her excellent reputation and popularity on stage. In 1938, with the Spanish war not yet over and with many Republicans already in exile, she convinced Lorca's friend, the theatrical director and critic Edmundo Guibourg, to adapt and direct *Bodas de sangre* in support of the Republic.[91] This would be the only film directed by Guibourg and the main objective of everyone involved in the project (the main actors and actresses had played Lorquian characters on stage before) was to honour the memory of the poet and playwright, as well as to send a message to his murderers that he would never be forgotten, by his becoming 'the first exponent of the cinematographic Spanish exile'.[92]

Bodas de sangre was also the first film with synchronized recorded sound in which Cortesina appeared. According to Saura, it was produced by the Spaniard Manuel Peña Rodríguez for the Argentinian production house Compañía Industrial Filmadora Argentina (CIFA). The exteriors were filmed in the village of Jesús María in the province of Córdoba and the interiors in the EFA Studios in Buenos Aires (today Canal 13).[93] The premiere took place at the Cine Monumental on 16 November 1938, but its exhibition was banned in Spain.[94] The inexperience of Guibourg as a cinema director can be seen in the film. Despite its high-grade performances and clear emotion, the film had technical deficiencies that disrupted the rhythm of the story. Thus, it was not well received by the public and did not have a very long run in movie theatres.

The second sound film ('talkie') in which Cortesina performed was *La dama duende* (1945). Produced by Estudios San Miguel, directed by Luis Saslavsky, scripted by María Teresa León and Rafael Alberti, and based on the original play by Calderón de la Barca, it was a message to the illegitimate Spanish government: 'anywhere where there is a Spanish refugee; there is the survival of Spain.'[95] For that reason, it was forbidden

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[91] Norma Saura, 'Los españoles en el cine argentino. Entre el exilio republican y el nacionalismo hispanófilo 1936-1956. Apéndice' (PhD dissertation, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2013), 61–62.

[92] Elena, 'Cruce de destinos', 340: 'El primer exponente del exilio cinematográfico español.'

[93] Saura, 'Los españoles en el cine argentino', 171.

[94] *Bodas de sangre* had to wait almost another seventy years until it could be seen in Spain. It was publicly screened for the first time on 21 November 2007 in the Teatre Zorrilla of Badalona, but its official national and European release was at the Centro de Estudios Lorquianos de Fuente Vaqueros on 14 May 2008. Xavier Rius Xirgu, 'Margarita Xirgu, el cine i la TV', *Margarita Xirgu*, margaritaxirgu.es.

[95] Aitana Alberti, 'La arboleda compartida. La dama duende', *ABC Cultural*, n. 767 (Madrid, 13 December 1996), 19: 'Donde haya un español refugiado está España viviente.'

from being shown in all Spanish territories until the end of the Franco regime.[96] This film, together with many other cultural oeuvres made in exile in every artistic field, was a symbol of resistance, showing that the heritage of the Second Republic was still alive and resisting the regime from around the world.

The director of the film, Saslavsky, was deeply involved with the Republican cause; he planned this film to pay homage to the 'migrant Spain' ('*España peregrina'*) and help exiled cinema professionals. 'You can use the excellent Spanish actors that curse in the Avenida de Mayo in front of a cup of coffee and still speak about the war', answered León when she was contacted by Saslavsky to write the adaptation of Calderón de la Barca's play.[97] Therefore, except for the central role played by the Argentinian actress Delia Garcés, most of the performers and other members of the production were Spanish, such as the aforementioned scriptwriters, the scenographer Gori Muñoz, the cinematographer José María Beltrán, and the musician Julián Bautista.[98] The result was a typical eighteenth-century Spanish village of Goyaesque inspiration that Muñoz designed and constructed by the river Reconquista in Argentina. This unreal place became the connection point for groups of exiles that formed 'a kaleidoscopic microcosm of the multiple regions of Spain'. As León remembered in her memoires: 'all of that was so real to the exiled actors from Spain, that we were shocked to come back to Buenos Aires every sunset.'[99] The film had its cinema premiere on 17 May 1945, and was considered the best Argentinian production in that year by the Asociación de Cronistas Cinematográficos de la Argentina.[100]

As these two films demonstrate, Helena Cortesina never forgot her political and artistic activism and devoted part of her Argentinian professional career (both on stage and on screen) to this end. Apart from *Bodas de sangre* and *La dama duende*, she also took part in other politically charged projects such as *El ojo que espía* (Torre Nilsson, 1966) on screen. In this film*,* previously titled *El ojo de la cerradura* (Leopoldo Torre

[96] *La dama duende* was shown on Spanish Television on 3 June 1988 and it was later screened in the 'Homenaje a los exiliados' section of the Festival de San Sebastián in 1989 in the presence of Rafael Alberti. 'Televisión. Películas Fin', *ABC* (Madrid, 3 June 1988), 66.

[97] León, *Memorias de la melancolía*, 437: 'Puedes aprovechar a los excelentes actores españoles que blasfeman en la Avenida de Mayo delante de una taza de café, hablando todavía de la guerra.'

[98] Among the performers were Amalia Ariño, Manuel Collado, Alberto Contreras, Helena Cortesina, Manolo Díaz, Enrique Diosdado, Paquita Garzón, Antonia Herrero, Francisco López Silva, Alejandro Maximino, Andrés Mejuto, and Ernesto Vilches.

[99] León, *Memorias de la melancolía*, 439: 'Era tan real todo aquello para los actores desterrados de España, que nos asombraba regresar a Buenos Aries todos los atardeceres.'

[100] 'La dama duende', *Film*, n. 1.433 (Buenos Aires, 5 June 1945), 1.

Nilsson, 1966), Cortesina played her last cinematographic role, and probably the most interesting one as she, already in her sixties, played the self-parodying character of an old decadent Republican *vedette* called Mariquilla Sandivaras who lived in a hotel on Avenida de Mayo. This film reflected the situation of some Spanish artists exiled in Buenos Aires, recounting in one scene:

> We are doing very well with the theatre, and this is almost a corner of there [Spain]. Twenty years we have been abroad, and we notice it. La Alhambra, El Escorial. They have brought the name of these things here, maybe to make us feel that we can live in our Republic forever.[101]

Cortesina was not only involved in leftist projects, as she also participated in regular films in all genres (historical, melodrama, noir, musical comedy) such as *Los tres mosqueteros* (Julio Saraceni, 1945), *María Rosa* (Luis Moglia Barth, 1946), *A sangre fría* (Daniel Tinayre, 1947), and *La niña de fuego* (Carlos Torres Ríos, 1952). However, looking carefully at her filmography in Argentina, there are some common characteristics that can be identified.

Apart from her involvement in politically charged films, she played a very specific kind of role on screen: important supporting roles that were neither the main character nor extras without a name. Usually, she had two or three scenes in which she would be a central element that was vital to the development of the plot. Additionally, she specialized in performing characters who, without being clearly autobiographical, were professionally and nationally proximate to her own life, being Spanish singers, variety show artists, or *vedettes* (Linda Moreno in *A sangre fría*, Rosarillo in *La niña de fuego*, and Mariquilla in *El ojo que espía* are good examples).

It is also remarkable that Cortesina sang in almost every film in which she appeared. Early in her career (building on her 'mysterious and sculptural' body and 'voluptuous dances'),[102] she had begun to train as a singer and to use her voice as a new element that had not been exploited until that moment to open up new professional paths.[103] She even

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[101] Helena Cortesina as Mariquilla Sandivaras in *El ojo que espía* (40'00" – 40'25"): 'Nos va muy bien con el teatro y esto es casi un rincón de allá. Veinte años llevamos fuera y se siente. La Alhambra, El Escorial. Aquí han traído el nombre de las cosas quizás para que nosotros podamos seguir viviendo en nuestra República siempre.'

[102] 'Cines y Variedades. Helena Cortesina, en Madrid', *El Imparcial,* n. 18.666 (Madrid, 24 January 1919), 5.

[103] Cortesina began to take lessons when she was hired as a soprano for the revue *El príncipe Carnaval* in the Teatro Reina Victoria in 1920. 'Entre bastidores. Helena Cortesina, tiple', *La Acción*, n. 1.644 (Madrid, 16 November 1920), 5.

presented her voice as a discovery when Juan Brasa interviewed her in the dressing room of L'Avenue in Paris in 1927.[104] This was a logical step in the career of a woman who wanted to move on from her profession as a dancer and explore other roles and genres on stage and on screen for both financial and artistic reasons.

Thus, this previously 'hidden' voice was exhibited in many of the films she acted in from 1938 onwards. Almost all her roles on screen had a musical moment in which she would sing popular songs. Most of them are diegetic and part of her role's narrative. For example, in *Bodas de sangre* the wife of Leonardo sings a lullaby to her baby before sleeping; in *La dama duende* Adela sings a jota in a duet that begins a scene of village festivities; in *María Rosa*, as Tomasa she sang two songs as a vocal soloist with Alberto Closas, one for the grape harvest and one for a wedding;[105] in *A sangre fría*, her character Linda Moreno sings a bolero to the audience of an Argentinian cabaret in which she is the star (even being credited as a music interpreter in the film).[106] Finally, Mariquilla Sandivaras in *El ojo que espía* is a diva and sings in the hotel surrounded by her Spanish and Latin American leftist friends.[107]

To end this summary of her filmography, Cortesina only went back to Spain to work under the Francoist regime to participate in *Intriga en el scenario* (1954).[108] This production as a whole was a forgettable anecdote. Written and directed by Feliciano Catalán, a modest professional with few titles in his filmography, it is a comedy-musical with a flashback structure of a film noir in which Cortesina played the role of Olga.[109]

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[104] Juan Brasa, 'Por los teatros de París: Los ojos de estrella de "la estrella"', *Nuevo Mundo*, n. 1.721 (Madrid, 14 January 1927), 15: 'Pero he hecho otro descubrimiento (…) – continúa la Cortesina riéndose en A -. ¡Tengo voz! No tanta como Fleta; pero desde luego más que el grillo, y, por consiguiente, me sobra para cantar cuplés.'

[105] Cortesina sings in *María Rosa* for the grape harvest (2'55'' – 3'20')' and for the wedding (1h 00'06'' – 1h 00'30'').

[106] In *A sangre fría* we hear Cortesina singing twice, but the most recognizable melody is the bolero *Traicionera*, composed by Gonzalo Curiel (*A sangre fría*, 37'00'' – 37'40'' and 53'40'' – 55'10'').

[107] Cortesina sings a very small extract of the mazurka 'A la sombra de una sombrilla' of the zarzuela Luisa Fernanda in *El ojo que espía* (42'10'' – 42'20'').

[108] After the Spanish Civil War there are two boat entrance registrations under the name of Helena Cortesina in the digital researching tool of the Centro de Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos (www.cemla.com). The first is on 13 April 1951, with her 15-year-old son José Manuel Fontanals Cortés on the ship *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, and the second is leaving from Vigo on the ship *Juan de Garay* and arriving in Buenos Aires on 22 September 1953. This date seems to be related to the Cortesina's acting role in *Intriga en el escenario* (Catalán, 1953) and also to support her niece Diana Cortesina for her debut on the Spanish stage in the review *Una conquista en* París (Antonio and Manuel Paso, 1953) that was a huge success at the Teatro Albéniz in Madrid.

[109] Alfonso Puyal, 'Catalán Antón, Feliciano', in *Diccionario del Cine Iberoamericano. España, Portugal y América*, ed. Emilio Casares Rodicio (Madrid: SGAE, 2011), 497.

Santiago Ontañón explains the reality of many intellectuals who arrived in Latin America as a result of the Spanish Civil War: 'My arrival in America was an encounter with a world full of different sensations, of accents and different ancestors, which I was approaching culturally and professionally equipped, but, apart from that, more or less empty-handed.'[110] What saved those exiles from artistic professions crossing the Atlantic Ocean by ship from different parts of Europe and North Africa was that their knowledge and skills were very much appreciated by the entrepreneurs they met in their host countries. The most notable cultural loss to Spain was an opportunity for other countries to enrich their own intellectual environments and, in the case of Argentina, to reinforce the Hispano-American relations that had been consolidated since the beginning of the Second Republic.[111] The loss of the war meant for Spain 'the rupture of a splendid cultural era that has been named the "Silver age" because the most qualified Spanish intellectuals of every sphere of art and science had to go into exile',[112] as Aznar Soler explains in the catalogue of the exhibition *El exilio republicano de 1939, ochenta años después*.

At that time, Argentinian theatre was suffering a significant crisis deriving mainly from the competition of emerging forms of leisure such as the cinema, the radio, and sports.[113] This resulted in a reduction in the number of authors and the quality of the productions chosen by entrepreneurs, who did not want to risk their money and who opted for more commercial plays and performers. In addition, they preferred to hire international companies and plays that had proven successful in other countries. In this context, recognized professionals and even full Spanish companies arrived in or were directly created in Buenos Aires, making it 'the theatrical capital of Spain' during the war.[114]

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[110] Santiago Ontañón (Santander, 1903 – Madrid, 1989), was a Spanish scenographer and theatre director exiled in Chile, Peru, and Argentina. Ontañón and Moreiro, *Unos pocos amigos verdaderos*, 211: 'Mi llegada a América fue el encuentro con un mundo plagado de sensaciones distintas, de acentos y de ancestros distintos, al que me acercaba cultural y profesionalmente pertrechado, pero, por lo demás, poco menos que con una mano delante y la otra atrás.'

[111] Ortuño Martínez, *El exilio y la emigración española*, 50.

[112] Manuel Aznar Soler, 'Escena y literatura dramática del exilio republicano de 1939', in *1939. Exilio republicano español*, ed. Manuel Aznar Soler and Idoia Murga Castro (Madrid: Ministerio de Justicia and Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2019), 491: 'Aquella derrota republicana significó también la ruptura de un espléndido proceso cultural que hemos convenido en llamar el proceso de nuestra «Edad de Plata», una ruptura debida a que nuestra intelectualidad más cualificada, en todos los ámbitos de las artes y de las ciencias, hubo de exiliarse entonces.'

[113] Diago, 'Buenos Aires: la capital teatral de España (1936-1939)', 22.

[114] Diago, 'Buenos Aires: la capital teatral de España (1936-1939)', 28.

Therefore, the Argentinian milieu accommodated companies such as the Compañía Española de Comedias of Gerardo Ribas and the companies of García León y Perales, Valeriano León and Aurora Redondo, Irene López Heredia, Lola Membrives (who, although she was half-Argentinian created a company composed almost exclusively of Spanish members and staged productions devoted to Spanish themes), Margarita Xirgu, and Cortesina and Mejuto's, among others. Although they contributed to the national economy by staging plays by Argentinian authors, the casts of these companies remained quite endogamous for a couple of decades, replicating a working, social, and cultural network that was common to other professions as well.[115]

In general, this multiplication of authors, performers, and scenographers was welcomed by the Argentinian press and entrepreneurs, who could attract a much larger public audience by investing less money than if the company were nationally based. In this sense, as the scholar Nel Diago points out, the Spanish companies were considered neither national, nor totally foreign: 'in practical terms, we could argue that the Spanish system was like a subsystem inside the Argentinian theatrical system.'[116]

However, there were some Argentinian professionals who saw their positions being threatened by the arrival of the exiles and who feared a loss of identity. For instance, the actress Tina Helba, one of the founders of Comedia Nacional, expressed in her memoires the common concern that the crisis in national theatre had increased since 1936 as a result of the 'avalanche of Spanish companies that established themselves among us and occupied our theatres and reigned for many years, around twenty years, over the Argentinian public'.[117] Due to the international political circumstances of war, and even suffering a lack of definition, Buenos Aires became for some decades one of the centres of cultural and theatrical activity in the Spanish-speaking world. The public was refined, and the critics were tough.

In this context, Cortesina's example is paradigmatic as it confirms, step by step, the main characteristics of the exiled theatre actors and actresses developing a long career in the Argentinian *milieu* through different companies mainly composed of compatriots. The

[115] Ortuño Martínez, *El exilio y la emigración española*, 379.

[116] Diago, 'El teatro español en Buenos Aires', 76: 'A efectos prácticas casi podría decirse que el español era como un subsistema dentro del sistema teatral argentino.'

[117] Tina Helba, *Un paseo por el teatro argentino de la mano de una actriz* (Buenos Aires: Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 1997), 121: 'avalancha de compañías españolas que se establecieron entre nosotros, que ocuparon nuestros teatros y que reinaron durante muchos años, alrededor de veinte, sobre el público argentino.'

first company she joined after her arrival in Buenos Aires was the Argentinian Compañía Dramática de Arte Cristiano, probably a choice made out of necessity for a Republican woman. The only play in which she took part was *Redención*, the first part of the trilogy *La Epopeya de la Cruz*, a verse drama in three acts, written by the Cuban writer Pedró José Cohucelo. The company presented Cortesina as the leading actress, and the press praised her portrayal of María Magdalena.[118] The reason for her fast incorporation into the national theatre in such a prominent position was probably because the public and the critics had not forgotten her previous successes in Argentina.

After that first experience, in 1938 she joined the famous company of the Spanish actors Joaquín García León y Manuel Perales. They were celebrating their seventh consecutive season in Buenos Aires, as they were one of the traditional Spanish companies whose presence in the Argentinian capital was not related to the Spanish political context of the Civil War.[119] Although in the note that she sent to *La Nación* she declared her intention to stay in that company as a principal actress until she reached sixty years of age, she only performed with them from March to September 1938, taking supporting roles during the whole period.[120]

The company's venue was the Teatro Smart Palace, where they presented a seasonal comic repertoire mainly composed of plays written by Spanish authors such as Enrique Jardiel Poncela, Pedro Muñoz Seca, the brothers José and Jorge de la Cueva, Antonio Paso, and Joaquín Abati, among others. This commercial selection was a representative example of the kind of repertoires that some Spanish companies were performing in Buenos Aires: attracting vast audiences, maintaining Spanish themes, artists, and authors, and, sometimes, making slight changes to adapt the topics to the Argentinian context without providing productions of a higher quality than the national companies.[121] In addition, some of the choices made by García León and Perales, such as the play *Faustina y Lucifer* by Pedro Muñoz Seca or *La Gran Duquesa* by Leandro Navarro, were judged negatively by the reviewers for being too frivolous and for disrespecting the painful moment that Spain was going through because of the Civil War.[122] Cortesina's political

[118] 'La epopeya de la Cruz, en el teatro Astral', *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 9 December 1937), in *Crónica*, n. 27 (March–December 1937), 194. [Buenos Aires, Argentores].
[119] 'Smart', *El Diario* (Buenos Aires, 13 March 1938), in *Crónica*, n. 28 (December 1937–1938), 15. [Buenos Aires, Argentores].
[120] 'Murió Helena Cortesina, aplaudida actriz española', *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 8 March 1984).
[121] Diago, 'El teatro español en Buenos Aires', 81.
[122] M. L. F., 'La 'Astrakanada' en el T. Smart', *Noticias Gráficas* (Buenos Aires, 27 August 1938), in *Crónica*, n. 28 (December 1937–1938), 127 [Buenos Aires, Argentores], and Carlos H. Faig, 'Se Dió en

activism did not stop her working with ideologically distant professionals such as the García León–Perales company and later with Lola Membrives.

It may have been her desire to further develop her potential as an actress in less mainstream repertoires which made Cortesina leave the company of García León and Perales in October 1938 and join the Compañía Española de Comedias, directed by Gerardo Ribas. When she first arrived, the leading actor of the company was Pedro López Lagar.[123] However, after some months he left, and Cortesina became the central figure, and the company began to be marketed using her name, including having it written in a large font and accompanied with a photo of her on the company's brochures. The Teatro Maravillas hosted the company for the 1939 season, when they staged a very politically committed repertoire: *Tierra Dura* and *Galicia Madre* by Xavier Bóveda, *Deseo* and *El hombre de la noche* by Paul Demasy, *La Casada Infiel* by Francisco Ramos Castro, *Amor de Don Perimplin con Belisa en su jardín*, by Federico García Lorca and one of their most polemic pieces, *Un hombre y su vida*, by Salvadora Medina Onrubia.[124]

Un hombre y su vida is considered one of the most remarkable political plays to have premiered in Buenos Aires during the Spanish Civil War. It showed in different chronological moments the causes and preliminary political and social events that led to the war in Spain. The play was described as 'clearly political, polemist and doctrinal, far from the established traditions of true theatre'.[125] Cortesina and López Lagar played the main roles.

The sharpest critique of the play was that it was written in an intellectual language that little suited the realities of war. The characters did not only fight with weapons but also dialectically in an effort to convince the enemy to embrace Republican reason and change their ideological standpoints. For that reason, the play uses an elitist vocabulary that differentiates it from the more commercial theatrical pieces of the time. As the

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el Smart un Folletín Sin Contenido', *Crítica* (Buenos Aires, 18 June 1938), in *Crónica*, n. 28 (December 1937–1938), 84. [Buenos Aires, Argentores].

[123] Pedro López Lagar (Madrid, 1899 – Buenos Aires, 1977) was an important Spanish actor who naturalised Argentinian and worked profusely on stage and on screen (many times with Cortesina). He became very popular in the 1940s and 1950s.

[124] Salvadora Medina Onrubia (La Plata, 1894 – Buenos Aires, 1972), was an anarchist and feminist writer, playwright and wife of Natalio Botana (the owner of *Crítica,* one of the main periodicals in Argentina). After Botana's death, Medina Onrubia took charge of the administration of the journal.

[125] 'Una pieza panfletaria en el teatro maravillas', *Noticias Gráficas* (Buenos Aires, 11 March 1939), in *Crónica*, n. 29 (December–November 1939), 28. [Buenos Aires, Argentores]: 'Una producción de neto corto político, polemista y doctrinario, apartándose de las tradiciones que particularizan al verdadero teatro.'

historian Diago explains, 'obviously, and as was expected, Medina Onrubia was also reproached for focusing on such a delicate and painful topic as the Spanish war'.[126]

Another less obvious case of political theatre in which Cortesina had an important role was the play *Tierra Dura* by Bóveda, whose work was inspired by García Lorca's *Bodas de sangre* being an adaptation of the story of Cain and Abel. Some Argentinian reviewers noted in the tragedy 'a more contemporary symbolic game [than the Biblical one]' in the metaphor of the Spanish situation.[127] Cortesina played the role of the mother and her interpretation received positive reviews, as she was 'returning to the genre that suits her and which demands fresh momentum from her'.[128]

In 1940 the Spanish musician Paco Aguilar created and directed the Gran Compañía 'Comedias 1940'. Cortesina, with whom he had worked during the previous year, became the leading actress and principal member of the company alongside Andrés Mejuto, the leading actor, who was also Cortesina's partner for several years.[129] Ofelia Cortesina, Helena's middle sister, was also part of the cast. The company's repertoire was quite international compared to her previous experiences. *Los Cuernos de Don Friolera* by Ramón del Valle-Inclán; *La Profesión de la Señora Warren* by Bernard Shaw and *La Quinta Columna* by Ernest Hemingway (translated into Spanish by Medina Onrubia) were three of the plays staged in the Teatro de Mayo during April and May 1940.

Los cuernos de Don Friolera premiered on 13 April 1940 in the Teatro de Mayo, becoming a success with both the critics and the public. Vallé-Inclán was already a recognized playwright, and his *esperpentos* were well known in Argentina. However, only one of his previous plays had been staged before this one, and this premiere 'corrected the inexplicable neglect by the Spanish companies'.[130] Cortesina was 'funny and bright, with lots of affected mannerisms, natural in her wit and all the while paying

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[126] Diago, 'El teatro español en Buenos Aires', 85: 'Por supuesto, y como era de esperar, también a Medina Onrubia se le reprochó el ocuparse de una asunto tan delicado y doloroso como lo era el de la guerra española.'

[127] 'Smart. Xavier Bóveda', *El Pueblo*, in *Crónica*, n. 28 (December 1937–1938), 169. [Buenos Aires, Argentores]: 'Es posible, aunque no demasiado fácilmente, encontrar en la tragedia de Bóveda otro juego simbólico más actual y exponer que el autor ha querido significar el horror de toda lucha entre hermanos, en una alusión que no podría ser de mayor oportunidad si se tiene en cuenta que una sola sangre es absorbida desde hace más de dos años por el suelo español.'

[128] *Crónica*, n. 28 (December 1937–1938), 168. [Buenos Aires, Argentores]: 'Helena Cortesina, (…) vuelve al género que le conviene y le demanda nuevo impulso.'

[129] Saura, 'Los españoles en el cine argentino', 88.

[130] 'Comenzó con una farsa abigarrada de Valle-Inclán', *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 14 April 1940), in *Crónica*, n. 30 (December 1939–December 1940), 63. [Buenos Aires, Argentores]: 'Paco Aguilar ha venido a salvar esa omisión inexplicable en que han incurrido las compañías españolas.'

attention to her difficult task, which she fully achieved'.[131] The reviewers praised the literary text and its style but judged that it lacked 'theatre'.[132] Even though its content was not visibly political, it was conceived of as a symbol of authentic Spain, the side that had lost the war. This play canonized Gori Muñoz as the Spanish scenographer in exile.

On the other hand, *La Profesión de la Señora Warren* was considered an 'unpleasant comedy' written in 1893 by Bernard Shaw as a musing on the 'dirty origin of the money' of the bourgeoisie. The Spanish version, directed by Aguilar, was appreciated as a brave effort, but it was considered too sensationalist and received criticism from conservatives. In addition, neither the translation nor the performances matched expectations and the quality of the original.[133]

Ernest Hemingway's *La Quinta Columna* (*The Fifth Column*) is one of the two plays written by the author and had been labelled as a cursed oeuvre.[134] The play was set in the Hotel Florida[135] during the bombing in Madrid in 1937. It tells the story of Phillip Rawlings (played by Mejuto in the version directed by Aguilar), a journalist loyal to the Republican government who fights the *quintacolumnistas*. This character – which was supposed to be an alter ego of Hemingway himself – bore the whole weight of the plot in which he had to fight between his progressive and loyal ideals and the love of Dorothy Bridges (Dorotea, played by Cortesina in the Argentinian version). She was also an American war correspondent, inspired by Hemingway's lover and third wife Martha Gellhorn. Being especially praised by those inclined to the Republican side, the theatrical quality of the text was not considered the main strength of the play, but its courage and

[131] 'Comenzó con una farsa abigarrada de Valle-Inclán', 63: 'graciosa y viva, opulenta en sus melindres, desenvuelta en su descaro y atenta en todo instante a una labor difícil, lograda enteramente.'
[132] Mariano de la Torre, 'Mayo', *El Pampero* (Buenos Aires, 14 April 1940), in *Crónica*, n. 30 (December 1939–December 1940), 63–64. [Buenos Aires, Argentores].
[133] *Crónica*, n. 30 (December 1939–December 1940), 84–85. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].
[134] The name of the play, *The Fifth Column*, is a phrase used by General Mola to describe those inside the Republican territories (in this particular case, Madrid) that were loyal to the *coup d'état* at a moment when four nationalist military columns were laying siege to the Spanish capital city. This name developed negative connotations and was popularized during the Spanish Civil War as a label for traitors who were willing to sell out their colleagues, friends, or neighbours to the enemy. Afterwards, it was also used during the Second World War on both sides.
[135] Hotel Florida (1924–1964) was a historical building sited in the central square of Callao where most of the international correspondents were lodged during the war, including important writers and photographers such as Herbert Matthews, John Dos Passos, Antoine Saint-Exupèry, Gerda Taro, Robert Capa, André Malraux, Virginia Cowles, Josephine Herbst, Nicolás Guillén or Pablo Neruda, among others. See Fernando Díaz de Quijano, 'Hotel Florida, crónicas de whisky y obuses', *El Cultural* (Madrid, 18 January 2019). One of the most accurate testimonies of the siege (with one of the most poetic beginnings) was written in this hotel by John Dos Passos and titled 'Room and Bath at the Hotel Florida' for the American journal *Esquire* (1 January 1938).

truth shocked some reviewers.[136] However, those less sensitive to the political message judged the play as a 'commercial' product that entertained the North American public, but that did not achieve the high standards of Buenos Aires for being 'simple and mediocre'.[137]

Looking at the times when Cortesina had a prominent place as leading actress and, therefore, probably had some control over the repertoires of the companies she acted with, we can easily perceive the political content of the plays. Plays such as *Un hombre y su vida* and *La Quinta Columna* were paradigmatic of the conflict that Spain had suffered, and they were some of the few instances when a theatre company took an explicit political stance after the war had already been lost.[138]

When Paco Aguilar left the Gran Compañía 'Comedias 1940', Mejuto took over the role of director and the company changed its name to Compañía Helena Cortesina. They installed themselves in the Teatro Smart Palace, where every night they offered a double bill of short plays from the Grand Guignol genre of the Theatre Noir in Paris.[139] None of the plays received much attention from the press, who presented the repertoire as 'melodramas whose aim is to provoke a reaction to the most twisted and painful parts of life'.[140] However, they did not mention the graphic violence and murderous criminal

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[136] 'La Quinta Columna', *El Sol* (Buenos Aires, 23 May 1940), in *Crónica*, n. 30 (December 1939–December 1940), 102. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].

[137] ''La Quinta Columna', Punto de Vista Yanqui de la Guerra Civil Española', *El Pampero* (Buenos Aires, 23 May 1940), in *Crónica*, n. 30 (December 1939–December 1940), 101. [Buenos Aires: Argentores]: 'Es una manera de teatro comercial que sin duda alguna gusta mucho en Estados Unidos – su enorme éxito en Nueva York lo demuestra – pero que para nosotros es ramplón y adocenado.'

[138] Diago, 'El teatro español en Buenos Aires', 85.

[139] The Grand Guignol was founded in 1897 in Paris by M. Metenier and it ended in 1962. It became a huge success in Paris, staging grisly and violent crime stories based on real-life reports in the press. This popular entertainment inspired many European artists, and its influence can be traced in films and novels, two of the most well-known examples being the work of Vincent Price and Stephen King. See Mel Gordon, *Theatre of Fear and Horror. The Grisly Spectacle of the Grand Guignol of Paris (1897-1962)* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2016). In August 1940, it premiered the translated version of the play *La Mano del Mono (The Monkey's Paw)* by W. W. Jacobs and Louis N. Parker; and *El Secreto del Castillo* (*L'Homme Nu*) by Charles Meré. Almost one month later, it staged *El carretón de la muerte* (*Les Pantines du Vice*), also by Charles Meré, and *Las Cuevas del Manicomio (Le Mistere de la Maison Noire*) by André D'Lorde (both translated by Alberto Ballerini). 'El Secreto del Castillo (L'Homme Nu)', in *Programas*, n. 17 (December 1939–October 1940), 150–151. 'El carretón de la muerte (Les Pantines du Vice) and Las Cuevas del Manicomio (Le Mistere de la Maison Noire)', in *Programas*, n. 17 (December 1939–October 1940), 166. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].

[140] 'Ayer Helena Cortesina Comenzó en el Smart su Temporada de los Lunes', *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires, 20 August 1940), in *Crónicas*, n. 30 (December 1939–December 1940), 158. [Buenos Aires: Argentores]: 'Las dos piezas presentadas pertenecen al género de los espectáculos de Gran Guiñol, repertorio del Theatre Noir, de Paris. (…) Pieza melodramática como la anterior, está hecha con el fin de producir sensaciones con lo más deforme y doloroso de la vida.'

exploits that characterized this type of gory play. This genre was considered of low artistic value, but it was popular for exploring the anxieties and fears produced by modernity within a controlled collective experience. The Argentinian public acclaimed the Compañía Helena Cortesina during the two months they performed these pieces.

For a short period in 1941, Cortesina paired up with Ana Lasalle,[141] another leading actress who also came to Buenos Aires after fleeing the Spanish Civil War, to create their own Compañía de Comedias Argentinas, directed by the poet César Tiempo. Together they staged 'risqué' plays such as *Amor Prohibido*, *El País de las Brevas* and *Su primera tentación*, by the Argentinian author Juan F. Moreno Rojas.[142] The company promoted the plays as 'morally impudent' or 'sassy but with quality'. While some reviewers appreciated their quality, others denounced the 'bad taste' of the pieces, and even omitted to describe the plots which they considered indecent.[143] The misguided promotion of the play *Amor Prohibido* as being more explicit than it really was attracted some groups of men who behaved inappropriately toward the theatre performers, which was censored by Argentinian theatre critics.[144]

Nevertheless, Cortesina's collaboration with Lasalle and César Tiempo did not mean the end of her professional – and personal – relationship with Mejuto. Both continued working together on different projects including León's unique adaptation of Lorca's *Marina Pineda*, with Helena Cortesina as Mariana Pineda, Andrés Mejuto, José Comellas, Rafael Alberti, and Alejandro Casona in the Teatro Mayo in 1941, with scenography by Gori Muñoz.[145] Although the press did not make much of it, it had great importance for the group of exiles as it was the first time that this play had been staged after the death of the poet and their close friend. This play became a symbol of freedom in which Mariana represented the unjust persecution of the Republic. It was an emotional event for the artist to restage the play with almost the same cast in June 1947 in the Teatro Astral under the name of Agrupación Intelectuales Demócratas Españoles and organized

[141] Ana Lasalle (Paris, 1912 – La Habana, 1989) began her career on the Spanish scene but it was in exile (first in Buenos Aires and afterwards in La Habana) where she developed most of her theatrical career, creating her own company.
[142] 'Amor prohibido', in *Programas*, n. 18 (October 1940–November 1941), 67; 'El país de las brevas', 95; 'Su primera tentación', 101. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].
[143] 'Anoche hubo estreno en el teatro Comedia', *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 5 April 1941), in *Crónica*, n. 31 (December 1940–April 1943), 27. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].
[144] 'El Incesto en el Escenario', *Libre Palabra* (6 April 1941), in *Crónica*, n. 31 (December 1940–April 1943), 28. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].
[145] Peralta Gilabert, *La escenografía del exilio de Gori Muñoz*, 158.

by the Ayuda Española a la Victoria Aliada (AEVA).[146] This time the play was given the title of *Homenaje a Mariana Pineda (Heroina de la Libertad)* in an attempt to pay homage to the lost freedom of their common homeland from which they grew further away every year. The aim of this second production, which attracted a large audience, was to help Spanish refugees based in the north of Africa.[147]

During 1941 and 1942, Cortesina and Mejuto explored alternative theatrical paths, briefly joining the Gran Compañía Regional Anduriña – O Paroleiro.[148] They also created the company El Guirigay which performed puppet shows for children in La Casa del Teatro, and there is some evidence that they may have performed around Argentina and Uruguay with a travelling theatre.[149] A remarkable moment for the couple was in 1943 when they joined the company of Margarita Xirgu in the Sodre studio Auditorio to perform *Sinfonía de los Héroes* by Edmundo Bianchi[150] and *El Ladrón de Niños* originally by Jules Supervielle (translated by León and Alberti), both with scenography by their old friend Santiago Ontañón.[151] *Sinfonía de los Héroes* was a pacifist piece in which the famous author reflected on three different wars: the one of 1914, the one that was taking place in 1940, and the war of the future. The play became very popular, and included among its audience 'all the representatives of the intellectual and artistic scene. From eminent figures of the government to the most modest author; from the lecturer to the amateur.'[152]

In 1943, Cortesina renewed her professional relationship with the actor Joaquín García León for a brief time in the Andalusian folkloric melodrama *Filigrana, la cantaora* by Antonio Quintero.[153] The following year, García León established another Spanish

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[146] Rosa Peralta Gilabert has written about the staging of *Mariana Pineda* in Argentina both in 1941 and 1947 in her referenced work about the career of the scenographer Gori Muñoz. Peralta Gilabert, *La escenografía del exilio de Gori Muñoz*, 160.

[147] Theatre leaflet 'Homenaje a Mariana Pineda. Heroína de la Libertad' (7 June 1947). [Private collection].

[148] 'Com'as Anduriñas', in *Programas*, n. 18 (October 1940–November 1941), 179. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].

[149] Peralta Gilabert, *La escenografía del exilio de Gori Muñoz*, 159 and Pablo Medina's current research that he very kindly shared with me in the cultural centre La Nube of Buenos Aires.

[150] Edmundo Bianchi (Montevideo, 1880–1965) was an anarchist playwright, journalist, and writer.

[151] 'Sinfonía de los Héroes', in *Programas*, n. 20 (April 1943–June 1944), 73 and 'El ladrón de niños', 82. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].

[152] *El Diario* (Buenos Aires, 24 September 1943), in *Crónica*, n. 32 (April 1943–March 1946), 29. [Buenos Aires: Argentores]: 'todo lo más representativo de nuestro mundo intelectual y artístico. Desde encumbrados personajes del gobierno, hasta el más modesto autor, del conferencista al aficionado, todos se dieron cita para apreciar la obra de Bianchi.'

[153] 'Filigrana, la cantaora', in *Programas*, n. 19 (December 1941–April 1943), 184. [Buenos Aires:

company of comedies with Marcelino Ornat, and they contracted Cortesina as the leading actress to open the season in Jacinto Benavente's comedy *La Culpa es Tuya*.[154] Adjectives such as 'always excellent' or 'elegant' were repeated in the press in reference to Cortesina's performance.

There was a further progression in Cortesina's career when in 1944 she joined the Cia. de Comedia of Luis Arata, a recognized Argentinian actor. During the following year and a half they presented performances in the Teatro Buenos Aires including *Cándido de día y Cándido de noche*[155] by Enrique Suárez de Deza, and *Tristes Amores (Tristi Amori)*,[156] by the prestigious Giuseppe Giacosa, but most importantly the highly successful version of Molière's play *El Avaro,*[157] directed by Cunill Cabanellas. It was in *Tristes Amores* that Cortesina was able to develop a more central role and, therefore, show her capacity as a comedic actress that was well received by the press.[158]

After her experience in the comedies company of Luis Arata, Cortesina went back to the Cia. Española de Comedia, directed now by Pedro Codina. They staged another Benavente play, *Más fuerte que el amor*, with a cast composed of some of the most prominent Spanish and Argentinian actors who came together for specific plays with large casts of characters. The second and last appearance by Cortesina with the Cia. Española de Comedia in the Liceo was *¡Y creó las madres!* by Antonio Casas Bricio.[159]

In 1947, Cortesina left Argentina for a while to live in Lima, where her mother Manuela Altabás was living. According to a journalist, the plan involved 'going to Lima to rest and come back to put together her own company of classical theatre',[160] a plan that probably was never concretized because when she returned, she joined a musical variety company as a comedy actress in the Teatro Avenida. The company staged different Spanish folkloric numbers such as dances, music, songs, and *sainetes* inspired by popular culture and with suggestive names like *Romeria*, *Fiesta Mayor en España* or *Por los*

Argentores]. *Filigrana* was adapted for cinema in 1949 directed by Luís Marquina. The main role was played by one of the most important *copla* performers, Conchita Piquer (Valencia, 1906–Madrid, 1990).

[154] 'La culpa es tuya', in *Programas*, n. 21 (June 1944–August 1945), 31, 36. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].

[155] 'Cándido de día y Cándido de noche', in *Programas*, n. 20 (April 1943–June 1940), 137. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].

[156] 'Tristes amores', in *Programas*, n. 22 (August 1945–March 1947), 29. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].

[157] 'El Avaro', in *Programas*, n. 21 (June 1944–August 1945), 123, 171 [Buenos Aires: Argentores] and Marcelo Jaureguiberry (ed.), *Germen Gelpi. Escenógrafo* (Buenos Aires: Wolkowicz, August 2019), 169.

[158] *El Mundo* (Buenos Aires, 21 October 1945), in *Crónicas*, n. 32 (April 1943–March 1946), 184. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].

[159] '¡Y creó las madres!', *Programas*, n. 22 (August 1945–March 1947), 109. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].

[160] 'Adiós a Helena Cortesina, Sra. de la escena', *Crítica* (Buenos Aires, 27 June 1947), 8.

pueblos de España.[161] However, there were some moments of recitation or poetry designed to legitimate the spectacle, for example a scene from *Bodas de sangre* given 'in memory of García Lorca' by Cortesina and Benito Cibrián. In this way, the fame of the first *lorquian*[162] actress – with other theatre actors who brought their expertise – was used to raise the cultural status of the play without losing its objective of entertainment.

The year 1949 was another crucial period in the trajectory of Cortesina's career. After a break of fifteen years, she went back to work with Lola Membrives' company in the Teatro Cómico. Although her sister Ofelia and her niece Paloma had played several roles with Membrives during the 1940s, Cortesina had not. It may have been that the different reactions to the Spanish political situation after the execution of García Lorca caused a rupture between them. Between the last two phases of work with Membrives (they worked together from 1931 to 1935, in 1949, and from 1958 to 1962), Cortesina worked irregularly with at least four different theatre companies for brief periods. Nevertheless, in Membrives' company Cortesina found stability during the final years of her career before her professional retirement in the 1960s. During that period, Membrives' company focused on Benavente's repertoire, bringing to the Buenos Aires public plays such as *Pepa Doncel*, *Su amante esposa* and *Los intereses creados*.

One of her last roles on stage was probably an adaptation of *Bodas de sangre*. Premiering on 20 September 1962 in the Teatro Cómico and adapted and directed by Membrives, it was severely criticized for trying to be a modern version of the – already – Spanish classic.[163] As a symbol of a life devoted to the stage, in this last play and being almost sixty years old, Cortesina was no longer playing *La Novia* but the older character of *La Criada*. In any event, this play brought to a close the circle of an artistic life devoted to her friend García Lorca's memory and the defence of the Spanish Republic.

