



# RESEARCHING WOMEN IN SILENT CINEMA

NEW FINDINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

EDITED BY MONICA DALL'ASTA, VICTORIA DUCKETT, LUCIA TRALLI

# RESEARCHING WOMEN IN SILENT CINEMA

## NEW FINDINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

Edited by:

Monica Dall'Asta

Victoria Duckett

Lucia Tralli



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

## **Women and Screen Cultures**

**Series editors: Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett**

ISSN 2283-6462

Women and Screen Cultures is a series of experimental digital books aimed to promote research and knowledge on the contribution of women to the cultural history of screen media. Published by the Department of the Arts at the University of Bologna, it is issued under the conditions of both open publishing and blind peer review. It will host collections, monographs, translations of open source archive materials, illustrated volumes, transcripts of conferences, and more. Proposals are welcomed for both disciplinary and multi-disciplinary contributions in the fields of film history and theory, television and media studies, visual studies, photography and new media.



<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us/>

# 1

### **Researching Women in Silent Cinema: New Findings and Perspectives**

**Edited by: Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett, Lucia Tralli**

ISBN 9788898010103

2013.

Published by the Department of Arts, University of Bologna  
in association with the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne  
and Women and Film History International

Graphic design: Lucia Tralli



FACULTY OF  
**VCA &  
MCM**



# Researching Women in Silent Cinema: New Findings and Perspectives

## Peer Review Statement

This publication has been edited through a blind peer review process. Papers from the Sixth Women and the Silent Screen Conference (University of Bologna, 2010), a biennial event sponsored by Women and Film History International, were read by the editors and then submitted to at least one anonymous reviewer. When the opinion of the first reader was entirely negative or asked for substantial revision, the essay was submitted to a second anonymous reviewer. In case of a second negative opinion the essay was rejected. When further changes were deemed necessary for publication, the editors worked extensively with the authors to meet the requests advanced by the reviewers.

## Board of Referees

Richard Abel (University of Michigan)  
Kay Armatage (University of Toronto)  
Janet Bergstrom (University of California, Los Angeles)  
Giorgio Bertellini (University of Michigan)  
Elaine Burrows (Women's Film and Television History Network UK/Ireland)  
Vicki Callahan (University of Southern California)  
Sumiko Higashi (Professor Emerita, SUNY Brockport)  
Sabine Lenk (DOMITOR International Society for the Study of Early Cinema)

Jill Matthews (Australian National University, Canberra)  
David Mayer (University of Manchester)  
Giuliana Muscio (University of Padua)  
Jacqueline Reich (Fordham University, New York)  
Masha Salazkina (Concordia University, Montréal)  
Matthew Solomon (University of Michigan)  
Shelley Stamp (University of California, Santa Cruz)  
Virginia Wexman (University of Illinois, Chicago)

## The Editors

Monica Dall'Asta is Associate Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Bologna, Italy. She is the author of the award winning book *Trame spezzate. Archeologia del film seriale* (2008) She edited a new Italian translation of Alice Guy's Memoires (*Memorie di una pioniera del cinema*, 2008) and the first collection on women filmmaking in Italian silent cinema (*Non solo dive. Pioniere del cinema italiano*, 2008).

Victoria Duckett teaches film history in the Centre for Ideas, Victorian College of the Arts. She has held posts in the University of Manchester (Department of Drama) and the Università Cattolica, Milan (Department of Communication and Performing Arts). She has published broadly in early cinema, has programmed films for Cinema Ritrovato, Bologna, and been involved in Women and the Silent Screen since its founding in Utrecht, 1999. She is currently completing a book that explores Sarah Bernhardt and early film (*History Fed By Fiction: Sarah Bernhardt and Silent Film*, University of Illinois Press, forthcoming).

Lucia Tralli is a Ph.D. Candidate in Film and Media Studies at the University of Bologna. Her main research focus is the re-use of media images in audiovisual productions. She received her MA in 2009 with a thesis about the practice of found footage and the work of two contemporary women filmmakers, Alina Marazzi and Cécile Fontaine. She is now writing her thesis on contemporary forms of audiovisual remixes, focusing especially on fan vidding and gender related issues in remix practices.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett <i>Kaleidoscope: Women and Cinematic Change from the Silent Era to Now</i>	2
PROLOGUE TO PART I	12
Heide Schlüpmann <i>An Alliance Between History and Theory</i>	13
I. HISTORICAL IMAGES	27
Martin F. Norden <i>Alice Guy Blaché, Rose Pastor Stokes, and the Birth Control Film That Never Was</i>	28
Veronica Pravadelli <i>Lois Weber's Uneasy Progressive Politics: The Articulation of Class and Gender in Where Are My Children?</i>	42
Donna R. Casella <i>Women and Nationalism in Indigenous Irish Filmmaking of the Silent Period</i>	53
Dunja Dogo <i>The Image of a Revolutionist: Vera Figner in The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty</i>	81
Margaret Hennefeld <i>The Politics of Hyper-Visibility in Leni Riefenstahl's The Blue Light</i>	96
Federico Pierotti <i>Coloring the Figures. Women's Labor in the Early Italian Film Industry</i>	106
Mark Garrett Cooper <i>Archive, Theater, Ship: The Phelps Sisters Film the World</i>	120
PROLOGUE TO PART II	130
Christine Gledhill <i>An Ephemeral History: Women and British Cinema Culture in the Silent Era</i>	131
II. WOMEN AND THE CULTURAL DISCOURSE	149
Mary Desjardins <i>Fading Stars and the Ruined Commodity Form: Star Discourses of Loss in American Fan Magazines, 1914-1929</i>	150
Anne Morey <i>School of Scandal: Alice Duer Miller, Scandal, and the New Woman</i>	163
Mark Lynn Anderson <i>The Impossible Films of Vera, Countess of Cathcart</i>	176

