

A Pedagogical Impulse:  
Noncommercial Film Cultures in Spain (1931-1936)

Enrique Fibla Gutierrez

A Thesis

in

The Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Film and Moving Image Studies) at

Concordia University

Montréal, Québec, Canada

September 2018

© Enrique Fibla Gutierrez, 2018



## Abstract

**A Pedagogical Impulse: Noncommercial Film Cultures in Spain (1931-1936)****Enrique Fibla-Gutierrez, Ph.D.****Concordia University, 2018**

This dissertation analyzes noncommercial film culture in Spain during the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1936), focusing on the pedagogical efforts of film criticism, nontheatrical, educational, amateur, and political filmmaking, as well as institutional developments associated with these movements. In this short and intense period of time the country experienced unprecedented social transformations and heightened participation of citizens in the public sphere through mass media and cultural initiatives. The images of ecstatic crowds celebrating the advent of the Republic on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1931, are a testament to the hopes that the new era brought to those that wanted to break with the country's unequal and corrupt old order. But it was also a time of unstable governments, resistance to democratic change and social justice, and political radicalization that found a tragic end in the Civil War provoked by Francisco Franco's failed coup d'état in July 18, 1936.

The emergence, international consolidation, and lasting effects of noncommercial film culture amidst this incredibly convulsive and complex context are the subject of the thesis. In its four chapters I examine the use of film as a tool for cultural and social progress in a country that was avidly looking for new models of political organization and modernization. Specifically, I look at the appeal of Soviet cinema and Socialist

modernity for Spanish intellectuals and filmmakers and the influence that this radical film culture had in the later production of propaganda films during the Civil War; the materialist translation of the avant-garde into Spain through transnational networks of film education and critical spectatorship epitomized in the journal *Nuestro Cinema* created by Juan Piqueras in 1932; the participation of Catalan amateur filmmakers in the emergent international amateur film movement that organized its first international congress in 1935 in Barcelona; and the institutionalization of cinema into state film policies, geopolitical initiatives, and educational programs by the Spanish and Catalan governments during the 1930s.

The aim of the dissertation is, then, to include the Spanish context into 1930s film scholarship, from which it has been largely excluded, showing how it can illuminate new perspectives on the relationship between cinema and modernity, the emergence of film culture, the avant-garde, film education, institutionalization and cinema beyond the commercial screen.

## Acknowledgments

I want to use this section to stress that no dissertation belongs entirely to its author. In my case it pertains as much to my supervisor Masha Salazkina and her endless generosity and patient guidance. I feel truly grateful to have crossed paths with such a supportive advisor and will try my best to transmit this enriching experience to the future students I may have. As philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman reminds us, neoliberal “inhumanity” always coexists with “spaces of humanity” that resist it from the humbleness of everyday conversations and actions. Thank you, Masha, for enabling such a refuge of humanity during these years and for teaching me the virtues of true collaborative work. The same goes for Pablo La Parra-Pérez, a friend first but also a brilliant young scholar with whom I have shared doubts, joys, disappointments, successes, travels, projects, etc. and with whom I wish I could have co-written this dissertation. Gracias camarada.

I extend this recognition of the collective authorship of my dissertation to my committee, from which I have learnt so much. Having Haidee Wasson and Luca Caminati onboard has been a luxury. Their comments and feedback on my comprehensive examination, thesis proposal, and specialization examination significantly helped shape the theoretical and methodological framework of the thesis project and my work as a scholar in general. Charles Acland and Jordana Mendelson have completed a real dream team of a committee that I couldn’t have imagined when I started the PhD in 2014.

The Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema at Concordia University has been a real home in all this time. Despite my constant coming and goings from Montreal to Barcelona and vice versa I have always been able to count with numerous friends,

colleagues, and teachers in my beloved Canadian shelter. In no particular order I want to thank Beatriz Bartolomé Herrera, Patrick Smith, Viviane Saglier, Joaquin Serpe, Sima Kokotivc, Maria Corrigan, Kay Dickinson, Joshua Neves, Marc Steinberg, Martin Lefebvre, Weixian Pan, Edo Ernest, Will Fech, Tess McClernon, Theo Stojanov, Giuseppe Fidotta, Patrick Brodie, Darien Sánchez Salas, Nikola Stepic, Irene Rozsa, and Zach Melzer for creating such a warm and healthy environment in which to pursue a PhD. Likewise thank you Basma, Guy, Nur, Isaac, Irene, and Juan for your beautiful hearts and utmost hospitality. The doors of my house, wherever that is, will always be open to you.