Cortesina built part of her career based on her personal and professional relationship with García Lorca – while he was alive, being one of the poet's closest friends and a 'chosen' actress to play his characters, and after his execution, paying homage to his memory as he became a symbol of the Republic and liberal intellectualism in Spain and

[161] 'Romería', in *Programas*, n. 23 (March 1947–December 1948), 190, 191; 'Fiesta Mayor en España', 200; and 'Por los pueblos de España', in *Programas*, n. 24 (September 1948–July 1950), 16, in that order. [Buenos Aires: Argentores].

[162] The term *lorquiano* is an adjective used to identify those people, studies, or influences related to Federico García Lorca or his work. Although it does not exist in English, it would be useful to translate it as *lorquian* in this work.

[163] Emilio A. Stevanovitch, 'Crítica de estrenos. Bodas de sangre', *Talía* IV, n. 23 (Buenos Aires, 1962), 12.

Latin America. Therefore, Cortesina, like other artists, worked to keep García Lorca's legacy alive by performing and adapting the roles she played in different mediums: on stage (staging several of Lorca's plays or adaptations of them), on screen (in *Bodas de sangre*), on radio and television (on the programme 'Teatro de García Lorca'), and also in her social life, being present at various commemorative pieces such as the staging of *Mariana Pineda* with León, Alberti, and Casona. The construction of her career based on the work of a famous poet like García Lorca can be analysed from a number of angles – perhaps as an opportunist move by a mediocre actress, or a nostalgic professional who enjoyed the highest point of her career in her 1930s performing *La Novia* on the Argentinian stage, or as the honest endeavour of a true friend who took on her shoulders part of the duty of maintaining the artist's legacy. Unfortunately, with the documentation found up to now, we cannot know for certain. What seems clear is that García Lorca produced this effect in many of the people he met, touching many lives and becoming a real symbol of better times for Republican Spain.[164]

As we have seen, many of the professional choices that Cortesina made after 1937, whilst in exile, orbited around issues of the Republic, the Spanish Civil War, and the execution of Federico García Lorca. While some of her work was shaped by Argentinian contemporary cultural trends such as cinema noir films or frivolous commercial plays, there were also a high proportion of plays defined by their ideological content and the evocation of the Spanish political situation. Her career is a good example of how the arrival of the Spanish exiles, or *transterradas,* to use Allison Taillot's term,[165] in Argentina is an example of transcultural cross-pollination that gave rise to some of the most prolific and exciting works seen in the cultural sphere of Buenos Aires at the time.

As Margarita Xirgu used to lament: 'How wise the Greeks were; they did not kill you, they exiled you.'[166] In that sense, even when Cortesina rapidly embraced the effervescent cultural and artistic environment of Buenos Aires, her life was marked by a sense of displacement and loss inherent in her exilic condition. The continuous dialogue with the aftermath of her homeland's ideological violence infused her work in her host country, a situation that was not only enabled, but also promoted, by a cultural and artistic

[164] For example, reading the memoires of García Antón, *Visto al pasar* we have the feeling of a woman stuck in her time as an actress in La Barraca, with García Lorca, being described as one of the happiest periods of her life.
[165] Taillot, 'A prueba del tiempo': 32.
[166] Xavier Rius Xirgu, 'Biografia', *Margarita Xirgu website*, http://margaritaxirgu.es/castellano/biografc/biografc.htm

environment that was full of other exiles who could share the strangeness, anxieties, and restlessness of being uprooted from their shared homeland. Although her political commitments are unknown due to the lack of first-hand testimony, we can deduce them based on the content of the plays and films in which she actively participated, as well as the social and professional circles in which she developed her career, working in tandem with Republican figures such as Rafael Alberti, María Teresa León, Alejandro Casona, Gori Muñoz, Santiago Ontañón, Andrés Mejuto, Xavier Bóveda, and Margarita Xirgu, and Argentinian leftist supporters such as Luis Saslavsky, Edmundo Guibourg, Alfonsina Storni, and Salvadora Medina Onrubia. Films such as *Bodas de sangre*, *La dama duende* and *El ojo que espía*, and plays like *La Quinta Columna*, *Un hombre y su vida*, *Tierra dura*, and *Mariana Pineda*, for example, were chosen for their political content and, therefore, working on them was a sign of a political commitment to maintain the memory of the 'losers' of the war in a place out of reach of the censorship of the Franco regime.

Part III. The Affective Familial Networks as a Springboard to Silent Cinema

Chapter VII. The two models of Iberian women's access to silent cinema

As their 'careerographies' demonstrate, in their professional and personal lives both Almeida and Cortesina challenged the conventions surrounding the social position of women in early twentieth century, while both were women fully inscribed in their time and place. Like others, they belonged to a particular group of middle/high-class urban women who had found personal freedom, economic independence, professional development, and cultural growth through artistic professions. As Carmen de Burgos described in 1927, 'the artistic professions were the first that women could conquer. A few years ago, according to employment statistics, the majority of women were either nuns or theatre artists.'[1]

Specifically, the stage, with a huge need of female performers, offered a professional alternative to women of all social classes, most of them victims of a system that exploited them as part of an 'artistic proletariat',[2] but also gave few of them the opportunity to stand out and achieve the celebrity status.[3] This relative professional and economic independence associated with stage performers, (that usually lasted only until they got married and go back to their assigned environment in the domestic sphere, as mocked by the writer Álvaro Retana),[4] was also transferred to cinema at least until mid-1910s in the Iberian countries.

The reason was that early cinema (along with other popular spectacles such as variety shows, *revistas* and the circus), constituted what was known as the 'frivolous' entertainment industry, associated with modern urban forms of leisure and consumption

[1] Burgos, *La mujer moderna y sus derechos*, 62: 'Las profesiones artísticas fueron las primeras que pudo conquistar la mujer. Hace algunos años las estadísticas solo daban mayoría de monjas y artistas de teatro'.
[2] A term coined by Serge Salaün. Serge Salaün, 'Las mujeres en los escenarios españoles (1890–1936). Estrellas, heroínas y víctimas sin saberlo', *Dossiers Feministes*, n. 10 (2007): 67.
[3] As Isabel Clúa points out, some stage celebrities, as Cortesina, knew how 'to take advantage of the industries mechanisms and cultural codes of the time to transcend the stage and become, not only subjects of public interest but also subjects able to organize a professional career, achieve an economic independence and guarantee themselves a space of agency.' Clúa, *Cuerpos de escándalo*, 10: 'algunas de esas mujeres expuestas como objetos de contemplación aprovechan los mecanismos de la industria y los códigos culturales del momento para trascender los escenarios y convertirse no solo en sujetos de interés público sino en sujetos capaces de organizar una carrera profesional, alcanzar una independencia económica y garantizarse un espacio de agentividad propia'.
[4] Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 20.

for the masses.[5] As Daniel Sánchez Salas explains, 'cinema is in the first decade of the twentieth century (…) a spectacle of growing popularity and dubious taste, projected in places that range from the *barracón* [portable cinema] to the theatre'.[6] Variety shows were a fusion of different attractions (dances, acrobats, *cuplés*, magic tricks, etc.) in which cinema was included, sharing the heterogeneous audiences and the physical spaces devoted to stage spectacles that were varied and difficult to categorize. Although it established itself as an independent spectacle during the second decade of the twentieth century, in the Iberian countries it did not acquire full artistic category during most part of the silent period, even if many film-makers sought for it.[7]

Shelley Stamp states in her DVD collection *Pioneers: First Women Filmmakers*, which is a compilation of the work of several silent film female directors of the United States, the question answered by researchers should not be why these women had an interest in cinema, but the opposite: how could these informed, cultured and urban women not be interested in cinema during the 1920s?[8] This could be applied to the Iberian context, too. A new kind of open medium full of possibilities and interrogations would have been a very attractive path for many different women with different objectives: political influence, pedagogic interest, philanthropy, economic independence, personal freedom, and so on. For that reason, the mystery here is not why Cortesina and Almeida tried their hand at cinema production but why other cultivated women of their time, such as Carmen de Burgos or Ana de Castro Osório, did not (although Burgos was very interested in cinema as a writer and journalist).[9] Maybe some of them did, but we have not told their stories yet.

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[5] Benet, *El cine español*, 16.

[6] Daniel Sánchez Salas, 'Su majestad el cine. El teatro por horas y recreación del cine de los orígenes', in *Actes del V Seminario internacional sobre los antecedentes y orígenes del cine. Cinema i teatre: influències i contagis*, ed. Ángel Quintana and Jordi Pons (Girona: Museu del Cinema, 2005), 189: 'el cinematógrafo es en la primera década del siglo XX (...) un espectáculo de creciente popularidad y dudoso gusto, desarrollado en lugares que van del barracón al teatro'.

[7] In Madrid, Pérez Perucha dates cinema consolidation as a spectacle separated from music-hall and theatre around 1911, based on annual receipts. In Lisbon it was in 1912 that the security measures in cinema projections were first regulated and in 1914 that the category of spectacles in which cinema was included appeared before the theatres category in the Anuário Comercial de Lisboa, according to Baptista. Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 82 and Baptista, 'Cinemas de estreia e cinemas de bairro'.

[8] Shelley Stamp, *Pioneers: First Women Filmmakers* (New York: Kino Lorber, 2018, DVD/Blu-ray collection).

[9] In 1918 Carmen de Burgos wrote a short story titled *La mejor film* that is the first known narration about the filming of a movie in Spain. On the relation of Carmen de Burgos with Spanish silent cinema see: Palomo, 'Colombine y el cine mudo en España', 21–30.

As detailed in Chapter V, section 5.1, when Almeida and Cortesina entered cinema, national film producing centres were not sited in their countries' capitals but in the second biggest (and more industrialized) cities of the North: Porto and Barcelona. However, in the first years of the 1920s that reality was about to change as Lisbon and Madrid were acquiring a role in cinema production.[10] Mirroring the previous and apparently 'successful' experiences of companies such as Invicta Film or Barcinógrafo, Fortuna and Cortesina Films were created at a time in which, looking at cinema with interest but from a proper distance, it seemed to be an open and lucrative field full of possibilities more adequate for 'action men' than artists, recalling how the Portuguese journalist Claro described it.[11] Therefore, entering into cinema, Almeida and Cortesina proved to be true 'women of action'.[12]

Although both production companies were in permanent financial crisis and were ultimately not business successes, neither Cortesina's nor Almeida's cinematographic ventures can be considered to be non-achievements, as I have argued in the previous chapters. Belonging to the delimited group of Iberian female cultural agents, they developed life-long and broad inter-artistical careers in which cinema was a useful step in attaining varied but concrete objectives: fame, fortune, status or influence. So, without being the main activity in their professional careers, cinema successfully played an important role for some years and helped them to achieve their purposes and a certain recognition at the time.

Therefore, looking at the specific cases studied in this dissertation, we can identify two different models (that I will further detail in this chapter) through which women could

[10] As I have noted in Chapter V section 5.1, my view over periodization divides the 1920s in two halves. The first one ends around 1925 and it is characterized by few middle (unexperimented but ambitious) companies that are trying to systematize production and create a national industry located in the capital cities (the examples would be Portugália, Pátria and Fortuna Film in Lisbon and Atlántida and Film Española in Madrid). This production system entered in crisis and all those companies disappeared around 1925 and is substituted by a more atomized structure even more centred in the capital cities in which multiple ephemeral companies would be created and disappear with only one or two films and where few names would stand out for their authorial and artistic aspirations. For the transition of the Spanish production centre from Barcelona to Madrid in the early 1920s, see Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 81–105 and for the rotation between Porto and Lisbon as Portuguese production centre, see Ribeiro, *Filmes, Figuras e Factos*, 177–180.

[11] Here, I am referring to Claro's article mentioned in Chapter V section 5.1 in which he claims that the Portuguese cinema system needed 'more action men than artists'. Claro, 'Palavras', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 5 (Lisbon, 1 March 1923), 54.

[12] Carlo Zappia in *El Cine* called Almeida 'woman of action' as she could not remain indifferent to the new medium artistic possibilities and made an incursion into cinema. Carlo Zappia, 'La ilustre escritora portuguesa Virginia de Castro', *El Cine*, n. 557 (Barcelona, 16 December 1922), 1.

access silent cinema culture in Iberian countries during the first third of the twentieth century and even get into film-making: through literature and through stage performance. The first option would allow women to write for cinema and about cinema in various specialized mediums in many cases with educative hope. The second would mostly involve acting and, in most cases, would stop there. Those positions taken a step further allowed Almeida and Cortesina, among others, to establish their own production companies and become film-makers by carrying out various roles: as plot writer, producer and editor in the Portuguese case and as leading actress, producer, and director in the Spanish one.

7.1 Model A. The intellectual coming from literature to cinema with pedagogical and educational aspirations

The ambivalent – and maybe even masochistic – relationship between Spanish and Portuguese early twentieth-century intellectuality and cinema alternated between attraction, leading intellectuals to write extensively about it, and hostility towards a medium that they did not totally understand, as Benet points out in the Spanish context.[13] Cinema was an intrinsically transnational medium controlled by external Western countries and the national intellectual elites did not know how to use it for their own benefit. It had, for them, an uncomfortable fascination for the urban working and middle classes, who were satisfied with a spectacle that, 'despite being born from technique and modernity' was traditional in 'its understanding of narrative and scenographic formulas', at a moment when 'the emergence of pictorial and literary vanguards were challenging them radically'.[14] Thus, cinema was perceived as a disrupting element that collaborated neither with the Iberian intelligentsia's nationalizing and didactic project nor with its politically progressive – and mainly anti-monarchic – agenda.

As Benet points out, early twentieth-century elites were incapable of predicting the effect of the new mass culture based on 'the serial production, the immediate

[13] Benet, *El cine español*, 42–54.

[14] Benet, *El cine español*, 48–49: 'A pesar de tratarse de un tipo de espectáculo surgido de la técnica y la modernidad, en el cine encontraron acomodo inmediato los modelos más conservadores o, cuando menos, tradicionales, a la hora de entender las fórmulas narrativas y escenográficas. Todo esto ocurría en un momento (...) de eclosión de vanguardias plásticas y literarias que las cuestionaban radicalmente.'

commercialization, the democratic access, and the dependency on technical advances'.[15] It was a medium that 'did not need the tutelage of intellectuals driven by a charitable aspiration to instruct and indoctrinate'. Around the mid-1920s, however, the position of many intellectuals towards cinema had shifted during a decade which normalized the modernist trend, and many of them were embracing its commercial opportunities and formal language.[16] However, they usually still dismissed what had been done previously in national cinema for being too popular and conservative in form and content.[17]

While the first generation of Portuguese modernist artists, who had published in the journal *Orpheu*, had not paid any attention to cinema as they were more interested in other artistic languages, including literary, visual, and stage arts, the Portuguese modernists of the second wave, which joined in the journal *Presença,* were fascinated by the language, principles, and tendencies of the new medium.[18] It is interesting to note how this situation paralleled the Spanish one, where the Generation of '98 dismissed or ignored cinema while the Generation of '27 was enthusiastic about it, reinforcing the connections between intellectuals across the border.[19]

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[15] Benet, *El cine español*, 48: 'La posición de los intelectuales de finales del siglo XIX y de la primera década del XX les hace incapaces de ver una tendencia imparable: la definición de la nueva cultura de masas basada en la producción en serie, la inmediata comercialización, la democratización del acceso y su dependencia de los avances de la técnica. Una cultura que ya no necesita de la tutela de intelectuales amparados por la buena voluntad de instruir y adoctrinar, sino construida desde las demandas de los dos grandes elementos de gestión del tiempo y de la vida individual que vienen aparejados con la modernidad: el disfrute del ocio y el consumo.'

[16] For one of the best examples of the connection that Portuguese modernists established between cinema and modern urban societies after the First World War, see the future director of Estado Novo's Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional in charge of cinema, António Ferro's (Lisbon, 1895–1956) conferences: *As Grandes Trágicas do Silêncio* (Lisbon: Monteiro e C., 1917) and *A Idade do Jazz-Band* (Lisbon: Portugalia Editora, 1924).

[17] There are a few studies about the relationship between the Portuguese modernists of *Orpheu* and *Presença* and cinema. See Joana Matos Frias, 'Cinema e modernismo', *Modern!smo - Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu*, (website, IELT-FCSH, Universidade Nova de Lisboa), https://modernismo.pt/index.php/c/198-cinema. On how cinema impacted the Spanish vanguardist literary generations, namely the Generation of '27, see Román Gubern, *Proyector de luna la generación del 27 y el cine* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1999).

[18] See, for example, the writings about cinema by the vanguardist Portuguese artist José Almada Negreiros (St Tomé y Príncipe, 1983 – Lisbon, 1970): 'Charlie Chaplin', *Diário de Lisboa*, n. 30 (Lisbon, 11 May 1921), 3; 'O cinema é uma coisa e o teatro é outra', *Sudoeste*, n. 2 (Lisbon: Edições SW, October 1935): 13–19; 'Encorajamento à juventude portuguesa para o cinema e para o teatro', *Sudoeste*, n. 2, (Lisbon: Edições SW, October 1935): 20–22 and Fernando Cabral Martins, 'Um filme-ensaio de Almada Negreiros', *Colóquio/Letras,* n. 185 (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, January 2014): 76–85.

[19] The Generation of '98 is the name attributed to a literary group of Spanish writers that were heavily influenced by the Hispano-American War of 1898 and were concerned with an aesthetic, social and cultural renewal. The Generation of '27 is also a literary group defined around the anniversary of the death of the Baroque poet Luis de Góngora in 1927. For more about the relationship between the

Partly, this elites' distrust was originated by the unpredictability of the effect that watching films could have on acritical spectators. This was a frequent topic of discussion in the press among intellectuals and religious sectors who were worried about the immorality represented on screen.[20] Their concerns were related to a classist fear of the empowered popular masses who were the main force supporting this new entertainment form. How can illiterate people enjoy the same film that I do? What do they understand from what they see? How can we all be mixed up in the same dark room under the homogeneous category of 'spectatorship' or 'audience'?

However, even the most extreme anti-film lobby could foresee 'a single path of redemption' for cinema: its huge educational or didactic potential.[21] This position of intellectuals on cinema was similar in both Spain and Portugal, and it was a frequent topic in press articles, exemplified by the following article about the 'art of silence' published in *Invicta Cine*:

> At the cinema, you learn to steal with Art, kill with expertise, get perverted with elegance (...) Who corrupted us in this way? Who made the Portuguese race become so decadent? The animatograph. Should we then ban it, repudiate it as the origin of an infection? No!! Modify it, transform it and free the screen from the harmful elements, and what now works as an element of destruction will in the future be a powerful element of construction and education.[22]

Portuguese first modernists and the Spanish Generation of '98 and the Portuguese second modernists and the Spanish Generation of '27, see Antonio Sáez Delgado and Santiago Pérez Isasi, *De espaldas abiertas. Relaciones literarias y culturales ibéricas (1870-1930)* (Granada: Comares, 2018).

[20] At the conference 'El cinematógrafo bajo su aspecto médico y los intereses creados' Spaniard Dr. Miguel Estorch called cinema 'a morally and intellectually intolerable spectacle'. Joan M. Minguet Batllori, '¿Tú vas al cine? Mira que es un medio diabólico de perversión. (Sobre la recepción del cine en la España de los años diez)', *Secuencias*, n. 8 (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1998): 12. Further evidence comes from the 'father of Portuguese cinematography', Costa Veiga, who, in 1923, gave his opinion that 'modern cinematography' was a 'practical school of crime, vice and prostitution', referring mainly to films coming from the United States. 'Costa Veiga, o iniciador do cinema lusitano', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 3 (Lisbon, 1 February 1923), 31: 'A cinematografia moderna é apenas a escola pratica do crime, do vicio e da prostituição infelizmente.'

[21] Joan M. Minguet Batllori, 'Early Spanish cinema and the problem of modernity', *Film History* 16 (2004): 96.

[22] Felcar, 'A Arte do Silencio. Como meio de Nacionalisação', *Invicta Cine*, n. 7 (Porto, 5 December 1923), 7: 'No cinema aprende-se a roubar com Arte, a matar com pericia, a perverter-se com elegancia. (...) Quem nos perverteu assim? Quem tornou assim tão decadente a raça portuguesa? O animatografo. Devemos então bani-lo, repudia-lo como foco de inféção? Não!! Modifique-se, transforme-se, livre-se a tela dos elementos damninhos e, ela que agora serve de elemento de destruição será no porvir um elemento poderoso de construção e ensinamento.'

According to this position, cinema could only achieve a constructive and dignified position if it became an educational and nationalizing tool at the service of the elites.

As I have noted in her Chapter V, section 5.2, Virgínia de Castro e Almeida was one of the first to identify the negative pervasive effect that cinema would have on the masses if the Portuguese government did not take measures to assure the quality and morality of films.[23] Being herself part of the intellectual elite of her country, she adapted to different governments, ideas, and trends in a politically, culturally, and socially convulsive period in Europe. However, she maintained her loyalty to three ideas: the power of education, the need for internationalization, and the dissemination of the vital part Portugal had played in the construction of Western 'civilization'. These axes would lead her life and her decisions, and they played a fundamental role in her film-making career, which she described as a 'dream of taking advantage of cinema to spread some useful ideas, a little of beauty that I am able to create'.[24]

To establish a dialogue with the 'people' outside the political and intellectual environments, she translated scientific and philosophical concepts into an understandable language for children and women without trivializing them.[25] In this sense, Costa described the creation of Fortuna Films as the 'first tentative attempt at a self-declared elitist, literary and obscure cinema'.[26] In my opinion, although from a paternalist outsider position, Almeida did not try to make a kind of cinema separated from the massive audience. In fact, she devoted her life to very concrete ideals, writing for 'her public' whom she described as 'women, children, young people, working-class, forces that can prepare the future of this land of Portugal that I love, but I am accused of looking down on them, because I only tell them truths that others, to flatter them, hide'.[27] As the French

[23] Almeida, 'Cinematographos', *A Capital*, n. 1.384 (Lisbon, 10 June 1914), 1.
[24] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to her son José Lopo (Paris, 17 February 1925). (PFC): 'o meu antigo sonho de aproveitar o cinema para espalhar algumas ideias uteis, um pouco da beleza que eu for capaz de criar'.
[25] The publications for the collection 'Biblioteca para os meus filhos' are example of the understandable and pedagogic literary style of Almeida inspired by the Swiss education: *Céu Aberto* and the continuation *Em Pleno Azul* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1907) tried to educate children about real aspects of the world but in a fictionalized way, *Pela Terra e pelo Ar* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1911) explained notions of entomology and *As Lições do André* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1913) explained scientifical discoveries. Bastos, 'Fantasia e realidade', 14.
[26] Costa, *Histórias do Cinema Português*, 35.
[27] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, 'Sociedade das Nações. A questão da escravatura', *O Século* (Lisbon, 20 September 1925), 1: 'Insisto no que sob formas diversas tenho escrito para o meu público, mulheres, crianças, gente nova, povo, forças que podem preparar o futuro dessa terra de Portugal que adoro, mas que me acusam de desprezar, porque só lhe digo verdades que os outros, para a lisonjear, lhe escondem.'

journal *L'Européen* highlights, it is clear that Almeida was not of the people but wrote about them and, I would claim, on occasions for them (as in the case of popular literature for children and women):

> Her novels demonstrate a great understanding of the popular soul. Do not forget, however, that Virginia de Castro is an aristocrat. She leans affectionately, attentively, over the people; she is not part of the people. When she describes, with so much sympathy and truth, her Portuguese shepherds, her fishermen, her pickers of olives, she does not know how to feel and communicate to us the same quality of emotion that Selma Lagerloff does, being a daughter of farmers herself (...) We do not mean to criticize. I sincerely admire the novelist *grands seigneurs* (...) Their disinterested testimony remains, by the way, particularly precious.[28]

Therefore, despite being an aristocrat, Almeida was concerned about the new medium's pedagogic capacity and the possibility of getting her message through to the masses and portraying the 'people' on the screen.[29] Despite her objective of entering cinema production still being rooted in the nineteenth century conception of culture as a way of indoctrinating and educating the masses in traditional values, it was her curiosity and independent character that pushed her to take control of her own film enterprise. In this sense, she differentiated herself from the other intellectuals who criticized or supported the new medium in the literature and press articles without risking anything. As she considered Portuguese film production to be of low quality, with little international circulation abroad and poor educative effects on the masses, she decided to enter into business to change it herself.[30] For that reason, the journal *El Cine* described her as a

[28] A. D. 'Virginia de Castro', *L'Européen*, n. 19 (Paris, 21 August 1929), 7: 'Ces nouvelles témoignent d'une grande connaissance de l'âme populaire. N'oublions pas, toutefois, que Virginia de Castro est une aristocrate. Elle se penche affectueusement, attentivement, sur le peuple; elle n'est pas du peuple. Quand elle nous décrit, avec tant de sympathie et de vérité, ses bergers, ses pêcheurs, ses cueilleurs d'olives portugais, elle ne sauvait ressentir et nous communiquer la même qualité d'émotion qu'une Selma Lagerloff, fille elle-même de paysans (...) Que l'on ne voie pas, ici, une critique. J'admire sincèrement les romanciers grands seigneurs (...) Leur témoignage désintéressé reste, d'ailleurs, particulièrement précieux.'

[29] The way she includes scenes of actual fishermen from Nazareth in many scenes of her film *Os Olhos da Alma* totally fits her almost ethnographic interest in the lower classes. Also, in the promotional photographs of *A Sereia de Pedra* (non-extant) published in the press, we can see non-professional performers as extras and it is reasonable to suppose that she would also have included them in *Noblesse* (if it had been filmed).

[30] 'Films portugueses. Sereia de Pedra', *Cine-Revista*, n. 63 (Lisbon, August 1922), 9.

'woman of action' who, after watching *J'Accuse* (Abel Gance, 1919), decided to consider cinema as an art form with pedagogic potential and space for improvement.[31]

Almeida decided to create her own production company to have creative and economic decision-making control in a highly male-dominated business. This way she avoided the marginal positions reserved for non-actresses in Iberian film industries. As she was used to making business decisions in relation to her literary work and to managing her properties, she was also used to being considered exceptional as a woman. That 'exceptionality' (compared with other women) was repeated throughout her entire life due to her particular character, personal trajectory, and professional career in every field she entered: as a female writer or literary judge, as a cinema producer, and as a cultural representative in international political spheres. Even she referred to herself as an exception among women, which certainly undermined sisterhood and other feminist principles in the search for equality among sexes.[32]

It is not difficult to understand the pattern that is reproduced in Almeida's case. In a country and at a time when the female capacity to think, be morally decent, and be responsible for basic freedoms were put in doubt, the position as the only 'exception' was a highly competitive one.[33] In addition, these exceptional cases reinforced the theory that women were the only ones to blame for their lack of judgement, social position and lack of rights, instead of refuting the misogynistic dismissal of feminine naturalised characteristics.

Thus, Almeida used different strategies to avoid being considered threatening to her male peers. One example is how she surrounded herself with 'safe' male professionals, such as her sons; the family friends: Ayres d'Aguiar and Alberto Jardim, who admired her very much;[34] and Roger Lion, a director who worked together with or under the command

[31] Zappia, 'La ilustre escritora portuguesa', *El Cine*, n. 557 (Barcelona, 16 December 1922), 1.

[32] In this sense, she could be compared with the film-maker Dorothy Arzner, who was the only director in the U.S. film industry in the late 1920s. She also avoided being linked or compared to other women and tried to distance herself from the stereotype of the 'woman director'. Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood*, 204–207.

[33] To illustrate this point, I offer the example of the description in the book *Os Anos Vinte em Portugal*, in which José-Augusto França enumerates the multiple women of letters (novelists, poets, children literature writers, etc.) that could be the heir to the seat in the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa left vacant by the writer and poet Maria Amália Vaz de Carvalho (Lisbon, 1847 – 1921) when she died in 1921 (Virgínia de Castro e Almeida being the first on the list). This metaphor shows how, among very valid options, women in the 1920s would have to compete between themselves to occupy the only space that was allowed to them as representatives of their whole gender. José-Augusto França, *Os Anos Vinte em Portugal* (Lisbon: Presença, 1992), 134.

[34] Alberto Jardim, 'Une Femme de Lettres Portugaise', *Paris-Notícias*, n. 46 (Paris, 23 March 1922), 1.

of women on several occasions during the silent period.[35] Another measure is that she reserved her talent for commonly female spheres (mainly at the beginning of her career), such as women's and children's education and domestic governance. However, over the years she also wrote about traditionally less 'feminine' subjects such as internationalization and divulgation of Portuguese history.

In addition, she usually presented herself and was portrayed in the press as an old woman with no other ambition than philanthropically serving her country. References to her age, femininity, social position, and kindness were common in the writings about her:

> D. Virginia de Castro, a noble Portuguese figure, makes everybody love her for her benevolence and generosity; for this interview, she has for us a kind smile, a smile of extreme goodness to which her white hair adds a strange note of poetry and affection.[36]

Also, according to *Jornal dos Cinemas*, Almeida was attributed those feminine characteristics that were supposed to be natural to women: 'austere but kind, a writer and a good judge of character, she knows how to exquisitely delineate the soul of the woman in her plots.'[37] This deactivation mechanism to avoid possibly disturbing and subverting her position as a woman in power shifted in favour of portraying an innocent and humble image. The strategy is evident in the draft letter to Salazar, in which she describes the lunch offered by Edouard Herriout at the Ritz Hotel in January 1939 to the delegates of the diplomatic conference. There she was given the place of honour to the right of Herriot. However, according to Almeida:

> this was not because of my white hair or the fact that I was the only woman among the delegates (apart from me there was only a young first secretary of the Cuban delegation). Several times I have been the

[35] Roger Lion co-directed with Frenchwoman Musidora *La Flamme Cachée* (1918), directed and produced the film *La Fontaine des Amours*/*La Fonte dos Amores* (1924) by the French writer Gabrielle Reval, and directed *La Clé de Voute* (1925) produced by the Italian Gina Pallerme. Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*, 191–198.

[36] 'D. Virginia de Castro e Almeida', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 7 (Lisbon, 1 April 1923), 83: 'D. Virginia de Castro, figura nobre de portugueza, fazendo-se amar por todos pela sua benevolencia e fidalguia, como primiliar para a entrevista tem para nós um sorriso gentil, um sorriso de extrema bondade onde os seus cabelos brancos põem uma nota extranha de poesia e de carinho.'

[37] 'D. Virginia de Castro e Almeida', 83: 'austera mas bondosa, escritora e psicologa, sabendo delinear primorosamente nos seus soberbos argumentos a alma da mulher'.

> only woman at official lunches and dinners in Geneva without being offered any place of honour.[38]

The reason she presents to her president was that, on this occasion, 'the place of honour was not for me but for the Government I represented and for the person at the head of it, you, who dignifies it and commands the respect of foreigners'.[39] Although she eventually deleted this part of the letter to Salazar, it is interesting to note the submissive tone of the letter from a woman who was used to leading and expressing herself in other terms in her writings and close social circle.

In conclusion, Almeida's interest in investing in cinema as an artistic medium of expression was encouraged by her lifelong mission to educate children, women, and the lower classes. However, for her, cinema was no more than another pedagogic medium of expression, another way of writing, disseminating patriotic ideas and moralizing, but, using moving images instead of using words.[40] As a writer and producer, she used cinema as a tool for promoting her patriotic feeling and her ideological discourse about the hierarchy of the social classes, the role of women in society, and moral righteousness.

As exemplified by Almeida's experience, I identify the first model of access of Iberian women to cinema: writing was one way for cultured women to gain access to cinema and explore its pedagogic and nationalizing potential. This path of access to cinema would come through literature, through being writers, journalists, or pedagogues who see in the narrative systematization of cinema an open window for accessing the new medium from a position in which women intellectuals were accepted. Their supposed essentialist moral superiority related to their natural maternal instinct and intuitive

[38] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, Draft of the notes send to Sr. President Salazar about the diplomatic Conference (Paris, 3 January 1939). (BNP. ESP. N 104/cx. 1): 'No esplendido almoço oferecido por Edouard Herriot no Ritz aos delegados á Conferência diplomática, eu tive o logar de honra, á direita do Herriot. Isto não foi devido aos meus cabelos brancos nem ao facto de ser a única mulher entre os delegados (além de mim só havia uma jovem primeira secretaria da Legação de Cuba). Por várias vezes tenho tido ocasião de ser a única mulher em almoções e jantares oficiaes em Genebra e em Paris, sem que o logar de honra me fosse atribuído.'

[39] Almeida, Draft of the notes send to Sr. President Salazar: 'O logar de honra não for para mim mas para o Governo que eu representava e á testa do qual se encontra V. Exª que o dignifica e o impõe ao respeito dos estrangeiros.'

[40] Almeida even referred to *Os Olhos da Alma* as 'an essay achieved with a huge effort in the sense of patriotic propaganda, that I made despite all difficulties'. Almeida to her son Luís Manuel (Paris, 3 April 1925): 'um ensaio conseguido á custa de um enorme esforço, com sentido de propaganda patriotica, o que realizei através de todas as dificuldades'.

understanding of human nature allowed women to be considered suitable for roles such as that of plot writer, scriptwriter, film reviewer or censor, and educator.[41]

In the specific case of the Portuguese Republican ideology, the instruction and education of children and, therefore, of future citizens was considered a women's central mission.[42] As the slogan of the *Escola Solidariedade Feminina* claimed: 'Educating women is contributing to the redemption of the homeland'.[43] The meaning behind this sentence states that women were responsible for raising the future of the society. Also, women's natural 'moral superiority' was a common argument made by (proto-)feminists in Spain. As Maryellen Bieder argues, it 'garnered women social approbation and granted them their only advantage over men, one which endorsed their right to speak out and seek change'.[44]

Also, the proliferation of periodicals specializing in cinema in Portugal from 1912 and in Spain from 1910 onwards also explored different ways in which the written word could be incorporated into cinema culture.[45] It was through the written word that some female writers and journalists, such as Carmen Prada, who wrote as Duquesa de Borelli from 1918 to 1921 in several general and specialized journals; María Luz Morales, who wrote under the pseudonym of Felipe Centeno in *La Vanguardia* from 1923 to 1933; and others such as Cecilia Alonso i Bozzo or Carlota O'Neill de Lamos, who explored their interest in the new medium and engaged with cinema as reviewers, and journalists.[46] Although these professions have not been the centre of attention in cinema histories, they

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[41] On the belief of women's moral superiority and the power it gave them on U.S. politics and cinema, see Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood*, 79–80.

[42] Madden, 'Historical Context in Portugal', 200.

[43] Maria do Céu de Brito Vairinho Borrêcho, 'Educação, Instrução e Analfabetismo', in *Mulheres na I República*, eds. Zília Osório de Castro, João Esteves and Natividade Monteiro (Lisbon: Colibri, 2011), 117.

[44] Maryellen Bieder, 'Women Authors and Early Feminist Thought', in *A New History of Iberian Feminisms*, ed. Silvia Bermúdez and Roberta Johnson (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 145.

[45] On the origin and development of Portuguese specialized cinematographic press, see Duarte, *Se não se podem ver filmes, leiam-se as revistas.* For the case in Spain, see Jorge Nieto Ferrando, 'La prensa cinematográfica española como fuente y objeto de la historia del cine. Análisis y evolución de sus contenidos (1910-2010)', *Historia y comunicación social* 24 (2019): 237–258.

[46] On female Spanish writers, such as Carmen Prada Mantrana (unknown), María Luz Morales (A Coruña 1895 – Barcelona, 1990), Cecilia Alonso i Bozzo (Barcelona 1905–1974), and Carlota O'Neill (Madrid, 1905 – Caracas, 2000), see Soto-Vázquez, 'Weaving a Cinematographic Culture', 120–131, and Victor Rivas Morente, 'Una primera aproximación a la figura de Carmen Prada, periodista cinematográfica y empresaria en el Madrid de los años veinte', *Secuencias* 46 (2017): 59–81. I have not found any scholarly work about Portuguese female writers who published about silent cinema which opens a whole area for future research.

were not unimportant. Journalists and critics were the mediators between the screen and the public and were responsible for creating film culture for the audience, establishing a global American star-system, and reinforcing cinephilia.

7.2 Model B. The stage performer who enters cinema through acting and intends film-making

Cortesina's objectives in entering cinema were very different to Almeida's and the model of access she represents. Her move into cinema was a logical step in her professional trajectory, motivated by artistic interests, entrepreneurial curiosity, and social ambition. Her position in the stage entertainment world, as well as her personal characteristics (such as independence and precocity), helped her move into the world of film. She established herself first as an actress and later as a producer and film-maker, intending to gain the status of a 'cinema star' (which was of a different nature than the status of variety show dancer) and increase her artistic capital.[47]

Variety dancers like Cortesina did not need to turn to cinema for fame or popularity, as the main Spanish celebrities came from the frivolous spectacles that had huge audiences every night, and whose photographs would circulate in specialist publications like *Eco Artístico* and on postcards. Also, they would become the face of product advertisements, or would even be contracted by the municipality to provide entertainment for public festivities, as when Cortesina, La Checa, and Carmen Flores (from the Romea show) paraded in the Carnival of 1917.[48] Fernando Castán Palomar, in his 'Revisión y anécdota del cine mudo en Madrid', published in *Primer Plano,* recognizes that the Spanish cinema actress of the silent period did not create any expectation in the streets, but the frivolous artists did:

> Those actresses ours that go – needless to say on foot – through the streets of Madrid, awake hardly any curiosity. But there are no

[47] Retana, for instance, protests about the different social and moral status attributed to the *ínfimo* genre performers of the 1900s and the cinema stars of the following decades. According to him, the work of the frivolous stage performers, even cheeky and slightly peccant, was more morally acceptable than the work of some film actresses who, also semi-naked, had to play perverse, corrupting, and shameless scenes. Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 24.

[48] Cortesina was the face of the advert for Peele almond milk body lotion in *ABC* (Madrid, 27 August 1917), 2, as shown in the Appendix B. For the article about the Carnival parade of 1917 see 'El Carnaval', *La Acción*, n. 358 (Madrid, 20 February 1917), 5.

> postcards of them, as there are of dancers and *cuplé* singers (…). They don't even appear on the covers of the weekly illustrated publications. Nor do they inspire the complicated themes of novelists – those of the 'short novel generation' – for their, more or less, invented oeuvres. The cinema actress can pass happily unknown in the street unless she emerges from the theatre, and no one would think of approaching her to ask for an autograph.[49]

Nevertheless, Cortesina's real objective seem to was to achieve cultural legitimation in the theatre. The theatre was a more recognized art, one in which Cortesina finally attained a prominent position in the 1920s, gaining the respect of critics and the public and entering into the intellectual elite, as we have seen.[50] Although there are several well known cases of popular actresses, dancers, and *cuplé* singers, like Lola Membrives, María Palou, and Eugenia Zúffoli,[51] who transitioned from the more frivolous variety show to cultivated theatre, it was not an easy feat to achieve, as it was quite a closed and conservative professional environment.[52] According to Retana, it is remarkable to note that 'while from the frivolous genre outstanding comedians emerged, no singer originating in the dramatic arts was comparable to the *cuplé* stars'.[53]

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[49] Fernando Castán Palomar, 'Revisión y anécdota del cine mudo en Madrid', *Primer Plano*, n. 908 (Madrid, 9 March 1958), 23: 'De estas actrices nuestras, de las que van – y no hay que decir que a pie – por las calles madrileñas, apenas si, en algún caso, se deriva un pequeño contorno de curiosidad. Pero no hay tarjetas postales de ellas, como las hay de las bailarinas y de las cupletistas (…). Ni los semanarios ilustrados les dedican sus portadas. Ni inspiran a los novelistas – la "generación de la novela corta" – los temas enrevesados para sus obras de invención, más o menos. La artista de cine es una buena muchacha desconocida en la calle, como no proceda del teatro, a quien a nadie se le ocurre acercarse para pedirle un autógrafo'.

[50] A dramatical career on theatre was considered more serious and remarkable than cinema. Even those actors as Brazão that even announced his intention to leave the stage to devote his career to cinema, had a short and ephemeral experience in the movies and left very little space to this activity in his memories (three pages out of 237). Eduardo Brazão, *Memorias de Eduardo Brazão que seu filho compilou* (Lisbon: Empresa da Revisa de Teatro Editora, 1925), 235–237.

[51] María Palou (Sevilla, 1891–Madrid, 1957) was a Spanish actress. Eugenia Zúffoli (Roma, 1897–Madrid, 1982) was an Italian actress, singer and company owner who lived in Spain and married her colleague José Bódalo. She acted in silent films such as *Los guapos* (Manuel Noriega, 1923) and *El niño de las monjas* (José Calvache, 1925). For Lola Membrives, see Chapter VI footnote 58. For more on Palou, Zúffoli and Membrives' career transition from frivolous stage to legitimate theatre, see Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 11–13. For Zúffoli's career specifically, see Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 112–113.

[52] Dougherty and Vilches, *La escena madrileña entre 1918 y 1926*, 37.

[53] Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 17: 'Por otra parte es curioso anotar que si del género frívolo surgieron comediantas sobresalientes, del arte dramático no brotó ninguna cancionista comparable a las estrellas del cuplé.'