Anke Brouwers	
<i>If it Worked for Mary. . . Mary Pickford's Daily Talks with the Fans</i>	197
Claus Tieber	
<i>Mary Pickford—as Written by Frances Marion</i>	220
Kristen Anderson Wagner	
<i>Silent Comediennes and “The Tragedy of Being Funny”</i>	231
Qin Xiqing	
<i>Pearl White and the New Female Image in Chinese Early Silent Cinema</i>	246
Ansje van Beusekom	
<i>Getting Forgotten. Film Critic Elisabeth de Roos and Dutch Culture Before World War II</i>	263
Luca Mazzei	
<i>The Passionate Eye of Angelina Buracci, Pedagogue</i>	273
 PROLOGUE TO PART III	 288
Jane M. Gaines	
<i>Wordlessness (to be Continued)</i>	289
 III. GENDER ON STAGE	 302
Annette Förster	
<i>A Pendulum of Performances: Asta Nielsen on Stage and Screen</i>	303
Victoria Duckett	
<i>The “Voix d’Or” on Silent Film: The Case of Sarah Bernhardt</i>	318
Elena Mosconi	
<i>Silent Singers. The Legacy of Opera and Female Stars in Early Italian Cinema</i>	334
Stella Dagna	
<i>A Tribute to Her Creativity: Maria Gasparini in The Stage</i>	353
Michele Leigh	
<i>Alexander Khanzhonkov and His Queens of the Screen</i>	362
Amy Sargeant	
<i>However Odd—Elsa Lanchester!</i>	374
Laraine Porter	
<i>A Lass and a Lack? Women in British Silent Comedy</i>	384
Johanna Schmertz	
<i>The Leatrice Joy Bob: The Clinging Vine and Gender’s Cutting Edge</i>	402
Viktoria Paranyuk	
<i>Riding Horses, Writing Stories: Josephine Rector’s Career at Western Essanay</i>	414
Luciana Corrêa de Araújo	
<i>Movie Prologues: Cinema, Theater and Female Types on Stage at Cinelândia, Rio de Janeiro</i>	424

Luciana Corrêa de Araújo

## Movie Prologues: Cinema, Theater and Female Types on Stage at Cinelândia, Rio de Janeiro

**ABSTRACT:** Between 1925 and 1926, film exhibitor Francisco Serrador built four new movie-theaters in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). Large and luxurious, they took as their model New York's movie palaces. Also inspired by successful North American film exhibition practices, Serrador introduced to audiences the novelty of movie prologues. These were stage presentations based on the theme, characters, dialogue or scenes from the film that was about to be screened. This article investigates how movie prologues established a close relationship with Brazilian culture, especially by adopting much of the structure, types and attractions from teatro de revista (a Brazilian variant of the vaudeville). It also analyzes the female types portrayed in such attractions: the maid, the modern woman, and the mulata.

Between 1925 and 1926, movie-theater owner Francisco Serrador's long-cherished project of building the Cinelândia film theater complex in Rio de Janeiro finally became a reality. Serrador was a Spanish born businessman who already had an established career in the field of entertainment. The project involved large-scale investment to build several cinemas in the area of Praça Floriano Peixoto. It also involved real estate business, since the upper floors of the buildings were for sale or for rent. With the opening of the Capitólio, Glória and Império theaters (respectively in April, September and November 1925), and then of the Odeon theatre (in April 1926), the city of Rio de Janeiro for the first time had luxury movie houses. But Serrador's "white elephants," as they were called, initially met some resistance from audiences, who, for the same price, could buy tickets to the more popular theaters of the region or to movie houses where they could see a feature film with stage presentations in the intervals. To overcome this resistance and to attract audiences to his new movie palaces, Serrador introduced a novel attraction imported from the United States: the movie prologue.

Movie prologues were stage presentations that preceded the screenings. Although it is difficult to give a precise date when prologues stopped being produced—by the end of 1926, or mid-1927 at the latest<sup>1</sup>—they are important, in that they reveal the ways in which local theatrical and performative practices developed a satirical, and often even critical reading of North-American film production and culture. Taking the form of brief sketches accompanied by song and dance numbers and referring to the theme, characters, or dialogue of the forthcoming feature film, they open up a critical space for a historical reflection on gender, as well as on the dialogue between film and theater.

---

<sup>1</sup> The production of prologues at the time of the transition from silent films to talkies in the United States is the subject of Lloyd Bacon's *Footlight parade* (1933).





Rio de Janeiro, Praça Floriano Peixoto.