Therefore, Retana was vindicative about the dignity of the popular stage. Working in a medium as the popular stage was highly competitive and, although for a majority it did not require any specific talent, diverse abilities in singing, dancing, or acting were needed to stand out among the thousands of female practitioners that acted every night in stages all over the Peninsula, as Salaün points out.[54] For that reason, Retana argues that popular entertainment served as a talent pool for the dramatic stage, but that not many theatre actors and actresses would be successful in either frivolous spectacles or cinema.[55]

As the journalist Josefina Carabias reports, the frivolous stage was a quite democratic space. The girls who trained to become variety show performers came from every social class: first, the 'girls from a poor family who do not resign themselves to the life of a worker and, furthermore, who are obsessed with the brightness of the vedettes'; second, 'the well-educated girls who have had bad luck in their jobs or studies'; and third, 'young ladies from families whose fortunes have declined'. Carabias continues by arguing that, in general, the girls who want to work on the frivolous stage 'are really thrilled, thinking that they will have luck and dreaming about magazines', or choose it as a way to escape a life of misfortune, and who perceive the stage not only as a solution but also as a disgrace. Whatever the circumstances, Carabias summarizes, anyone can develop a brilliant career.[56]

However, despite their central position in Spanish urban popular culture and their celebrity status in some cases, female performers of variety shows and other frivolous spectacles were considered immoral and concupiscent. But, as Retana states, in many cases, that lascivious fame was unfounded: 'although it is axiomatic that the *cuplé* singer

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[54] Salaün, 'Las mujeres en los escenarios españoles (1890–1936)', 67, 73.

[55] In the Spanish context of 1922, the leap of established performers from theatre to cinema were merely 'trials', according to the press. The reasons were the lack of industry and of well-paid contracts and the consequences were a generalized lack of training on the cinematographic acting requirements. Although with notable exceptions such as Raquel Meller (see Chapter IV footnote 72) and Ernesto Vilches (Tarragona, 1879–Barcelona, 1954), the journalist considers the rest of experiences non-representative of the artistic capacities of the performers on stage. Micromegas, 'Los artistas españoles en el cine', *Almanaque de Tras la Pantalla* (Barcelona, 1 January 1922), 13–15.

[56] Carabias, 'Reportajes frívolos', *La Voz*, n. 4.140 (6 April 1934), 3: 'en general, son muchachitas de familia humilde que no se resignan a la vida de obreras y que además están obsesionadas con el brillo de las *vedettes*. No faltan también muchachas muy bien educadas que han tenido mala suerte en sus empleos o en sus estudios. Ni las señoritas de familias que han venido a menos... En general, las chicas que aspiran a brillar en el género frívolo se dividen en dos grandes grupos, a saber: las que vienen ilusionadísimas pensando que ésto va a ser su suerte y que sueñan con las revistas, y el otro grupo lo forman las que viven por recurso contra los reveses de la vida. Estas últimas aceptan ni teatro como un medio para salir de su angustiosa situación; pero también, y en cierto modo, como una desgracia. Esto no es obstáculo para que a veces las segundas hagan una carrera más brillante que las primeras.'

o the dancer is closer to the devil than to Christ, eventually they flirt with the first, but at the end they turn themselves to the Redeemer'.[57] For that reason, by advancing into the world of theatre, the popular performers might be seeking for legitimization and respect from more recognized and distinguished reviewers and the public.[58]

Natural characteristics as being photogenic and beautiful on screen were considered the main requisite for being a cinema actress.[59] The capacity to show truth and spontaneity was valued, but this needed to be achieved seeming effortless; thus, there was space for improvement and training, but it was supposed that there had to be an innate previous talent that could not be acquired only by reading, travelling, or studying. As an article in *Cine-Teatro* states: 'It is true that an artist cannot be made; she is born with the quality that distinguishes her from common beings, but only with practice – experience – can she improve and become a prominent figure'.[60] Although there were acting schools in the Iberian countries, they were conceived as places to train the body and network in an environment close to film-making.[61]

Therefore, acting and *photogenie* were perceived as an almost innate capacity that could not be taught or learned, as this would risk losing the freshness needed for the screen.[62] Filming was a mechanical act outside of art and, therefore, female sensibility

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[57] Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 19: 'Porque si bien es axiomático que la cupletista o bailarina está más cerca del diablo que de Cristo, generalmente coquetean con aquél, pero al final se entregan al Redentor.'

[58] The misconduct of the public is also a subject of discussion in Salaün's, article. Salaün, 'Las mujeres en los escenarios españoles', 69.

[59] See, for example, the article in the Portuguese cinema journal *Cine-Teatro*, where the journalist states that in silent films the only important aspect for a female actress was her beauty, and her intelligence and intellectual culture meant nothing at all. Artur Coelho, 'Desfazendo uma lenda...', *Cine-Teatro*, n. 3 (Lisbon, 21 September 1929), 10: 'em se falando da beleza puramente física como aquela que nos mostrava o cinema de ha pouco, os dotes de inteligencia ou melhor de cultura intelectual não tinham ahi a menor significação.'

[60] 'Crie-se artistas!', *Cine-Teatro*, n. 8 (Lisbon, 15 January 1930), 5: 'É certo que o artista não se faz, nasce já com essa qualidade que o distingue dos sêres vulgares, mas só a practica – a experiencia – consegue aperfeiçoar, de maneira a tornar-se um vulto de valor.'

[61] For instance, in the Conservatório Nacional do Arte de Representar, the lessons were directed towards theatre, while cinema acting lessons were not established until 1935, limiting lessons to dancing. S. M. 'O Conservatório e o cinema', *Imagem*, n. 113 (Lisbon, 1 March 1935) and F. M. 'Mestre Antonio Pinheiro fala-nos de cinema', *Imagem*, n. 114 (Lisbon, 18 March 1935).

[62] 'Everybody agrees that cinema artists are born artists and cannot be learned. The big names – the stars — are those who came gloriously from the spoken art – the stage. These are the ones who have the main roles nowadays (...) Everything demonstrates that it is not always going to be like this. Cinema is developing its own talents.' 'Artistas de Cinema', *Cine-Teatro*, n. 2 (Lisbon, 5 September 1929), 9: 'Todos estão de acordo em que artistas de cinema já nascem artistas e não podem ser improvisados. Os grandes nomes – astros e estrelas são nomes daqueles que vieram gloriosamente da arte falada, – do placo. Estes, os que tem os principais papeis actualmente (...) Tudo demonstra que não ha de ser sempre

and opinion were of no value here, while on the stage they were an added value.[63] For that reason, theatre actresses' prominent position as decision-makers did not transfer to the new medium in the Iberian countries. The desire for naturalness and the corresponding lack of need for acting skills opened up the field to unexceptional artists and amateurs (even variety dancers and common people), and enabled them to dream about the possibility of becoming film stars with the international fame this would bring.

In Cortesina's case, cinema played a transitional role, linking her variety show work and her 'high theatre' stage performances. Even though her filmography was far from being considered part of the intellectual vanguard of the Generation of '27 (being even dismissed as '*españolada*', as previously discussed), it allowed Cortesina to distance herself from the 'sculptural dancer' stereotype, prove her acting skills to the press, and attract the attention of a heterogeneous audience including women, the upper classes, and theatre directors. Therefore, cinema played an instrumental role in culturally upgrading Cortesina's professional value. Furthermore, being a cinema producer and film-maker projected a public image of modernity and responsibility that was transferred into her career.

Although I have no evidence of Cortesina's ambition of becoming an international star, we know that this trajectory had 'already begun to be a dream and goal' for Spanish screen performers as Castán Palomar points out.[64]Acting was the only fame-inducing profession for women in Iberian silent cinema; and although they were very famous, there was not a single national cinema actress whose fame, power, and artistic recognition could be compared with the great female actresses from the stage, as mentioned.[65] The examples of Raquel Meller and Carmen Viance could prove this point. They were among the artists who would be baptized as cinema stars, but the first was already a popular *cuplé* singer

assim. O cinema encontra-se a desenvolver os seus próprios talentos.'.

[63] According to Chaplin, for instance, 'actresses should not talk – they must be beautiful and obedient. Bring me a beautiful woman who does what I order her to do and we will have in Hollywood another star'. Dr. Raymon Schulte, 'Uma entrevista sensacional com Charles Chaplin', *Cine-Teatro*, n. 2 (Lisbon, 5 September 1929), 8–9: 'As actrizes não devem falar - devem ser belas e obedientes. Apresente-me uma mulher formosa, que faça o que eu lhe mandar e teremos em Hollywood mais uma "estrela".'

[64] Castán Palomar, 'Revisión y anécdota del cine mudo en Madrid', 23: 'sueña con las luces cegadoras de los lejanos estudios de Los Ángeles, que ya empiezan a ser ilusión y meta'.

[65] Examples such as Margarita Xirgu (Molins de Rey, 1888 – Montevideo, 1969), María Guerrero (Madrid, 1867–1928), and Lucinda Simões (Lisbon, 1850–1928) were not only dramatic actresses; they were also important cultural personalities outside the theatre. For Xirgu and Guerrero, see Burgos, *Confesiones de artistas* I, 29–38 and 79–93 (respectively), and for Simões, see Burgos, *Confesiones de artistas* II, 163–169.

on the stage and the latter even being a great star of the screen, would juggle her work as a film actress with her work as a typist in public institutions.[66] Another example is Carmen Rico, a popular actress in the 1920s, who represents the role of the vocational cinema actress engraved onto the frame of modernity, asserting in one interview that her 'two obsessions have always been cinema and airplanes'.[67] However, the actress that best embodied the new requirement of a Spanish movie star for the silent period was Elisa Ruiz Romero, commonly called La Romerito (note that this name contains a diminutive). She was known for being thin and athletic (she played tennis and rode horses), and for having an expressive beauty transmitted by her big black eyes with a 'deliciously naughty look', as well as 'a somewhat childlike character'.[68]

The infantilization of movie stars was a recurrent mechanism for playing the archetype of 'the ingenue' (which was inherited from literature and the stage). This enabled the more traditional and pliable infantilized stars to perform the dual function of playing quick and agile characters that were aligned with the aesthetic of the new medium while still maintaining an 'antimodernist' model of femininity that would not transgress 'the traditional feminine sexual norms of passivity and restraint'.[69] Using Gaylyn Studlar's terminology from her work about Mary Pickford, this masquerade would diminish the cultural anxiety that had risen in *fin-de-siècle* Western societies with the rise of the modern woman. For that reason, in most cases the public star persona was also

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[66] Helena Cortesina, Raquel Meller (see Chapter IV footnote 72), Elisa Ruiz Romero (Sevilla, 1903–Madrid, 1995), and Carmen Viance (Madrid, 1905–1985) would be the only female actresses named by Alfredo Serrano as being part of the Spanish star-system in 1925. Serrano, *Las Películas Españolas*, 115. However, Viance and La Romerito would be considered the most famous actresses of Spanish silent cinema establishing a healthy competition among the fans (*Romeristas* and *Viancistas*); they were compared to the important bullfighters Gallito and Belmonte, but as stars of the screen. Other women, such as as María Luz Callejo (unknown), also had brief moments of fame as stars. Seavon, 'Carmen Viance', *Ilustração*, n. 83 (Lisbon, 1 June 1929), 26–27. For one of her few Viance's personal interviews after she retired from the screen, see Juan de Diego, 'Carmen Viance, la estrella que era mecanógrafa', *Primer Plano*, n. 122 (14 February 1943), 6 and Antonio García-Rayo, 'Carmen Viance: la actriz-mecanógrafa que se convirtió en la estrella española del cine mudo', *Archivo Fundación AGR* (website, 27 May 2019), https://archivo-agr.blogspot.com/2019/05/carmen-viance-la-actriz-mecanografa-que.html

[67] Díaz Morales, 'Las primeras mujeres que en España se han dedicado al cine', *La Pantalla*, n. 58 (Madrid: 10 March 1929), 966: 'Mis dos obsesiones han sido siempre el cine y los aeroplanos. Me dediqué al film por vocación.'

[68] Castán Palomar, 'Revisión y anécdota del cine mudo en Madrid', *Primer Plano*, n. 908 (Madrid, 9 March 1958), 23: 'Elisa Ruiz Romero, a quien llaman La "Romerito", por su ser menudo y su carácter un poco infantil, es muchacha de belleza muy expresiva. Hay en ella unos grandes ojos muy negros y en éstos una alegría deliciosamente traviesa. Además, "La Romerito" tiene cierto perfil deportivo.'

[69] Gaylyn Studlar, 'Oh, "Doll Divine". Mary Pickford, Masquerade and the Pedophilic Gaze', in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, ed. Jennifer Bean and Diane Negra (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 361.

constructed through an extratextual discourse 'including fan and general-interest magazine articles, publicity photographs, and interviews' in coordination with this role.[70] This was the case for La Romerito, who was described as 'small, quick, fresh and as restless as a sardine' in an interview for the Portuguese press.[71]

On the other hand, in Portugal the main female cinema stars were Brunilde Júdice and María Emilia Castelo Branco, young actresses with short on-stage experience prior to appearing on screen.[72] Both of them were described in the press under the category of 'vamp', sharing some external characteristics such as being tall, thin, delicate, elegant, and having big black expressive eyes – being seductive but without vulgarity.[73]

The above examples show how it was preferred that the appearance of Iberian actresses matched the modernity of the new medium. Agile, light, athletic, and child-like bodies and faces were required to do stunts and with stand the camera's close-ups.[74] For that reason, even when Cortesina was considered one of the most popular cinema actresses of the star-system that was slowly emerging in Spain during the early 1920s – she was even voted, together with Lola París, as one of Spain's favourite actresses by the readers of *Cine Popular,*[75] – her figure, which had been exalted in the previous decade on stage, began to be criticized for being too robust and too corpulent, which were seen as disadvantages for the new parameters of film femininity.[76] She would fit neither the role of the ingenue nor that of the athletic heroine. This could be another reason for Cortesina's

[70] Studlar, 'Oh, "Doll Divine"', 354.

[71] Seavon, 'Cinema espanhol, o que nos diz "La Romerito"', *Ilustração*, n. 85 (Lisbon, 1 July 1929), 31: 'pequenina, vivinha, fresquinha e mexidinha como a sardinha'.

[72] Brunilde Júdice (Milan, 1898–Lisbon, 1979) was the daughter of a very famous lyric Portuguese actress and singer, María Júdice da Costa, and Italian tenor Gugliemo Caruson, so she debuted in theatre and cinema almost at the same time. María Emilia Castelo Branco was a popular stage performer prior to her contract with Fortuna Films.

[73] On Maria Emilia Castelo Branco, see Claro, 'Emilia Branco', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 9 (Lisbon, 1 May 1923), 115. On Brunilde Júdice, see 'Brunilde Júdice', *Cine*, n. 2 (Lisbon, 24 May 1934), 5.

[74] Still in 1935, the Portuguese journal *Imagem* had several articles referring to the need of cinema actors and actresses to play sports: 'The gymnastics and sports that are essential for the cinema artist are those that keep the balance of the shape, slimness and flexibility and avoid fatness. A common body projected on the screen always seems chubbier than it is'. 'Artistas de cinema e Desportos', *Imagem*, n. 111 (Lisbon, 1 February 1935), 11: 'A gimnástica e os desportos que são indispensáveis ao artista de cinema são aqueles que mantêm o equilibrio das forma, que dão esbelteza e flexibilidade e evitam as gorduras. Um corpo vulgar projectado na tela (...) parece sempre mais cheio do que é.'

[75] 'Nuestro concurso', *Cine Popular*, n. 28 (Barcelona, 7 August 1921), 3.

[76] An article said: 'In Helena we have observed more adipose tissue. The beautiful young lady should take care and subject herself to rigorous gimnastics to keep the figure. To her she owes her prestige...' El Caballero del Verde-Gabán, 'Varietés', *Cine Popular*, n. 368 (Barcelona, 15 February 1919), 4: 'En la Helena hemos observado más tegido [sic.] adiposo. Debe cuidarse la joven bella mujer y someterse a una rigurosa gimnasia para conservar la línea. A ella debe su prestigio…'

preference for theatre instead of cinema, where body figure would soon be discarded for more infantile stereotypes.

In this sense, it is remarkable that we can track the changes of the image associated to Cortesina's public persona and perceive the influence that cinema had on her career by paying attention to the advertising contracts that she established and her image (costumes, *attrezzo* and poses) in the photographs that circulated publicly. As Isabel Clúa states, the use that actresses and other performers made of the dissemination of their image in late nineteenth and early twentieth century allowed them to act as 'active consumption objects', alternating between the presentation of their erotized body to the male gaze and the communication of other messages that empowered them.[77]

In 1917 (being fourteen years old) she was the image of the almond milk lotion *Peele* dressed as a Greek nymph with long hair in the *ABC* journal.[78] It is clear that in the advert, she was using her Classic image for promoting a product for her young, white, and marbled skin, all aspects were highlighted in the articles about her dances. At that time, her poses in the commercial postcards were full of Greek iconography and other archetypes common on European turn-of-the-century stages such as the 'primitive' and 'exotic' Oriental influence featuring her dressed in feathers, or with turbans on her head, adorned with necklaces and holding daggers.[79] These choices reinforced the extra-textual discourse about her spectacles and proves her notions of consumption culture and auto-promotional strategies. In this sense, she knew the mechanism of the industries around the stage and tried to create and control her public persona using not verbal but mainly visual language that had become the centre of modern social and cultural practices.[80]

Only one year later, she was wearing a fashionable modern *channel* haircut with a hat portrayed in full-page in *La Unión Gráfica,* in which she was photographed driving a motorbike with her French bulldog sitting in the sidecar[81] and three years later, coincident with her incursion into the screen, she became the promotional image of a FIAT car in which a *chaffeur* was driving her across the Retiro park with her sister Ofelia.[82] Cortesina was taking advantage of the established connection between speed, fashion, automobiles, and cinema, to shape her public star persona that was already crucial to enter the imported

[77] Clúa, *Cuerpos de escándalo*, 78.
[78] 'Peele. Hermosura juvenil natural', *ABC*, n. 4.448 (Madrid, 27 August 1917), 2.
[79] Clúa, *Cuerpos de escándalo,* 181.
[80] Clúa, *Cuerpos de escándalo,* 68.
[81] 'Páginas gráficas', *La Unión Ilustrada*, n. 477 (Málaga, 31 October 1918), 11. See Appendix B.
[82] 'FIAT', *Nuevo Mundo*, n. 1.425 (Madrid, 6 May 1921), 18. See Appendix B.

and limited national star-system. This was possible because the circulation of postcards and other images in the press expanded their presence of female body outside the limited space of the stage widely into the public sphere and the bourgeois home.[83]

Going back to the Iberian cinema cultures, the prominence of actresses in the cinema press and film history does not mean that women had no presence in other invisible film-making areas, such as editing – examples are Valentine Coutable and Marie Meunier from France, who were cutters for the production house Invicta Film in Portugal.[84] However, internationally acting, and the incipient star-system, put some women in a privileged position that enabled them to gain enough money and fame to set up their own production companies and try to retain control over the films on which they worked.[85] Dall'Asta asks regarding the Italian context:

> why were so many of them [women film-makers] also actresses? Could this indicate that women's access to direction, production, and sometimes even screenwriting, was dependent on their previous entry into the film industry in a more traditionally feminine role, such as that of an actress?[86]

This excerpt shows how acting was one of the most common gateways to production and direction of Western cinema. Nevertheless, as aforementioned, silent cinema was not an industrial or cultural system that allowed women decision-making power either in Portugal or in Spain.[87] Focusing exclusively on the Iberian region and observing the path taken by Cortesina, I identify a second model of access to film-making that was common outside the Peninsula but that very few accomplished inside: the stage performer who

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[83] João Silva, *Entertaining Lisbon: music, theater and modern life in the late 19th century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 135, 214.

[84] Valentine Coutable was hired by Invicta Film with her husband, the editor Georges Coutable. She was credited as editor in the films *Frei Bonifácio* (1918), *O Comisário de Polícia** (1919), *A Rosa do Adro* (1919), *O Mais Forte** (1919), *O Amor Fatal** (1920) and *Barbanegra* (1920), all directed by Georges Pallu. Marie Meunier replaced Valentine Coutable as the editor of Invicta Film and worked on *Os Fidalgos da Casa Mourisca* (1920), *Amor de Perdição* (1921), *Quando o Amor Fala...** (1921), *O Primo Basílio* (1923), all of them directed by Georges Pallu, as well as *Mulheres da Beira* (Rino Lupo, 1922), *Tempestades da Vida** (Augusto Lacerda, 1922), *Tinoco en Bolandas* (António Pinheiro, 1923), and *Tragédia de Amor* (António Pinheiro, 1924). There is another credited editor for Pallu's *O Destino* (1922), *Claudia* (1923), *Lucros… Ilícitos* (1923), and *A Tormenta** (1924), about whom the only information we have is her name – Maria Laura. (Film titles marked with an asterisk are non-extant.) Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud e Pallu*, 206–212 and 220–225.

[85] For the U.S. context, see Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood*, 154–178.

[86] Dall'Asta, 'What It Means to Be a Woman', 44.

[87] The very few exceptions are mentioned in this chapter.

leaps into cinema acting with different objectives related to fame, fortune, and legitimation, and who transitions into production (usually by creating her own company) in order to retain control over her image, the working team, the plot of the film, and income from distribution, among other aspects.

I should note that, in this model, almost none of the examples that I could find of Iberian stage performers who tried to transition from acting to a different role in silent cinema already enjoyed a recognized career in theatre. Most of them were debutant theatre actresses or frivolous performers. This supports the hypothesis that the dramatic stage was accorded a higher artistic value in comparison with cinema. It also confirms that, while there were some very famous and well-paid celebrities on the popular stage, the majority of them were in precarious situations and would see cinema as a way of upgrading their careers into a morally acceptable and economically successful option.[88]

In summary, Cortesina shaped her public persona to achieve self-promotion through fictional statements (the characters of Paloma and Elvira Montes) and non-fictional statements (press interviews, advertising contracts, photographs on postcards, her own aesthetic tastes and fashion sense). She tried to control her presence in the press, knowing they would be read by the public and probably also by entrepreneurs. During her time as a variety dancer, she knew how to adapt and interpret the classic/exotic archetype and, during her cinematographic phase, that of the modern 'new woman'. This was not an isolated case in the stage context, and there are extensive biographical profiles of performers (of both stage and screen) who built their star persona very astutely, stressing the different aspects they wanted to be associated with, and knew how to capitalize their popularity using an emerging visual culture.[89]

7.3 Other Iberian examples ascribed to the models

Both routes of access, through literature and from the popular stage, exemplified by the above case studies, cannot be described as 'models' unless I could identify more than one

[88] As Salaün argues, for many performers as Cortesina (some of them without much talent) the frivolous stage might be a first step to more advantageous professions. Salaün, 'Las mujeres en los escenarios españoles', 75.

[89] On the Spanish *fin-de-siècle* stage context, see Clúa, *Cuerpos de escándalo*, on the Portuguese context see Silva, *Entertaining Lisbon* and on the international context of silent cinema, see Förster, *Women in the Silent Cinema*.

single case. Looking comparatively at other female film-makers' access, they present equivalences with different women internationally. Cortesina's experiences as popular stage performer transitioning to cinema acting and producing might be related to Musidora in France, Nell Shipman in North America, or Adriënne Solser in the Netherlands, and Almeida's to other female writers who wrote for cinema, such as Selma Lagerloff in Sweden and Matilde Serao in Italy. Nevertheless, as the focus of this work limits the frame to the Iberian context, I have delineated several female careers that followed similar trajectories to access cinema. However, I do not refer to every actress coming from the stage or screenplay-writer coming from a career in literature. I have focused on those women who is known that attained decision-making positions before 1930 and who intended to produce and direct their films (not always managing to do so and some only after the advent of sound). Looking at other comparable cases could confirm that, despite each case's singularity, it is possible to identify patterns among Iberian female film-makers in their incursion into cinema and draw 'constellations'.

Within the first model of writers who pursued patriotic and pedagogical objectives using cinema production as a tool, illustrated in this dissertation by Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, I could also classify the Spanish writer and journalist Carmen Velacoracho.[90] In 1928 she invested her money to produce and direct the film *Descubrimiento de América (Fiesta de la Raza),* a historical film that was considered 'educative, moral and artistic'.[91] As the title indicates, it was a fictional retelling of the discovery of America and the takeover of Granada during the reign of Isabel la Católica*,* who was the main character of the film, beginning with her childhood and finishing with her death. It was filmed completely in Cuba, where Velacoracho lived from approximately 1901 to 1928, and the most remarkable aspect of the film was that the cast was composed of more than two hundred children.

Her dedicated, patriotic efforts were praised by the King Alfonso XIII of Spain, who watched the film in a screening at the Royal Palace, and it was also considered to be the proof of the 'pedagogic, national, racial and human' influence that cinema could develop if guided by a certain political orientation. Although this is a simplification that

[90] On Carmen Velacoracho (or Belacoracho, as her name is written with both letters being indistinct) (Ciudad Real, 1880s – Madrid, 1960), see Concepción Moya García and Carlos Fernández-Pacheco Sánchez-Gil, 'Carmen Belacoracho: una mujer periodista, productora de cine y líder feminista en el primer tercio del siglo XX', in *Actas del primer congreso internacional 'Las mujeres en la esfera pública. Filosofía e historia contemporánea'*, ed. Laura Branciforte et al. (Madrid: C.E.R.S.A., 2009), 332–354.
[91] 'La Fiesta de la Raza, Película Infantil', *ABC*, n. 7.883 (Madrid, 4 April 1928), 11–12.

would need further analysis in some other comparatist work, Velacoracho and Almeida also have in common their transition from a patriotic interest to anti-semitism and sympathies with the arrival of dictatorships in Spain and Portugal. They were also concerned about the situation of women and their work as writers for different periodicals.

In the context of the discussion on what constituted a national production, I can also include the French writer Gabrielle Reval. Being a self-declared admirer of Portugal, in 1923 she hired Lion to direct the film *A Fonte dos Amores* (*La fontaine des amours*, Lion, 1924) based on her own previous novel. This opened a heated discussion in the papers about what makes a film 'Portuguese'. Joan de Souza Fonseca published a sharp criticism in *Cine-Lisboa*, warning of the servitude of Portugal to French professionals in the establishment of its cinematographic pseudo-industry, and specifically against Reval's incursion.[92] As a French writer who hired French actors and actresses and French technicians, Fonseca was horrified that *A Fonte dos Amores* could be considered by *Diário de Notícias* as 'another Portuguese film' simply for being filmed in Coimbra. It is possible that Almeida's example inspired Reval and that they could even have shared some expertise, as both worked with the same director. In any event, there is evidence that Reval knew the film *A Sereia de Pedra* from its screening in Paris because the film drew praise from her.[93]

Regarding the second model, Helena Cortesina was not the only woman in the Iberian Peninsula to step into cinema from acting on the (popular) stage. Singers and *vedettes* who crossed into silent cinema in Spain were numerous and much more successful than Cortesina. The examples of Raquel Meller,[94] La Bella Chelito,[95] Amalia Molina,[96] Conchita Montenegro,[97] and Conchita Piquer[98] are perhaps the most important ones. However, there is no evidence that they decided to produce or direct films, keeping

[92] Fonseca, 'Cousas nossas. Um escandalo', *Cine-Lisboa*, n. 4 (Lisbon: 25 October 1923), 2–3.
[93] Fonseca, 'Cousas nossas. Um escandalo', *Cine-Lisboa*, n. 4 (Lisbon: 25 October 1923), 3.
[94] Meller's filmography: *Los arlequines de seda y oro* (Ricardo de Baños, 1920), *La gitana blanca* (Ricardo de Baños, 1919), *Les oprimés* (Henry Rousell, 1922), *Violettes Impériales* (Henry Rousell, 1924), *La terre promise* (Henry Rousell, 1925), *La ronde de nuit* (Marcel Silver, 1926), *Carmen* (Jacques Feyder, 1927), *Nocturne* (Marcel Silver, 1927), and *La venenosa* (Roger Lion, 1928). Grace Morales, 'La pantalla de Madrid: Raquel Meller, reina del cine y del cuplé', *Madriz* (19 February 2016), https://www.madriz.com/pantalla/la-pantalla-de-madrid-raquel-meller-reina-del-cine-y-el-cuple
[95] La Bella Chelito stage name of Consuelo Portela (Cuba, 1885–Madrid, 1959) played a role in *El Conde Maravillas* (José Buchs, 1927).
[96] Amalia Molina (Sevilla, 1881–Barcelona, 1959) played a role in *Malvaloca* (Benito Perojo, 1926).
[97] See Chapter VIII footnote 84.
[98] Conchita Piquer (see Chapter VI footnote 155) acted in the following silent films directed by Benito Perojo: *El negro que tenía el alma blanca* (1927) and *La Bodega* (1930).

to their role of actress. However, we do have the record of Elena Jordi, who in 1916 began acting in films such as *La boja de la muntanya de Montserrat* or *La loca del monasterio* (Domènec Ceret), and in 1918 she produced, directed, and played the main character in *Thais*, a luxurious film about the myth of the tortured dancer/prostitute who tries to escape from her past.[99] The parallelisms between the two Elenas (Cortesina and Jordi) are remarkable. Not only did they begin their careers as dancers in vaudeville, but they also entered cinematography by acting in films with the support of their two sisters to their enterprises. Both produced and directed only one film before returning to the stage as actresses and entrepreneurs.

Another actress and female producer that might be categorised in this model is Amélia Pereira, briefly mentioned in Chapter V section 5.1. Her case is interesting as she was responsible, together with her husband Nascimento Fernandes, of one of the first Iberian co-productions in 1919.[100] Few months earlier, in September 1918, Pereira and Fernandes had decided to distance themselves from their careers as stage performers and had established a production house, Portugal Films.[101] However, without finding the means to carry out their projects, they left to the most important cinema centre of the Peninsula, Barcelona, and signed a contract with Ricardo de Baños, owner of Royal Films.

Pereira and Nascimento brought the plot of a new comedy-vaudeville written expressly for the screen that resulted in the film *Vida Nova* (Nascimento Fernandes, 1919), a meta-fiction with them as leading actor and actress acting the role of a married couple. They also produced the comedies *Nascimento, Músico* and *Nascimento, Sapateiro* and *Nascimento, Detective por Amor* (Nascimento Fernandes, 1919). The three productions were premiered in the Teatro Eden of Lisbon in May 1919 and according to Fernandes were also distributed in Spain and Brazil. After these productions, Portugal Films closed and Pereira and Nascimento went back to the stage, eventually finishing their relationship.

Pereira began her career on stage at the end of the nineteenth century and worked in some of the most established theatre companies touring around the country. Her

[99] On the almost unresearched career and life of Elena Jordi (Montserrat Casals Baqué, Cercs, 1882–Barcelona, 1945), see Josep Cunill Canals, *Elena Jordi, una reina berguedana a la cort del parallel*, (Barcelona: Diputación de Barcelona, 1999) and Irene Melé Ballesteros, *Elena Jordi y el mito de Thais* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2013).
[100] Amélia Pereira (Lisbon, 1872–1953) and Nascimento Fernandes (Faro, 1881–Lisbon, 1955).
[101] Ribeiro, *Filmes, Figuras e Factos*, 182–185.

specialization were comedies, vaudeville and operetta, genres in which she obtained a high recognition. According to her colleague, Brazão, Pereira 'was an admirable operetta star, was able of distinguish recitation in comedy and had a cheeky flair in the *revues*'.[102] Pereira left her career when she became widowed of her second husband around 1943.

The Portuguese actress María Emilia Castelo Branco debuted on screen in the film *O Destino* (George Pallu, 1922). Appearing in the Fortuna Films productions made her one of the most recognized stars of Portuguese cinema during the 1920s, playing an iconic character in Reporter X Film's production *O Táxi 9297* (Reinaldo Ferreira, 1927). After acting in the last two productions directed by Rino Lupo, *O Diabo em Lisboa* (1928) and *José do Telhado* (1929), Castelo Branco left acting to join a production company with her father called Mello-Castello Branco Limitada.[103] By 1923 she may have already tried to establish her first company, Empresa de Maria Emilia Branco, on her own, 'exclusively formed by Portuguese professionals', among them Ernesto Alburquerque.[104] She was also part of the Oporto Film Company in 1928, an enterprise that never produced any films.[105]

After touring around France and England in September and October 1925, she visited Rio de Janeiro for the first time to present two lectures at the Instituto Nacional de Música: the first titled 'A Cinematographia' about the topic 'Uma pose de Jaques Catellaine: o cine e a geographia; o rhytmo no cinema; e as mascaras no cine', and the second on the origins of fado titled 'O fado e a sua etymologia'.[106] Being known for her roles in Fortuna Films productions, she was used as an attraction for the release of *O Destino* in Brazil.

In 1948 she created her own production company, Fundação Cultural Pátria Filmes in Porto, to enable her to write, direct, and produce films. Her first project was the feature film *A Tragédia das Terras do Douro*, a patriotic film about hard-working inhabitants of the Douro region who laboured to produce and sell port wine. The idea was to promote

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[102] Ilda Soares de Abreu, 'Amélia Pereira', in *Feminæ, Dicionário Cotemporâneo*, ed. João Esteves et. al. (Lisbon and Porto: Comissão para a Cidadania e a Igualdade de Género, 2013), 78–79: 'foi admirável estrela de opereta, de declamação exímia na comédia e tinha graça *canaille* nas revistas'.

[103] On María Emilia Castelo Branco (birth and death unknown), see Tiago Baptista, 'Castelo Branco, María Emilia' in *Diccionario del Cine Iberoamericano. España, Portugal y América* 2, ed. Emilio Casares Rodicio (Madrid: Sociedad General de Autores y Editores/Fundación Autor, 2011), 461 and Paulo Cunha, 'Tragédias e ressurreições da Sereia de Pedra', *À Pala de Walsh* (website, 8 January 2018), http://www.apaladewalsh.com/2018/01/tragedias-e-ressurreicoes-da-sereia-de-pedra.

[104] 'Cinemas e Fitas. Uma estrella do cinema "double" de uma mulher de letras', *O Paiz* (Rio de Janeiro: 17 September 1925), 6 and 'Projecções Rapidas', *Cine-Lisboa*, n. 4 (Lisbon, 25 October 1923), 1, 16.

[105] 'Uma carta de D. Maria Emilia Castelo Branco', *Cinéfilo*, n. 16 (Lisbon, 8 December 1928), 4.

[106] 'Notícias e comentarios', *Revista da Semana* (Rio de Janeiro, 10 October 1925), 26.

traditional Portuguese products internationally. To finance the filming, she used her own savings and asked for a loan from the *Secretariado Nacional de Informação* (SNI). However, they rejected her application for economic support and, therefore, she could not finish the project. In the end, she divided and commercialized the already filmed material in two separate documentaries produced and directed by her: *Roteiros Líricos do Douro* (1957), and *A Região do Douro e do Vinho do Porto* (1958). In December 1965 she tried again to obtain support from the government to finish the project on which she had been working for almost twenty years, 'producing and directing without any official help or commercial agreement, sacrificing to the oeuvre all my material assets, tranquillity, health and even risking my own life in my hard-working days without the support of any teamwork'.[107] Symbolically, she had changed the title to *Ressureição*. The refusal of this last request to the SNI six months later meant the end of Castelo Branco's cinematographic career.

Beatriz Costa is another emblematic example of Portuguese actresses who illustrate how variety show stages were the most prolific school of debutant cinema actresses in the Iberian Peninsula during the 1920s.[108] Costa had performed in *Fátima Milagrosa*, *O Diabo em Lisboa* (Rino Lupo, 1928), and *Lisboa, Crónica Anecdótica* (Leitão de Barros, 1930) becoming a star before the arrival of photographic sound. Her Louise Brooks hairstyle would become recognizable for generations. In fact, her face was one of those chosen to appear on the commemorative stamp collection to celebrate the centenary of cinema in Portugal.

Despite there being no evidence of her participation as a cinema producer, it is noticeable that as early as 1932 she was the screenplay writer (together with the *Cinéfilo* journalist Augusto Fraga and the director and producer Artur Costa de Macedo) of the docu-fiction promotional film *Beatriz Costa, Memorialista* (Artur Costa de Macedo, 1932), in which she played herself. Filmed by the *Revista Cinéfilo* to promote the publication of 'Páginas de Minhas Memórias', written by Beatriz Costa, it evidences the clear interest that Costa had in recording her experience as an actress in different

[107] María Emilia Castelo Branco in Cunha, 'Tragédias e ressurreições da Sereia de Pedra': 'há anos venho produzindo e realizando sem qualquer auxílio oficial ou combinação comercial, sacrificando à obra todos os meus bens materiais, tranquilidade, saúde e até arriscando a própria vida nas minhas duríssimas jornadas de trabalho sem apoio de equipes.'

[108] Beatriz Costa (Milharado, 1907 – Lisbon, 1996). 'Beatriz Costa', *CinePT. Cinema Português* (website, Universidade da Beira Interior) http://www.cinept.ubi.pt/pt/pessoa/2143690207/Beatriz+Costa

mediums: periodicals, cinema, and memoires, thereby becoming one of the early chroniclers of Portuguese cinema.[109]

Even though Maria Helena Matos did not come directly from the popular stage as she was the daughter of one of the most respected Portuguese actresses of the time, María Matos, and the theatre manager Francisco Mendonça de Carvalho, she did come from a theatrical background, so she could be considered to be tangentially part of the model. After debuting in cinema in the comedy *Um Passeio Auspicioso* (Afonso Gaio, 1929), she was the directorial assistant, the screenplay writer (with António Luís Lopes) and an actress in *Campinos do Ribatejo* (António Luís Lopes, 1932), a picturesque love story, produced by the director and distributed by Mello-Castello Branco, possibly during the period in which María Emilia Castelo Branco was part of the company.[110]

In Spain, María Comendador was another popular actress who, without producing, took part in scenario writing before the arrival of synchronized sound.[111] She had also come from variety shows and subsequently acted in more than twenty-five films from 1919 to 1928, most of them directed by José Buchs for Atlántida Films and Film Española, such as *La inaccessible* (1920), *La verbena de la Paloma* (1921), *Carceleras* (1922), *Rosario, la Cortijera* (1923) and *El abuelo* (1925). However, during the first years of her cinematographic career, Comendador had ambitions of becoming a cinema writer, and she wrote the screenplays of the non-extant films *La venganza del marino* (1919), *Santander, años veinte* (1920), and *Víctima de la calumnia* (1921), some of them attributed to her husband, José Montenegro.

Although each 'careerography' has its specificities, there are convergences between these examples of female film professionals that followed the two models above identified. These paths of access to silent cinema that women repeatedly traversed identify patterns that seem far from hazardous coincidences. Few Iberian women of letters and performers saw in film-making the potential to attain different objectives and their

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[109] Beatriz Costa wrote several memoires, such as *Sem Papas na língua, memorias* (Lisbon: Publicações Europa-América, 1975), *Quando os Vascos eram Santanas… e Não Só* (Lisbon: Publicações Europa-América, 1977), *Mulher sem Fronteiras* (Lisbon: Publicações Europa-América, 1981), *Nos Cornos da Vida* (Lisbon: Publicações Europa-América, 1984), and *Eles e Eu* (Lisbon: Publicações Europa-América, 1990).

[110] 'Maria Helena Matos', *CinePT. Cinema Português*, (website, Universidade da Beira Interior) http://www.cinept.ubi.pt/pt/pessoa/2143690218/Maria+Helena+Matos.

[111] María Comendador was a very active actress and writer during the 1920s in Spain. See Josefina Martínez, *Los primeros veinticinco años de cine en Madrid. 1896-1920* (Madrid: Filmoteca Española, 1992); and Joaquín Cánovas Belchi, 'Comendador, María', in *Diccionario del cine español,* ed. José Luis Borau (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1998), 245.

way of achieving decision-making and fame-inducing professions such as producer, director was through acting in the film or through writing the script, positions in which feminine characteristics were not only allowed but, even, valued.

To conclude, all the previously mentioned women enjoyed usually long interartistic careers and different professions, coming from the stage or literature before working in film-making and, sometimes, going back to the original medium. In addition, what all these 'careerographies' have in common is that they are almost unresearched, which allows for fruitful and exciting future studies that could uncover many aspects of the Iberian cinematographies, paying attention to the processes and conditions of the female professionals involved.

Chapter VIII. The relational autonomy of the familial network

8.1 Theorizing caring and affection

Can any cultural production be isolated from the artist's personal context? The intertwinement of personal life and production has long been sublimated and analysed from a non-corporal perspective, forgetting its material and emotional conditions. Since the 1970s feminist movements have identified the necessity to break with the doctrines of positivism, objectivism, and the false notion of private and public life as two differentiated and unrelated spheres of human production. Although personal caring relationships applied to art are not exclusive to women, feminist film studies have been one of the first to analyse family networks and affection as important components for both men and women involved in creative enterprises.[1] In this respect I note the importance that Annette Förster gives to family in the 'careerographies' of Adriënne Solser in the Netherlands and Nell Shipman in Canada.[2]

Nevertheless, those elements have been ignored by academia, which dismisses them as unimportant, or as too intimate and therefore inappropriate for scientific study, even though their importance in the creation, development, and extinction of ideas, projects, and enterprises should be considered. The narrative around the role of romantic love as artistic inspiration for many of the most important oeuvres has been a common philosophical question. Conversely, authentic daily love in the form of caring relationships, families, and friendships has been relegated to the margins of art history, written in endnotes as contextual information that has to be there to better understand the conception of the piece, but which must be excluded from the main body of the text.

[1] See, for example, the numerous references to the familial context in the profiles of women film-makers all around the globe in the *Women Film Pioneers Project*, or overview essays such as Ned Thanhouser, 'All in the Family: The Thanhouser Studio' (2016), Jane Gaines and Radha Vatsal, 'How Women Worked in the US Silent Film Industry' (2011), which contains a section titled 'The Family System of Production', Kathryn Fuller-Seeley and Karen Ward Mahar, 'Exhibiting Women: Gender, Showmanship, and the Professionalization of Film Exhibition in the United States, 1900–1930' (2013). All in *Women Film Pioneers Project* website, ed. Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta (New York: Columbia University Libraries).

[2] Förster, *Women in the Silent Cinema*.

Affect theorists, such as Claire Hemmings, doubt 'the capacity of both quantitative empirical approaches and textual analysis to account for the fullest resonance of the social world we wish to understand' as they do not attend to 'our qualitative experience of the social world, to embodied experience that has the capacity to transform as well as exceed social subjection'.[3] In this dissertation, the concept of 'affect' is explored as a contextual or pre-textual element of the process of conception and production of the (art)work itself. It was a requirement for setting up the basis for cultural production as, without networks of caring family and friends, the films produced by the case studies could not have been made. In fact, the concept that I am using here might be not only 'affect' but also care, intimacy, trust, and cooperation, because the effect that 'affect' produces is a multiplication of power. I argue that it was the caring network which enabled Cortesina and Almeida to step out of their expected social position and gave them the power to imagine and take the risk of embarking on their path as film-makers.

In his analysis of Baruch Spinoza's theory of affections – the human capacity to be affected by actions or passions – Gilles Deleuze argued that: 'when we encounter a body that agrees with our nature, one whose relation compounds with ours, we may say that its power is added to ours; the passions that affect us are those of *joy*, and our power of acting is increased or enhanced'.[4] While sadness represents the moment in which we are 'most separated from our power of acting, (...) most alienated', joy propels us into action. Therefore, the joy produced by our encounter with the compatible other would allow us to be the most active, creative, and productive version of ourselves. According to Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza, the purpose is not to deny the individual or hide behind the collective, but to explore actions that result from combining the powers and creativity of compatible individuals:

> That individual will be called good (or free, or rational, or strong) who strives, insofar as he is capable, to organize his encounters, to join with whatever agrees with his nature, to combine his relation with relations that are compatible with his, and thereby to increase his power.[5]

Therefore, a strong or free individual would not be one who acts alone but who knows how to organize himself with others. This is of great importance to my hypotheses of the family networks that supported Cortesina and Almeida, as their communal or collective

[3] Hemmings, 'Invoking affect': 549.
[4] Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 27–28. [Emphasis in the original].
[5] Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 22–23.

shared responsibility does not diminish their value as film-makers but rather enhances their value as interconnected individuals.

In this sense, feminist theorists such as Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar have rejected the Kantian/Rawlsian account of the notion of autonomy that has heavily influenced Western cultures.[6] This perspective understands the autonomous agent as 'self-sufficient', 'individualistic' and 'atomistic', that is associated with the character of the 'self-made man' that operates unaffected by social relationships and communitarian ties. However, as Stoljar explained in 'Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy', what certain feminist scholars challenge is this ideal, questioning 'whether self-sufficiency, or substantive independence, is a value that a theory of autonomy, and normative theories in general, should promote', while social relationships of affection and care have been historically dismissed and marginalized as feminine reproductive spheres of socialization that are opposed to those masculine productive spheres of individuality, freedom, and creativity. [7]

For that reason, new trends of feminism explore the term 'relational autonomy', which is understood as the acknowledgement of the compatibility between an individual self and the appreciation of family care and other social communitarian interdependent relationships.[8] Interdependence is the keyword here, as historical accounts of male heroism or pioneerism have mainly emphasized aspects such as extraordinariness, independence, and competition as being characteristics that are valued by capitalism. However, at the same time the whole system relies on the invisible affective labour done mainly by women. So, as Hemmings summarizes the conclusion of Michael Hardt's article 'Affective Labor': 'while affective labor is the hidden center of capitalist accumulation since it remains unremunerated yet is what bestows qualitative value, it also produces emotional connections that threaten to disrupt that accumulation'.[9] Therefore, affective labour is both an essential sustaining force of capitalism, and also a potential alien acting outside the rules of the market value of exchange.

In addition, art history and gender studies scholars have also recognized the importance of the caring interpersonal relationships behind those artists who have entered

[6] Mackenzie and Stoljar, 'Introduction. Autonomy Refigured', 3–31.
[7] Natalie Stoljar, 'Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2018 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/feminism-autonomy/
[8] Mackenzie and Stoljar, 'Introduction. Autonomy Refigured', 4.
[9] Hemmings, 'Invoking affect': 550.

into the history books as individual 'geniuses' free from their familial responsibilities, as Marilyn Friedman points out.[10] A current feminist contribution has been to contextualize male intellectuals and artists' work into their social, affective, and material structures of production (in many occasions resultant of collective creative environments).[11]

In their work, affective theorists such as Hemmings emphasize 'the unexpected, the singular, or indeed the quirky, over the generally applicable', as the latter is associated with 'the pessimism of social determinist perspectives, and the former with the hope of freedom from social constraint'.[12] While I ascribe this dissertation to the 'affective turn' of humanities in their objective to highlight omission, the individual is irrelevant here. On the contrary, it is the connected and relational over oppositional modes of community. Although here I am analysing two individual autonomous case studies, I focus on their relational nature and their capacity to illuminate processes, connections, and trends that took place in a determined moment (during the silent film production period) and a determined region (the Iberian Peninsula). However, the interdependent family network relations that I am presenting here as applied to the cinema industry could be potentially generalized to the dynamics that women have put into practice in very diverse contexts (such as their professional advancements as businesswomen or their social and cultural relations) to enable them to enter hostile environments and achieve a certain level of power there.

[10] Marilyn Friedman, 'Autonomy, Social Disruption, and Women', in *Relational Autonomy. Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, ed. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 35–37.

[11] The complaint about the unjust dichotomy that separates the male genius and the female muse in art history, and the explanation of the difficulties that surrounded female creation due to the material and educational conditions of women, were brilliantly explained in Virginia Woolf's *A Room for One's Own* (London: Hogarth Pres, 1929). However, more recent efforts from feminists (inside and outside academia) have been made to recover those names behind the shadow of the male individual artist. See, for example, the initiative of the *Asociación para la igualdad de género en la cultura*, *Clásicas y Modernas*, 'Ni ellas musas ni ellos genios', which has programmed many lectures about international romantic couples, giving equal credit to both members. Laura Freixas and Pilar V. de Foronda, 'Ni ellas musas ni ellos genios', *Clásicas y Modernas* (Lectures, Mujeres en las Artes Visuales and Caixa Forum Madrid, 2015–2019), https://clasicasymodernas.org

[12] Hemmings, 'Invoking affect', 550.

8.2 Modernity and industrialization in the Iberian Peninsula

Virgínia de Castro e Almeida describes perfectly the turbulent times that people like her, born and educated in the nineteenth-century Portuguese style, had experienced in the process of modernization in the first third of the twentieth century. In the prologue of *Crianças mal educadas*, Almeida explained to old-style parents how they were obliged to adapt their values to the 'new cycle' of cosmopolitanism in which new values 'were arising':

> The economic conditions of the world; the ease of communication between diverse countries; the struggle for a rough and hard existence, the progress of science in shortening distances, making the world much smaller and vulgarizing culture; decadent civilization exasperated in the thirst for material comfort and dizzily consuming time; all these things and many others, are the root causes of the imbalance that we are witnessing, that wrap us up and drag us down, and that hastily and untidily are transforming the very foundations on which human society is based.[13]

In this description of her time written by Almeida in 1933, we can find all the elements that were both triggers for and consequences of the modernization process that Western European countries went through from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. The switch from an agrarian to an industrial economy; the facilitation of communication between countries, not only due to technological advances but also the understanding of the need for intergovernmental societies to communicate, collaborate, and assure peace (the main example being the creation of the League of Nations in 1920); the use of science in daily life and its widespread uses in transport and entertainment; and the development of new perspectives and experiences of space and time which seemed to have become shortened and accelerated – these all seemed unstoppable changes. Furthermore, they produced frictions and tensions with nationalistic tendencies and bourgeois traditional identities. According to Benet, 'modernity imposes, for its own nature, an experience of

[13] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, 'Prefácio', in *Crianças mal educadas*, Fernand Nicolay (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1933), 11–12: 'As condições económicas do mundo; a facilidade de comunicações entre países diversos; a luta pela existência, áspera, dura, os progressos da ciência encurtando as distâncias, tornando o mundo muito mais pequeno e vulgarizando a cultura; a civilização decadente exasperando-se na sua ânsia de confôrto material e devorando vertiginosamente o tempo; tôdas estas coisas e muitas outras, constituem as causas profundas do desequilíbrio o que assistimos, que nos envolve e nos arrasta, e precipitadamente, desordenadamente, vai transformando as próprias bases sôbre as quais assenta a sociedade humana.'

time, space and culture that is guided by the overcoming, through the synthesis, of spatial barriers (nations) and temporal barriers (traditions)' and cinema was one of the best examples of this process.[14]

Thus, modernization meant a constant and evolving – but also sometimes contradictory – process that affected mainly urban areas and 'provided an arena for the circulation of goods, the exchange of glances, and the exercise of consumerism', as Susan Larson stresses in her work.[15] The urban areas of Portugal and Spain developed their own process of demographic, productive, and artistic modernization that was culturally influenced by what was coming from Paris or London but while also maintaining their specificity.[16] The Iberian population established an inferiority complex – reflected in popular cultural production – that peaked at the end of the nineteenth century when both countries suffered from their stereotypical identities as empires that had fallen to stronger military opponents. Spain entered the twentieth century after Cuba' independence in 1898, resulting from Spain's defeat in the Spanish–American War, which created a lasting national trauma.[17] For its part, Portugal perceived as a betrayal and a humiliation the ultimatum given by the British government in 1890 to withdraw Portuguese troops from the disputed areas of what is now Zimbabwe and Malawi, limiting Portuguese aspirations of colonial expansion between Angola and Mozambique and creating a breeding ground for the fall of the monarchy.[18]

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[14] Benet, *El cine español*, 19: 'La modernidad impone, por su propia naturaleza, una experiencia del tiempo, del espacio y de la cultura que se rige por la superación, mediante la síntesis, de barreras espaciales (naciones) y temporales (tradiciones).'

[15] Susan Larson, 'Stages of Modernity: The Uneasy Symbiosis of the *género chico* and Early Cinema in Madrid' *Visualizing Spanish Modernity*, ed. Susan Larson and Eva Woods (Oxford: Berg Press, 2005), 265.

[16] The Portuguese process of modernization and industrialization was delayed compared to other European countries and even compared to Spain. It was also heavily influenced by migration from rural to urban areas (mainly Lisbon and Porto) and also by transatlantic emigration. It produced strong regional asymmetries in demographic and industrial terms with a general movement towards the coast only in the 1930s. Teresa Ferreira Rodrigues and Susana de Sousa Ferreira, 'Migrações e desenvolvimento econômico no mundo urbano em Portugal. O caminho da modernidade (1850-1930), in *Inmigración, trabajo y servicio doméstico: En la Europa urbana, siglos XVIII-XX*, ed. Isidro Dubert and Vincent Gourdon (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2017), 45–60.

[17] On the trauma of the defeat of 1898 and the end of the Spanish Empire, which in national terms was an earlier beginning to the twentieth century, see Tomás Pérez Viejo, *3 de julio de 1898. El fin del Imperio español* (Barcelona: Taurus, 2020).

[18] For more on the impact of the British Ultimatum of 1890 on Portuguese culture, see Silva, *Entertaining Lisbon*, 3–4; and María Teresa Pinto Coelho, '"Pérfida Albion" and "Little Portugal": The Role of the Press in British and Portuguese National Perceptions of the 1890 Ultimatum', *Portuguese Studies* 6 (Modern Humanities Research Association, 1990): 173–190.

The resultant cultural, political and economic environment made the Iberian population appreciate what was coming from abroad (mainly Europe and North America) as being modern and advanced, and defined and diminished the national as being primitive, popular, and low. One good example of this tendency that permeated both popular and high culture is mentioned in Larson's analysis of the Madrilenian zarzuela *Cinematógrafo Nacional* (1907). In the play, two cities are portrayed: 'one sad, dark, dilapidated and full of convents and churches called Iberia and another more dynamic, futuristic city', which symbolized a civilization called Europa.[19] Iberia and Europa, with their specific characteristics, mingled and intertwined in the Peninsula in a complex ecosystem of past and future; tradition and progress; national and global; expectations and reality.

This continuous tension resulted in a convulsive and unstable political period that saw alternating conservative and progressive governments, social rights and military control, monarchy and republic, until the breaking point produced by the advent of dictatorship – Francoism in Spain (1939–1975) and *Dictadura Militar* and *Estado Novo* in Portugal (1926–1974). These regimes, despite their nuances, complexities, tensions, and changing realities, in general hampered the modernization of their countries and tried to maintain the status quo for almost forty years under a doctrine supported by the three principles of 'God, Homeland and Family' (*Deus, Pátria e Família* in Portuguese; *Dios, Patria y Familia* in Spanish).

In this context, Portugal and Spain at the beginning of the twentieth century were two countries with industrialization concentrated in urban areas but whose main economies were based on agrarian structures[20] and in which more than fifty per cent of

[19] Larson, 'Stages of Modernity', 276.

[20] In Spain at the beginning of the twentieth century, 68% of the population were peasants, while less than 16% were industrial workers; and 33.5% of the population lived in cities of more than 10,000 inhabitants (while only 9.4% of cities had more than 100,000 inhabitants). In Portugal, the numbers were quite similar: around 62.5% of the population were peasants, and 17.6% were industrial workers. The main difference was that the number of people living in cities of more than 10,000 inhabitants was only 13.3% and there were 9.6% inhabitants in cities with a population of more than 100,000 (almost the same percentage as in Spain). Of course, these numbers are related to the differing number of residents in both countries. While in Spain the population was more than 18.5 million, Portugal had a population of around 5.5 million. For Spain, see Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino (1896–1930)', 22. For Portugal see Pereira, 'Demografia e desenvolvimento em Portugal', 85-117 and Direcção Geral da Estatistica e dos Proprios Nacionaes de Portugal, *Censo da População do Reino de Portugal*, *1 de Dezembro 1900*, vol. I (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1905).

the population were illiterate.[21] However, both countries had a productive and innovative cultural elite and big, effervescent cities such as Lisbon, Porto, and Coimbra, and Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia, where constant frictions between tradition and modernity arose. As Larson posed in her study of the Spanish capital:

> Madrid, between 1900 and 1936 is the center of an incredibly dynamic and diverse number of social and cultural debates. The tension between tradition and the modern, between the local and the global, would result in an unprecedented number of overlapping artistic tendencies that make characterizing the cultural production of the period a challenge.[22]

However, those characteristics may also apply to the other metropolises of the Iberian Peninsula. All the cities mentioned above experimented with a continuous, but also problematic, modernization process beginning in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that became fixed, represented, and divulgated in the cultural production of the time, in every medium – literature, painting, architecture, stage performance, and of course cinema, which had emerged as popular entertainment in all these territories.[23]

Urban spaces and technological advances opened up a range of new professions to middle- and upper-class Iberian women away from the manufacturing and agrarian professions in which working-class women had always worked.[24] And it was not only

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[21] In Portugal in 1900 only 26% people older than 7 years old could read and write (the percentage of male literacy was 34% and of female literacy was 17%). In 1920 the percentage increased to 33% (male literacy was 40% and female literacy was 25%). However, there was a big difference between urban and rural areas. Considering only Lisbon and Porto, the general literacy was almost double than in the rest of the country: 64% in 1920 (73% of men and 55% of women). In Spain in 1900, the percentages were a little higher: 41% of people over 6 years old were literate (48% of men and 34% of women) and in 1920 the percentage increased to 55% of literate people (60% of men and 51% of women). Ramos, 'Culturas da alfabetização': 1067–1145; and Narciso de Gabriel, 'Alfabetización y escolarización en España (1887–1950)', *Revista de Educación*, n. 314 (1997): 217–243.

[22] Susan Larson, *Constructing and Resisting Modernity: Madrid 1900-1936* (Madrid, Orlando, Frankfurt: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2011), 175–176.

[23] A good example of the filmic representation of the coexistence and tension of modernity and tradition in the Portuguese urban environment during the 1920s is the film *Lisboa, Crónica Anecdótica* (Leitão de Barros, 1930). Tiago Baptista, 'Documentário, modernismo e revista em Lisboa, Crónica Anecdótica', *Doc On-line*, n. 6 (August 2009): 114.

[24] At the beginning of the twentieth century women were already a part of the manufacturing industries in both Portugal (reaching almost 30% in 1900 then decreasing to 21.5% in 1930, without counting informal unpaid workers contributing to family businesses) and Spain (where the percentage of women among those actively earning a salary outside the home was 18.2% in 1900, decreasing to 12.7% in 1930 – of these women, 13% worked in manufacturing industries in 1900, and 28.2% in 1930). For Portugal, see Paulo Guinote, 'A Mulher e o Mundo do Trabalho na 1ª República', in *Mulheres na I República*, ed. Zília Osório de Castro, João Esteves and Natividade Monteiro (Lisbon: Colibri, 2011), 227, and for Spain, see Marcos Heras Gil, *La mujer en el mundo laboral en la España de los siglos XX y XXI. El caso del sector*

professions: beliefs, morals, and fashion also saw a gradual (but fast) change that is difficult to analyse as it was heterogeneously applied to society, thereby creating unavoidable friction between classes and genders. In fact, in all eras there have been independent and 'modern' women, but what was specific to the early twentieth century in the Iberian countries was the speed and diffusion of the changes to women's way of life in comparison with the experience of their mothers, and also what was expected of them.[25]

The high rates of illiteracy and lack of education, which affected a greater percentage of women than men, relegated the working classes to repetitive, routine, and unqualified professions. However, some manufacturing jobs were available specifically to women and allowed them to sustain their families.[26] Other urban jobs, including telephonists, textile workers, and film-colourists and cutters, among others, were created as a result of modernization and were often intimately related to new technological advances.[27] Nevertheless, most women aspired to work outside the home only until they got married, since a professional married woman would shamefully highlight her husband's incapability to provide enough money for the family, and would also be interpreted as detrimental to their role as mothers and housekeepers.[28] However, even while being perceived as transitory, these new industrial professions allowed women to occupy part of the public sphere in the cities, to enjoy more individual freedom, and to

industrial de la automoción en la provincia de Soria (Unedited pre-graduated thesis, Soria: Facultad de Ciencias Empresariales y del Trabajo de Soria, 2017), 18–22.

[25] For the fast changes that affected mainly urban women by Spanish modernization see Otero-Carvajal, 'La sociedad urbana': 255–283.

[26] Recent scholarly work states the big diversity of female working conditions and the necessity to study them locally and comparatively to avoid generalizations and misconceptions. Some examples of majoritarian female jobs during the two first decades of the twentieth century were the cigar manufacturers in Seville (Spain) and Xábregas (Portugal) and textile workers in Catalonia, among others. Borderías Mondejar, 'La reconstrucción de la actividad femenina': 17–47; Baptista and Alves, 'As mulheres de Xabregas', 501–516 and Agustín Olmo, 'Las otras cármenes', in 'Los Reporteros', *Canal Sur Televisión* (TV feature, 1 October 1995 and 25 February 1996).

[27] For the Portuguese context see Guinote, 'A Mulher e o Mundo do Trabalho', 229. For the Spanish context see Otero-Carvajal, 'La sociedad urbana', 259.

[28] In capital cities such as Lisbon or Madrid where there was a service-sector that was fundamental for the economy, the profile of the female worker was that of a young single immigrant woman, while married women's jobs were invisible to statistics being obscured by familial commerce or domestic labour (recent accounts point out the existence of a higher percentage of working married women in the turn-of-the-century than what was expected). Baptista and Alves, 'As Mulheres trabalhadoras em Portugal', 523–531 and Borja Carballo Barral, 'La participación de las mujeres en el mercado laboral madrileño del primer tercio del siglo XX (1905–1930)', in *No es país para jóvenes*, ed. Alejandra Ibarra Aguirregabiria, (Vitoria: Universidad del País Vasco, 2012), 1–19.

gain partial economic independence, with money to spend on leisure activities, thus converting them into the majoritarian consumers of mass culture,[29] and also an important part of cinema audiences when this entertainment began to establish itself in the cities in the Iberian Peninsula from 1905 onwards.[30]

8.3 Theatrical Family Structures

The industrial landscape of Portugal and Spain at the beginning of the twentieth century was characterized by territorial segmentation and commercial atomization, in part due to the familial configuration of most enterprises.[31] This is one of the main reasons mentioned in analysis for the delay of the industrialization in both countries – which has been extensively discussed by economic historians.[32] As the anthropologist Eric W. Wolf identifies (referring to communities in the Mediterranean), what differentiated traditional from modern societies was the substitution of commercial or artisanal kinship organizations with a corporate business structure:

> historically, the essential change in organizational forms leading from so-called traditional to modern societies lies in the elaboration (...) of non-agricultural corporate units (...) – though originally commercial or artisan kinship organizations – developed the organizational potential of the corporate business structure.[33]

[29] Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 87.
[30] For Seville, see Begoña Soto-Vázquez, 'Las mujeres y los niños primero. Segmentación familiar del primer público cinematográfico', in *La construcción del públic dels primers espectacles cinematogràfics* (Girona: Fundació Museu del Cinema – Col.lecció Tomás Mallol/Ajuntament de Girona, 2003), 153 and for Lisbon, see Baptista, 'Cinemas de estreia e cinemas de bairro': 29–56.
[31] Alonso García, 'De arañas y moscas', 134: 'A esta segmentación territorial se le añade, en segundo lugar, una atomización comercial, debido al dominio del carácter familiar en la configuración empresarial de la economía española.'
[32] Recent research has nuanced the common idea of the failure of industrialization in the Iberian countries in comparison with other European countries. New approaches recognize a delay in modernization during the nineteenth century until 1913, but also explore the accelerated progress that took place in the interwar period and agrees that specific urban areas suffered a modernization process based on science, technique, and education. See, for example, Horacio Capel, 'Globalización y modernización urbana: Lisboa-Barcelona. Algunos puntos para el debate', *Scripta Nova* 13, n. 296 (1 August 2009) and Pedro Lains, *Los progresos del atraso. Una nueva historia económica de Portugal 1842-1992* (Zaragoza: Prensa Universitaria de Zaragoza, 2006).
[33] Eric R. Wolf, 'Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies', in *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies*, ed. Michael Banton (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 4.

Therefore, in industrial countries the informal networks between families and their neighbours, which had been essential for the functioning of the economy and were based on a 'communitarian culture', were gradually replaced by a more modern entrepreneurial culture. This new trend 'value[d] the (formal and informal) relations of professional nature and stimulates a higher integration between the productive and the scientific or technological systems', according to Ana Nunes de Almeida, João Ferrão, and José Manuel Sobral.[34]

However, the personal or familial component does not belong solely to pre-modern systems, and it remained as part of the ecosystem, together with other large industrial enterprises.[35] For that reason, the authors define the industrial systems as 'socio-territorial systems, a product of complex interrelations between enterprises, institutions, and people (...) generating territorial dynamics susceptible to producing (...) development'.[36] The fact that an entrepreneur is socially connected in a specific region influences the number of resources that he or she can mobilize locally, which is a central element in the formation of new enterprises. In addition, the authors describe the social relations with family, neighbours or friends as direct and characterized by their multiplicity and superimposition, together with the importance of face-to-face interaction.[37]

Spanish and Portuguese theatrical companies, even the more complex and refined ones, were based on traditional, familial, pre-industrial structures closer to those in the creative arts and crafts.[38] Only these smaller and family-owned organizations allowed women to be involved in a certain level of professional decision-making in the stage environment, a context that was exclusively dominated by an elite of men who owned the

[34] Almeida, Ferrão and Sobral, 'Territórios, empresários e empresas': 64: 'uma cultura empresarial valorizadora das relações (formais e informais) de natureza profissional e estimuladora de uma maior integração entre o sistema produtivo e o sistema científico e tecnológico.'

[35] For instance, to work in a tobacco factory, workers had to be related to someone already working there. In this way, several generations of laborers worked together in the same factories, thus producing a mixture of familial and industrial organizations in which professional, domestic, and communitarian aspects were blurred. It also helped that working-class labourers used to live in the surrounding areas of the factories in which they worked. Olmo, 'Las otras cármenes'.

[36] Almeida, Ferrão and Sobral, 'Territórios, empresários e empresas': 63: 'sistemas sócio-territoriais, fruto de interrelações complexas entre empresas, instituições e pessoas, (...) gerando dinâmicas territoriais susceptíveis de produzirem (...) desenvolvimento.'

[37] Almeida, Ferrão and Sobral, 'Territórios, empresários e empresas': 76.

[38] César Oliva describes the theatrical companies' business structure of the first forty years of the twentieth century as 'full of ancestral customs.' César Oliva, 'Teatro y sociedad en la España del siglo XX', in *Literatura y sociedad, el papel de la literatura en el siglo XX*, ed. Fidel López Criado (A Coruña: Universidade da Coruña, 2001), 90.

institutional, economic and cultural apparatus of entertainment.[39] In the early twentieth century, few Iberian women could achieve a managerial role in the theatre but it never transferred to the cinema.[40] In fact, certain leading female actresses achieved fame that allowed them not only to star in plays but also to choose which plays to do, employ the members of the company, design the seasonal programmes, hire authors, and manage contracts with the owners of the venues.[41] They usually had the support of their husbands, who were also usually involved in the companies as actors, managers, or playwrights, and were also usually the daughters or sisters of the directors and managers.[42]

According to Soto-Vázquez's hypothesis, the principal source of power for few Spanish theatre actresses, together with their artistic and cultural aspirations, were their families.[43] This hypothesis is supported by the fact that theatre and other spectacles have produced some of the most famous artist dynasties of the twentieth century in which a minority of actresses played a uncommon powerful and artistic role for the parameters of the time in the Iberian stages (some of them had their origin even in the nineteenth century). The Gutierrez-Caba-Alba, Ibañez-Menta-Serrador, and Guerrero-Díez de Mendoza-Fernán Gómez were some of the most well-known examples in Spain, while in Portugal there were the Matos-Mendonça de Carvalho-Santana, Rey Colaço-Robles Monteiro, and Simões-Furtado Coelho companies. In fact, according to Dru Dougherty and María Francisca Vilches in their work on the Madrilenian stage, the theatre environment was very closed, conservative, and 'dominated by a few whose prestige facilitated their continuity due to the fear of the business risk involved in hiring new

[39] Salaün, 'Las mujeres en los escenarios españoles': 71.
[40] For Spain, see Cordero-Hoyo and Soto-Vázquez, 'Women and the Shift from Theatre to Cinema': 96–120.
[41] Rodrigo, *Margarita Xirgu*, 138.
[42] Xirgu, for example, married the main actor and co-administrator of her company (Miguel Ortín) after her first husband died. The case of María Guerrero and her husband Fernando Díaz de Mendoza (co-administrator of the company and first actor) is very similar. Catalina Bárcena never married her partner (Gregorio Martínez Sierra) because he was already married. He was the co-administrator of the company and co-author of many of the plays she performed. In Portugal, Amélia Rey Colaço (see Chapter IV footnote 8) married the actor Robles Monteiro, with whom created a company. Maria Matos married the actor Francisco Mendonça de Carvalho and had a daughter named Maria Helena Matos, who was also an actress and who married the actor, producer, and director Henrique Santana, son of another famous stage lineage. In addition, the actress Lucília Simões was the daughter of the famous acting couple Lucinda Simões and Luis Cândido Furtado Coelho.
[43] Begoña Soto-Vázquez, 'Volverse invisible. Cinematógrafo, modernidad, mujer y trabajo', *Cinema i modernitat: les transformacions de la percepció* (Girona: Fundació Museu del Cinema – Col.lecció Tomàs Mallol/Ajuntament de Girona, 2008), 158.

people' (either new authors or new performers for the companies).[44] This reality also applies to Portugal where, even during the Republic, there was an 'evolution in continuity', as there was not much change in the 'repertoires, typology of spaces, performance style and dynamics of a show's reception, besides the obvious permanence of the cast of actors'.[45]

Furthermore, many of the aforementioned theatre companies worked as artisanal enterprises composed of married couples, parents, siblings, and children. Some of them functioned as domestic structures in which the leading actress occupied a central position, and her management was not only allowed but even promoted. This followed the logic of the traditional gendered division of spheres and labour, and while men ruled the public spaces and significant issues, family education and home management were the female spheres of power.

My hypothesis is that the key idea behind letting women achieve a dominant position as decision-makers in theatre companies was that they were not conceived as artistic enterprises that would have a clear impact on the culture and identity of the country, but as family conglomerates. Therefore, women's main interests were presumedly their family interests as mothers, daughters, and wives, rather than personal and professional ambition that could remain hidden.[46] Xirgu is one of the best examples who, even whilst being one of the most famous Spanish theatre actresses, felt the necessity to assure that she was driven by familial love instead of professional ambition:

> It is true that I cannot complain. In truth, everything has been easy for me; I always achieved more than I wanted. Instead of looking for theatre managers, they were the ones looking for me. Who can refuse a leading actress position and a great contract? But please do not think I am ambitious, what I find closer to my heart is my intimate life, my family; in our profession there is never a lack of disappointments, struggles, wasted nerves... At home, everything is forgotten, everything

[44] Dougherty and Vilches, *La escena madrileña entre 1918 y 1926,* 37: 'La queja de que la escena española estaba dominada por unos pocos cuyo prestigio facilitaba su continuidad debido al miedo de los empresarios a arriesgarse con gente nueva estaba bastante consolidada.'

[45] Fernando Matos Oliveira, 'A mulher no teatro da República', *Sinais de cena*, n. 14 (2010): 26: 'Em boa medida sobrevivem à República repertórios, tipologias espaciais, estilos de interpretação e dinâmicas da recepção do espectáculo, além da permanência óbvia do elenco de actores.'

[46] See, for example, the interviews to the Spanish stage performers Conchita Ruiz (1871–1951), Nieves Suárez (Madrid, 1878–1939) and Dionisia Lahera (unknown) and the Portuguese actress Lucinda Simões (see Chapter VII footnote 65) in Burgos, *Confesiones de artistas* I, 128, 162, 250 and Burgos, *Confesiones de artistas* II, 168 (respectively).

> is serene. Next to my mother and husband I am a different woman... So happy! Like a sailor reaching shore.[47]

As I have noted, breaking into the legitimate theatrical profession was a complicated business. To develop a successful career on the Iberian stage, it was easier if one was part of a family conglomerate, or had an influential 'godmother' or 'godfather' inside the profession.[48] For some female performers, the family functioned to legitimize their presence in the public sphere and their entitlement to have their own 'liberal' or 'artistic' professional careers. Otherwise, upon marriage they usually ended those artistic careers.[49] Those married actresses who continued their profession and to run their companies usually had the support of their husband, who was also likely an artist.[50] This allowed them to maintain their entrepreneurial desires within the limits of family-owned businesses, ruling over it as if it were part of the domestic sphere. In addition, families had an economic advantage, as being '[m]aximally efficient for the least amount of cost, therefore, the family is also maximally adaptive to changes in the conditions that define and circumscribe its existence'.[51] In this sense, the adaptability to economic or artistic restriction also needs to be taken into account.

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[47] Burgos, *Confesiones de artistas* I, 32–33: 'Es verdad que no me puedo quejar. En realidad, todo me ha sido fácil; logré siempre más de lo que deseaba. En vez de buscar yo a los empresarios, ellos me buscaban a mí. ¿Quién es capaz de negarse cuando le ofrecen un puesto de primera actriz y una magnífica contrata? Pero no crea que soy ambiciosa, a mí lo que me llega al corazón es mi vida íntima, mi familia; nunca faltan en nuestra profesión disgustos, luchas, gasto de nervios... En el hogar se olvida todo, se serena todo. Al lado de mi madre y de mi marido yo soy otra... ¡Tan feliz! Un marino que llega al puerto.'

[48] According to Ilda Soares de Abreu, Portuguese actresses usually came from the lower classes and perceived the stage as a way to upgrade their lives and receive an income (such as Adelina Abranches and Beatriz Costa), and also from families related to the theatre (such as Lucinda and Lucília Simões and Maria das Dores). There were also cultivated women from high-class families, but they were seen as scandalous exceptions (such as Esther Leão or Amélia Rey Colaço). Ilda Soares de Abreu, 'A República vai ao Teatro', in *Mulheres na I República*, ed. Zília Osório de Castro, João Esteves and Natividade Monteiro (Lisbon: Colibri, 2011), 246, 251–252.

[49] Some examples of performers who left the stage after their marriage named by Retana are La Goya (see Chapter IV footnote 72), who married the writer Tomás Borrás, María Esparza (see Chapter VI footnote 34), who married the actor Manuel Collado, and the sisters Victoria and Laura Pinillos (see Chapter VIII footnote 85). Retana, *Historia del arte frívolo*, 20, 58, 71, 213. Also, as mentioned by Burgos, we find the actress Josefina Blanco (León, 1878 – Pontevedra, 1957) who married the writer and playwright Ramón del Valle Inclán. Burgos, *Confesiones de artistas* I, 117–125.

[50] Burgos interviewed the dancer and singer La Tortajada (Santa Fé, 1867 – 1957), who admitted that her husband had always encouraged her in her career. When Burgos expresses her surprise, as it was rare for a Spanish man to support his wife in this way, La Tortajada answered that it was because he was also an artist himself. Another example is Lucinda Simões (see Chapter VII footnote 65), who shared control of the company with her husband. Burgos, *Confesiones de artistas* II, 27–28, 165 (respectively).

[51] Wolf, 'Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations', 7.

In the early twentieth century, cinema was already trying to conform itself to a modern corporate business structure in which traditional artisanal organizational systems were exposed as being inefficient and financially unviable.[52] Emeterio Díez Puertas, in the book *Historia social del cine en España*, stresses how the cultural and entertainment trade shifted from a 'crafted way of production to a capitalist way of production':

> Edison's words 'Anything that won't sell, I don't want to invent', show how, from its beginnings, cinema was just one more product of the market society, a product that is the result of the transformations that occurred in the theatrical business with the arrival of the second industrial revolution and the development of capitalism. These transformations bring industrial diversification, professional specialization, mass production, so-called white-collar workers, and the advertising to the world of entertainment. In this sense, the theatre company evolves into the cinema production house; the stage becomes a set or studio; and the theatre hall a movie theatre.[53]

Díez Puertas' statement supports the idea that theatre-making belonged to a pre-industrial concept of entertainment, and even of space and time (all coming together in one place to be present for a unique event), while cinema adapted better to a capitalist derivation of entertainment. Nevertheless, according to Alonso García in his article about distribution enterprises in Spain, until the institutionalization of cinema as a system in the mid-1910s, economies in the pre-industrial countries had a 'dual existence': on the one hand, 'rural–regional–familial' and on the other hand, 'urban–global–corporate',[54] forms that both merged and coexisted. The main reason for this is that both systems had their advantages.

Francisco Comín and Pablo Martín Aceña explained that, although corporations with big capital investment had 'obvious advantages' in the twentieth century, small

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[52] Serrano, *Las Películas Españolas*, 61–62 and Ribeiro, *Invicta Film*, 83.

[53] Díez Puertas, *Historia social del cine en España*, 323: 'Las palabras de Edison, "si una cosa no la puedo vender, no la quiero inventar", muestran que desde sus inicios el cine constituye una [sic.] producto más de la sociedad de mercado, un producto que es el resultado de las transformaciones operadas en la empresa teatral con la llegada de la segunda revolución industrial y el desarrollo del capitalismo. Estas transformaciones traen al mundo del espectáculo la diversificación industrial, la especialización profesional, la producción en serie, los llamados trabajadores de cuello blanco y la publicidad. En este sentido, la compañía teatral evoluciona hacia la productora de cine; el escenario se convierte en plató o estudio; y la sala de teatro, en la sala de cine.'

[54] Alonso García, 'De arañas y moscas', 135: 'Se trata, sin duda, de un caso más de lo que los historiadores económicos del periodo llaman una "existencia dual" de la economía en los países pre-industrializados: rural-comarcal-familiar por un lado, urbana-global-corporativa por otro.'

companies also presented some benefits: for example, the ability to respond more efficiently when demand decreased, varied, or destabilized, as they were more flexible and agile in reacting to market changes and economic crises. They also had the capacity to be auto-financing, thus avoiding having to deal with shareholder pressures and being able to reduce costs. According to Comín and Martín Aceña, 'this higher efficiency of the small companies was particularly visible in the periods and sectors in which technologies were not very rigid'; in the case of industries 'in which technologies made a big cost difference between the different scales of production, small companies had ostensible disadvantages.' However, this did not mean that they were headed towards failure, as 'they could survive with ingenious procedures, such as through renting equipment and installations to other companies.'[55]

As far as cinema was concerned, taking into account its high dependence on technology, installations, enormous initial investments, and slow recovery from economic shocks, as I have previously shown, big corporations and enterprise conglomerates (as co-productions) ended up being seen as a better solution for dealing with the international film market in the Iberian countries.[56] Thus, the drawing up of agreements with competitors and the sharing of materials, studios, and laboratories between small production houses were already practices that both Fortuna and Cortesina Films engaged in. In the case of Cortesina Films, *Flor de España* was filmed in the studio of Atlántida Films in Calle Verónica in Madrid,[57] while Fortuna Films arranged with Portugália Film to use their studio in Rua São Bento to film the interiors of the films *A Sereia de Pedra* and *Os Olhos da Alma.*[58] In addition, when the financial crisis of silent cinema affected all production houses in Portugal, Almeida tried to merge Fortuna Films with Invicta Film searching for a solution that one strong company would possibly have overcome.

On the other hand, Cortesina and Almeida tried to replicate the same family structures ruled by women which were successful in theatre when they set up their cinema production companies. For that reason, their first attempts to make films involved creating

[55] Comín and Martín Aceña, 'Rasgos históricos de las empresas en España': 80: 'Esta mayor eficiencia de las pequeñas compañías era particularmente visible en los períodos y en los sectores en los que las tecnologías no eran muy rígidas; por el contrario, en las industrias en las que las tecnologías marcaban grandes diferencias de costes entre las distintas escalas de la producción, las pequeñas empresas tenían ostensibles desventajas, pero pudieron sobrevivir con procedimientos ingeniosos, como el alquiler del equipo e instalaciones a otras compañías.'

[56] H. da Costa. 'El momento actual del cine portugués', n. 29 (Madrid, 31 March 1935), 38.

[57] Machuca, 'Historia del cine español', *La Libertad*, n. 2.763 (Madrid, 26 January 1929), 6.

[58] Baptista, *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*, 80.

a family production company. However, the commercial aspect of cinema, and its tendency and willingness to become an industry, collided with the family business limitations. Cinema's relationship to the modern, capitalist mode of production could not be reconciled with the heritage of the 'old' theatrical pattern of decision-making (more personalized and informal). However, I hypothesize that without a supportive family network, women could not secure a place inside the Portuguese or Spanish film production structure that, although precarious, was already male-centred.

Although both were mothers, neither Cortesina nor Almeida were married at the moment of their incursion into cinema. This does not mean that their non-traditional families did not support them. Both maintained their businesses within trustworthy family networks, emulating the theatrical family structure, inserting themselves into the film production systems in place at that time in their countries, which were advancing towards a modern capitalist business-model with the aim of constituting an industry. In this model the domestic sphere and the economic activity were theoretically separated, as Marisol Pérez Lizaur states in her ethnographic study of Ibero-American family businesses.[59] According to the scholar, one of the main changes resultant from the progressive professionalization and capitalization of production was the decrease of importance of the familial social capital: the prestige of the family name, the family network and surrounding social relationships.[60] In addition, the close and trusting relationships among the crew were lost in more modern and bigger enterprises.[61]

Although Iberian film production houses working around the 1920s, like Invicta, Iberia, Caldevilla, Pátria, and Atlántida Films, had their differences, making it difficult to establish common patterns among them, they were not so family-centred as Fortuna and Cortesina Films (even sometimes having also siblings, or couples involved).[62] The mythology surrounding male producers, even the unsuccessful ones, has historically presented them as adventurous, modern 'action' men ready to risk for 'making movies',

[59] Marisol Pérez Lizaur, 'Las empresas familiares catalanas, chilenas y mexicanas: una comparación', *Arxiu d'Etnografia de Catalunya*, n. 14 (2014): 156.
[60] Pérez Lizaur, 'Las empresas familiares catalanas, chilenas y mexicanas', 159.
[61] Pérez Lizaur, 'Las empresas familiares catalanas, chilenas y mexicanas', 189.
[62] In Caldevilla Film's administration we could find the names of João Manuel and Raul Lopes de Oliveira and Adriano Ramos Pinto and his brother and in Invicta Film's General Assembly there were José and Joaquim de Almeida Cunha and Alfredo and Jorge Nunes de Mattos (which I assume were family). Baptista*, Lion, Mariaud, Pallu,* Annex Caldevilla Film and Invicta Films/Lista de Pessoal (no page).

supported but also challenged by male colleagues, capitalists, or competitors.[63] However, the women's case studies that I have presented in this dissertation do not match this stereotype. They created two different 'matrilineal' structures: on the one hand 'the mother of the artist', heir of stage culture, in the case of Cortesina and, on the other hand, the 'strict but tender exemplar mother' with total control over the company, embodied by Almeida.[64] Those family interdependent structures supported their long professional and personal lives and were also present in their attempt to break into cinema around 1920, as described in the following sections.