### *Local Content*

This novelty of the movie prologues that were set-up at the Cinelândia theaters reproduced a type of stage performance that had already proved a success in North American movie palaces. Indeed, Serrador's inspiration for both the Cinelândia project and the prologues came from New York, where movie palaces as the Capitol, the Rialto, and the Strand enjoyed the contribution of such an inventive theater manager as Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel. From 1911 to the end of the silent era, as Ross Melnick points out, Rothafel "was heralded for his achievements in producing live entertainment and musical accompaniment for the feature films he presented, often in aesthetic or thematic tandem to the motion picture" (18).

However, while the idea of the prologues was imported from the United States, their content was not. To produce the sketches, Francisco Serrador contracted Luiz de Barros, a filmmaker, along with a group of publicity employees, from Paramount's Brazilian office.





1. Prologue to *Orphans of the Storm* (D.W. Griffith. 1921).

Photographs of some of the settings, reproduced in the *Cinearte* magazine, show impressively large-scale scenery, elaborate decorations and extensive casts. For the opening of the Odeon theatre in 1925, for example, around a dozen artists performed in the prologue before the screening of *Graustark* (Dimitri Buchowetzki, 1925). For D.W. Griffith's *Orphans of the Storm* (1921), a palace hall was set up on the stage of the Glória theater, with ten artists adorned with hooped dresses, stockings and wigs. These figures portrayed the French aristocracy in the midst of the French Revolution [fig.1]. Also at the Glória, Moorish scenery was put up for the prologue to Raoul Walsh's *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924).<sup>2</sup>

Because the producers had to submit the scripts to censorship, the prologues's texts have been preserved, and today they can be accessed at the Arquivo Nacional in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See the "Cinema e cinematographistas" column in *Cinearte*: Apr. 28, 1926; Aug. 18, 1926; Aug. 25, 1926.

<sup>3</sup> Censorship visa collection of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Delegacia Auxiliar da Polícia do Rio de Janeiro [subsidiary Rio de Janeiro police department]. The research for this study involved consulting the text of sixteen prologues, all of which were submitted to censorship between April and July 1926. More documentation is available that require

The sixteen prologues I investigated (see Araújo, “Prólogos envenenados”) include dramas and comedies, most of which were accompanied by song and dance numbers. A suspenseful ending was not unusual—this would provide a hook for the main feature, which began shortly afterwards. The prologues of a comic type took the films’ plots as their inspiration to create sketches that closely resembled the popular *teatro de revista* (a Brazilian variant of the vaudeville), with the appearance of stock types and the use of colloquial, humorous and sometimes licentious dialogue, double meanings, allusions to politics and current affairs, in addition to the song and dance numbers, which almost all prologues have in common.

Parody is stronger in those prologues that were written by the publicity employees of Paramount’s Brazilian office, all of them featuring Brazilian men: Annibal Pacheco, Benjamin Fineberg and Celestino Silveira. *Vaqueiro estilizado* (stylized cowboy, Pacheco, Silveira, 1926), the prologue to Buster Keaton’s *Go West* (1925) stages a comic dialogue between a Portuguese milkman, Manuel, and one of his customers, a maid called Henriqueta. Having visited “the Americas” the milkman now wants to be called “Buster Keaton” and claims he is the spitting image of the artist. The double meanings and humorous misunderstandings revolve around the word “mulata,” referring to both the woman the milkman lives with and his cow. Boasting that he met Rudolph Valentino in the United States, the milkman remarks: “Look how much milk Randolpho Banselina drank from my *Mulata*.” (“Banselina” is a pun for “vaseline” and makes fun of the actor’s impeccably smooth and glossy hair). At the end, the *mulata*, his wife, appears in person, catching the Portuguese man when he makes advances towards the maid. The sketch is a parade of character types (the Portuguese immigrant, the *mulata*, the maid) from the *teatro de revista*, in a parody that contrasts Hollywood’s representation of the Old West with the typical everyday life of a Rio de Janeiro suburb.