8.5 Cortesina's family structure: 'The mother of the artist'

In the stage environment, mothers used to have a fundamental role in their daughters' careers.[65] They were a constant presence in the different stage venues such as music halls, *café cantantes*, and variety stages (even those considered less 'respectable'), and they were a recognizable and stereotypical figure called the '*madre de la artista*' (an expression in Spanish still found today) that was used in press articles in a very derogatory way.[66] Their duties included:

> having conversations with friends while the artist gets dressed and undressed, quarrelling with businessmen and female colleagues, accompanying the girl to dinner to maintain her good name, declaring that tomorrow 'we don't work' because 'we are ill', battling with the stagehands, and having the cup of coffee ready and the dresses

[63] Claro, 'Palavras', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 5 (Lisbon, 1 March 1923), 54.

[64] I am using the 'matrilineal' concept in a broad sense referring to an organization of the family that is based on the mother's lineage. In those families the role of the mothers has a crucial importance for the development of all family's components lives and the individuals are considered to belong to her descent group.

[65] The '*madre de la artista*' was such a common figure in the theatrical environment that it was possible to find a press article asking for a law to investigate which were the true ones and protect them against harassment and defamation. Julio Romano, 'La mamá de la artista', *La Nación* (Madrid, 5 July 1917), 10 and Montijano Ruiz, *Historia del teatro olvidado*', 266.

[66] Federico Urrecha, for example, describes her as 'a woman of regular height, well fed, ham-like, barefaced, tough language and with a hairy moustache'. Federico Urrecha, 'La madre de teatro', *Cinematograph*, n. 3 (Barcelona, 3 August 1906), 1: 'mujer de regular estatura, bien mantenida, ajamonada, de cara dura, hablar recio y bigote poblado'. The archetype of the 'mother of the artist' was so recognizable for the general public that *Muchas gracias* published a comic strip featuring the debut of a beautiful girl who is in the stage receiving insults from the public while her mother (portrayed as an old, ugly, and boorish woman) is proudly waiting behind the curtains without realising the reality. Bellón, 'El début', *Muchas gracias*, n. 12 (Madrid, 19 April 1924), 12.

> arranged, among another thousand duties, each of them more important than the others.[67]

For that reason, they could be seen as functioning as 'managers', and those performers who did not have the luck to have their mothers close, usually 'rented one'.[68] Their role was so inscribed in the stage environment that they adapted their function to cinema culture, too.[69]

Responsible for their daughters, they were portrayed as twisted, fake, and immoral women. Journalists (usually male) had a firm opinion about their place as a member of the stage world, and contradictory roles were attributed to them, such as moral guardians as well as immoral *madames* interested only in the money their daughter earned (on stage and with other activities such as accompanying men).[70] They were criticized both for being too protective and following their daughters everywhere to control them, but also for pushing their daughters into immoral stage professions to exploit their youth, their talent, and their bodies for profit. However, in many cases the performers' salaries were the only income that many all-female families could count on.[71] For that reason, when widows or single mothers had the chance to manage their daughter's career on the stage instead of sending them to other more tiring and poorly paid jobs, they did so. This decision, sincerely recognised by the stage actress Mercedes Pérez de Vargas, is

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[67] 'Las mamás de las estrellas o el inútil bagage', *El Cine*, n. 584 (Barcelona, 23 June 1923), 9: '¿Quién podría, sino, dar conversación a los amigos mientras la artista se viste y se desnuda, quién reñir con los empresarios y con las compañeras, quién acompañar a la niña a la cena para que la fama no padezca, quién decretaría que mañana "no trabajamos" porque "estamos enfermas", y quién, en fin, lucharía con los tramoyistas y tendría la taza de café preparada y los trajes a punto, entre otras mil funciones a cual más importante?'

[68] This was one of the main complaints in the press, that many times the supposed 'mother' was not the real mother but a woman who fulfilled the duties of the position and was maintained by the performer. Urrecha, 'La madre de teatro', *Cinematograph*, n. 4 (Barcelona, 15 August 1906), 2.

[69] In an article in Popular Film, Aurelio Pego writes about the shift of the 'mother of the artist' from theatre to cinema and differentiates two kinds of mother: the one who disturbs her daughter's career, interfering constantly with the director's decisions, and the other who acts more like a sister and likes partying and spending money. Aurelio Pego, 'Popular Film' en Nueva York. Dos clases de mamás', *Popular Film*, n. 151 (Barcelona, 20 June 1929), 1. See also, Genova, 'Alrededor de la pantalla. Las mamás de las estrellas', *Jueves cinematográficos*, n. 126 (Barcelona, August 1929), 9–10.

[70] For example, Parmeno describes a show starring La Chelito (see Chapter VII footnote 95), in which she danced almost naked but men could not touch her (only shout), because her mother was there collecting the money. Parmeno, 'Comentarios breves. Nuestras bellas', *Heraldo de Madrid*, n. 7.124 (Madrid, 1 June 1910), 1.

[71] In *Confesiones de artistas*, Pepita Sevilla (birth and death dates unknown) recognizes that she began dancing 'out of necessity' when her father died and her middle-class family (mother, sister, and herself) did not have any income. Also, La Chelito admits that she is proud of being able to give her mother and brothers a career as result of her success on stage. Burgos, *Confesiones de artistas* II, 56 and 68.

representative of the views of many other Spanish stage actresses: 'Upon the death of my father, I felt the need to reflect on the struggle for life. The jobs that women do, and how difficult they are in Spain scared me, and I decided to dedicate myself to the performing arts.'[72]

This was precisely the case for the Cortesina sisters, Helena, Ofelia, and Angélica Cortés Altabás, who began their careers on the stage at a very young age and performed around Spain and Europe under the name 'Cortesina sisters', imitating exotic and neo-classical dances and nudity, trying to balance sensuality and art, as we have seen. The Cortesina sisters, looking to progress in their artistic careers towards a more recognized form of acting on the theatrical stage or on the cinema screen, created an all-women network – problematic, but useful – and the leadership of the network was assumed by their mother/manager, Manuela Altabás Alio, who had also had a career as a singer in a *café-teatro* and adopted the artistic name of Emma Cortesina to match her daughters'.

According to the researcher Susana Climent Viguer, her marriage to Hernán Manuel Cortés García was never approved of by his liberal bourgeois Republican family.[73] However, he was very attracted to the bohemian and literary life, even using his talent to write several *sainetes*, and he fell in love with Manuela. As Climent Viguer states, the marriage was not a happy one, and after having four children together, they separated, and he left for Argentina with the writer Blasco Ibáñez to set up the colonial project 'Nueva Valencia' in 1911.[74] However, there is a record of a trip that his wife Manuela and their oldest daughter, Helena (at that time eight years old), made to Argentina on August 1911 on the ship *Valbanera* from Valencia.[75] This evidence suggests that the family either travelled together or that the women visited him in 'Nueva Valencia', as the dates are too exact to be a coincidence.

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[72] Mercedes Pérez de Vargas (1889–Madrid, 1925) was a prominent actress in the Madrilenian theatre during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Burgos, *Confesiones de artistas* I, 50: 'A la muerte de mi padre tuve necesidad de pensar en la lucha por la vida. Los trabajos de la mujer, que usted sabe cuán difíciles son en España, me asustaban, y quise dedicarme al arte escénico.'

[73] For more about Hernán Cortés García's family, see Climent Viguer and García Monerris, 'Redes familiares', 269 and Climent Viguer, 'Rescatando desconocidas'.

[74] 'Nueva Valencia' was the second colonial project initiated in 1911 by the writer Vicente Blasco Ibañez (Valencia, 1867 – Menton, 1928) in Corrientes (Argentina). His idea was to populate the zone with farmers from Valencia to cultivate rice and citrus, but it needed too much investment and it was abandoned in 1913. Paul Smith, *Vicente Blasco Ibañez: una nueva introducción a su vida y obra* (Santiago de Chile: Andrés Bello, 1972), 31.

[75] Digital search engine of the Centro de Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos (CEMLA).

When he returned to Spain, he worked until his death in 1921 as the director of a mental asylum in Valencia. In any case, Manuela Altabás took care of their four children and guided their daughters' careers during much of their lives. Her firm personality and strong character attracted the nickname of 'El Acorazado' ('The Battleship') when the family reunited again in Buenos Aires in exile.[76]

In order to better understand the role of 'mother of the artist' of Manuela Altabás and the controversial public image that her relationship with her daughter Helena Cortesina projected, I will analise the case of *Paloma*.[77] On 18 August 1917, the short novel *Paloma* was published in Madrid, written by the journalist and *charlista* (lecturer) Federico García Sanchiz. This novel tells the story of a journalist's friendship with a young Valencian variety dancer (almost a child) who has recently debuted in the Teatro Romea, awakening passions among the male public. This girl, called Paloma, is always accompanied by her mother Paulina, a lady who used to be someone in her city, Valencia, and the former love interest of the journalist. The ambitious woman drags her daughter to parties and auctions her virginity to the highest bidder. Paloma, sick of her mother's graft and being stalked by men, runs away and sleeps with the first driver who appears with the objective of devaluing herself and losing her 'purity'.

Although it is a piece of literary fiction, it is presented as a first-person testimony, written as a letter by a poorly disguised alter-ego of the author García Sanchiz. The story has the pretension of introducing the reader to the dark side of variety shows in Madrid and the lives of the vedettes, focusing on the experience of Paloma:

> The dances are not interesting, as Paloma has not realized her own beauty. (...) She is sixteen years old and has just finished school. For months they trained her in the art of pirouette, in the way dogs are trained to jump through hoops. How can we explain the brilliant success of this foolish young girl? Because she exhibits herself naked, and you cannot imagine the perfection of her body, slim and tight, white, stylized, and completed by a small and delicate head. She was born in

[76] For this information I must thank María Antonia Muñoz (Tonica), daughter of the Spanish scenographer Gori Muñoz and María del Carmen García Antón, who knew them all in Buenos Aires during her childhood.

[77] García Sanchiz, *Paloma*. I referred to the Cortesina family's problems and accusations of immorality derived from the publication of the short novel at the *XII Seminari internacional sobre els antecendents i origens del cinema* (Girona, 28–29 March 2019), which resulted in Cordero-Hoyo, 'Entre el clasicismo, el exotismo y la modernidad', 139–147.

> Valencia, and I believe that she was left on the Mediterranean beach by a wave that came from Greece.[78]

This short novel, rich in detail, does not spare adjectives, accusations, and dismissals, and presents the hypersexualized Paloma as an archetyped 'lolita' who is 'gorgeous and dumb',[79] and her mother Paulina as someone with a 'lack of morals'.[80] It also presents extensive perverted detail under the mask of criticism and fault-finding:

> They have held back adolescence in Palomita. Becquer's rhymes have been replaced with the *cuplés* sung by her stage peers. Instead of the shy and ardent stammering of a Romeo in the second year of Law or Medicine, poisonous snakes have hissed in her ears; lewd old men have burned her face with their nauseating breath, inundating her with words that are too concrete and descriptive. She has already seen many naked and deformed women to be surprised by her own body development. (…) Nothing is forbidden for her, as long as she does not displease the will of the man who throws coins into the pipes of the *manzanilla* [sweet wine].[81]

This melodramatic story would not arouse much interest other than it was explicitly inspired by the life of Cortesina. Its publication at the beginning of her career on stage obliged her mother, Manuela, to use every means to defend the family from the accusations raised in the short novel and clear their name. One of her efforts was to appeal for the help of the painter Joaquín Sorolla, a very influential man of the time and friend of the family, and whom the novel also tangentially named. In a letter to the artist from Cortesina's mother, she begs his intervention to make the 'vile' writer retract his work:

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[78] García Sanchiz, *Paloma*, 4: '[N]o resultan interesantes las danzas, ya que Paloma ni siquiera se ha dado cuenta de su propia belleza, ni de nada. Tiene diez y seis años y acaba de salir del colegio. En unos pocos meses la adiestraron en el arte de piruetear, como se alecciona a los perros a saltar por el aro. ¿Cómo explicarse entonces el éxito brillantísimo de esta nena tonta? Porque se exhibe completamente desnuda, y tú no puedes imaginarte la perfección de su cuerpo fino y firme, blanco, armonioso y rematado por una cabeza chiquita y delicada. Nació en Valencia, y yo creo que la depositó en la playa levantina una ola que venía de Grecia.'

[79] García Sanchiz, *Paloma*, 3.

[80] García Sanchiz, *Paloma*, 12.

[81] García Sanchiz, *Paloma*, 13: 'Le han escamoteado la adolescencia a Palomita. Las rimas de Becquer han sido sustituidas con los cuplés que entonan las compañeras de tablado. En lugar de los balbuceos tímidos y ardorosos de un Romeo en el segundo año de Leyes o Medicina, silbaron en sus oídos las sierpes ponzoñosas, quemáronle el rostro con su aliento nauseabundo los viejos lúbricos, la inundaron de palabras demasiado concretas y plásticas. Ha visto ya muchas hembras desnudas y deformes, para que le sorprenda el desarrollo propio. (…) Nada le está prohibido, con tal de que no contraríe el gusto del señor que arroja monedas en los cañeros de manzanilla.'

> There is a great scoundrel called Federico García Sanchiz who, without any cause, perhaps because he has been paid, has written a despicable libel, in the form of a story, in the last 'Cuento semanal' that he titles 'Paloma' and in which he tears my skin and that of my poor Helena to shreds (…) You cannot know the scandal that has sprung from this. I am terribly upset. (…) I swear by the purity of my children and that everything that is said in that infamous paper is nothing but a vile slander.[82]

Since all three parties came from Valencia (the family Cortesina, the writer García Sanchiz, and the painter Sorolla), it is difficult to disentangle the implications of this apparently trivial anecdote. Also, we do not know what the responses of the painter and the writer were and how the Cortesina family reacted, apart from the ironic fact that Paloma was the chosen name of the main character played by Helena in the film *Flor de España* and also the name given to one of her nieces, becoming a kind of alter-ego that was linked to the family forever. However, it is a pivotal event for understanding the essential characteristics of the stage medium in Madrid in 1917, the threats that surrounded the young dancers, and the illegitimate image that their mothers had in the eyes of the male authorities.

Also, even without being able to determine if the accusation that 'Paulina' (meaning Manuela) was immoral and negligent is true, it gives information about the imbalance of power, strength, and credibility. The male journalist had access to the public platform of the press and was able to publish a short story which could reach the broader public, while the impotent women had to appeal to an influential family friend to have any chances of being heard and have their public dignity restored. Finally, this incident gives insights into Manuela's particular relationship with her daughter Helena and the role that she played as a manager, guide, and defender of her family's interests.

In any event, Helena soon designed a path of her own, and Manuela devoted herself to the younger sisters Ofelia and Angélica, who had formed an artistic duo and were working on stage under the name of 'hermanas Cortesina'.[83] The Cortesina sisters began

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[82] Manuela Altabás Alio to Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida (August 1917), [Museo Sorolla, Nº inv. CS/1645]: 'Hay un gran canalla que se llama Federico García Sanchiz, que sin causa ninguna, tal vez por que [*sic*.] le han pagado, ha escrito un libelo infame, á manera de cuento, en el "Cuento semanal" último, y que titula "Paloma": En el que hace trizas mi piel y la de mi pobre Helena. (…) [N]o sabe V. qué escándalo se ha armado. Tengo un disgusto de muerte. (…) Lo juro por lo más santo que son mis hijos, que todo cuanto dice ese papel infame es una vil calumnia.'

[83] They also suffered accusations of being 'concubines' of the ex-clergyman and playwright José María Granada as it was rumoured that Manuela Altabás Alio and her two younger daughters shared bed with

their professional careers dancing in synchronized 'sister acts' that allowed them to perform in various types of variety show and *revistas* as an artistic attraction. For these shows, they dressed up in the same outfit and performed short dances.

Many other female artists of the Spanish stage and screen used to perform with their siblings, such as the Montenegro sisters (Conchita, Juanita, and Justa Andrés Picado, led by their mother, Anunciación Picado),[84] the Pinillos sisters (Laura and Victoria),[85] Pyl y Myl (Pilar and Milagros, who ended up living and acting in Lisbon), the Jordi sisters (Elena, whose real name was Montserrat, and Tina Casals i Baqué), the Nerina sisters (María and Pilar), the Morén sisters (Leonor and Trinidad Ginar Morén who, together with their mother Conchita Morén, worked as an artistic trio, dancing, singing, and playing instruments), among many others.[86]

Sisters working together in different stage shows were so common during the first decades of the twentieth century in Spain that in 1931 Díaz Morales even wrote an article about it in *Estampa*: 'Los hermanos que trabajan juntos' ('Siblings who work together').

> I can assure you that this siblinghood in women occurs more frequently than in men. The whole world is now invaded by these identical duos that seem to be mass-produced, known as 'sisters', taken from the English. Sometimes these sisters are sisters in no more than name and

him at the same time. Cansinos Assens, *La novela de un literato 2. 1914–1921* (Madrid: Alianza, 1985), 159–160.

[84] The Montenegro sisters Conchita (San Sebastián, 1911 – Madrid, 2007), and Juanita (San Sebastián, 1913 – Rio de Janeiro, 1985) also shifted their stage career to the cinema. They starred in silent Spanish films like *Rosa de Madrid* (Luis Fernández Ardavín, 1927, together) and *Sortilegio* (Agustín de Figueroa, 1927, only Conchita). A comparison between the Cortesina sisters and the Montenegro sisters was presented at the *Women and Silent Screen/Eye International Conference: Sisters*. Elena Cordero-Hoyo and Begoña Soto-Vázquez, '"Can I See Her Twice?" Spanish Sisters on Stage and on Screen', *Women and Silent Screen/Eye International Conference – Sisters* (Unpublished paper, Amsterdam, 28 May 2019). For a biography of the Montenegro sisters, see Santiago Aguilar and Felipe Cabrerizo, *Las Montenegro* (Madrid: Bala Perdida, 2021).

[85] The Pinillos sisters also made an incursion as actresses into the cinema. Victoria (unknown) worked for the producer, writer, and director Eusebio Fernández Ardarvín in the films *La leyenda del cementerio* (1917), *Ensueños* (1917), and *El aventurero misterioso* (1918). She and her sister Laura played dancers in *La chica del gato* (Antonio Calvache, 1923). Apart from this latter film, Laura (1900 –Madrid, 1970) debuted in the silent screen in *Curro Vargas* (José Buchs, 1923) and continued her cinematographic screen years later with *El famoso Carballeira* (Fernando Mignoni, 1940) and *¡¡Campeones!!* (Ramón Torrado, 1943).

[86] For more on the other Spanish sister acts performing on the twentieth-century variety stages, see Retana, *Historia del arte frívolo*. As the Portuguese variety stage has not been studied in depth, the only names of acting sisters that I have identified are Amélia (see Chapter IV footnote 8), Alice (Lisbon, 1890-1978), and Maria Rey Colaço (unknown dates).

> misfortune: two girls who met one day, in a random city, and who danced, by chance, two identical steps.[87]

Based on her daughter's careers, it seems that Manuela Altabás guided them into the performing professions and controlled their public image, at least in the early stage of their careers.[88] She even designed some of their costumes, such as the aforementioned black bodysuit that Helena wore during the summer of 1920 on the beach of San Sebastián, and which had significant media coverage, giving her the nickname of 'musidorita'.[89] Whether this was a thought-out commercial strategy, or whether it was only to protect her daughter's body from the sun, what is certain is that Manuela Altabás had a strong influence on her daughters' professional and personal lives.[90]

The Cortesina sisters learned singing and dancing when they were children under their mother's supervision. She accompanied them in their performances and took care of her grandchildren when their mothers were touring.[91] Also, she probably controlled part of the family's income as she was the only one carrying money on Cortesina's journey to Spain from La Habana in August 1931 on the ship *Marqués de Comillas*, as the register from Ellis Island (where they stopped on the way) proves.[92]

Her grandchildren Rosa María, Juan Manuel Fontanals (Helena's children), Paloma Cortés (Ofelia's daughter), and Diana Cortesina (Angélica's daughter), and her own daughter Hada (a child who Manuela Altabás had much later in life) were also trained for the stage from childhood. Rosa María joined the company of Lola Membrives with her

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[87] Díaz Morales, 'Los hermanos que trabajan juntos', *Estampa*, n. 180 (Madrid, 20 June 1931), 8–9: 'En las mujeres, puede asegurarse que se da con más frecuencia que en los hombres esta hermandad. Todo el mundo está hoy invadido por esas parejitas iguales, que parecen fabricadas en serie, que se llaman "sisters", que ustedes saben que en inglés quiere decir "hermanas". A veces, estas hermanas no lo son más que de nombre y de infortunio: dos muchachitas que se conocieron un día, en una ciudad cualquiera, y que lucieron, acaso por casualidad, dos pasos iguales.'

[88] The episode presented in the journal *La Voz* in which the journalist Mayral encountered the whole Cortesina family except Helena (Ofelia, Angélica, their mother and their brother, Hernán) in the dressing room of the Romea, demonstrated that Manuela was with her daughters while they were performing and helped them get ready. José L. Mayral, 'Las grandes figuras de las variedades opinan sobre el conflicto Imperio-Piquer', *La Voz*, n. 2.309 (Madrid, 15 March 1928), 3.

[89] Ontañón and Moreiro, *Unos pocos amigos verdaderos*, 96.

[90] An anecdote told by the family in an informal conversation is that Manuela Altabás always recommended her daughters never to wear a bra and never get married.

[91] Apparently, Manuela Altabás crossed to France with Ofelia and Angélica's daughters while they were working in Germany when the Spanish Civil War began. This information was provided by Paloma Cortés in an informal interview conducted on 14 October 2019, in in which she related their journey into exile. Unfortunately, due to the lack of time no evidence to support her testimony has been found.

[92] 'Passenger Record', *The Statue of Liberty – Ellis Island Foundation*, digital search engine. https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org

mother and Juan Manuel performed with Margarita Xirgu's company. Paloma and Hada even attended a 'school of vedettes' where they were taught singing and dancing for their future profession. In a visit to the school where the youngest ones were training, the journalist Josefina Carabias of *La Voz* was surprised to find such skilled girls, to which Manuela Altabás, who was present during the lesson, answered: 'If they do not begin at this age, they will never be able to dance correctly. What they are doing now, more than anything else, is gymnastics to give flexibility to the body.'[93] This statement casts doubt on Helena Cortesina's testimony in which she declared that she had an instinct of 'rhythmic movement' that developed naturally from the moment she began to walk to when she danced to her mother playing the piano.[94] It seems that there may have been a preformulated plan to guide the whole family towards the stage following in the steps of the 'matriarch'.

As was discussed in Chapter V, section 5.3, taking advantage of her celebrity status on the stage, in 1920, Helena Cortesina, made her debut in cinema as an actress in *La inaccesible* (José Buchs, 1920) with great success and she was hailed in the press as a national star. Encouraged by her fame as an actress in her cinematographic venture, one year later the Cortesina family created their own production company which Cortesina began managing. *Flor de España* (1923) was their only production. The fact that she starred in the film, while Ofelia and Angélica were also part of the cast, shows how the family counted on each other to advance each other's careers and be part of joint entrepreneurial ventures. Nevertheless, the main objective seems to have been to boost Helena's cinematographic career as her name was well known, and she probably contributed the greatest financial return through the earnings she received from her longer career on stage and her job as leading actress in cinema.

My hypothesis is that Cortesina tried to emulate the entrepreneurial model of the stage where, as previously discussed, some family businesses ruled by women were well-known and successful. Cortesina might have followed the 'production at the expense of the director' system imposed on film-makers in Madrid because of the lack of investors.[95]

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[93] Carabias, 'Reportajes frívolos', *La Voz*, n. 4.140 (Madrid, 6 April 1934), 3: 'De no empezar a esa edad no se puede llegar a bailar bien nunca. Estas lo que hacen ahora es, más que otra cosa, gimnasia para dar flexibilidad al cuerpo.' Josefina Carabias was one of the few female journalists during the first third of twentieth century in Spain: see Ángeles Ezama Gil, 'Los comienzos periodísticos de una reportera española: las colaboraciones de Josefina Carabias en *La Voz* (1932-1935)', *El Argonauta Español*, n. 9 (June 2012).

[94] 'Actrices del cinematógrafo. La venus valenciana', *Cine Popular,* n. 12 (Barcelona, 18 May 1921), 6.

[95] Martínez Álvarez, 'La participación de las élites madrileñas', 363.

However, it is doubtful that the family could have afforded all the costs of making a film. Unfortunately, the lack of documents and testimonies regarding the film's production process leaves most questions open. In any case, this was not to be the last time that the Cortesina family would design a joint professional project (even if some of these would not be carried through to fruition), such as the 'Gran Compañía Cortesina', created by the four siblings and with which they planned to tour around Europe performing 'Spanish dances and songs.'[96]

Therefore, the Cortesina family's relations are perceived as a kind of spider's web in which several threads are created between the different family elements. Also, the hierarchical weights can be measured and shifted across time, linking and disjointing the elements from which we can rank the relational degrees that vary between the personal and the professional sphere.[97] Firstly, there is the relationship of Manuela Altabás with her daughters and son in a kind of matrilineal pyramid in which power and care are mixed together. Secondly, Helena Cortesina achieved a professional semi-independence from her siblings and dedicated herself to more recognized theatrical and cinematographic acting. In addition, her brother, Hernán, had an intermittent stage career that soon turned into a business career. Finally, Ofelia and Angélica performed for most of their careers as an artistic duo, and later in exile they created several companies in which their own daughters, Ofelia and Diana, were also involved.[98]

In conclusion, supported by her sisters and mother, Helena Cortesina dealt with the patriarchal, conservative Spanish society and its consequences: accusations of immorality and concubinage, progeny outside of marriage, and exile in Buenos Aires because of the Spanish Civil War. The Cortesina sisters took advantage of their safe family network to live their lives outside the norm, and to have long and irregular artistic careers. It was precisely the non-bourgeois, liberal matrilineal structure of this network that allowed them to succeed in surpassing sexualized dancing shows in the pursuit of other long-term

[96] Brasa, 'Por los teatros de París', *Nuevo Mundo*, n. 1.721 (Madrid, 14 January 1927), 15.

[97] In my opinion, it is relevant to note that Helena, Ofelia, and Angélica Cortesina lived together for several years in Buenos Aires (for intermittent periods until their deaths), preserving the sibling connection and maintaining the cooperative support network that had helped them during all their lives.

[98] In 1939, Ofelia Cortesina began a theatre company for children in which her daughter Paloma and niece Diana debuted. Most of the staged plays were written by the Argentinian anarchist and feminist writer, playwright, and diary writer Salvadora Medina Onrubia (Chapter VI footnote 124). 'Blancanieves y los siete enanitos', 'Caperucita Roja', and 'El Ratón Pérez se cayó a la olla', *Programas*, n. 16 (March–December 1939), 87, 146, 169. [Buenos Aires, Argentores]. At some point that I cannot specify, Ofelia, Angélica, Paloma and Diana Cortesina also created a company called 'Las Manolas' that performed Spanish dances and songs across Latin America.

ambitions and the more legitimized forms of entertainment of that time, such as cinema and theatre.

8.6 Almeida's family structure: 'Lessons from the mother'

Cortesina was not the only woman who relied on her mother for personal and professional advice. Virgínia de Castro e Almeida was also very dependent on her mother Virgínia Folque (born 12 July 1839 – death unknown) until her divorce, when disagreements on how to manage her marital problems created a rift between Almeida and her family.

Almeida's mother also played an essential role as a counsellor and guide at the beginning of Almeida's adult life.[99] Almeida always received lessons from her mother when she left the family home after marrying the agronomist João da Mota Prego in 1895 and lived in different places. First, they travelled to Paris for treatment for her husband's vision problems, and later to Guimarães where his family was from, and then in 1896, they rented the Quinta da Bizelga to Almeida's parents and took care of the family farm for three years.[100] However, this agreement created much tension in the family in respect of issues related to debts and management of the farm.

Almeida's letters to her sister-in-law in Paris just after her marriage evidence the unbalanced relationship of the couple, as Mota Prego was presented not only as her partner but also as her superior (being better educated and fifteen years her senior), an asymmetry that would last until the divorce:

> It is this immense pleasure, here in this Babylon, where I get lost and that he knows so well, this pleasure of feeling inferior to him and entrusting my spirit to his hands that he initiates me into all the great

[99] The title of this section is inspired by the letter that a bourgeois woman from Porto sent to Ramalho Ortigão, author of *As Farpas,* answering to his accusations that Portuguese women did not know how to make a good soup. She replied that they did not need specific education (as English or French women did) because they had always learnt how to manage their homes looking at the example of and receiving lessons from their mothers. Eça de Queirós and Ramalho Ortigão, *As Farpas: chronica mensal da politica, das letras e dos costumes* (January 1878), 24.

[100] For the trajectory of her early life as married woman and mother, see her letters from 1895 to 1899 (PFC).

> artistic feelings that I have never felt before and that leave me so amazed.[101]

In her letters to her mother, Almeida mainly looked for advice on the management of the Quinta and the domestic space, in which she had to develop her skills as an aristocratic housewife, as was expected of her. Among her duties was to decorate the house, become a good hostess to visitors, manage the house staff, educate and raise her children, and manage the household finances. In order to learn her responsibilities as mistress, wife, and mother in the best possible way, she constantly asked her mother for advice and wanted to rule her house under her mother's 'protective wings'.[102] She also had to learn to cope with economic restraints as her husband's earnings were not high at the time of their marriage and when they had children.[103]

Nevertheless, Almeida's duties were not limited to the domestic sphere; she also helped her almost-blind husband with his paperwork, acting as more than just an assistant. As he was slowly losing his sight, she wrote part of the books and articles published under his name and helped him prepare his lessons as Chief Professor of the Superior School of Agronomy in Santarem[104] – all of this, in addition to her work as a writer of children's books and journal columnist. For that reason, she described her life as a 'duality of secretary and housekeeper', the first prepared to carry on philosophical and intellectual conversations and the second ready to keep the everyday needs on track.[105] Because of these multiple tasks and responsibilities, she left her two sons, Luís Manuel and José Lopo, in Lisbon to be taken care of by her parents. As she recognised, the birth of her children made Almeida feel a deeper connection with her parents (especially her mother), with whom she always maintained an ambivalent relationship of admiration, but from whom she also felt pressure to not be a disappointment:

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[101] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to Raquel Jardim (Paris, 31 August 1895) (PFC): 'E este prazer imenso, aqui nesta Babilónia, onde me perco e que ele tão bem conhece, este prazer de me sentir inferior a ele e de entregar nas suas mãos o meu espirito que ele vai iniciando a todas as grandes sensações artísticas que nunca por mim tinham passado e que me deixam tão espantada.'

[102] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to her mother (Quinta da Bizelga, 27 January 1899) (PFC).

[103] Virgínia de Castro Almeida to her mother (Quinta da Bizelga, 1 January 1897) (PFC).

[104] João da Mota Prego published several books about agronomy during his life being one of the first ones the *Guia Práctico para o emprêgo dos adubos em Portugal* (Lisbon: Typografica Universal, 1896) and *Olivaes e Lagares: Andaluzia, Catalunha, Nice, Toscana, Bari Portugal* (Lisbon, Typografia da Livraria Férin, 1902) about which Almeida writes in her letters to her mother as she was working editing them. Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to her mother (Santarem, 28 April and 12 May 1902) (PFC).

[105] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to her mother (Quinta do Gualdim, 12 April 1899) (PFC).

> Why is it that my mommy pulls so strongly on this invisible and strong cord that connects my heart to yours? If it is possible, mother, since the baby was born, I like you even more; and I don't separate you from my love for him. I have you both linked inside my heart, one to the other as if my mother and he were a single person.[106]

Their relationship became more difficult after Almeida's hasty marriage to her hostile and impulsive husband, whom the family did not trust from the beginning.[107] Trying to mitigate the shame of one of the first divorces in Portugal, they offered Almeida financial and moral support.[108] However, Almeida's decision to make the separation from her husband official and enter into a long judicial trial, which brought the family name publicly, caused her family to reject her.[109] Reading her letters to her family, it is striking to see how close they were before the incident and to imagine how painful the irreconcilable disagreement was for everyone concerned.

At that point in time, Almeida was left alone at the centre of her life. She was therefore able to rid herself of any aristocratic constraints and was able to rise to the top of her own familial and professional structure, demonstrating her skills for guiding the lives of her two sons and her own.[110] On the other hand, Almeida's writings revealed her need for other people, creating a duality between independence (as she was on her own and in control of her own decisions) but also dependency, as she sought the support of many friends who involved themselves in her different life phases by giving economic, moral, or legal support. For example, the stakeholders of Fortuna Films, the scriptwriter Alberto Jardim, Dr Lopes Vieira, Mathilde de Sauvayre, and Vieira de Castro, were enthusiastic friends of Almeida. However, apart from their economic contributions, she also had to take out a loan from Banco Minho and Banco Ultramarino and repay it by

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[106] Virgínia de Castro e Almeida letter to her mother (Quinta da Bizelga, 29 February 1898) (PFC): 'Porque é que a minha mãesinha, puxa com tanta força este cordão invisível e tão forte que prende o meu coração ao seu? Se é possível, minha mãe, desde que nasceu o pequeno gosto ainda mais de si; e não a separo dele no meu amor. Tenho-os dentro do meu coração ligados um ao outro como se a minha mãe e ele fossem uma pessoa só.'

[107] Almeida letters to her mother (Quinta da Bizelga, 1 January and 30 December 1897) (PFC).

[108] I must thank Virgínia de Castro e Almeida's nieces for this information. They gave me access to the family archive and offered me their time to contextualize and dig into the family's past.

[109] The details regarding the family's problems were recounted by José de Castro e Almeida's descendants in informal conversation.

[110] After the divorce, she managed her properties and income from writing to finance housing, studying and travelling for herself and her sons. For example, in a letter to Ana de Castro Osório, Almeida tells her that she has moved to Bern (Switzerland) and updates her friend about her sons' studies and love lives. Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to Ana de Castro Osório (Bern, 8 April 1920) [BNP, ESP. A/454].

monthly instalments with 10 per cent interest, a situation that made the company financially unviable.[111]

She also maintained a lifelong friendship with the leader of the Republican Party Afonso Costa, who was not only her first lawyer but also her financial adviser; she was also friends with the Count and historian João Ameal, and with Ayres d'Aguiar and his wife Renée Vallée, who worked for Fortuna Films (at the beginning for free) and became an indispensable part of the French branch of the company.[112] Apart from them, Almeida built a network of female friends who helped her to become an independent woman, such as the aforementioned Mathilde de Sauvayre, Ana de Castro Osório, and Pamela Boden, among others. Finally, her sons Luís Manuel and José Lopo played a fundamental role in their mother's life and backed her in her different projects. They were a great support during the divorce process and the separation from her youngest daughter until they began their studies in Switzerland, a hard decision taken by Almeida of which she was very proud:

> I suffer the *saudades* with patience, and consider the big sacrifice that I made in sending them there well worth it in every sense. I owe them this. They accompanied and helped me like men. And it is fair that now they think of themselves. Their health is better and they are in excellent spirits, and they write me letters that console me. All three of us work for the future that will reunite us in peace and with an even greater happiness as it will have been won inch by inch.[113]

While they also struggled with Almeida to be able to lead their own lives, lacking the resilience, talent, and strength of their mother, they were dependent on her financially on many occasions, thus creating a problematic symbiotic relationship of mutual help but also controlling tension. For that reason, although they wanted to be independent, she

[111] Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 9 October 1923) (PFC).

[112] On her relationship with Afonso Costa (Seia, 1871–Paris, 1937), Ayres d'Aguiar (Ponta Delgada, 1896–2000), and Renée Vallée (birth and death date unknown), see Aguiar, *Memórias dos meus tempos de cinema* and the private family collection from 1922 to 1925. On her other personal and professional relationships, for instance with João Ameal's aristocratic family (Coimbra 1902–Lisbon, 1982) see the letters preserved at the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (Espólio).

[113] Almeida to Ana de Castro Osório (Mont'Estoril, 11 July 1916) [BN ESP. A/450]: 'Soffro as saudades com paciencia e dou por bem empregado o grande sacrificio que fiz em todo o sentido mandando-os para lá. Devia-lhes bem isto. Acompanharam-me e ajudaram-me como uns homens. É justo agora que pensem em si. Estão melhores de saude e em excellente disposição de espirito e escrevem-me cartas que me consolam de tudo. Trabalhamos todos três para o futuro que ha-de reunir-nos em paz e com uma felicidade tanto maior quanto será conquistada palmo a palmo.'

involved them in the Fortuna Films project from the beginning, inviting them to join her production company but also asking them to grow up and become useful members of the family production house under her direction, as can be read in the following letter to one of her sons:

> My idea is to employ you and your brother by my side in order to work together. The thing is serious, and it can have a very long future. What is absolutely indispensable is that you both leave aside your childishness and thoughtlessness, your silly obsession with finery and outward appearances, and resolve to really help with the huge effort that I am undertaking.[114]

The division of the company between Portugal and France was quite efficient as the work and the artistic and technical crew were divided between both countries. While the filming was done in Portugal (both exteriors on location and interiors in the studio), the editing and international sales were centralized in Paris (which was a matter of criticism in the Portuguese press, as mentioned previously).[115] This resulted in a parallel process of selling *A Sereia de Pedra* in France, while *Os Olhos da Alma* was being filmed, and while *Noblesse* was being written and planned. In each case, every decision was supervised by Almeida, as her sons and her closest collaborator Aguiar informed her by letters or telegrams of the different processes that the films were simultaneously going through. She made sure to oversee almost all of the production processes, from the conception of the idea, the screenplay, the filming (being physically there in the case of the first film), the editing, the selling of the film to distributors and exhibitors, and even other commercial elements such as the promotional photographs and novelization.

In addition, she embodied a maternal producer figure far removed from the cold entrepreneur stereotype. Each reference to her in the press by any of her employees (whether technicians or actors) was always marked with respect and admiration, proving the existence of a caring environment that Almeida had achieved in her cinematographic relationships and the close and familial relationships that they had established. For example, Emilia Castelo Branco recognized that she 'would like to make films eternally'

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[114] Almeida, letter to one of her sons (Lisbon, 6 July 1922) (PFC): 'A minha idéia é empregar a ti e ao teu irmão ao meu lado a fim de trabalharmos juntos. A coisa é séria e pode ser de um larguíssimo future. O que é absolutamente indispensável é que vocês [illegible word] definitivamente a sua infantilidade e inconsciência, baboseiras patetas de elegâncias e exterioridades e se disponham a ajudar a valer o esforço gigantesco que estou fazendo.'

[115] Fonseca, 'Cousas Nossas. Un escandalo', *Cine-Lisboa*, n. 4 (Lisbon, 25 October 1923), 3.

with Almeida and her sons because, following 'the advice of D. Virginia de Castro e Almeida, who I adore with the affection that you could give to a mother, I managed to do everything' in acting.[116] In addition, the actor Artur Duarte described Almeida as 'the initiator of Lusitan cinema, not being an entrepreneur, but only a lovely friend with whom you would like to work', and the actor Francisco Senna and the operators Marcel Bizot and Charles Mallet also praised her.[117]

Therefore, Fortuna Films worked as a centralized system in which most of the creative and commercial decisions had to be taken by Almeida, who would travel between France and Portugal leaving her sons as delegates to supervise the processes and inform her of progress. They would be in charge, for example, of buying film stock and bringing it directly from France, for raising and borrowing money, for paying the crew's travel expenses, and so on. Additionally, her employee Aguiar, with whom Almeida developed a strong relationship of mutual respect and trust, was working in France editing different versions of *A Sereia de Pedra* and *Os Olhos da Alma* and managing the international sales and distribution of the copies. Aguiar later used the experience that he gained during his time with Fortuna Films to become a producer and an international distributor of films with his enterprises Aguiar and Cie. and Gray Film.[118]

However, the fast and ambitious production of films by Fortuna Films collided with the slow and unreliable opportunities to sell and rent out copies of their films.[119] This meant, as previously noted, the company was in a permanent financial crisis due to their debts to investors, which was a common problem that suffocated film production in small companies in the Iberian countries.[120] So, in order to be able to film her third feature-film

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[116] Claro, 'Emilia Branco', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 9 (Lisbon, 1 May 1923), 115–118: 'Com D. Virgínia de Castro e seus filhos, gostaria de fazer eternamente cinema. (...) [S]ob os conselhos de D. Virginia de Castro, a quem venero com a afeição que se pode dedicar a uma mãe, consegui fazer qualquer coisa.'

[117] 'Artur Duarte', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 8 (Lisbon, 15 April 1923), 101: 'A D. Virginia de Castro, chamos sem receio a iniciadora do cinema lusitano, não sendo uma emprezaria, mas, somente uma amiga encantadora com quem apetece trabalhar'. 'Uma auto-biografia', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 12 (Lisbon, 15 June 1923), 182–183 and João Bastos Nunes, 'Os operadores da "Fortuna-Film"', *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 6 (Lisbon, 15 March 1923), 74–75.

[118] For more on the relationship between Almeida and Ayres d'Aguiar, see Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 23 September 1923) (PFC) and Aguiar, *Memórias dos meus tempos de cinema*, 13–14 and Baptista*, Lion, Mariaud, Pallu,* Annex Fortuna Films/Cronologia (no page).

[119] The letters sent to her sons during 1925 prove how the financial viability of the company had become a problem. Just as an example, see Virgínia de Castro e Almeida letter to Luís Manuel (Paris, 20 January 1925) (PFC).