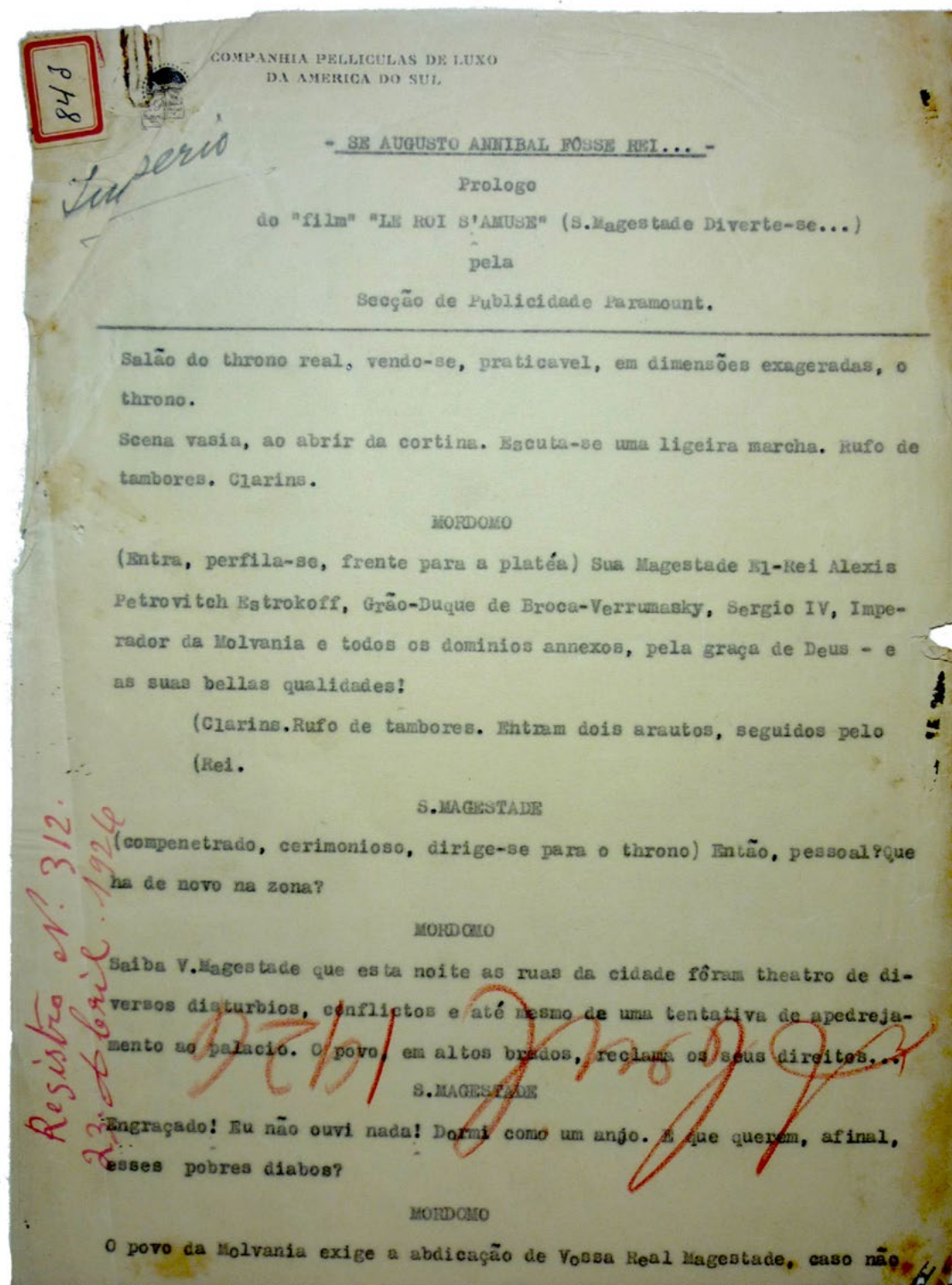
One of the prologues that received the most savage attacks in *Cinearte* was the accompanying piece for *The King on Main Street* (Monta Bell, 1925), a comedy starring Adolph Menjou. In this prologue, entitled *Se Augusto Annibal fosse rei...* (if Augusto Annibal were king..., Pacheco, Fineberg and Vieira, 1926), the king is unable to decide whether to marry a princess, who has just arrived, or to take out a loan from a South American country in order to save his country from bankruptcy. The king asks to call the princess’s maid. The dialogue between the two is exactly in the same style of the later big screen *chanchadas* [musical comedy films], a genre that would be flourishing in Brazilian cinema across the following three decades. The sexually explicit double meanings appear to have overstepped the mark, leading to a section being cut out by the censors [fig.2].

The prologue continues with the king urging the maid to give up her work for the princess and come to live in his castle. Finally, after the first chords of the overture to the opera *O Guarani*, the song “Maria Antonieta” and the triumphal march from *Aida*, the arrival is announced of Princess Ignacia de Loyolla, of the Kingdom of Carvonía.<sup>4</sup> The stage directions

---

further research.

<sup>4</sup> A crasis of *carvão* [coal] and the Latin suffix *onia* [property], meaning “the land of coal.”



2. Front page of the script *Se Augusto Annibal fosse rei...* [if Augusto Annibal would be king...], prologue to *The King on Main Street* (Monta Bell, 1925), with a censored dialogue.

describe the character as “a pitch-black negress, quite ludicrous.” When he sets his eyes on her, the prince “falls in a faint onto his throne” (*Se Augusto Annibal fosse rei...* Censorship visa 312 8).

### *A Mixed Reception*

Sometimes the description of the prologues’ plots in local magazines emphasize their ridiculous side. The *Selecta* and *Cinearte* magazines (which regarded themselves as staunch defenders of morality and good manners) criticized the licentiousness of the prologues and adopted a pejorative and recriminatory tone in their assessment of them. The articles often stirred up deep-rooted prejudices regarding skin-color, class and gender. An editorial in *Cinearte*, for instance, attacks the supposed “misrepresentation” of some prologues, which fail to establish any relation whatsoever with the film, as in the case of a film about “the thrilling issue of divorce.” The prologue, we are explained,

was about the discovery of Brazil by Pedro Álvares Cabral or something like this. With talking, singing and dancing! But that’s not the worst of it.