[120] As previously mentioned, Ribeiro explains the way in which the Portuguese film sale system to distributors was inefficient for the producers, making it almost impossible to recover the invested money in a reasonable timescale to continue production. In very similar terms, Pérez Perucha explains the crisis

project *Noblesse*, Almeida tried to enlarge the enterprise's network, creating agreements with other production houses, including Portugália, Pátria, and Invicta Film, foreseeing the benefits of negotiating and integrating with other national enterprises to survive the competition from the international film market that had been dominating Iberian exhibition since the end of the First World War.[121] However, their inability to reach an agreement resulted in the closure of Fortuna Films, and Invicta Film was forced to stop production (after six years), subsisting only by translating intertitles until 1928 and renting out its studio and laboratories until 1931.[122]

The end of Almeida's production company with her joining a more modern organization, exemplified by the Empreza de Films d'Arte Portugueza, in which she invested in 1925 to distribute Fortuna Films' productions in Brazil, as described in Chapter V, section 5.2, signalled the end of her familial enterprise. The network in which it was sustained and which revolved around her 'matriarchal' figure dissolved, and her sons were obliged to make their living far from her mother's entrepreneurial and financial protection.[123] However, the variety and length of her correspondence and the terms in which she refers to her friends indicates that she always counted on a close circle of friends and family in which the limits of personal and professional matters were totally

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and end of the Catalan industry around 1921 due to the impossibility of amortizing the high production costs of longer and more expensive feature films. Ribeiro, *Invicta Film, uma organização modelar*, 83 and Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino', 56.

[121] For more about Fortuna Films' negotiations with Pátria and Portugália Film, see Almeida to her son José Lopo (Paris, 28 September 1923). The initiation of discussions with Invicta Film are referred in Almeida to one of her sons (Paris, 3 January 1924) (PFC).

[122] It is noteworthy how the historian Henrique Alves Costa dares to predict that the end of Invicta Film was inevitable, and nothing would have change this, even if they had accepted Fortuna Films' proposal of cooperation. In my opinion, this assertion and the way it is written diminishes the effort made by Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and the possible mistake by Invicta Film of rejecting her offer, as that decision, among many other complex and external reasons, contributed to the closure of both production houses. Costa, *Breve história do cinema português*, 39. For more details about the demise of Invicta Film, see Ribeiro, *Invicta Film*, 84–85 and Ribeiro, *Filmes, Figuras e Factos*, 127–134.

[123] In a letter, she argues with her son Luís Manuel about his inactivity, since he is 26 years old, and asking him to trust her: 'I have made an attempt at work that went awry at first, but I will straighten it all out and, before I die, I plan to achieve it so, God willing, you will not receive less than my father left me. Nothing is easy in these current times.' Almeida to her son Luís Manuel (Paris, 6 October 1923) (PFC): Eu fiz uma tentativa de trabalho que deu torto ao princípio. Mas hei-de endireitar tudo isto e, antes de morrer conto conseguir o meu fim e se Deus quizer não ficarão com menos do que o meu pai me deixou. Nada é fácil pelos tempos que vão correndo.

blurred and with whom she established relationships of interdependence and affective autonomy.[124]

Almeida's use of the family as a springboard for her professional ventures breaks with the Portuguese aristocratic and bourgeois concept of family as women's life sole mission in a context that excluded them 'through habits or laws, from politics, from industry, from commerce, and from literature', as Eça de Queirós and Ramalho Ortigão described.[125] Being divorced and excluded from her aristocratic family, Almeida was not part of a traditional bourgeois family anymore but part of a trusting and caring network of family and friends. As a result, she achieved to stand out in all those mentioned spheres (politics, industry, commerce and literature) forbidden for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Portuguese society.

8.7 Familial vs. industrial

In her work on women film pioneers from different areas of the Western world, such as Shipman, Musidora, and Solser, the scholar Förster identified some common characteristics that can be assigned to all of them, despite their coming from very different cultural backgrounds, nationalities, and contexts. The most relevant commonalities were the creation of small, independent production companies to achieve and maintain total control over their projects, as well as their versatility, adaptability, and competence in switching between stage and screen. This showed strong resilience and the ambition to take entrepreneurial and professional risks by investing their own money. Also, 'it was essential to secure the collaboration of competent and loyal crew members', and Musidora and Shipman 'astutely attuned their self-promotion and public personas'.[126] Finally, Förster labelled the three of them as 'competent and clever craftswomen'.

Although I agree that both Cortesina and Almeida were 'clever and competent', to use Förster's adjectives, those is not the points I am most interested in. I am interested in

[124] For example, see the letter sent to the 3rd Countess de Ameal in which Almeida explains her personal, professional and political situation in very informal and friendly terms. Virgínia de Castro e Almeida to the 3rd Countess de Ameal (12 March 1937) [BNP. ESP. E37/5017].
[125] Eça de Queirós and Ramalho Ortigão, *As Farpas* (March 1872), 67: 'Em Portugal, uma mulher, excluída da política, da indústria, do comércio, da literatura, pelos hábitos ou pelas leis – fica apenas de posse de um pequeno mundo mora, seu elemento natural – a família.'
[126] Förster, *Women in the Silent Cinema*, 428.

the 'craftswomen' aspect.[127] It is this exact term that I would have applied to them as film producers, focusing on some characteristics of the concept such as the 'learning by doing' aspect; a certain need of both intellectual and physical requirements for the job that situated them in a middle-class professional category (far from aristocracy and far from manufacturers); and the need to fulfil the whole production process (investing time, money and effort) for the making of a single product (the film). Also, the dependency and collaboration with loyal crewmembers, as Förster points out. But I would go even further: in their case, they were not only loyal crew members but family with whom they established relationships of 'relational autonomy'.

Entering into the Iberian aspiring-to-be-industrial systems without much knowledge of film-making (as many other colleagues did) and learning through practice, Almeida and Cortesina counted on the support of their network of family and friends to carry on with their cinematographic enterprise. In their 'traditional' system, the familial objective was more important than the individual qualities or capacities, (and even more important than the individual desires, as we see in the arguments between Almeida and her sons). The 'personal genius' is suppressed by the collective, in opposition to modern conceptions of enterprise.[128] Their caring women-centred structures should not be a surprise, as they were in line with quantitative studies made of Portuguese families which evidence that solidarity and both daily and financial help usually flow from the female side of the family.[129] The same study, carried out by Pedro Vasconcelos, concluded that the networks of support are mostly familial, and particularly intergenerational, and that those gestures of help and support are usually made in a disinterested way, thereby helping to form the family into a collective body/agent and to maintain the group's social status.[130]

Nevertheless, the 'matrilineal' system that had promoted the joint career of the Cortesina sisters on the stage, working together and being managed (more or less) by their

[127] The word 'craftsmen' is a complex concept full of different connotations and some of them could not apply to Almeida and Cortesina's cases. For example, in his book devoted to the craftsman Richard Sennet gives a great importance to the final quality of the craft-made products. In the case of Fortuna Films' productions, I only can assert their intention of making high quality films and in the case of Cortesina Films, even that is unknown. For a historical and philosophical reflection about the characteristics of craftsmanship, see Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008).

[128] Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 22.

[129] Pedro Vasconcelos, 'Redes de apoio familiar e desigualdade social: estratégias de classe', *Análise Social* XXXVII, n. 163 (2002): 519.

[130] Vasconcelos, 'Redes de apoio familiar': 510–511.

mother, was insufficient and inefficient for their move to cinema as they aspired to achieve a position apart from acting. Also, Almeida's custom of controlling her finances and domestic staff, her ability to draw capital from her lands and assets and, more importantly, to manage her own career as a writer did not apply to a medium in which many commercial and artistic aspects involved variables that were out of her control. In the context of the Iberian film industries of mid-1920s, the small familial organizing structure was no longer possible, and cinematographic careers tended to develop individually outside a family network, as in other complex organizations.

The change towards a male-centred, pseudo-industrial capitalist structure kept women away from roles of responsibility, and female-centred production houses, like Fortuna Films and Cortesina Films, were dismissed by the historiography as the efforts of enthusiastic amateurs. In addition, Almeida and Cortesina did not match the stereotype of the 'autonomous' individualistic hero-producers that would be highlighted by cinema history. However, this transformation was not only restricted to the sphere of cinema, although its higher dependency on technology and investment made it an even more masculinized cultural system. The 'normalization' and 'globalization' of Iberian capitalist societies during the first third of the twentieth century disempowered the family as the decisive element in 'directing the adjustment of the individual to society' and left anonymous corporations to do so, as Herbert Marcuse explained in *Eros and Civilization*.[131] According to Marcuse:

> This change derives from the fundamental economic processes which have characterized, since the beginning of the century, the transformation of 'free' into 'organized' capitalism. The independent family enterprise and, subsequently, the independent personal enterprise cease to be the units of the social system; they are being absorbed into large-scale impersonal groupings and associations. At the same time, the social value of the individual is measured primarily in terms of standardized skills and qualities of adjustment rather than autonomous judgment and personal responsibility.[132]

Therefore, in the industrialized societies described by Marcuse, there is no room for face-to-face verbal agreements, informal (or even collective) non-hierarchical structures, or improvised projects.

[131] Marcuse, 'The dialectic of civilization', 96.
[132] Marcuse, 'The dialectic of civilization', 96.

As the beginnings of feature-film production in Spain were described in *La Pantalla*, it was not systematic or organized. On the contrary, it was 'sudden, spontaneous, adventurous'. The journalist Díaz Morales described the moment of conceiving a film: 'A few comedians met in a dressing room, grabbed a theatre screenplay or the life episodes of a famous bandit and, among laughs, smoke, little money, and much enthusiasm, they created a Spanish *pandereta.*'[133] This situation would not be very different in Portuguese silent cinema, which the historian Costa described as a 'continued lack of industrial structures'.[134]

However, as Alonso García pointed out, the main problem of the Spanish cinematographic economy around 1915 is that 'it was installed in a no man's land of "dual existence", in which the personal trust rules of the small familial business are dissolved, but the rules of professional treatment of the big market are not yet established'.[135] Even as the system slowly developed a greater professionalization, cinema in the Iberian countries would not complete the institutionalization of practices during most of the silent period. This is why the method of trial and error continued, as proven by the rise and fall of so many companies devoted to different areas of cinema during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

This 'no man's land' opened a window in the 1920s for women to experiment with the new 'cultural apparatus', but this era of experimentation ended when the 'system of institutional authority' was figured out and a gendered division of labour was established, using the Marcuse concept of 'mature civilization':

> From the primal father via the brother clan to the system of institutional authority characteristic of mature civilization, domination becomes increasingly impersonal, objective, universal, and also increasingly rational, effective, productive. At the end, under the rule of the fully developed performance principle, subordination appears as implemented through the social division of labor itself.[136]

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[133] Díaz Morales, 'Las primeras mujeres', *La Pantalla,* n 58 (Madrid, 10 March 1929), 966: 'Era, por el contrario, brusca, espontánea, de empresa aventurera. Se reunían en un camerino un puñado de comediantes, apresaban un libreto de teatro o los episodios de la vida de un bandolero célebre, y de entre carcajadas, humo, poco dinero y mucho entusiasmo, sacaban una pandereta española.'

[134] Costa, *Histórias do cinema*, 24: 'Continuada ausência de estructuras industriais'.

[135] Alonso García, 'De arañas y moscas', 137: 'la economía cinematográfica española se encontraba instalada en una tierra de nadie de la "existencia dual", en el que se disuelven las normas de confianza personal del pequeño comercio familiar pero no se instauran las reglas de trato profesional del gran mercado.'

[136] Marcuse, 'The dialectic of civilization', 89.

As cinema was advancing towards an increasingly legislated, controlled, and systematized production system, the domain of the technology and capital also became increasingly discriminatory.[137]

Therefore, the possibilities of access to modern ways of production were taken from women and other unprivileged individuals, without making this explicit or creating a rule for it. The social division of labour and the search for rationality, effectiveness, and productivity made it obvious to capitalists that a small group of prominent trustworthy men had to be in charge. Marcuse continues: 'Society emerges as a lasting and expanding system of useful performances; the hierarchy of function and relations assumes the form of objective reason: law and order are identical with the life of society itself.'[138] That is, in 'civilized' and developed systems, the social role of each individual in society is defined and hierarchized behind a disguise of a natural order.

In this sense, women were excluded from positions of responsibility behind the camera as a logical next step, as if they had never belonged there, and their past experiences were conceived as 'failures' inside imperfect, uncontrolled, and primitive systems evolving into more sophisticated, proper, male-centred industries. According to Alonso García, this systematization was a common characteristic of capitalist societies that tend to 'give center, sense, and closeness, to the diverse cultural praxis'. The main reason for this would be that 'defining strictly an expressive form and a social practice allows them to monetize, through specialization, the creation prices and the production expenditures'.[139]

Therefore, the capitalist tendency of cinema and its intertwinement with banks and private or public investors took charge of the praxis and constructed the cinema-system where women could find neither voice nor space. In other more robust industries like that in the U.S., women, who were an important percentage of the managing creative professions, were ousted.[140] In other precarious cinematographies such as the Spanish or Portuguese ones, it was unnecessary to oust them as they already had very little space,

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[137] For the U.S. context see, Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood*, 202 and Gaines, *Pink-Slipped*, 24, 28. For the Italian context, see Monica Dall'Asta, in 'Introduzione. L'altra metà del cinema muto italiano', in *Non solo dive*, ed. Monica Dall'Asta (Bologna: Cineteca di Bologna, 2008), 9–10.

[138] Marcuse, 'The dialectic of civilization', 89.

[139] Alonso García, 'De arañas y moscas', 142: 'Pero, en las sociedades capitalistas, existe una tendencia a otorgar centro, sentido y cierre, a las diversas praxis culturales, configurando un sistema. Definir estrictamente una forma expresiva y una práctica social permite rentabilizar, mediante la especialización, los costos de creación y los gastos de producción'.

[140] Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood*, 180–181.

but the remote possibility for them to achieve decision-making positions in the industry evaporated. In fact, it was Almeida's extraordinary situation as a divorced Portuguese landowner and writer that allowed her to take control over her income (from various sources) and enter into negotiation with several financial entities which lent her money to produce films. However, it did not substitute for her personal network that sustained her and allowed her to settle her debts. Also, Cortesina's already established professional career as a performer provided her the fame and fortune needed to film-make and her caring family network (formed by her mother and siblings) supported her to leap from variety-show dancer to cinema actress and, later producer.

This means that the ten years that separated the lives and professional trajectories of Cortesina and Almeida up to 1930 were crucial to their prospects in cinema. In the early 1920s, it was still possible for a female-led family to dream about the possibility of making movies and achieving success in the production of films in the Iberian countries in order to boost their careers artistically and financially. For that reason, the Cortesina and Almeida families were encouraged to invest their money in the creation of production houses. Less than ten years later, a female-led family could hardly dream about that possibility.[141] They already knew that women would only have space either in fame-inducing roles as actresses or in undervalued professions inside the cinematographic craft.

Therefore, Iberian cinemas in 1920 were still pre-industrial experimental territories in which women could try their luck. In 1930 they had already proven themselves to be hostile capitalist environments in which the chances of success were meagre for men and almost impossible for women – and even more so with the advent of sound and the crisis that this produced in the Spanish and Portuguese cinematographic contexts and the

[141] The only known professional producer-director in the Iberian Peninsula during the 1930s was Rosario Pi (Barcelona, 1899 – Madrid, 1967) who began working on cinema with the advent of the Spanish Second Republic and finished with the Spanish Civil War in 1936. She produced *El hombre que se reía del amor* (Benito Perojo, 1933), screenplayed *Doce hombres y una mujer* (Fernando Delgado, 1934) and *El gato montés* (Rosario Pi, 1935), which she also directed. *Molinos de viento* (Rosario Pi, 1938) was the second and last film she directed. In Portugal, the next female film-maker in a position of power after the advent of the military dictatorship in 1926 was Barbara Virgínia (Lisbon, 1923 – São Paulo, 2015) who directed *Três dias sem Deus* (1946) two decades later. For Rosario Pi see Susan Martin-Marquez, 'Pioneering Agency: Rosario Pi', *Feminist Discourse and Spanish Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Pres, 1999), 49–84. For Barbara Virginia see Ricardo Vieira Lisboa, 'Três dias sem Deus by Bárbara Virgínia. A different form of representation', in *Women in Iberian Filmic Culture*, ed. Elena Cordero-Hoyo and Begoña Soto-Vázquez (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect Books, 2020), 49–69 and Ana Catarina Pereira and William Pianco, 'Bárbara Virgínia – A primeira realizadora de cinema, em Portugal', *International Journal of Cinema*, n. 2 (2016): 18–29.

convulse political period.[142] Therefore, cinema conception and professionalization – even if not already achieved in the Iberian countries – was shaped in relation to modernity, industry, machines, and mechanical reproduction (all male-associated aspects) and distanced itself from more traditional spaces closer to theatre such as creative arts and family structures, where women had a chance, a difficult and unlikely one, but at least a chance.

[142] For Spain see Román Gubern, 'El cine sonoro (1930–1939)', *Historia del cine español*, ed. Román Gubern et. al. (Madrid: Cátedra, 2010), 123–179. For Portugal see João Bénard da Costa, 'O advento do sonoro e a tentativa do cinema como indústria', *Histórias do cinema* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional/Casa da Moeda, 1991), 45–49.

Summary and closing remarks

In other Western countries feminist film scholars have done an impressive amount of work researching women film-makers' careers and rightfully returning them to the first thirty years of national cinema histories. However, in the Iberian region there is still work to be done. There is a lack of research into women's trajectories and contributions to Portuguese and Spanish silent cinema, and those women's expectations, objectives, opportunities, and frustrations are mostly unknown. For that reason, this dissertation has applied some of the feminist film historiography theoretical frameworks, questions, and methods that have allowed important revelations about women's contributions to silent cinema in other regions in the reconstruction of the 'careerographies' of two women film-makers: Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and Helena Cortesina.[1]

Moreover, I aimed to adapt them to the specificities of the geographical context of the Iberian Peninsula and shed some light over this field, mainly focusing on archival research and comparison of the careers of Almeida and Cortesina. As two examples of women working in Portuguese and Spanish cinema, respectively, in the early 1920s, their biographies partially reveal aspects of female experience in a broad number of areas: the intersection of film-making with other professions in which women were present and active, the cultural milieu of Lisbon and Madrid around the 1920s, the intertwinement of familial and professional networks, and so on. Even though these were two individual and particular cases, their comparison with other Iberian examples allowed me to identify the level of their *extraordinariness* (more in Almeida's case and less in Cortesina's), and establish patterns that could help in understanding other examples or even a collective. They also allowed me to conclude how escaping the historiographical hegemony of 'film as source' and researching with an intermedial and transnational approach was absolutely crucial when considering the lives of privileged, urban, and professional women working in culture and entertainment.

As previously noted, cinema historians – unlike researchers in other, more ancient fields of study – have the privilege of the availability of multiple sources (films, working documentation, contemporary publications, personal testimonies, etc.) from which to

[1] As described in the introduction of this thesis, 'careerographies' is a term coined by Annette Förster to define the reconstruction of multilayered, interdisciplinary, affirmative and non-hierarchical careers 'which comprise a number of roles on stage and on screen, of films and of writings'. Förster, *Women in the Silent Cinema*, 11.

construct their narration and try to answer the question raised by Jane Gaines: 'what happened?'[2] However, paraphrasing Kay Armatage's thoughts on the matter: the existing historiographical concepts and methodologies have demonstrated their inability and inappropriateness to spot, analyse, and describe women's experiences and contributions to cinema's systems internationally.[3]

For that reason, ***Part I. 'Historiographical, conceptual, and methodological challenges to researching women's access to silent cinema'*** has been devoted to unpacking some of the main challenges of researching women's access to and participation in silent cinema in Portugal and Spain. The issues described in this first part have been inspired by my personal researching and writing experience. The subjective division into historiographical, conceptual, and methodological categories helped me to face these challenges equipped with a theoretical base coming from a background of feminist silent film history that has developed in me a heightened level of historiographical and methodological self-awareness.

Embracing the experience of scholars who have previously encountered similar problems has allowed me to transform these challenges from obstacles to opportunities for further reflection. That is the reason why in **Chapter I. 'Historiographical challenges'** I subscribe to an alternative way of history-writing that, following Richard Maltby suggestion,[4] I named in this dissertation 'new cinema histories from below' – deriving from the concepts 'new cinema history' and 'history from below' – which breaks with what positivist and conventional historiography has understood as an objective, universal, legitimized description of an existing past, and text-centred approaches to film history. The 'new cinema histories from below' approach – developed by feminist scholars, although naming it differently[5] – argues in favour of a more social and cultural cinema history that acknowledges the fragmentation of sources; the appreciation of individual stories over general ones and specific over abstract characteristics; the avoidance of linear and causal explanations in the historical discourse; and the openness of conclusions that are not presented as definitive or definitory. In addition, by emphasizing my research process I have pointed out how the contradictions and challenges that this dissertation presented are aligned with my determination to

[2] Gaines, *Pink-Slipped*, 13.
[3] Armatage, *The Girl from God's Country*, 5.
[4] Maltby, 'On the Prospect of Writing Cinema History from Below'.
[5] Such as Vivian Sobchack. Sobchack, 'What Is Film History?'

acknowledge that I am writing from a certain limited 'locus of speech', using Djamila Ribeiro's term.[6] In my case, this acknowledgement entails the recognition that I am writing from the privileged, but also limited, position of a white Iberian (having studied in both Spanish and Portuguese universities) cisgendered female scholar.

Chapter II. 'Conceptual challenges' was directly triggered by Audre Lorde's statement 'for the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' referred in the first chapter.[7] I believe that the use of the conceptual categories commonly found in film history would not make a significant impact from a critical perspective. Incorporating a few female film-makers' names in the canon would not be sufficient to dismantle its monolithic structures. My research revealed that only a radical theoretical restructuring of the traditional categories of 'authorship', 'woman', and 'pioneer' would give real space and voice in silent cinema histories to other subjects and agencies outside the established white male privileged collective.

In relation to the category of 'authorship', I endorsed the solution proposed by Radha Vatsal, who suggests writing a 'non-authoritative' filmography, even though it could destabilize film history and problematize the distinctions between *task* and *position* in silent film productions.[8] I also found it relevant to draw on Monica Dall'Asta's work in order to deal with the deconstruction of the main subject of this study: the category of 'woman'. Dall'Asta suggests applying Iris Marion Young's interpretation of the concept of 'serial collective' to film studies, explaining how women were subjected to a patriarchal structure which restricted their opportunities, desires, and expectations inside film production, whether they recognized their experiences and oppressions as shared with other women or not.[9] By adopting this solution in this dissertation, I have avoided entering the labyrinth of analysis of Almeida and Cortesina's subjective dimension as women for which, mainly in Cortesina's case, there is a lack of sources. In addition, Hans Renders' and Sabina Loriga's thoughts on biography-writing and the need to historize and locate these case studies, Almeida and Cortesina, in their specific time, geography, ethnic group, class, culture, and sexuality were of great use in avoiding simplifications and generalizations.[10] Finally, I relied on the criticism of the category of 'pioneer' raised by

[6] Ribeiro, *O que é lugar de fala?*
[7] Lorde, 'The Master's Tools'.
[8] Vatsal, 'Reevaluating Footnotes', 124.
[9] Dall'Asta, 'What It Means to Be a Woman'.
[10] Renders, 'The Limits of Representativeness'; Loriga, 'The Role of the Individual in History', and 'La escritura biográfica'.

Kay Armatage, Rosanna Maule, and Begoña Soto-Vázquez in order to shift towards my understanding of 'new cinema histories from below', which considers the tasks carried out by anonymous female waged workers to be the foundation of the silent cinema businesses, although I could not explore it in this dissertation.[11]

Furthermore, the practical problems I have encountered, such as the disappearance of most of Almeida's and Cortesina's silent films, the dispersal of evidence of their lives in archives all around Europe and Ibero-America, and the brevity of their trajectories as film-makers within longer cross-media careers triggered methodological reflections around the instability of sources. Therefore, to be able to adopt the methodological ramifications that I needed to find biographical details of Almeida and Cortesina and contribute to 'new cinema histories from below', in **Chapter III. 'Methodological challenges'** the paths opened by the feminist scholars Monica Dall'Asta, Jane Gaines, Christine Gledhill, Michele Leigh, and Rosanna Maule were instrumental.[12] Moreover, the works of André Gaudreault, Phillipe Marion, and Tom Gunning were valuable when writing about early cinema's international and intermedial nature, and its periodization.[13] Finally, when focusing on Spanish and Portuguese nationalizing film histories, I have relied on Luis Alonso García, Tiago Baptista, Joan M. Minguet Batllori, and Begoña Soto-Vázquez.[14] For that reason, I have highlighted the need for diversity of sources other than text-based analysis, as well for transnational approaches and the importance of acquiring an intermedial perspective to understand the formation of, and access to, silent cinema.

Part II. 'The 'careerographies': Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (1874–1945) and Helena Cortesina (1903–1984)' is the core of my comparative research work. Through reconstructing the life stories of Almeida and Cortesina, the primary objective of this dissertation was to unearth everything about the careers of these two women who produced feature films in the Iberian Peninsula between 1921 and 1923. Until now, their names and contributions to cultural histories were mostly unknown and their biographies

[11] Armatage, 'Roughing It in the Bush'; Maule, 'Feminist Film History'; Soto-Vázquez, 'Weaving a Cinematographic Culture'.
[12] Dall'Asta and Gaines, 'Prologue. Constellations'; Gaines, *Pink-Slipped*; Gledhill, 'Introduction: Transnationalizing Women's Film History'; Leigh, 'Reading between the Lines'; and Maule, 'Feminist Film History'.
[13] Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction*; Gaudreault and Marion, 'The Cinema as a Model'; and Gunning, 'Early Cinema as Global Cinema'.
[14] Alonso García, 'De quimeras, engaños y pendencias'; Baptista, 'Nacionalmente correcto'; Minguet Batllori, 'Lo nuestro y lo ajeno'; and Soto-Vázquez, 'El censo, el mapa y el museo'.

were unwritten. For that reason, the writing of ***Part II*** has been the most challenging part of the work, because for years I have traced, and tried to make sense of, all the scattered information from disparate sources (letters, photographs, programmes, articles, books, films, shipping lists, birth, death, and marriage certificates, and so on) that I have been able to gather from international archives (both official and familial), libraries, and museums. The research process has brought me to different mediums and countries, and has forced me to diversify my methodologies and theoretical frameworks in order to decode and analyse meaning and context. Thus, the primary value of this dissertation has been the reconstruction of Almeida's and Cortesina's puzzled biographies, incorporating new information such as Almeida's personal vision as exposed in her letters and Cortesina's career in Buenos Aires after her exile.

Nonetheless, cinema in the Iberian Peninsula has remained the main focus of the research. Thus, it is the reason that ***Part II*** is divided into three chapters. The first, **Chapter IV. 'Before cinema, the professional background'**, describes both women's upbringing and the beginning of their careers: as a writer in Almeida's case and as a variety show dancer in Cortesina's. Their experiences as film-makers from the moment that they entered cinema as professionals until the moment they ended their production activity is narrated in **Chapter V. 'Incursion into the new medium: the experience of cinema'**. Here, I also compare film production in the Iberian countries in the 1920s to contextualize the situations that allowed Almeida and Cortesina access to creative control of films for a short period. In this chapter I relied on the historical works of Luis Alonso García, Tiago Baptista, Julio Pérez Perucha, and Alfredo Serrano.[15] Finally, **Chapter VI. 'After cinema, still a long way'** offers an analysis of the aftermath of their life trajectories after the closure of their production companies until their deaths, when their careers transitioned between countries and expressive mediums: Almeida went back to literature and lived in Switzerland, France, and Portugal, and Cortesina entered into theatre and cinema acting in Spain and Argentina.

After researching the full 'careerographies' of the two case studies, taking into account not only their experiences in cinema but also their background and later trajectories, ***Part III. 'The affective familial networks as a springboard to silent cinema'*** is devoted to identifying the elements that allowed Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and

[15] Alonso García, 'De arañas y moscas'; Baptista, *As cidades e os filmes* and *Lion, Mariaud, Pallu*; Pérez Perucha, 'Narración de un aciago destino'; Serrano, *Las Películas Españolas*.

Helena Cortesina to be two of the very few women who had access to film production in the early 1920s in the Iberian context, and highlights similarities and differences between them.

Therefore, in **Chapter VII. 'The two models of Iberian women's access to silent cinema'** I detail their different routes of access to cinema that, when compared with other Iberian film-makers, reveal two specific patterns. On the one hand, the path followed by Almeida: being considered part of the upper class and intellectual elite and coming from the world of literature, she found in film production a place to develop her own nationalistic and educative projects in this new medium. In order to delineate this route of access and understand the conflicting relationships between intellectuality, modernity, and cinema, the works of Vicente Benet, Joan M. Minguet Batllori, and Joana Matos Frias were helpful.[16] Also, different chapters of the anthologies *Mulheres na I República* and *A New History of Iberian Feminisms* have provided useful context for identifying the cultural and moral educative duties attributed to upper- and middle-class women in Iberian countries that became Almeida's purpose in life.[17]

The second path to accessing cinema is exemplified by Cortesina: the performer in variety shows who started by acting in films and, aspiring to have more creative control over her career and become a star, then created her own independent production enterprise to develop her own projects. The description of the stage context of the first decades of the twentieth century as described by Serge Salaün, and by contemporary writers such as Carmen de Burgos and Álvaro Retana, have been decisive in grounding my understanding of Cortesina's early professional milieu and her desire to surpass being categorized in certain ways that limited and constrained her career possibilities and life choices.[18]

Comparing the case studies, I realized the fundamental role that family played in Almeida's and Cortesina's careers, and it stood out as a decisive springboard for their leap into film-making. For that reason, I felt the need to devote **Chapter VIII. 'The relational autonomy of the familial network'** that the two producers established, with matrilineal caring and affective networks of family and friends providing the structures that enabled them to take risks economically, professionally, and personally in a creative field that in

[16] Benet, *El cine español*; Minguet Batllori, '¿Tú vas al cine?'; and Matos Frias, 'Cinema e modernismo'.
[17] Castro, Esteves and Monteiro, *Mulheres na I República*; and Bermúdez and Johnson, *A New History of Iberian Feminisms*.
[18] Salaün, 'Las mujeres en los escenarios españoles'; Burgos, *Confesiones de artistas* I and II; and Retana, *Historia del arte frívolo.*

the early 1920s was still in the initial process of institutionalization. Here, the feminist views of Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar on the concept of autonomy and affection have provided the main theoretical framework.[19] In addition, several other works focusing on the demographic, industrial, and economic histories of both countries allowed me to identify common and diverse trends.[20]

Closing remarks

The work done by feminist film scholars in the present century proves that there is a tendency to revisit film history and recover the names and stories of those women who played an important part in building the foundations of cinema: as singular individuals or as anonymous collectives. The absence of women in the institutional film narrative is not only an injustice to their memory, but also a great loss for film history itself. Without the recognition of women's roles, a deep gap in cinema history remains. For that reason, this dissertation deviates from a positivist and conventional historiography, raising up women's individual biographies in order to acknowledge their valuable contributions, but trying to deviate from the 'rescue' narrative. I see this as a starting point in delineating transnational and intermedia patterns, and ultimately uncovering information that could shed light on early cinema itself.

Women in silent cinema are a rare object of study, with many gaps and misinformation that makes it necessary to ground study of them on archival research and verified data, distrusting second-hand narratives. I recognize that feminist film studies still need time to establish themselves as part of the open historiographical dialogue in the Iberian countries. Also, imagination is needed to find possible answers to future conceptual challenges, apart from the ones that I identify in this dissertation – the notions of 'authorship', 'woman' as a homogenising category, and 'pioneer' – that would eventually require reform of the approach taken. Finally, feminist film historians will need expertise to develop new researching methods that allow them to overcome obstacles that

[19] Mackenzie and Stoljar, 'Introduction. Autonomy Refigured', 3–31.

[20] Such as Pereira, 'Demografia e desenvolvimento em Portugal'; Ramos, 'Culturas da alfabetização'; Guinote, 'A Mulher e o Mundo do Trabalho'; Baptista and Alves, 'As Mulheres trabalhadoras em Portugal' for the Portuguese context; Borderías Mondejar, 'La reconstrucción de la actividad femenina'; Otero-Carvajal, 'La sociedad urbana'; and Carballo Barral, 'La participación de las mujeres en el mercado laboral madrileño' for the Spanish context.

have not yet been pinpointed. Nevertheless, with this dissertation I have contributed to the description of three methodological challenges that obscure the discovery of female film-makers' footsteps during the first three decades of the twentieth century: the exclusively text-centred approach to film, the nationalistic approach, and the approach to cinema as an isolated medium. Consequently, I argue that a comparative approach is notably advantageous in silent cinema research in order to promote alternative sources outside the filmic text, to examine transnational traces, and to adopt intermedia perspectives to find, and narrate, women's biographies and their experiences and contributions to film culture.

I have found that comparing women's film careers in silent cinema requires examination of many aspects: the film industry and its practices; women's roles in society; and the connections of cinema with other mediums and professions. However, I have also found that what was most difficult was to get rid of preconceptions and misjudgments that are incorporated into our knowledge of cinema and women's history. Nonetheless, feminist film studies have already proven its resilience as an academic field, by overcoming the disparity between film history and film theory, and by finding convergence with other critical fields such as postcolonial and queer studies.

As mentioned above, my intention was to break the wall of conventional film historiography in the Iberian region and recover/narrate the stories behind the names of two of the few women known to have worked as film-makers in the early 1920s: Virgínia de Castro e Almeida in Portugal and Helena Cortesina in Spain. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that the endeavour I faced was not free of contradictions. As I have discussed in ***Part I. 'Historiographical, conceptual, and methodological challenges to researching women's access to silent cinema'***, the challenges of researching women film-makers during the first three decades of cinema are complex and diverse.

Therefore, my overall finding is that the reasons behind the absence of female experience and involvement in silent cinema in film history books come from a variety of aspects and cannot be simplified into one single gender-related reason. When pinpointing some of the reasons why Almeida and Cortesina have been left out of conventional text-based nationalistic film histories, I clarified in ***Part I*** that the main obstacles keeping them away from deserved recognition were the restrictive categories of 'authorship', 'woman', and 'pioneer', and also the lack of preservation of their films and their transnational and cross-media life stories. These are just some of the difficulties that I encountered during my own research process that, at a certain point, have obscured

access to my case studies and the narration of their 'careerographies'. Therefore, the aforementioned problems and their classifications into historiographical, conceptual, and methodological challenges are a subjective selection among many others that could be further developed in investigations to come. However, I now provide some reflections and solutions that could potentially facilitate future research in the field of feminist cinema history.

As already mentioned, the objective of this dissertation was not to inscribe Almeida's and Cortesina's names in their respective national film histories as the 'first women pioneers' but to register the limitations in history in which women had no place. Related to this point, the second conclusion, established in ***Part I*** and supported by the information collected in ***Part II***, is that, ironically, women who have been attributed the role of directors in the early films in which they participated are receiving sudden, and sometimes misplaced, attention to their careers.

In the case of Cortesina, her name has recently been included in a number of Spanish publications and websites for all the incorrect reasons: for being the alleged director of *Flor de España* (and therefore its author), or for being considered to be the first Spanish female pioneer in directing a fiction feature film. If none of these commercial and promotional 'tags' that are nowadays part of the fashionable vocabulary of 'rescuing' lost national female pioneers had been applied to Cortesina, she would not have entered into any film history books, in the same way that other women have not. If contemporary film histories had not identified her as the 'first', the 'pioneer', the 'director', the 'author', or the 'woman', her experience as a film-maker would still be overlooked. In fact, her contributions to Spanish film culture were actually very modest when compared to her contributions to Spanish theatre, Argentinian theatre, and Argentinian cinema culture. This paradoxical reality brought an appealing quality to my research, as I am conscious that I am arguing against those characteristics that make my work of any value in the eyes of film scholarship and the general public.

The case of Almeida is different as, without being the director of her films, her work as a producer, screenplay writer, artistic coordinator, editor, and owner of one of the four most prominent production companies in Portugal during the early 1920s, makes her an indispensable figure of Portuguese silent cinema history. However, she is still mostly seen as a tourist in cinematography and much more appreciated for her work as a writer in the female literary genealogy. Her role as a cultural agent and political representative in Europe has also been disregarded, even when her ideological position during the

Portuguese First Republic and Estado Novo frames her as a prominent example for understanding Portugal's nationalism during the first half of the twentieth century.

In fact, my research has revealed that there have also been political reasons that have affected the memory of Almeida and Cortesina in Iberian cultural histories. While Cortesina's erasure as a Republican activist by the Francoist regime after the Spanish Civil War was deliberate, I consider Almeida's oblivion to be a result of her paradoxical personality and problematic support of European dictatorships. Being such an ideologically unclassifiable person made Almeida a difficult character to vindicate either during the Estado Novo or following the advent of democracy after the Portuguese Carnation Revolution on 25 April 1974.

In addition, as evidenced in ***Part II. 'The 'careerographies': Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (1874–1945) and Helena Cortesina (1903–1984)'***, the reconstruction of Almeida's and Cortesina's biographies has been a slow, difficult, and methodologically uneven process. It has been fundamental to explore and cross a transnational and intermedial range of sources to understand the trajectory of these women in silent cinema. The lack of one of the most important objects for film studies – the films themselves – obliged me to open my research to other, usually secondary sources such as press reviews, photographs, musical scores, or personal letters. Also, the sparse information that is available from Almeida's and Cortesina's not heroic female life stories obliged me to enhance my imagination and speculative capacity in order to make sense out of scattered and conflicting pieces of information.

Using a comparative methodology to study the two Iberian film-makers who are the case studies in this dissertation, it is remarkable to conclude how the sources used to reconstruct their 'careerographies' support their professions and trajectories. On the one hand, in the case of Almeida, apart from the extant film *Os Olhos da Alma*, her surviving writings (books and letters, mainly) archived in institutional libraries, and also the transcription of letters provided by the family, gave me access to her inner thoughts and personal struggles during most of her life, as well as the process of the constitution and dissolution of Fortuna Films. On the other hand, in Cortesina's case, the access to multiple photographs has been one of the most valuable information sources for the different phases of her professional and personal trajectory; but they have also been a window on the archetypes and collective imageries imposed on Spanish women in the first half of the twentieth century. In addition, the musical score has revealed itself as a fundamental source for speculation about the dimension of the non-extant film *Flor de España* and

imagination of some of the scenes as inspired by the music. And last, but not least, informal conversations with family and friends who knew her personally added an affective layer that complemented more objective and neutral information with their intimate memories and emotions.

However, this conclusion is determined by the very specificity of my research and the partial access to the gathered archival material; the presented dichotomy between sources demonstrates the unbalanced importance given to written documents and visual and musical sources, which are key in the case of the career of the actress. The careers of Almeida as a writer and Cortesina as a performer have been translated into the traces that they left behind that are available to researchers. For that reason, I perceive the opening of a broader methodological reflection in the appreciation of sources of different natures – the need to break the hegemony of the film print as the centre of the text-based film history, and the written document as the most prominent material of historical interpretation.

A further conclusion regarding Almeida's and Cortesina's incursion into cinema, analysed in ***Part II***, is that while they did not exactly innovate, both of them participated in the consolidation of the cinematographic production systems in their respective capital cities at a pivotal moment of change. Their contributions fed the pseudo-industrial landscape, with their economic and creative efforts translated into the foundation of their production companies, together with their input as scenario writer in Almeida's case and actress in Cortesina's.

In particular, Fortuna Films played a fundamental role in the transition of the centre of film production in Portugal (from Porto to Lisbon), competing directly with Invicta, Caldevilla, and Pátria Film, but also establishing collaborations with Portugália Film. The one difference that Almeida tried to introduce in the Portuguese production landscape was the effort she put into dialoguing and negotiating with most of her main competitors. As proven by the letters I have analysed in this dissertation, her vision was to achieve more stable and efficient film production, sharing costs among enterprises and seeking a stronger financial structure which would allow the production of bigger and better feature films that could be distributed internationally, instead of remaining small, atomized production companies dependent on selling and distributing copies themselves, which made production nearly unprofitable.

Although Cortesina Film's involvement was not as crucial as Fortuna Films for shifting forces in the Spanish territory, it was a prototype for a development that took

place soon after when production in Catalonia declined and Madrid constituted itself as the Spanish film production centre. This change meant a diversification from the 'production at the expense of the director' system with the proliferation of the figure of the director/producer/actor. Many newcomers set up their own production companies between 1926 and 1928, financing one or two films designed to be successful products that would launch their careers and make them famous (usually with poor results). In this sense, Cortesina was a trailblazer in the Spanish capital in providing an example of this kind of production system in which the stars were responsible for designing and managing their own careers by controlling the films in which they performed.

Linked to these two models of access and inspired by Almeida's and Cortesina's long interartistic careers, the main conclusion that I draw in ***Part III. 'The affective familial networks as a springboard to silent cinema'*** is that, in the 1920s, Iberian cinema still had an undefined position in the national cultural and industrial landscapes (although in Portugal it was more delimited and organised than in Spain due to the existence of Invicta Film). In this sense, film-making played an instrumental role by acting as a mirror onto which each film-maker could project their expectations and goals. For Almeida, it was a way of connecting with a broad international heterogeneous public to spread her morally reformative and patriotic stories. For Cortesina, it was a platform that provided her with fame and visibility to, again, reach a broad international heterogeneous public that would legitimate her as a performer outside the frivolous stage.