To welcome Cabral, a mulata from the favela appears on scene and the two begin a dialogue in coarse slang, with clumsy gestures, obscure phrases, double meanings, and even outright obscenities, which may well be the ingredients of an outstanding success in certain seedier parts of the city, but which, thrown in the face of the ladies and gentlemen who frequent these new entertainment establishments, are nothing more than a veritable insult to their good taste and education.<sup>5</sup> (“Segundo prologo ou siga o prologo” 3)

Consolidated as a “national symbol” in the 1920s, the *mulata*—e.g. the mulatto woman, defined by historian Tiago de Melo Gomes as someone “characterized as having some degree of African ascendance, visible in her appearance, but also distinguished by a performance that suggested a remarkable sexuality to observers”—appears to welcome Portuguese navigator Pedro Álvares Cabral when he discovers Brazil. Critical of a carnivalesque scene that is built over the same irreverent, almost nonsensical humor that will inspire countless Brazilian sound film comedies as well as popular Carnival songs, *Cinearte* presents itself as a defender of educated ladies and gentlemen.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> “O prólogo referia-se à descoberta do Brasil por Pedro Álvares Cabral ou coisa semelhante. E isso falado, cantado e dançado! Mas isso não é o pior. Para receber o Cabral aparecia logo uma mulata do Favella e começavam os dois a dialogar em gíria das gentes malandras, com gestos do maior desgarre, frases de calão obscuro, de duplo sentido, ou antes de sentido torpe, que podem ser elementos de grande, excepcional sucesso em certas zonas escusas, mas que atirados à face do público fino que constitui a clientela dos novos estabelecimentos de diversão constituem verdadeiros ultrajes à sua educação e ao seu bom gosto” (translated by Paul Webb and the author).

<sup>6</sup> As in the song “História do Brasil”: “Quem foi que inventou o Brasil?/ Foi seu Cabral! / Foi seu Cabral! / No dia vinte e um de abril / Dois meses depois do carnaval” [who was the one who invented Brazil? / it was Mr. Cabral! / it was Mr. Cabral! / on April 22 / two months after Carnival].



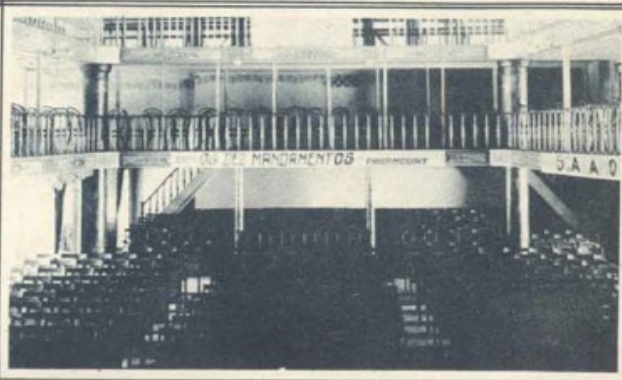


FACHADA DO CAPITOLIO, DO RIO, NO DIA EM QUE EXIBIU A "IRMÃ BRANCA", DA M. G.

Abriu-se no Rio de Janeiro mais um Cinema, o Batuta, instalado á rua Senador Pompeu.

## CINEMAS E CINEMATOGRAFISTAS

"Cinearte" publicará toda e qualquer photographia de fachadas, prologos e outros detalhes de "réclame", publicidade e apresentação.



FACHADA E INTERIOR DO RIO BRANCO, DE ARACAJÚ, NO DIA EM QUE APRESENTAVA "MADAME SANS-GÊNE", DA PARAMOUNT.



FACHADA DO PATHÉ, DO RIO, QUANDO EXIBIA, "MÃE É SEMPRE MÃE", DA UNIVERSAL.



FIGURAS QUE TOMARAM PARTE NO PROLOGO DE "AMOR DE PRÍNCIPE", NO ODEON, DO RIO.



Throughout 1926, both *Cinearte* and *Selecta* continued to publish editorials and commentaries that were harshly critical of the prologues' content. At the heart of the controversy, there was an ingrained prejudice against popular theater. This was considered a lower form of entertainment, scarcely adequate to introduce first-class Hollywood productions to the respectable audience that was the target of the American films programmed at the new movie palaces. The journalists who wrote against prologues expected the Cinelândia complex to attract Rio de Janeiro's social elite, while film exhibitors showed a different approach, choosing to strengthen ties with other forms of popular entertainment in order to attract a broader and more diverse audience.

Although they were all great admirers of the Hollywood industry, these journalists did not advocate (and perhaps were not aware of) similar exhibition practices in the North-American motion picture market. According to Richard Koszarski, from 1915 to 1928 "exhibitors considered themselves showmen, not film programmers. The feature motion picture was only one part of an evening's entertainment" (9). Taking that into account, Melnick stresses that the original theatrical silent film experience, "with its live performances and (sometimes improvised) musical accompaniment, is in fact largely irreproducible, like any live performance, based both on its unpredictability, its spontaneity, and the physiological realities of liveness" (15). Melnick adds that "the interpolation of live and recorded media could be found from coast to coast and overseas" (12).