Moreover, I conclude that, having very different objectives and trajectories, both women had two important aspects in common regarding their trajectory: their intermedia and transnational careers and their entrepreneurial instincts. Coming from a marginal position as women in the pseudo film industries, both needed to have the money and, therefore, the power to make decisions and give orders in male-dominated societies. For that reason, both took steps towards not appearing to be *threatening* to their male peers, by surrounding themselves with a safety net of family and friends and working in close partnership with a man (Almeida with Ayres d'Aguiar and, presumably, Cortesina with José María Granada).

Even more important than the cultural factors prohibiting women from cinema entrepreneurship was the commercial aspect of the business. In the theatre, the few women who attained administrative roles, apart from important leading actresses, were usually wives, mothers, fiancées, daughters, and/or lovers of male managers, writers, or actors. This supportive familial network allowed some of them to have control over their

careers. Through this familial or pseudo-familial system, women could become directors, managers, and/or company owners. With the institutionalization of the cinema industry, a medium closer to an advanced capitalist system, the structure that combined family with entrepreneurship was abandoned, and women consequently lost a public platform with access to power. Cinema in the Iberian Peninsula was no longer seen as the amateur, improvised, and chaotic medium of the early 1920s (in which familial companies could have a chance) but as a professional, capitalist, and technical male-oriented business by the late 1920s. Consequently, women's opportunities to have a managerial role and agency over their projects similarly disappeared. Although I base this conclusion on the experience of Almeida and Cortesina as women in positions of creative control, in general terms it is more a plausible hypothesis than a conclusion. Therefore, I see space for future development of a comparative study of the professional agency that women enjoyed in the Iberian theatrical and cinematographic mediums at the beginning of the twentieth century.

As cinema began to lose its appeal as an ideal pedagogic and educative medium with nationalistic purposes for the masses, this also hampered women's paths to becoming film-makers. In the Iberian countries specifically, this situation was aggravated by the end of the First Portuguese Republic in 1926 and the beginning of the military dictatorship that established close relations with a group of new critics-directors that aimed to convert cinema into a modern, vanguardist, and authorial art. Also in Spain, cinema from 1928 onwards became an even more hostile environment for female film-makers when it entered into a long financial, organizational, and creative crisis aggravated by the arrival of talking pictures.

However, this does not invalidate the fact that silent cinema – internationally – offered economic independence and social freedom to some women. In many Western countries they could earn their own money and enjoy a social status in the few fame-inducing positions inside the cinema industry, as actresses or (to a lesser degree) as scriptwriters; this allowed them to make their own professional decisions and even encouraged them to experiment as film producers or directors. Nevertheless, Iberian – reduced and emaciated – cinematographic cultures and the roles that women occupied in their morally traditional and religiously driven societies did not offer a platform for women to experiment with cinema as other stronger cinematographies did. As multiple examples in the *Women Film Pioneers Project* prove, in the United States and other European countries like France, Germany, the Scandinavian countries, and Italy,

showbusiness was one starting point that allowed women to become film stars, and subsequently many of them had the opportunity to become entrepreneurs who produced their own projects. In contrast, in Portugal and Spain the known examples of women entering film production or direction during the silent period, such as Almeida and Cortesina, were very rare. However, an exhaustive cartography of female producers and directors of the silent period in the Iberian countries is still to be done, as well as recovery of the 'careerographies' of other technical and creative professionals inside film-making. These subjects can be the object of research to come.

The lack of information about the formation of Cortesina Films, and its internal organization and decision-making processes, - in case a minimum organization and formal decision-making processes ever existed and were documented - prevented any conclusions from being drawn. However, the hypothesis that the production house was supported by a network of family and friends is a plausible one, taking into account the other professional and personal dynamics discussed in this dissertation and the very few testimonies available. By contrast, access to the numerous letters that Almeida sent to her sons concerning the enterprise, the collaborator Aguiar's memoires, and press interviews with the crew make it possible to conclude that Fortuna Films was a family-based production house led by Almeida. Although the power was centralized by her matriarchal figure, a few people from her close circle shared responsibility for the different steps in the film production and distribution processes in Portugal and France. Both women were quite unique cases in the Iberian context at the time, accomplishing the creation and management of their own production companies, making feature films in the early 1920s by applying their experience based on an inherited familial–matrilineal knowledge of domestic, financial, and professional management, as applied to their previous careers in other cultural industries.

From analysing these two female film-makers, I can state that their families were exceptional cases and do not lend themselves to generalizations, but could still illustrate women's situation in the Portuguese and Spanish artistic contexts of the era. They are examples of the cultural environment in which connected and privileged women enjoyed more freedom and, therefore, could develop, to a certain point, their artistic and personal projects. The affection and care that linked their production companies allowed them to take risks with their professional names and comfortable positions in other fields in giving cinema a chance, opening themselves to uncomfortable exposure and possible criticism.

They also received help and support to raise the necessary finance, and to make the managerial decisions, even when winding up the companies.

In any case, I do not intend supporting the position of these women inside their national film canons, as the central point of my argument is the need to operate at the margins and consider these two figures and their affective networks as examples of the contribution, and even more importantly of the potential contribution, that women could have had in the consolidation of transnational intermedia cultures. Their professional careers and trajectories are riddled with so much cross-fertilization, intersections, and boundary-crossings that they are examples of how the concepts and methods used in conventional national film historiography are not suitable for describing many experiences in cinema. Although traditional film history has played an important role in legitimating film studies and cinephilia inside academia, it has only elucidated a small and homogenous portion of the available knowledge. We must now recognize its theoretical and methodological inability to spot, embrace, and explain more effectively the diversity of film-makers around the globe. Either for not being pioneer enough, first enough, genius enough, commercial enough, or having enough artistry, most of the people working on cinema during its first three decades have been kept out of film history books, and principally they have been left out of the general knowledge about cinema culture, which is still grounded on big names and canonical lists of white male directors and perceived masterpieces.

Appendix A. Virgínia de Castro e Almeida's album





Photographs of Virginia Folque de Castro e Almeida Pimentel Sequeira e Abreu during her childhood, [dates unknown].

Private family collection (PFC).



Group portrait of Maria Luisa José da Costa, Constança J. da Costa, Maria Francisca José da Costa, Mariana J. da Costa, Virginia de Castro e Almeida, D. Luis de Castro e Almeida (both standing up in the middle) and José Cardoso, [Espinho, 1881].

Private family collection (PFC).



Portrait of Virginia de Castro e Almeida and her brother, Luis Filipe de Castro e Almeida, 2nd Count of Nova Goa [unknown date].

Private family collection (PFC).



Amateur photograph of Counts of Nova Goa with family and friends, [Praia de Espinho, Casa de Viscondessa de Veiros, September 1888] (top) and family image of a young Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (Tia Gi), [date unknown] (bottom).

Private family collection (PFC).





Virginia de Castro e Almeida with a guitar and younger her cousins, [unknown date].

Private family collection (PFC).



Virginia de Castro e Almeida knitting at the window, [unknown date].

Private family collection (PFC).



Group photograph of José Izidro de Seabra Mouzinho (in the chair), Julia and Beatriz Mouzinho, Virginia de Castro and Almeida (second from the right) and her husband Jõao da Motta Prego, [unknown date].

Private family collection (PFC).



Virginia de Castro e Almeida with her two sons Luís Manuel and José Lopo, [estimated date around 1900].

Private family collection (PFC).



D. Virginia de Castro e Almeida

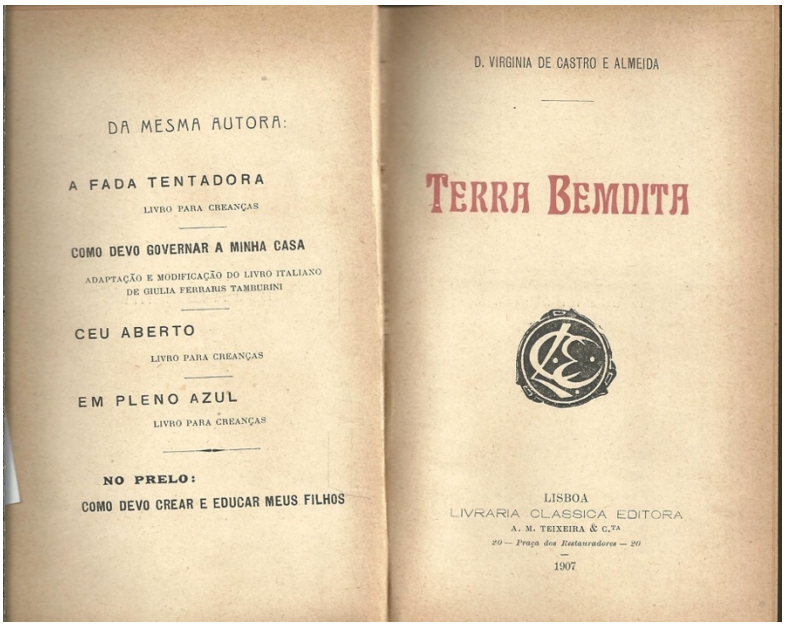
Foi ante-hontem julgado definitivamente, no Supremo Tribunal de Justiça, o processo de divorcio intentado pela brilhante escriptora e nossa illustre collaboradora sr. D. Virginia de Castro e Almeida contra seu marido o sr. João da Motta Prego, tendo a sentença sido pronunciada a favor da mesma senhora, por unanimidade.

Short article about the favourable judgement obtained by Virginia de Castro e Almeida in the divorce process against her husband João da Mota Prego in *A Capital*, n. 2.363 (Lisbon, 15 May 1917), 1.

Periodical's digital archive of the Hemeroteca Municipal de Lisboa.



D. VIRGINIA DE CASTRO E ALMEIDA. — Depois do *Trabalho Bemdito*, romance todo de bondade, publicou a illustre escriptora D. Virginia de Castro e Almeida *O Capital Bemdito*, editado pela Livraria Classica Editora e que constitue um legitimo successo. Entre as escriptoras portuguezas a auctora d'estas duas obras destaca-se pela segurança do estylo e pela amenidade do entrecho dos seus lindos livros.



DA MESMA AUTORA:

A FADA TENTADORA
LIVRO PARA CREANÇAS

COMO DEVO GOVERNAR A MINHA CASA
ADAPTAÇÃO E MODIFICAÇÃO DO LIVRO ITALIANO DE GIULIA FERRARIS TAMBURINI

CEU ABERTO
LIVRO PARA CREANÇAS

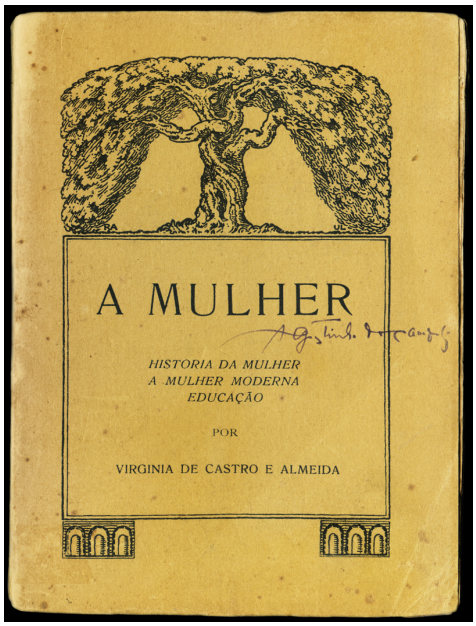
EM PLENO AZUL
LIVRO PARA CREANÇAS

NO PRELO:
COMO DEVO CREAR E EDUCAR MEUS FILHOS

D. VIRGINIA DE CASTRO E ALMEIDA

TERRA BEMDITA

LISBOA
LIVRARIA CLASSICA EDITORA
A. M. TEIXEIRA & C.TA
20 — Praça dos Restauradores — 20
1907



A MULHER

HISTORIA DA MULHER
A MULHER MODERNA
EDUCAÇÃO

POR

VIRGINIA DE CASTRO E ALMEIDA

Virgínia de Castro e Almeida being reviewed in the press as a writer in *Ilustração Portuguesa*, n. 230 (18 July 1910), 72 and *O Jornal da Mulher* (November 1911) and two examples of her early publications: *Terra Bemdita* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1907) and *A Mulher* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1913).

Blog Mulheres Ilustres and Iberlibro



D. VIRGINIA DE CASTRO E ALMEIDA

A "SEREIA DE PEDRA"

UMA ESCRITORA PORTUGUESA

autora de uma novela cinematografica que vai ser exibida em Paris

A sr.ª D. Virginia de Castro e Almeida, escritora ilustre que tem vivido na Alemanha e na França, regressou ha pouco a Lisboa e hospedou-se singelamente num hotel do Chiado.

Do estrangeiro trouxe a paixão do *film*. Com a sua voz cheia de serenidade, de confiança, quasi afogada, ela expõe, rapidamente, as suas ideias a quem a entrevistou:

—O *film* é uma arte, mas como se faz lá fóra...

—Uma arte propria...

—Absolutamente. Os alemães, que são mestres em propaganda, utilizam-no como o seu melhor meio.

—Quando pensou em fazer a sua pelicula...

—Ha tempos já, quando estava na Alemanha. Lá desconhece-se absolutamente Portugal. «Portugal?»—dizem. «Ah! Bem sei, uma provincia de Espanha». Ouvia isto repetidas vezes e pensei em fazer tornar conhecido o meu país...

—Por meio do cinematografo...

—Exactamente! Julguei que podia aproveitar um conto que tinha intitulado: «Obra do Demonio». Mas enganei-me. Tive que o refundir quasi inteiramente e dar-lhe um novo titulo: a «Sereia de Pedra...»

—Com uma nova tecnica...

—O *film* tem que viver da vida rapida, nervosa, alucinante que ora decorre. A acção tem que ser viva. Precisava dar á minha obra, não só um entrecho fulminante, mas os eternos termos humanos de paixão e de amor, e assegurar-lhe um *encadrement* artistico.

—Já se fizeram *films* portugueses...

—Já. Apenas tiveram saída em Portugal e no Brasil. Não são perfeitos. Por vezes a acção é arrastada; o entrecho banal para as grandes plateias acostumadas a ter sob os olhos beleza e arte, ouvindo uma musica feita expressamente para o que estão vendo...

—Onde foi filmada a «Sereia de Pedra?»

—Em Tomar, no Convento de Cristo. Uma rapariga fria como uma pedra de catedral que vê á roda de si o amor, multiplicado em paixões, e que o deixa morrer insensivel e triste... Ha invocações historicas; feiras; desfolhadas, pegas de touros, campos e lezirias...

—Emquanto lhe importou a pelicula...

—Desculpe que não lhe diga por emquanto. Já gastei, pelo menos, duzentos contos. Quasi todo o capital é meu. Não quiz deixar de fazer uma coisa bem feita. Imagine, fizeram-se dez mil metros de fita, para só se aproveitaram dois mil, que são uma maravilha... A *Sereia de Pedra* foi filmada por duas maquinas, o que representa uma novidade em Portugal...

—Onde será exibida?

—Primeiro em Paris. De lá trouxe muitos artistas comigo e o ilustre «metteur-en-scène», Gance, que é uma autoridade e um jornalista distintissimo. Todos os *films* que ele enscena já estão previamente vendidos.



Ciné-Miroir 23

"CINÉ-MIROIR" AU PORTUGAL

LA SIRÈNE DE PIERRE

IL y a quelques mois, quelques personnalités portugaises, désolées de voir que les œuvres dramatiques et littéraires de leur pays étaient privées de l'appoint de popularité qu'apporte le cinéma aux drames et aux romans dont il utilise les intrigues, vinrent chercher en France un metteur en scène capable de transporter sur l'écran quelques-unes de leurs œuvres nationales.

L'âme de ce groupement était Mme Virginia de Castro, romancière célèbre dans la république péninsulaire. Après mûres réflexions, ce fut M. Roger Lion qui fut choisi pour tenter cette épreuve de collaboration franco-portugaise. M. Roger Lion ayant, d'accord avec Mme Virginia de Castro, établi le scénario cinématographique du roman que la poétesse souhaitait tout d'abord voir porter à l'écran, composa sa troupe et partit pour Lisbonne au début de l'été. Aujourd'hui, ce film est fini, et bientôt il sera projeté dans le même temps sur les écrans de France et sur ceux de Portugal.

La Sirène de pierre, tel est le titre de l'œuvre ainsi réalisée. L'action s'en déroule presque tout entière dans un monastère perché comme un nid d'aigle au flanc de la montagne et qu'habitait jadis une communauté de moines guerriers, les Templiers, dont les rois de Portugal utilisaient les services contre les Maures. Dans ce cadre d'un admirable romantisme se noue un violent drame d'amour et de jalousie, comme en sont friands tous les amis du cinéma. Ce drame est d'une belle émotion mais ce n'est probablement pas lui qui suscitera chez nous le plus de curiosité.

Nous nous imaginons volontiers que le Portugal ne se différencie en rien de l'Espagne. La Sirène de pierre *détruira cette erreur en nous montrant l'originalité profonde du Portugal, de ses habitants, de ses mœurs qui, malgré le voisinage, ne doivent rien à l'Espagne. M. Roger Lion, avec un goût très sûr, n'a en effet oublié dans sa bande aucun des détails qui nous font, pour ainsi dire, vivre durant près de deux heures, de la vie quotidienne des paysans portugais. Voici dans une ruelle blanche, où la poussière fait un tapis, un amoureux à cheval qui vient au rendez-vous donné par sa belle et sur la terrasse ombragée de palmiers, la belle attend en souriant.*

Voici, au bord d'une prairie, les garçons et les filles qui dansent le léger et nerveux fandango, pendant que les mandolinistes et les joueurs d'accordéon scandent les pas des danseurs du son de leurs instruments en clignant de l'œil.

Voici, sur la place brûlée de soleil d'une petite ville, deux paysans qui, à l'heure du marché, et parmi la curiosité passionnée des marchands et des acheteuses, s'affrontent dans un meurtrier duel au bâton... Voici sur la route en lacets qui gravit la colline aride et rocheuse, la diligence au tintinabulant attelage de mules. Voici, surtout, la plazza et sa course si différente de la course espagnole que nous connaissons pour l'avoir vue à Saint-Sébastien ou à Madrid pendant un rapide voyage, à moins que ce ne soit sur l'écran d'un de nos palaces cinématographiques.

" *J'ai trouvé au Portugal un accueil vraiment touchant, nous disait, il y a quelques jours Roger Lion. Comme on y aime la France qui, malgré ses erreurs politiques, reste toujours la grande nation et le cerveau du monde! Voulez-vous quelques exemples de cet amour? Dans un club chic de Lisbonne, un officier de la garde républicaine est assis à côté de ma femme et de moi. Entendant notre conversation, il se tourne vers nous et nous dit en français :*

" *Permettez-moi de vous saluer. J'aime tant la France, qui est ma seconde patrie!* "

" *Parmi de multiples décorations, cet officier portait notre croix de guerre.*

" *A Thomar, à trois kilomètres d'une gare où j'ai* " *tourné* " *la plus grande partie de mon film, j'entre chez le pharmacien qui* " *s'excuse de parler si péniblement le français* ", *mais ajoute :* " *Je lis très bien votre belle langue. Tous* " *mes auteurs sont français.* " *Et, prenant un volume dans son tiroir, il me le tend. C'est un volume français, un volume de philosophie : Néant et Survie! Voilà les distractions d'un Homais portugais dans un pays où, il est vrai, il ne saurait exister une Mme Bovary!*

" *Durant tout mon séjour, tant dans les villes que dans les campagnes, tout le monde s'ingénia à faciliter notre tâche. Les autorités de la petite ville où je* " *tournais* " *s'étaient constituées en* " *comité* " *pour aider les cinématographistes. Il y avait le délégué qui recrutait les figurants, celui qui s'occupait des hôtels où logeaient les artistes, celui qui indiquait les coins intéressants, etc.* "

Un tel accueil ne va-t-il pas donner à ceux de nos metteurs en scène qui s'expatrient difficilement le désir de passer la frontière?

R. J.

A LA PLAZZA : LE TORÉADOR VIENT D'ÊTRE BLESSÉ A MORT PAR LE TAUREAU

UN AMOUREUX, A CHEVAL, AU RENDEZ-VOUS DONNÉ PAR SA BELLE

UNE PORTEUSE D'EAU, AU SEUIL D'UN ANCIEN MONASTÈRE PERCHÉ COMME UN NID D'AIGLE AU FLANC DE LA MONTAGNE, ET QU'HABITAIT JADIS UNE COMMUNAUTÉ DE MOINES GUERRIERS, LES TEMPLIERS

Interview to Virgínia de Castro e Almeida about Fortuna's first feature film, *A Sereia de Pedra* (Lion, 1922) in *Diário de Lisboa*, n. 402 (Lisbon, 26 July 1922), 5 (left) and a French review about the film in *Ciné-Miroir*, n. 18 (Paris, 15 August 1923), 23 (top right).

Periodical's digital archive of Casa Comum and Private collection, respectively.



Logo depois de casado, o rico lavrador foi com sua esposa á famosa festa dos taboleiros em Thomaz.



O jogo do páu no dia da festa dos Taboleiros



Images of different scenes of *A Sereia de Pedra* published with a long synthesis of the film for its release in Brasil in *A Scena Muda*, n. 218 (Rio de Janeiro, 28 May 1925) and n. 219 (Rio de Janeiro, 4 June 1925), 11–13.

Periodical's digital archive of Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira.



O trabalho junto á larcira.





TIVOLI

AVENIDA DA LIBERDADE, 160

TELEFONE N. 5474

APRESENTA
DURANTE
ESTA SEMANA

OS OLHOS
DA
ALMA

SUPERFILM PORTUGUEZ EM SETE PARTES
DE
D. VIRGINIA DE CASTRO
E ALMEIDA

Realisação de ROGER LION,
o enscenadôr de "A SEREIA DE PEDRA"
e
"A FONTE DOS AMORES"

INTERPRETES

Eduardo Brasão
Charles Maxudian
Jean Murat
Artur Duarte—João Lopes
Nestor Lopes — Francisco Sena
Emilia de Oliveira
Gil Clary
Maria Emilia Branco

A acção deste film passa-se na Nazareth, em Lisboa e na Batalha. ★ ★ ★ Explendidas paisagens marítimas. ★ ★ ★ Sumptuosos interiores. ★ ★ ★ Enrêdo curioso e comovente.

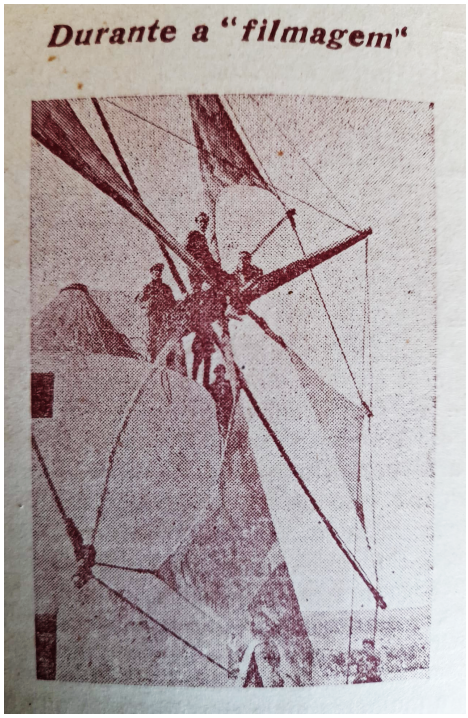
Imp. Libanio da Silva — Lisboa

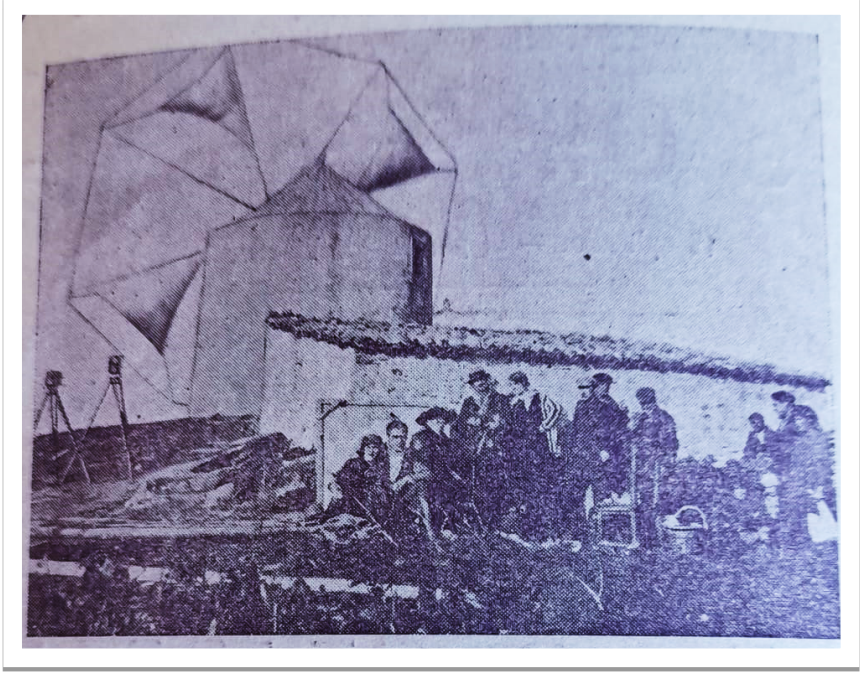
Prospecto de lançamento de «Os Olhos da Alma» no Tivoli, que diz bem da importância dada pela empresa de cinema ao filme referido.

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Commercial about first release of *Os Olhos da Alma* at Tivoli in Lisbon the 30 March 1925.

M. Félix Ribeiro, *Filmes, Figuras e Factos da História do Cinema Português, 1896-1949* (Lisbon: Cinemateca

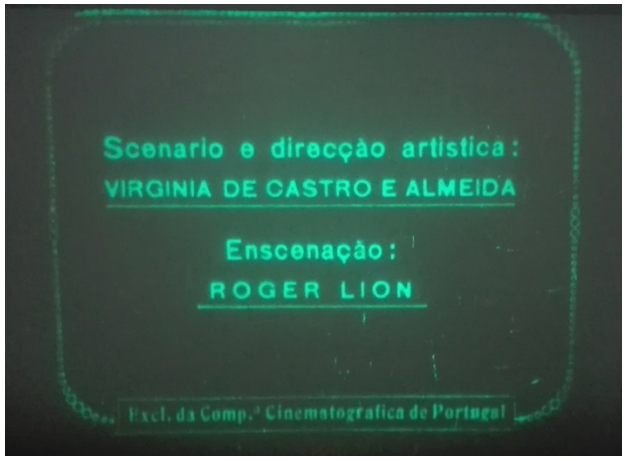




Fortuna Film's crew filming *Os Olhos da Alma* (Lion, 1923) in Nazareth published by *Jornal dos Cinemas*, n. 4 (Lisbon, 15 February 1923), 48 (left) and n. 7 (Lisbon, 1 April 1923), 90 (top). Two cameras can be seen on the left of the image below.

Cinemateca Portuguesa.

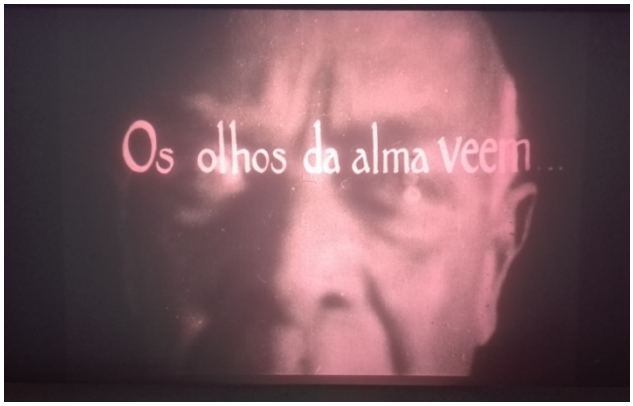








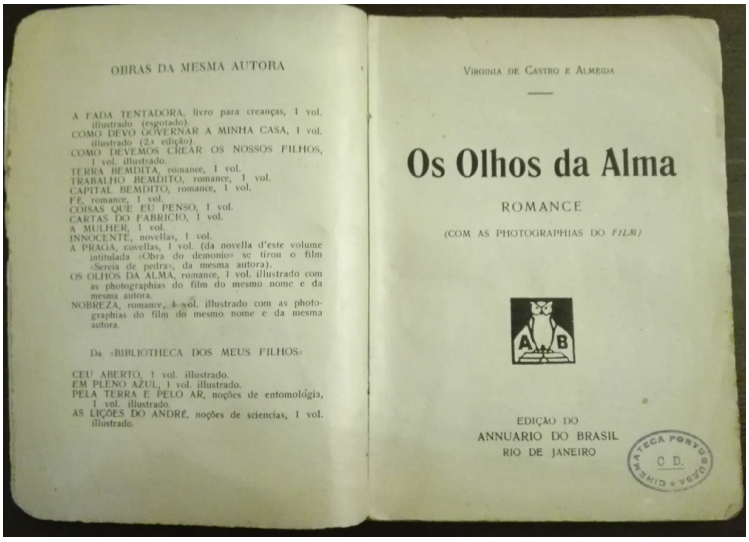




Two different versions of the film *Os Olhos da Alma* (Lion, 1923). In the left column captures of the one in black and white, 1.524 meters (around 839 shots, 60 scenes, and 91 intertitles) from Archives Françaises du Film/CNC, Bois d'Arcy and in the right column captures of the tinted copy, 1.440 meters (around 866 shots, 70 scenes and 146 intertitles) from Cinemateca Portuguesa/Arquivo Nacional da Imagen em Movimento.

Cinemateca Portuguesa/Arquivo Nacional da Imagem em Movimento.




OBRAS DA MESMA AUTORA

A FADA TENTADORA, livro para creanças, 1 vol. illustrado (esgotado).
COMO DEVO GOVERNAR A MINHA CASA, 1 vol. illustrado (2.ª edição).
COMO DEVEMOS CREAR OS NOSSOS FILHOS, 1 vol. illustrado.
TERRA BEMDITA, romance, 1 vol.
TRABALHO BEMDITO, romance, 1 vol.
CAPITAL BEMDITO, romance, 1 vol.
FÉ, romance, 1 vol.
COISAS QUE EU PENSO, 1 vol.
CARTAS DO FABRICIO, 1 vol.
A MULHER, 1 vol.
INNOCENTE, novellas, 1 vol.
A PRAGA, novellas, 1 vol. (da novella d'este volume intitulada «Obra do demonio» se tirou o film «Sereia de pedra», da mesma autora).
OS OLHOS DA ALMA, romance, 1 vol. illustrado com as photographias do film do mesmo nome e da mesma autora.
NOBREZA, romance, 1 vol. illustrado com as photographias do film do mesmo nome e da mesma autora.

Da «BIBLIOTHECA DOS MEUS FILHOS»

CEU ABERTO, 1 vol. illustrado.
EM PLENO AZUL, 1 vol. illustrado.
PELA TERRA E PELO AR, noções de entomologia, 1 vol. illustrado.
AS LIÇÕES DO ANDRÉ, noções de sciencias, 1 vol. illustrado.

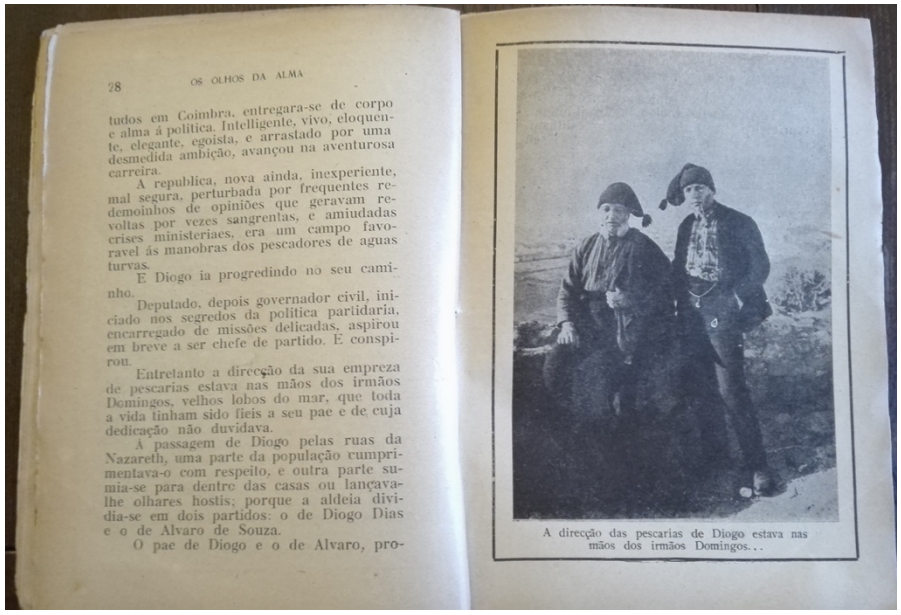
VIRGINIA DE CASTRO E ALMEIDA

Os Olhos da Alma

ROMANCE

(COM AS PHOTOGRAPHIAS DO *FILM*)

EDIÇÃO DO
ANNUARIO DO BRASIL
RIO DE JANEIRO


28 OS OLHOS DA ALMA

tudos em Coimbra, entregara-se de corpo e alma á politica. Intelligente, vivo, eloquente, elegante, egoista, e arrastado por uma desmedida ambição, avançou na aventurosa carreira.

A republica, nova ainda, inexperiente, mal segura, perturbada por frequentes redemoinhos de opiniões que geravam revoltas por vezes sangrentas, e amiudadas crises ministeriaes, era um campo favoravel ás manobras dos pescadores de aguas turvas.

E Diogo ia progredindo no seu caminho.

Deputado, depois governador civil, iniciado nos segredos da politica partidaria, encarregado de missões delicadas, aspirou em breve a ser chefe de partido. E conspirou.

Entretanto a direcção da sua empreza de pescarias estava nas mãos dos irmãos Domingos, velhos lobos do mar, que toda a vida tinham sido fieis a seu pae e de cuja dedicação não duvidava.

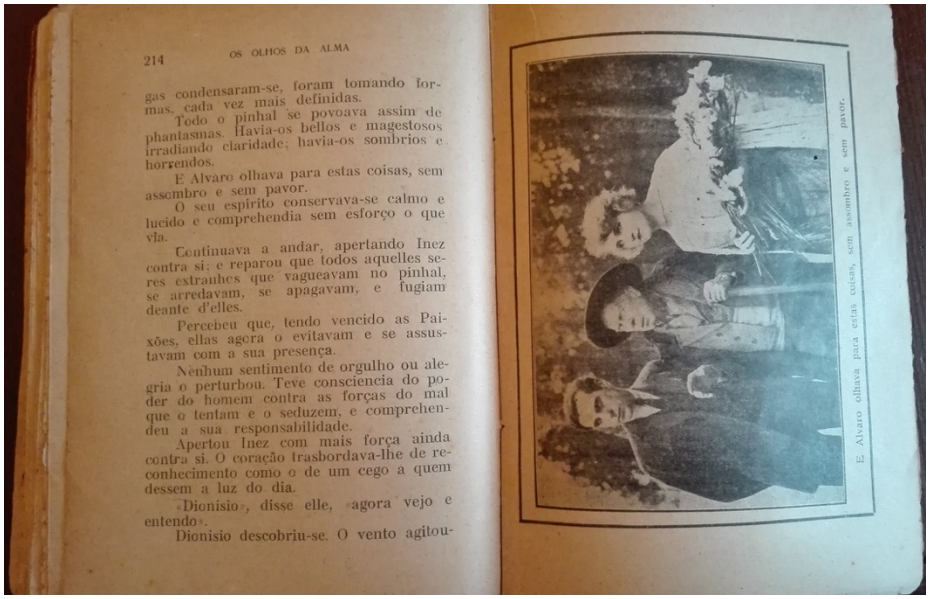
A passagem de Diogo pelas ruas da Nazareth, uma parte da população cumprimentava-o com respeito, e outra parte sumia-se para dentro das casas ou lançava-lhe olhares hostis; porque a aldeia dividia-se em dois partidos: o de Diogo Dias e o de Alvaro de Souza.

O pae de Diogo e o de Alvaro, pro-

A direcção das pescarias de Diogo estava nas mãos dos irmãos Domingos...

Novelization of Fortuna Films' second production: *Os Olhos da Alma*. *Romance de D. Virgínia de Castro e Almeida* (Rio de Janeiro: Edição Do Annuario do Brasil 1925).

Cinemateca Portuguesa.


214 OS OLHOS DA ALMA

gas condensaram-se, foram tomando formas, cada vez mais definidas.

Todo o pinhal se povoava assim de phantasmas. Havia-os bellos e magestosos irradiando claridade; havia-os sombrios e horrendos.

E Alvaro olhava para estas coisas, sem assombro e sem pavor.

O seu espirito conservava-se calmo e lucido e comprehendia sem esforço o que via.

Continuava a andar, apertando Inez contra si; e reparou que todos aquelles seres extranhos que vagueavam no pinhal, se arredavam, se apagavam, e fugiam deante d'elles.

Percebeu que, tendo vencido as Paixões, ellas agora o evitavam e se assustavam com a sua presença.

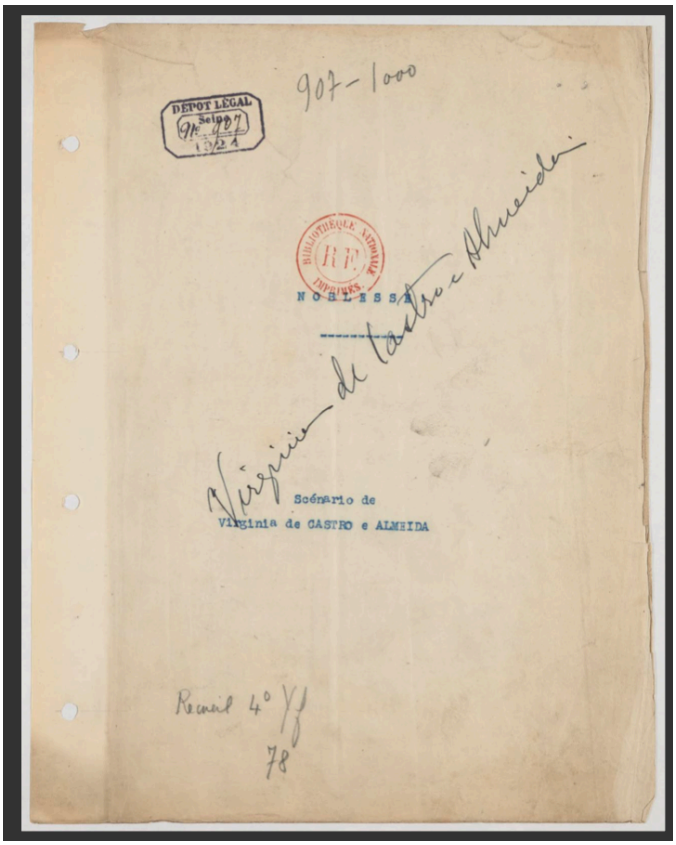
Nenhum sentimento de orgulho ou alegria o perturbou. Teve consciencia do poder do homem contra as forças do mal que o tentam e o seduzem, e comprehendeu a sua responsabilidade.

Apertou Inez com mais força ainda contra si. O coração trasbordava-lhe de reconhecimento como o de um cego a quem dessem a luz do dia.