In England, for instance, mixed-media exhibition enjoyed a boost in the 1920s. Analyzing the cultural interpenetration of theatre and film during this period, Christine Gledhill covers not only movie prologues but also filmic projections employed in live drama and other examples of integration of cinema and live performance. She mentions, for instance, the cases of the American actor George Beban and the British star Ivor Novello, who both successfully performed at the same time on stage and on screen, interacting with their own projected images during the presentation of their films. Gledhill observes that "such practices met with varying approval from different audience groups, distinguishing the broad popular audience from an intelligentsia concerned with the potential of film as a distinctive form" (13).

Movie prologues (as, more generally, the interaction between cinema and stage) aroused similar, mixed and sometimes contradictory, responses in Brazil too, as again we can observe in the pages of *Cinearte*. While, as I mentioned above, it continued to attack the prologues, the magazine also took a position favoring them in the column "Cinema e cinematographistas" [moving pictures and movie-makers] [fig.3]. Although not a trade periodical, *Cinearte* used this section to address professionals, and especially exhibitors. The column called for "any photograph of movie house façades, prologues and any other 'promotional' features, publicity and presentation" ("Cinema e cinematographistas," *Cinearte* Apr. 28, 1926 31). Here, unlike in other sections, prologues had a space of encouragement and appreciation.

Female bodies and female characters played an important role in the movie prologues. Famous women artists (actresses, singers, dancers) allowed the prologues to take advantage of the star system already established by other recent popular stage traditions, such as the *teatro de revista*. From the *teatro de revista* also came most of the structures, characters and attractions deployed in the movie prologues. The sketches, especially the comic ones, borrowed traditional characters from popular stage entertainment, including female types such as the maid and the *mulata*. Both of these types were sexually charged characters. The fact that they belonged to a lower class means that all kinds of malicious dialogues and flirtations were allowed. The reference to their sexual accessibility was constantly repeated, although this does not mean they were always portrayed as subservient. In *Vaqueiro estilizado*, for example, the maid maliciously mocks the milkman who tries to make advances towards her (Censorship Visa 331 7).

When it comes to the *mulata* characters, the issue of race is ambivalent. The *mulata* is often represented as a sexual object, as a “symbol of the intensified sexuality usually associated to African descendants” (Gomes 44). At the same time, however, the exuberant sexuality is just one aspect of this emblematic, contradictory figure. Both *Vaqueiro estilizado* and *Se Augusto Annibal fosse rei...* expose, in different degrees, the negative cultural stereotype embodied by the *mulata* and the afro-descendant woman characters. This is illustrated by the way in which these figures are reduced to animal-like caricatures, ridiculous types that reject the subjects they represent by reducing them to merely grotesque images. As the anthropologist Mariza Corrêa argues:

I believe that the figure of the *mulata* as built in our social imaginary contributes, in terms of racial classification, to expose the contradiction between an assertion of our racial democracy and the flagrant social inequality between whites and non-whites in our country. . . . However, in terms of gender classification, as she embodies in such an explicit manner the White Masculine desire, the *mulata* also reveals the rejection that this embodiment hides: the rejection of the black negro woman.<sup>7</sup> (49–50)

Even if the prologues reinforced a considerable amount of prejudice and stereotype, it is evident that they promoted an interesting mixture of subjects, characters, foreign and national elements, highbrow and lowbrow culture. They were in a vivid dialogue with the audience’s cultural repertory, combining elements of both tradition and modernity. They did not ignore, for instance, the changes that were affecting women’s habits. In particular,

---

<sup>7</sup> “Acredito que a mulata construída em nosso imaginário social contribui, no âmbito das classificações raciais, para expor a contradição entre a afirmação de nossa democracia racial e a flagrante desigualdade social entre brancos e não brancos em nosso país . . . Mas, no âmbito das classificações de gênero, ao encarnar de maneira tão explícita o desejo do Masculino Branco, a mulata também revela a rejeição que essa encarnação esconde: a rejeição à negra preta” (translated by Paul Webb and the author).

two prologues by Luiz de Barros present modern women characters. *Mulheres modernas* (1926) takes place in a cabaret, where old Madame X dances with her gigolo, mocks her old husband and sniffs cocaine, while the Austrian ballerina Valery Oeser performs a “futurist dance.” (*Mulheres modernas*. Censorship Visa 304 2). *Parisina* (Luiz de Barros, 1926), maybe the prologue to *Mademoiselle Midnight* (Robert Z. Leonard, 1926), presents some typical Parisian characters, including the *femme fatale* and the *garçonne*. The first one just crosses the stage, while the *garçonne* introduces herself by means of a song: she is the *garçonne chic*, who has turned habits upside down; she has shortened her hair and her skirt; she borrows everything from men, except trousers (*Parisina*. Censorship Visa 345 1-3).

How did Brazilian film culture deal with and represent changes in women’s habits? The movie prologues react with both fascination and criticism. On the one hand, the modern woman is seen as a powerful sign of an increasingly cosmopolitan, mundane lifestyle, connected to the world’s latest trends. As the country’s capital city at the time, Rio de Janeiro would have to embrace the modernity portrayed in these prologues. On the other hand, it was not easy for the traditional, patriarchal Brazilian society to cope with the deep changes related to modern women’s new lifestyles. While, as we have seen, the representation of characters associated to the lower classes—the *mulata* and the maid characters—turned them into sexual objects, the sketches that revolved around figures of modern bourgeois women tended to emphasize the masculine aspects of their attitude (hair, clothes, sexual behavior), in such a way so as to criticize changes in gender roles.

Although the treatment of these characters (the maid, the *mulata*, the modern woman) reaffirmed traditional views on gender, race and class through the use of stereotypes, the representation of types already repeatedly exploited in other forms of popular entertainment also contributed to the development of a unique, locally produced reading of the foreign films that were screened at Cinelândia. Quite importantly, this reading was not subordinated to the meaning of the original, imported film. In the prologues staged in the cinemas of Rio de Janeiro, the prevailing Hollywood model was given a reinterpretation through parody, as well as through the incorporation of characters and situations that were already familiar to theater audiences—the same audiences the new movie palaces wanted to attract.

In their analysis of early cinema’s representation of the female figures as “regularly coded” and “recognizable types,” Pierre Chemartin and Nicolas Dulac point out that such stereotypes ought be considered also with regard to their effectiveness (*efficacité*): “since they always carry a simplification, stereotypes must be immediately intelligible, relying heavily on schematization, caricature and spectacular devices” (155).<sup>8</sup> Moreover,

This strategy is part of a certain movement that appears in different institutions of popular entertainment, institutions that do not give any particular importance to such values as the

---

<sup>8</sup> “. . . les figures stéréotypales, puisqu’elles procèdent toujours d’une simplification, se présentent de manière à être immédiatement intelligibles, en misant beaucoup sur la schématisation, le caricatural ou le spectaculaire” (translated by author).

plot's originality or its edifying character, as advocated by the representatives of the "belle lettres" and the naturalistic theatre, but favour instead the spectacular dimension, the simple variation of familiar situations, which belongs to traditional folklore and popular rituals. Moreover, the situations described above are by no means exclusive to the cinema, but can also easily be found in the roman-feuilleton, the vaudeville theatre, the comics etc.<sup>9</sup> (148)

Despite the historical and geographical distance, it is possible to refer these remarks to the case of Brazilian movie prologues too. The use of stereotypes that were instantly recognizable to the local audience articulated an appealing attraction based on local interpretations of foreign (and especially Hollywood) films. Stereotypes work as invaluable tools for the movie prologue genre, helping it to "find its audience"—and "to find an audience" has always been a challenge to Brazilian cinema. It is not surprising that prologues—in particular the comic ones, with their exuberant predilection for parody—reveal a close affinity with representational strategies which would become the stock-in-trade of Brazilian popular cinema after the introduction of the talking pictures, from Luiz de Barros' comedies of the 1930s and 1940s, to the popular *chanchadas* produced between the 1940s and the early 1960s.

The short season of the movie prologues preceded the arrival of the talking pictures in Brazil by only a few years. The first Brazilian feature film with synchronized sound, *Acabaram-se os otários* (gone are the morons, Luiz de Barros), was released in 1929. Two years later, Luiz de Barros directed *O babão* (the slobberer, 1931), a musical comedy that, like so many satirical prologues, was also a parody of a huge Hollywood hit, *The pagan* (W.S. Dyke, 1929), starring Ramon Novarro.

The use of a colloquial language style, the double meanings, the everyday situations and popular types, the recourse to song and dance routines to punctuate the main plot, the parodistic approach to imported foreign models are all major features of both the Brazilian movie prologue genre and the Brazilian film comedies and *chanchadas* of the talking era.

THE AUTHOR: Luciana Corrêa de Araújo is an Associate Professor of Theory and History of Film and Audiovisual Media at the Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar), Brazil. Her research interests revolve around Brazilian cinema history, focusing on Brazilian silent cinema, and film criticism. She is the author of *A crítica de cinema no Recife dos anos 50* [film criticism in Recife in the 1950s] (1997) and *Joaquim Pedro de Andrade: primeiros tempos* [Joaquim Pedro de Andrade: the early days] (2013).

---

<sup>9</sup> "Cette stratégie s'inscrit dans une certaine mouvance qui apparaît dans différentes institutions de divertissement populaire, institutions qui ne valorisaient pas tant l'originalité du récit et son caractère édifiant—preconisés par les 'belles-lettres' ou le théâtre naturaliste, par exemple—que la dimension spectaculaire, la simple variation de situations bien connues, faisant partie du folklore ou des croyances populaires. D'ailleurs, les situations décrites ci-dessus ne sont en rien exclusives au cinéma, mas se retrouvent également dans le roman-feuilleton, le vaudeville, le *comic strip*, etc" (translated by author).