«Dionisio», disse elle, «agora vejo e entendo».
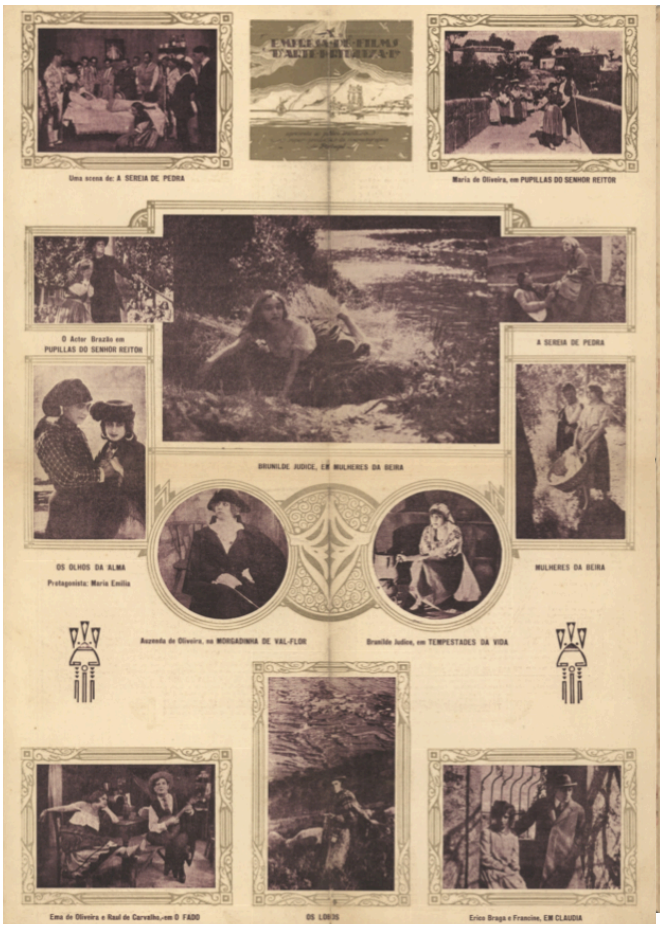
Dionisio descobriu-se. O vento agitou-

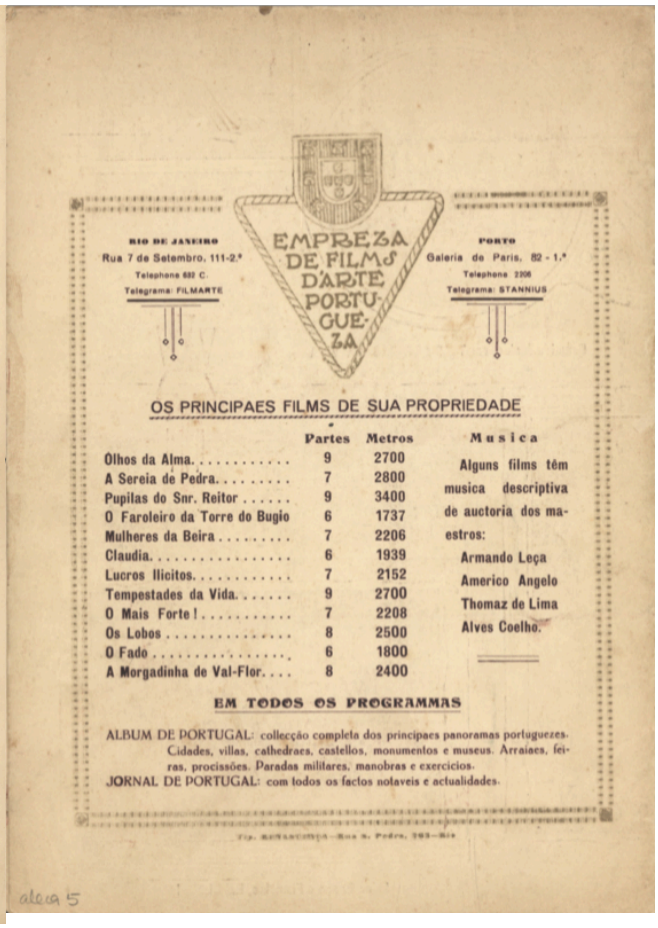
E Alvaro olhava para estas coisas, sem assombro e sem pavor.



Scenario registered by Virgína de Castro e Almeida in 1924 planned to be the third Fortuna Films's production.

Bibliothèque Nationale de France





Empreza de Films d'Arte Portugueza's brochure for the distribution of twelve Portuguese feature films in Brazil in 1925.

Biblioteca Nacional Portuguesa. Área de Música.



VIRGINIA DE CASTRO E ALMEIDA

Déléguée du Portugal à l'Institut Int.l de Coopération Intellectuelle à la S.t N.s

avec ses compliments, prie Monsieur Offerso de bien vouloir prendre connaissance de la note ci-jointe, relative à la constitution de la Comission Nationale de Cooperation Intellectuelle portugaise.

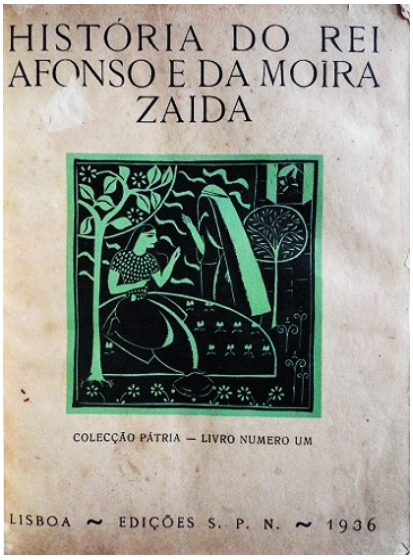
Bussiness card of Virgínia de Castro e Almeida as Delegate of Portugal's Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle (Société des Nations), 1926.

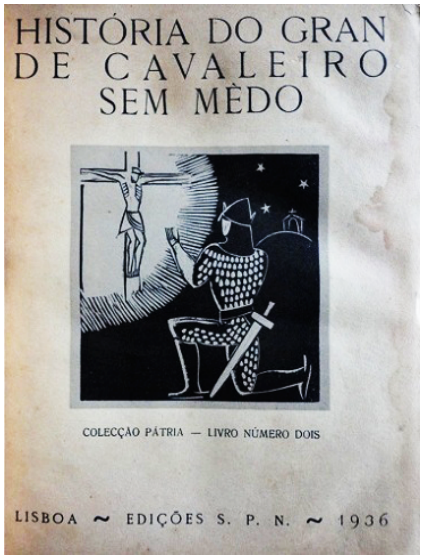
United Nations Archive at Geneva.



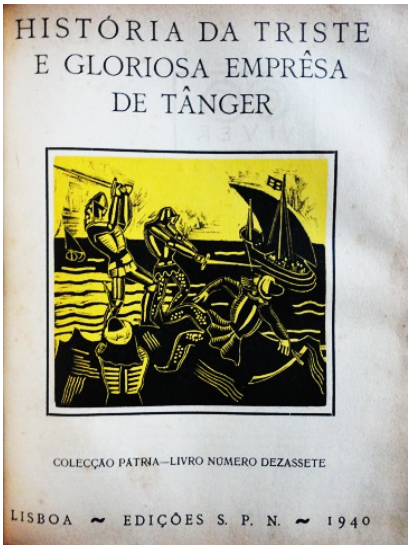
Jury of literary contest composed by Mário Beirão, Manuel Ribeiro, João Ameal, Manuel Múrias, Francisco Lage, Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, António Ferro, colonel Costa Veigas, Vitoriano de Faria, 1936.

Arquivo da Torre do Tombo.

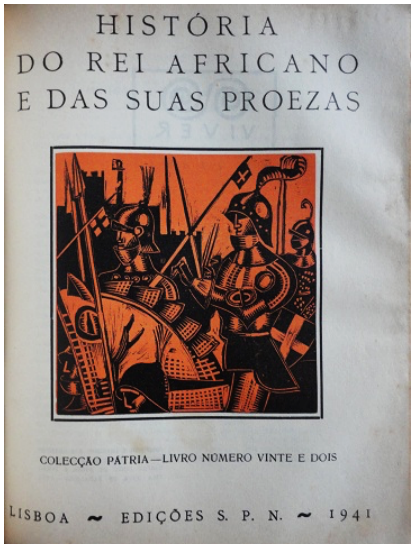


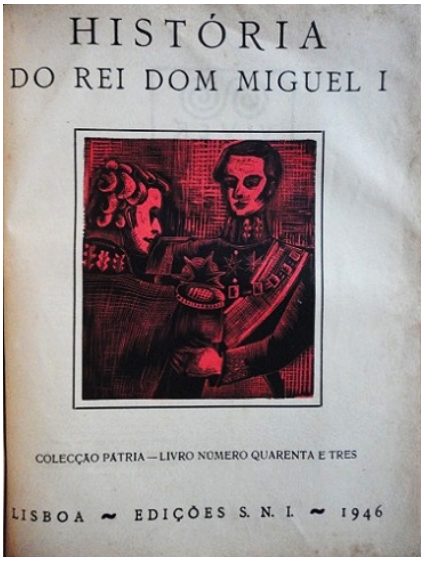


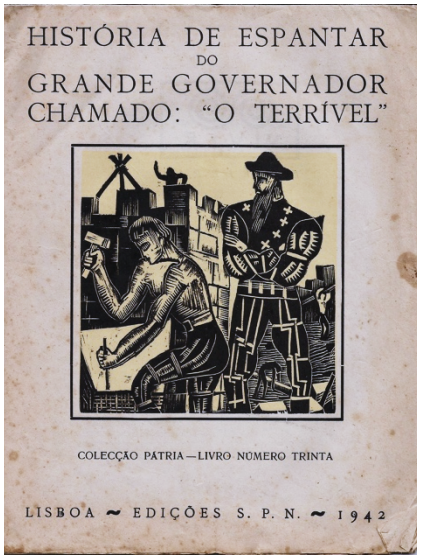


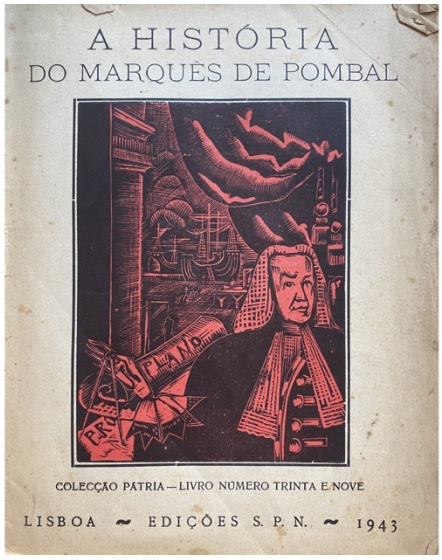


Covers of some of the 43 volumes that form the Colecção Pátria, written by Virgínia de Castro e Almeida from 1936 to 1946.



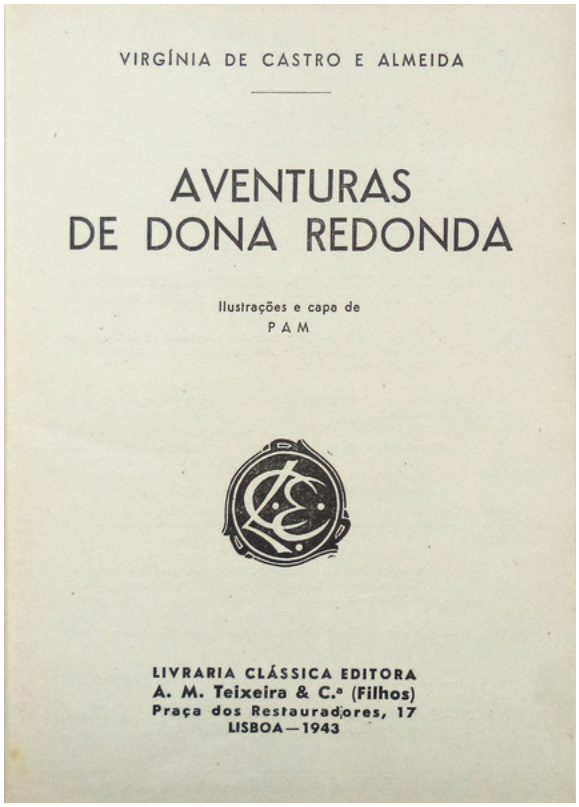






Cover of *Aventuras de Dona Redonda* (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica, 1943), written by Virginia de Castro e Almeida and illustrated by Pamela Bodem (Pam) and drawing of Dona Redonda (below).







Painting portraying Virgínia de Castro e Almeida and Pamela Boden by António Dacosta, 1944.

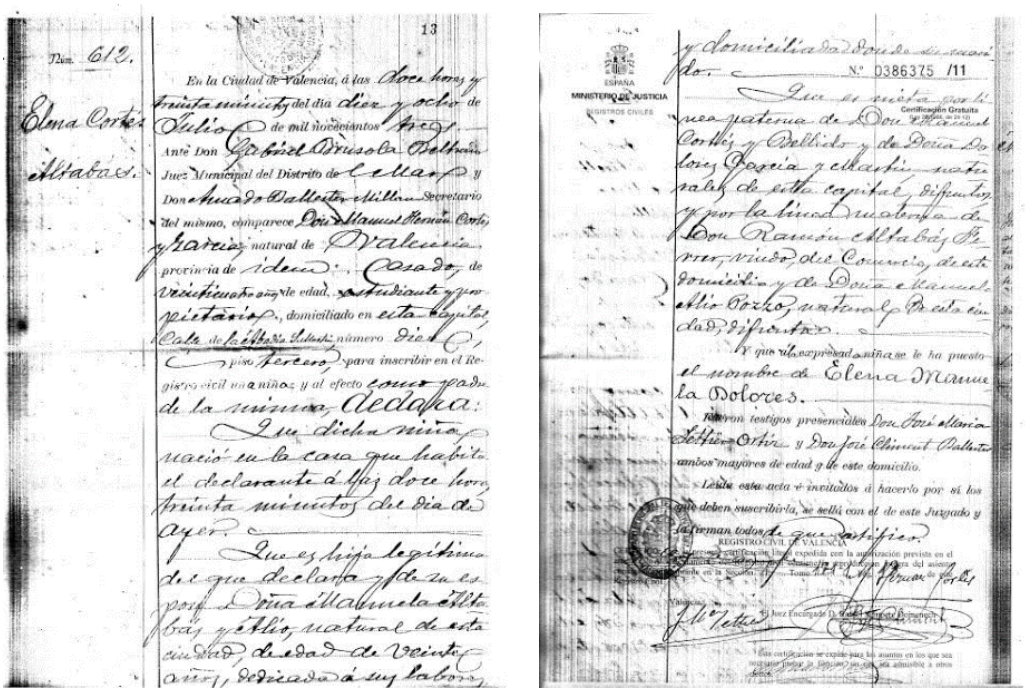
Museu de Angra do Heroísmo.

Appendix B. Helena Cortesina's album



Family photo of Elena Cortés Altabás (Helena Cortesina, on the left) with her father Hernán Cortés García, her brother Hernán and her two sisters, Ofelia and Angélica. On the corner, Hernán Cortés García and Manuela Altabás Alio on their wedding day [unknown dates].

Susana Climent Viguer and Carmen García Monerris, 'Redes familiares', in *De l'ofici a la fàbrica. Una familia industrial valenciana en el canvi de segle, 'La Maquinista Valenciana*' (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2000).



Núm. 612.

13

Elena Cortés Altabás.

En la Ciudad de Valencia, á las doce horas y treinta minutos del día diez y ocho de Julio de mil novecientos tres. Ante Don Gabriel Brusola Balbuena Juez Municipal del Distrito de Centro y Don Eduardo Ballester Millan Secretario del mismo, comparece Don Hernán Cortés y García natural de Valencia provincia de Idem, casado, de veintiseis años de edad, estudiante y propietario, domiciliado en esta Capital Calle de Lérida Chiva número diez y piso tercero para inscribir en el Registro civil una niña y al efecto como padre de la misma, Declara:

Que dicha niña nació en la casa que habita el declarante á las doce horas treinta minutos del día de ayer.

Que es hija legítima de que declara y de su esposa Doña Manuela Altabás y Alio natural de esta ciudad de edad de veinte años, dedicada á sus labores,

ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE JUSTICIA
REGISTROS CIVILES
Certificación Gratuita

y domiciliada donde se casó.

N.º 0386375 /11

Que se nieta por línea paterna de Don Hernán Cortés y Ballido y de Doña Dolores García y Martín naturales de esta capital difuntos y por la línea materna de Don Ramón Altabás Ferrero viudo de Comenge de este domicilio y de Doña Manuela Alio Borso natural y de esta ciudad difunta.

Y que la expresada niña se le ha puesto el nombre de Elena Manuela Dolores.

Fueron testigos presenciales Don José Alonso Sotillos Ortín y Don José Climent Ballester ambos mayores de edad y de este domicilio.

Leída esta acta é invitados á hacerlo por sí los que deben suscribirla, se sella con el de este Juzgado y la firman todos de que doy fé.

REGISTRO CIVIL DE VALENCIA

Birth certificate of Elena Cortés Altabás, real name of Helena Cortesina, 17 of July 1903.

Registration Office n. 2 of Valencia, Vol. 171-1, 13.



Portrait of Ofelia, Angélica, Hernán and Elena Cortés Altabás, (from left to right), [unknown date].

Private family collectio (PFC).



Portrait of Ofelia, Helena and Angélica Cortesina, (from left to right), [estimated date around 1915].

Private family collection (PFC)





Helena Cortesina at her first poses as a dancer exploring exotic, primitive and Classical imaginery, [estimated before 1917].

Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte de España, Archivo General de la Administración. Fondo MSCE.









Helena Cortesina posing in her dancer costumes at a young age, [estimated before 1917].

Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte de España, Archivo General de la Administración. Fondo MSCE.



Cortesina advertising body almond milk Peele with the handwritten inscription: 'Peele are the products of my preference.' ('Peele son los productos que prefiero.')

Digital newspaper archive of *ABC* (Madrid, 27 August 1917), 2.



Charcoal drawing of Cortesina as model to Joaquín Sorolla who named her as 'Venus Valenciana.'

Prefectural Art Museum of Nagasaki, Suma Collection, n. 394.

Photograph of Joaquin Sorolla's painting 'Danzarinas Griegas' (1917).

Museo Sorolla, Nº inv. CS/81877.





Cover of the short novel *Paloma*, written by Federico García Sanchiz (1917) and inspired in Cortesina's life.

Private collection.





Helena Cortesina posing in her exotic dancer costumes at a young age [estimated date 1917].

Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte de España, Archivo General de la Administración. Fondo MSCE.





4 Mayo 1917 NUEVO MUNDO

HELENA CORTESINA, LA QUIETUD EN LAS INQUIETUDES

© Biblioteca Nacional de España

First long article about Cortesina in written by Federico García Sanchiz, *Nuevo Mundo*, n. 1.217 (Madrid, 4 May 1917), 25.

Digital periodical's archive of Biblioteca Nacional de España.



Helena Cortesina, presumabily with her mother, Manuela Altabás Alio and an unknown man in a relaxed domestic space and other images below taken the same day, (unknown date).

Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte de España, Archivo General de la Administración. Fondo MSCE.









Helena Cortesina in 1920 at La Concha beach in San Sebastián wearing a black bodysuit, probably inspired by Musidora in *Les Vampires* (Feuillade, 1915-1916).

Fondo Fotocar, Ricardo Martín/Kutxa Fototeka





Helena Cortesina's screen debut in *La Inaccesible* (José Buchs, 1920) in the cover of *Arte y Cinematografía*, n. 239 (1 February 1921).

Periodical's digital archive of Filmoteca de Catalunya.



Helena Cortesina in a scene of *La Inaccesible* (Buchs, 1920).

Filmoteca Española.



Helena Cortesina and her counterpart Florián Rey in *La Inaccesible* (Buchs, 1920)

Filmoteca Española.



Helena Cortesina in glamourous scene of *La Inaccesible* (Buchs, 1920)

Filmoteca Española.



Helena Cortesina and Florián Rey in *La Inaccesible* (Buchs, 1920).

Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte de España, Archivo General de la Administración. Fondo MSCE.





PELICULERÍAS

Cuando estas líneas vean la luz, Gabrielle Robinne, la actriz admirada y mimada de la Comedia Francesa, que antes de la nefasta guerra europea trazó una gloriosa huella en el arte cinematográfico brindándole el tesoro divino de su arte delicado y gentil y de su belleza soberana, seguramente habrá recibido pleitesía férvida y cariñosa del público madrileño en el lindo teatro del callejón de San Ginés.

Gabrielle Robinne, la preciosa criatura, tan mujer y tan artista, que en infinidad de películas supo rendirnos y hacernos aclamarla reina de la pantalla en competencia ventajosa con la excelsa Francesca Bertini, en tiempos dichosos en que aún no acusaba la menor decadencia el cinematógrafo francés, está entre nosotros.

En Eslava dará á conocer sus obras predilectas; y los madrileños aficionados al cinematógrafo, que tanto se deleitaron con sus bellísimas creaciones «mudas», podrán deleitarse ahora con su labor «personal» y la musical vocecita deliciosa de la mujercita linda que tantas inquietudes espirituales prendiera alguna vez en sus almas con su alada coquetería, genuina y adorable.

Sea bienvenida, y que el triunfo corone su esfuerzo.

◇

Señores: ya contamos con una nueva entidad madrileña productora de películas.

Helena Cortesina, la danzarina hermosa, lisonjeada por el éxito alcanzado en *La inaccesible*, se lanza definitivamente al cinematógrafo. Y, á imitación de muchas «estrellas» norteamericanas, producirá las obras por su cuenta, estando formando un elenco artístico escogido al efecto.

Esperemos con fe, dispuestos á aplaudir á la bella Helena, si acierta, como es de esperar, á llevar su nave por los mares del éxito.

◇

Y como no todo ha de ser hablar de casa, diremos:

HELENA CORTESINA
Bella bailarina, que se dedicará al arte cinematográfico FOT. FRANZEN

Que el famoso intérprete de *La barrera* ha empezado á trabajar en los estudios de la Paramount, en los Angeles.

Y que la maravillosa Alice Brady, que tantas simpatías tiene entre nuestro público, ha terminado ya algunas obras para la Realart, nueva marca que lanza al mercado la misma casa, que ha incluído en su cuadro artístico, también, á la menuda Mary Miles Minter, á la gitana Constance Binney y á las bellísimas Wanda Hawley, Bebe Daniels y Justine Johnstone.

Y, por hoy, no va más.

* DUQUESA DE BORELLI

PENDIENTES EXÓTICOS

En una comunicación leída hace algún tiempo ante la Real Sociedad Geográfica de Inglaterra sobre los indígenas de Borneo, Mr. Carlos Hosw decía que en aquel país las madres ponen pendientes de gran tamaño á sus niñas en cuanto tienen ocho meses de edad, y que se los cambian por otros más pesados según van creciendo, hasta el punto de que algunas jóvenes los llevan de cerca de un kilo. Cuando las muchachas llegan á mayores, gastan pendientes tan grandes, que tienen que llevarlos descansando sobre los hombros, pues de otro modo se les desgarrarían las orejas.

En el Sur de Italia también se usan pendientes muy pesados, aun cuando no tanto como los de Borneo.

Por el largo de los pendientes se sabe de qué parte de Italia es la mujer que los lleva: su largo aumenta cuanto más meridional es la italiana que los usa.

Anouncement of the creation of the new production company created by Helena Cortesina. Duquesa de Borelli, [pseud.], *Mundo Gráfico*, n. 499 (Madrid, 25 May 1921), 131.

Periodical's digital archive of Biblioteca Nacional Española

Interview with Helena Cortesina in which she anounces her intention of 'conquering the screen' with her own production company in 'La Venus valenciana', *Cine Popular*, n. 12 (Barcelona, 18 May 1921), 6.

Periodical's digital archive of Filmoteca de Catalunya



6 — CINE POPULAR

ACTRICES DEL CINEMATOGRAFO

La Venus valenciana

Así la calificó Sorolla cuando Elena Cortesina le sirvió de modelo para uno de los lienzos que el famoso pintor compuso por encargo de una sociedad hispanista de Norteamérica. Y así es, en efecto. Su cuerpo, de líneas clásicas, tiene la gracia robusta de las mujeres levantinas. Parece tejida su piel con pétalos de rosas de suave matiz. Y la cara tiene una dulce serenidad, una deliciosa atracción.

Elena Cortesina ha decidido dedicarse al cinematógrafo.

Y, requerida por un periodista, ha contestado amablemente a sus preguntas.

—¿Dónde nació usted?

—En Valencia. Fuí bautizada en la iglesia de San Martín.

—¿Cuándo decidió usted dedicarse a la danza?

—Desde mi más tierna infancia. La niñera, para contentarme, tenía que bailarse conmigo los «schotixes» y pasodobles que sabía. Apenas andaba, cuando mi madre tocaba al piano bailables, yo seguía el ritmo adecuado, ante el asombro de parientes y amigos, que exclamaban: «¡Esta niña será una bailarina famosa,!» A los diecisiete meses me llevaron a un baile infantil vestida de «Tosca» y «me acuerdo que hice bailar de coronilla a todos los pollos de mi edad». Me dieron el primer premio: una muñeca preciosa que aún conservo.

—¿Y se olvidó, después, de las danzas?

—¡Nunca!. En el colegio, donde encantaba a las monjitas con mis paruetas, lo mismo que en mi casa, continué desarrollándose en mi este instinto de movimiento ritmado».

—¿A qué edad se presentó usted en un teatro?

—A los trece años. Y ahora tengo diecisiete. En estos cuatro años he conseguido muchos triunfos en mi carrera artística; pero ahora quiero conquistarlos en el cinematógrafo, donde me propongo triunfar definitivamente.

—¿Quiere usted contarme sus planes?

—Ya lo creo. Contrato una compañía a mi gusto, y de la casa de películas que ya funciona yo soy la directora y primera actriz y me escribo los argumentos. Pronto estará filmada la primera película, que será de asunto madrileño.

—¿Se proyectará en España?

—Si la pagan; pues de lo contrario, y con todo el dolor de mi alma, tendré que venderla en París o en América.

—¿Qué tipo representa usted en la película?

—Una «rista». El ambiente de la obra es popular. Cuento con un operador americano de primer orden. Estoy segura de que mis producciones tendrán todos los adelantos de la cinematografía.

—Así lo deseo, para gloria de usted y de nuestra patria. De su vida íntima, ¿quiere usted decirme algo?

Elena Cortesina se echa a reir, con un delicioso borbotón de vida y de travesura. Mira con sus grandes ojos acariciadores, en los que hay un leve fulgor de picardía.

—¿De mi vida íntima? ¿Que si tengo amores? ¡Ay!... ¡Qué difícil es esto de contestar! Soy feliz con «los míos», muy poquitos: mi madre y mis hermanos. En ese sagrado grupo me refugio porque tengo miedo a la vida del corazón; he visto muy de cerca los peligros de llevar el alma sin defensa, y me escondo. No vivo más que de mi arte, sólo «amo de amor» a mi arte. El público es mi único amante y a él me entrego en cuerpo y alma. ¿Suele ser ingrato? Yo lucharé para que siempre sea mío. No debe sorprender que escriba mis obras de cine; mi padre fué un literato potable. Ahora recibo cartas de enamorados platónicos, ofreciéndome dinero para mi empresa cinematográfica.

GERALDINE FARRAR *en una escena de la película* JURAMENTO SAGRADO

FilmoTeca de Catalunya



Cortesina in *Flor de España*, filmed in 1921. Frame from a nitrate tinted copy preserved at the collection of nitrate frames known as 'Cuaderno de Fernández Cuenca' ('Fernández Cuenca notebook')



Helena Cortesina and Jesús Tordesillas in a scene of *Flor de España,* filmed in 1921.

ladyfilstrup.blogspot.pt



Brochure of *Flor de España* (1923), by Helena Cortesina. Written by José María Granada. Music by Maestro Bretón (son). Spanish production.

Blog 'Enciclopedia del cine español.'





Flor de España in *La Esfera*, n. 405 (Madrid, 8 October 1921), 18; the cover of *Cinema Variedades* (April 1923); Arte y Cinematografía, n. 257 (1 August 1922), 19; and *Boletín de información cinematográfica*, n. 8 (Barcelona, February/March 1923) (from left to right and top to bottom).

Periodical's digital archive of Biblioteca Nacional de España, private collection, Filmoteca de Catalunya and private collection, respectively.





Whole page photograph of Helena Cortesina riding a motorbike with 'her littel bulldog' in the sidecar in *La Unión Ilustrada*, n. 477 (Málaga, 31 October 1918), 11.

Periodical's digital archive of Biblioteca Nacional de España.



Advertisement of a Landaulet FIAT with Helena and Ofelia Cortesina being driven by a chauffeur in *Nuevo Mundo*, n. 1.425 (Madrid, 6 May 1921), 18.

Periodical's digital archive of Biblioteca Nacional de España.





Cortesina in La Concha beach of San Sebastián, an important tourist spot at the time, [estimated date around 1921).

Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte de España, Archivo General de la Administración. Fondo MSCE.







Portrait taken by the French agency Agence Rol, ‘Elena Cortesina, danseuse espagnole’, 1924.
Gallica.bnf.fr/Biliothèque nationale de France.



Portraits of Helena (top), Ofelia (bottom left) and Angélica Cortesina (bottom right), [unknown date but estimated around 1925].

Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte de España, Archivo General de la Administración. Fondo MSCE.





POR LOS TEATROS DE PARÍS

LOS OJOS DE ESTRELLA DE "LA ESTRELLA"

Es un elegante estuche de terciopelo rojo—el magnífico Teatro de Fábregues—se ha presentado al muy respetable público de París—y digo muy respetable porque á la aristocrática sala no concurren los extranjeros juerguistas—una perla blanca, nítida y española: Helena Cortesina (Helena de hoteles, bellena griega).

Aquella sirena que en la playa de San Sebastián asombró á la multitud veraniega exhibiendo el milagro de su cuerpo apenas cubierto por una original malla oí lo Fantomas, triunfa como luminosa estrella en el «Séptimo cielo», la ya popular opereta del popularísimo Ripp.

• •

Encuentro á la Cortesina en su camerino del teatro, rodeada de los críticos franceses, periodistas femeninos y fríos que podrían considerarse como el justo término medio entre la severidad y la huraña del ilustre Díez-Canedo y la benevolencia y cordialidad del entrañable *Floridor*.

• •

—¿Qué le ha parecido á usted?—me interrogó resueltamente la triunfadora—. ¿Estoy mejor ó peor que antes?

—¿Antes de qué?

—De mi retirada del teatro, de mi huida hacia la tranquila felicidad.

—Yo creo sinceramente que siempre está usted mejor que nunca. Pero no recordemos esa antes; alabemos ese ahora. El pasado de las mujeres guapas sólo interesa á los poetas *cursilísimos*—cursis en todas las líneas—para ejecutar recobados malabarismos á base de pétalos caídos, otoños grises y desconsuelos desoladores. Charlemos del rico presente que hace usted al público con esa presencia.

—Pues muy sensible. No pude resistir el sondeo de los empresarios, que, por fin, me han sacado de mi cenillas. Y, por cierto, que he tenido unas nervios al presentarme en escena ahora, que cuando salí por primera vez. Es que de niña parecía que jugaba inconscientemente á ser artista; pero hoy, después de haber estudiado y observado, como espectadora, el Arte, adquirí el sentido de la responsabilidad, y la *sabiduría* de mis veintitrés años sólo sirve para preocuparme hondamente. En ocasiones, por ejemplo cuando veo algunos españoles entre el público, hasta tiemblo. ¡Cómo me juzgarán!

—¿Y en qué conoce usted desde escena á los compatriotas?

—En que son morenos, tienen los dientes muy blancos, el lazo de la corbata bien hecho y aplauden fuerte, porque al entrar en el teatro se han quitado los guantes. El francés que presume de elegante no se desenfunda las manos jamás. ¡Ni para tomar espárragos!

• •

—Pero he hecho otro descubrimiento más sensacional que este de los enguantados—continúa la Cortesina riéndose en A—. ¡Tengo voz! No tanta como Fleta; pero desde luego más que el grillo, y, por consiguiente, me sobra para cantar cuplés. Con mis hermanas Ofelia y Angélica, y mi hermano—que ya regresaron de una afortunada excursión por los principales escenarios de Europa—he formado una «Compañía» de danzas y canciones españolas, muy españolas. Lo verdaderamente español se lleva mucho, de los Pirineos para acá. Nos presentaremos con decorado y vestuario de Manolo Fontanals, que á mí me parece—y no es pasión, aunque algún malicioso lo suponga—un buen escenógrafo y director artístico.

—Diga usted que es el mejor escenógrafo de España y comadrimos—interrumpí.

—La «Gran Compañía Cortesina» ya está contratada para actuar en Berlín, Viena, Roma, París y los Estados Unidos, por donde comenzará su excursión americana. ¡Viajar, trabajar, triunfar!!...

—¡Y amar!

—¡Y amar! ¿Cómo no, si vivimos enamorados del Amor!...

• •

Helena Cortesina, inteligente, observadora y humorista, es una belleza casi imponente.

Aquellos grandes ojos—de sirenilla—que ha sido sorprendida en el colegio escribiendo á su novio—, muy abiertos, y que mirabanasustados quizás por contemplar el triste panorama de la Vida, hoy lanzan destellos cegadores que trastornan á quienes los admiran.

Y es que los inquietantes ojos de estrella de la *estrella*—que antes eran de paloma—necesitaban, sin duda, la *sabiduría* de sus veintitrés años para adquirir su máxima potencia deslumbradora.

JUAN BRASA

(Fots. Sybel)

Los inquietantes ojos de estrella de la «estrella» triunfadora

Los ojos muy abiertos, de sirenita, que ha sido sorprendida en el colegio escribiendo á su novio...

Los grandes ojos de la Cortesina lanzan destellos cegadores

Interview to Helena Cortesina in Paris in *Nuevo Mundo*, n.1.721 (Madrid, 14 January 1927), 15.

Periodical's digital archive of Biblioteca Nacional de España.



Helena Cortesina as theatre actress portrait dedicated to Paco Hernández (Alicante, 1892-1974), actor and artistic director specialized in Valencian theatre, [unkown date].

Museo Nacional de Teatro de Almagro.



The Cortesina sisters, Ofelia and Angelica, at the cover of *Mundo Gráfico*, n. 860 (Madrid, 25April 1928) and promotional images of both sharpening their phisical similarity as a marketing tool, [unknown dates]

Periodical's digital archive of Biblioteca Nacional de España and Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte de España, Archivo General de la Administración. Fondo MSCE.





Portrait of Helena, Ofelia and Angélica Cortesina (from left to right), [unknown date].

Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte de España, Archivo General de la Administración. Fondo MSCE.



Helena Cortesina posing as a star, [unknown date].

Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte de España, Archivo General de la Administración. Fondo MSCE.





Helena Cortesina in Lola Membrives's company playing *Santa Rusia* by Jacinto Benavente, premiered in 1932 at Teatro Beatriz of Madrid (top image, Cortesina on the left); *Teresa de Jesús* by Eduardo Marquina, premiered in 1932 at Teatro Beatriz of Madrid (right image, Cortesina standing up); and *Madreselva* by the Álvarez Quintero brothers, premiered in 1931 at the Teatro Fontalba of Madrid (bottom image, Cortesina on the left).

Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte de España, Archivo General de la Administración. Fondo MSCE / Archivo Regional de Madrid.





Lola Membrives company in *La zapatera prodigiosa* by Federico García Lorca, premiered in 1933 at Maipo de Buenos Aires (Cortesina, second on the left).

Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte de España, Archivo General de la Administración. Fondo MSCE.



Lola Membrives company in *Bodas de sangre* by Federico García Lorca, premiered in 1933 at Teatro Maipo of Buenos Aires (Cortesina wearing white), [Teatro Avenida of Buenos Aires, 1933-1934].

La Nube, Library and Culture Centre in Buenos Aires.



Federico García Lorca in the center of the first row giving the left arm to Lola Membrives and the right one to Helena Cortesina after one representation of *Bodas de sangre, at the* Teatro Avenida of Buenos Aires, 1934. Cortesina's daughter, Rosa María, is the young girl in the left.

La Nube, Library and Culture Centre in Buenos Aires.



Cortesina and García Lorca at the Teatro Avenida of Buenos Aires the 25 of March of 1934, after the puppets representation of *Retablillo de Don Cristóbal*.

Huerta de San Vicente. Casa Museo Federico García Lorca.



Homage to Lola Membrives given at the Hotel Nacional of Madrid on the 28 of February 1935. Lola Membrives seated in the middle of the image and Helena Cortesina seated the first on the left. Other theatre people as Irene López Heredia, Magda Donato, Carmen Ruiz Moragas, Aurora Redondo, Conchita Ramos, Eduardo Marquina, Federico García Lorca, Manuel Machado, Eusebio de Gorbes, Valentín de Pedro, Cipriano Rivas Cherif, Andrés Romeo, Valeriano León and Manuel de Góngora are also in the image.

Photograph archive of the Instituto Nacional de Estudios de Teatro of Argentina.



Lunch to celebrate the succes of Luis Cernuda's *La realidad y el deseo*, 29 of April 1936 in the restaurant Rojo (nowadays Los Galayos) in Madrid.
Seated from left to right: Eugenio Imaz, non identified person, Helena Cortesina, Manuel Fontanals, Santiago Ontañón, María Antonia Hagenaar Vogelzang, Concha Méndez, Luis Cernuda, Maruja Mallo, La Argentinita (?), Enrique Moreno Báez. Standing: Vicente Aleixandre, Federico García Lorca, Pedro Salinas, Rafael Alberti, Pablo Neruda, José Bergamín, Manuel Altoaguirre, María Teresa León and Víctor María Cortezo (?).

Archive of Fundación Federico García Lorca [3.1.124]

Portrait of Cortesina on September 1937, already living in the exile in Buenos Aires.

Argentina. Archivo General de la Nación, Departamento Documentos Fotográficos.



Cortesina acting with the Compañía Española in Buenos Aires, 5 August 1938.

Argentina. Archivo General de la Nación, Departamento Documentos Fotográficos.





Cortesina playing cards with Carmen González and Charo Carmona at the Teatro Smart of Buenos Aires in the middle of a play, on May 1938.

Argentina. Archivo General de la Nación, Departamento Documentos Fotográficos.



Portrait of Cortesina in 1938.

Photograph archive of the Instituto Nacional de Estudios de Teatro of Argentina.


TEATRO SMART

CORRIENTES 1283 — DIRECCIÓN: ALBERTO BALLERINI — U. T. 35 LIB. 2592

Compañía de Comedia

PEDRO LOPEZ LAGAR

DIRECTOR

SAMUEL EICHELBAUM

PRIMERAS ACTRICES

Delfina Jaufret -:- Helena Cortesina

Primera Dama Joven VILMA VIDAL

Primer Actor Cómico — Primer Actor de Carácter

FERNANDO FRESNO — FERNANDO SALA

Hoy Sábado 15 de Octubre de 1938

NOCHE a las 22.15

GRANDIOSO ESTRENO

Tierra Dura

Poema trágico, en prosa, en 3 actos y 6 cuadros, original de XAVIER BOVEDA

Páginas musicales de PACO AGUILAR

Reparto:

José	PEDRO LOPEZ LAGAR
La madre	Helena Cortesina
Juliana	Delfina Jaufret
Rosaura	Vilma Vidal
La criada	Josefina Pérez Cuesta
Antonio	Pablo Vicuña
El viandante	Fernando Sala
Tío Pedro	José Carmona
Moza 1ª	Fanny Yest
Moza 2ª	Carmen Caballero
Moza 3ª	Luisa Almayor
Una moza	Carmen Cadena
Borracho 1º	Antonio Zarauz
Borracho 2º	Luis Pérez Aguirre
Borracho 3º	Alberto Celta
Mozo 1º	Rafael Acevedo
Mozo 2º	Alberto Marquez
Mozo 3º	Alberto Barcel

La acción en Castilla

Los intervalos serán amenizados por el concertista MIRAMONTE


TEATRO ARGENTINO

Bmé. Mitre 1448 — U. T. 38 - 4688

Empresa: ALBERTO CALVERA

Compañía de Comedias

Director Artístico:

Gerardo Ribas

Primera Actriz:

Helena Cortesina

TEMPORADA POPULAP

Viernes 24 de Noviembre 1939

DEBUT

NOCHE A LAS 22.15 HORAS

2.—*SENSACIONAL ESTRENO*

Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su Jardín

Aleluya erótica en 4 cuadros, original de

FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA

REPARTO

Belisa	HELENA CORTESINA
Marcolfa	Isaura Gutierrez
Madre de Belisa	Matí de Castillo
Duende 1º	"
Duende 2º	Alba Solís "
Don Perlimplín	Miguel Calazzo


Teatro de Mayo

AVENIDA DE MAYO 1099 — U. T. 38-Mayo-8851

TEMPORADA OFICIAL 1940

GRAN COMPAÑÍA

"COMEDIAS 1940"

DIRECTOR ARTISTICO:

Paco Aguilar

PRIMERA ACTRIZ: — PRIMER ACTOR:

Helena Cortesina — Andrés Mejuto

OTRO PRIMER ACTOR:

José Comella

Helena Cortesina — Andrés Mejuto

Brochures of different plays and companies in which Cortesina played the first actress during the years in Buenos Aires.

Argentores. Sociedad General de Autores de la Argentina.



Celebrating the liberation of Paris in 1944 in Buenos Aires. Mari Carmen García Antón (scenographer Gori Muñoz's wife), Javier Farias, María del Carmen García Lasgoity, Helena Cortesina and her son Juan Manuel Fontanals, Andrés Mejuto and Carmen Caballero (from left to right).

Archive of Gori Muñoz's family, gorimuñoz.com

Cortesina as the wife of Leonardo in *Bodas de sangre* (Edmundo Guibourg, 1938).

Filmoteca Española





Cortesina as the wife of the Mayor in *La dama duende* (Luis Saslavsky, 1945).

Cortesina as the Queen of France in *Los tres mosqueteros* (Julio Saraceni, 1945).





Cortesina as Tomasa in *María Rosa* (Luis Moglia Barth, 1946).



Cortesina as Linda Moreno in *A sangre fría* (Daniel Tinayre, 1947).



Cortesina as Clotilde in *La niña de fuego* (Carlos Torres Ríos, 1952).



Cortesina as Olga in *Intriga en el escenario* (Feliciano Catalán, 1953).



Cortesina as Mariquilla in *El ojo que espía* (Leopoldo Torre Nilsson, 1966).



Helena Cortesina (in the left) with her nieces Paloma Cortés and Diana Cortesina and her sisters Angélica and Ofelia (from left to right), all of them professional performers, [unknown date].

Private family collection (PFC).



Portrait of Helena Cortesina, [unknown date].

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- *Tinoco em Bolandas* (dir. António Pinheiro; prod. Invicta Films, 1923).
- *Toma cero pionera* (Rosa Blas Traisac, 2010).
- *Tragédia de Amor* (dir. António Pinheiro; prod. Invicta Films, 1924).
- *Três dias sem Deus* (dir. Bárbara Vírginia; prod. Invicta Films, wr. Raul Faria de Fonseca, 1946).
- *Uma conquista de Cardo as Charlot no Jardim Zoológico de Lisboa* (Ernesto de Alburquerque, 1916).
- *Violettes Impériales* (dir. and wr. Henry Rousell; prod. MJ Films, 1924).