## Works Cited

- Acabaram-se os otários* [gone are the morons]. Dir. Luiz de Barros. 1929. Film.
- Araújo, Luciana Corrêa de, “‘Prologos envenenados’: Cinema e teatro nos palcos da Cinelândia carioca” [‘poisoned prologues’: cinema and theatre on the stages of Cinelândia]. *Travessias*. 3.2 (2009): 1-17. Print.
- Babo, Lamartine. “História do Brasil” [history of Brasil]. 1934. Song.
- Chemartin, Pierre, and Nicolas Dulac. “La femme et le type: le stéréotype comme vecteur narratif dans le cinéma des attractions” [the woman and the type: the stereotype as narrative vector in the cinema of attractions]. *CiNéMAS* 16.1 (2005): 139–161. Print.
- “Cinema e cinematographistas” [moving pictures and movie-makers]. *Cinearte* 1.25 (18 Aug. 1926): 27. Print.
- Biblioteca Digital das Artes do Espetáculo*. Web. 20 July 2013. <[http://mls.bireme.br/\\_popup\\_pdf.php?data=c|1926|08|01|0025](http://mls.bireme.br/_popup_pdf.php?data=c|1926|08|01|0025)>.
- . *Cinearte* 1.26 (25 Aug. 1926): 27. Print. *Biblioteca Digital das Artes do Espetáculo*. Web. 20 July 2013. <[http://mls.bireme.br/\\_popup\\_pdf.php?data=c|1926|08|01|0026](http://mls.bireme.br/_popup_pdf.php?data=c|1926|08|01|0026)>.
- . *Cinearte* 1.9 (28 Apr. 1926): 31. Print. *Biblioteca Digital das Artes do Espetáculo*. Web. 20 July 2013. <[http://mls.bireme.br/\\_popup\\_pdf.php?data=c|1926|04|01|0009](http://mls.bireme.br/_popup_pdf.php?data=c|1926|04|01|0009)>.
- Corrêa, Mariza. “Sobre a Invenção Da Mulata” [about the invention of the mulatto woman]. *Cadernos Pagu* 6-7 (1996): 35–50. Print.
- Footlight parade*. Dir. Lloyd Bacon. 1933. Film.
- Gledhill, Christine. *Reframing British Cinema, 1918-1928: Between Restraint and Passion*. London: BFI Publishing, 2003. Print.
- Go West*. Dir. Buster Keaton. 1925. Film.
- Gomes, Tiago de Melo. *Um espelho no palco: identidades sociais e massificação da cultura no teatro de revista dos anos 1920* [a mirror on stage: social identities and mass culture in the magazines of 1920s]. Campinas: Editora UNICAMP, 2004. Print.
- Graustark*. Dir. Dimitri Buchowetzki. 1925. Film.
- The King on Main Street*. Dir. Monta Bell. 1925. Film.
- Koszarski, Richard. *An Evening's Entertainment. The Age of the Silent Feature Picture: 1915-1928*. Berkeley: University of California press, 1994. Print.
- Mademoiselle Midnight*. Dir. Robert Z. Leonard. 1926. Film.
- Melnick, Ross. *American Showman: Samuel “Roxy” Rothafel and the Birth of the Entertainment Industry, 1908-1935*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. Print.



*Mulheres modernas. Prólogo para filme de mesmo título* [modern women. prologue for a film of the same title]. Dir. Luiz de Barros. Censorship Visa 304. April 14, 1926. 1-2. Conjunto documental da 2ª Delegacia Auxiliar da Polícia do Rio de Janeiro (Índice das peças, gêneros e onomástico). 1917-1940. Arquivo National, Rio de Janeiro. Print.

*O babão* [the slobberer]. Dir. Luiz de Barros. 1931. Film.

*Orphans of the Storm*. Dir. D.W. Griffith. 1921. Film.

*The Pagan* Dir. W.S. Dyke. 1929. Film.

*Parisina. Prólogo para o filme A mana de Paris* [*Parisina*. prologue to *Woman of Paris* (Adolphe Menjou, 1925)]. Dir. Luiz de Barros. Censorship Visa 345. May 25, 1926, 1-3. Conjunto documental da 2ª Delegacia Auxiliar da Polícia do Rio de Janeiro (Índice das peças, gêneros e onomástico). 1917-1940. Arquivo National, Rio de Janeiro. Print.

*Se Augusto Annibal fosse rei... Prólogo para o filme Sua majestade diverte-se* [if Augusto Annibal would be king... prologue to *The King on Main Street* (Monta Bell, 1925)]. Script: Annibal Pacheco, Benjamin Fineberg e Celestino Vieira. Censorship Visa 312 April 26, 1926, 1-8. Conjunto documental da 2ª Delegacia Auxiliar da Polícia do Rio de Janeiro (Índice das peças, gêneros e onomástico). 1917-1940. Arquivo National, Rio de Janeiro. Print.

“Segundo prologo ou siga o prologo” [second prologue or following to the prologue]. *Cinearte* 1.19 (7 July 1926): 3. Print. *Biblioteca Digital das Artes do Espetáculo*. Web. 20 July 2013. <[http://mls.bireme.br/\\_popup\\_pdf.php?data=c|1926|07|01|0019](http://mls.bireme.br/_popup_pdf.php?data=c|1926|07|01|0019)>.

*The Thief of Baghdad*. Dir. Raoul Walsh. 1924. Film.

*Vaquero estilizado. Prólogo para filme de mesmo título*. [stylized cowboy. prologue for the film of the same title (*Go West*, Buster Keaton, 1925)]. Script: Annibal Pacheco, Celestino Silveira. Censorship Visa 331 May 17, 1926. 1-7. Conjunto documental da 2ª Delegacia Auxiliar da Polícia do Rio de Janeiro (Índice das peças, gêneros e onomástico). 1917-1940. Arquivo National, Rio de Janeiro. Print