This dissertation wouldn't have been possible without the assistance of the archivists at the Filmoteca de Catalunya (Barcelona), Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya (Barcelona), Pavelló de la República (Barcelona), Filmoteca Española (Madrid), Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid), Archivo Histórico del Partido Comunista (Madrid), Biblioteca Valenciana (Valencia), and Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris). Their work, and the importance of archives to learn about our society and its history, deserves eternal gratitude and recognition.

A special thank you to my MA cohort, colleagues, friends, and mentors at San Francisco State University, who took in a confused Spaniard in 2011 and sheltered him through a challenging seminar on Julia Kristeva, homesickness, and a long-distance relationship. I will always be thankful to the kindness and friendship of Andrew Clark, Joel Park, Rodrigo Sombra, Patrick Brame, Megan Payne, Rachel Hart, Courtney Fellion, Alina Predescu, Abas Zadfar, Sean Bristol-Lee, and Ashley Nunes. Professors Jenny Lau, Aaron Kerner, and Randy Rutsky were not only excellent teachers, but also incredibly

supportive mentors that helped me navigate the difficult transition from cinephile to scholar. Daniel Bernardi and Tarek Elhaik deserve a separate mention, both for their intellectual and human generosity. Thank you for opening your hearts and brilliant minds and encouraging me to pursue an academic career from which you are ultimately responsible. And thanks also to my Californian “Strong” adoptive family; Rob, Muy, Ken, and Vera.

I would also like to recognize the help of the numerous scholars that I have met in conferences, archives, events, bars, or through email correspondences. A special mention goes to Sonia García López, Lee Grieveson, Andrea Mariani, Timothy Barnard, François Albera, Benoit Turquety, Valérie Vignaux, Jane Gaines, Fernando Ramos Arenas, Eduardo Hernández Cano, Vicente Rubio-Pueyo, Miguel Fernández Labayen, Malte Hagener, Vicente Sánchez Biosca, Josep Maria Català, and Aitor Hernández Eguíluz. And to the many others that I haven’t met in person but whose work has been instrumental in my work; Marta García Carrión, Bert Hogenkamp, Vicente Benet, José María Caparrós Lera, Román Gubern, Zhang Zhen, Jo Labanyi, Heather Norris Nicholson, María Antonia Paz Rebollo, Alicia Alted Vigil, Russell Campbell, and a long etc.

A successful dissertation not only depends on the “spaces of humanity” that one is lucky to find in academia. It is especially dependent on the love of friends and family to which I have had to wave goodbye too many times in these last years. I thank my parents Luisa and Ricardo for giving me everything and always welcoming me back into the joyful chaos of a Valencian family (with is completed by two magnificent and utterly disorganized Fibla brothers). Thank you also to the Vilas crowd, my Catalan family and a

constant source of support. Lur, Pau, Arnau, Susana, Martina, Ricard, Robert, Ashton, Ben, Jesse, and Carles, have been instrumental in keeping my spirits up and priorities clear: their friendship and love is the most precious thing in life. Which leads me to the last, but not least, person I have to thank for her encouragement, strength, and amusing company; moltes gràcies Mònica, i pa'lante!



## Dedication

“A Pedagogical Impulse” is dedicated to everyone who participated in the imperative of culture promoted by the Second Spanish Republic. Many of them were assassinated during the war, had to flee the country and live in exile, or stayed in Spain and became part of those who lost (*los vencidos*), facing long periods of jail, social exclusion, and political persecution during the interminable Franco dictatorship. Their inspiring memory has overcome oblivion thanks to the work of archivists, scholars, artists, writers, relatives, and anonymous people who stored documents, housed dissidents, helped people flee, and, most importantly, never stopped *remembering*. What they were able to transmit to future generations will remain forever an invaluable point of reference for anyone interested in a more just and open society.

## Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations .....	xiii
List of Figures .....	xiv
Tragic Prologue as Means of Historical Context.....	1
Introduction/Roadmap: The Imperative of (Film) Culture in Interwar Spain .....	8
1. Silky and unforgettable memories of the Spanish Empire.....	9
2. Disorganizing modernity .....	16
3. The pedagogical impulse and the question of the masses.....	24
4. How can noncommercial cinema matter more?.....	38
Rethinking Spanish film history through film culture .....	46
5. Chapter breakdown .....	52
Chapter 1. From Bullfighters to Red Sailors: Alternative Film Culture and Socialist Modernity in Spain (1931-1936) .....	56
Dissipating the “white fog”: noncommercial film culture in Spain.....	63
“Something like Soviet cinema”: intellectuals and the appeal of socialist modernity .	79
<i>Nuestro Cinema</i> and the cultivation of radical film culture.....	92
Mimicking the struggle of the red sailors .....	103
Chapter 2. Film Called into Action: Juan Piqueras, Léon Moussinac, Harry Alan Potamkin and the <i>Internationale</i> of Film Pedagogy .....	110

The deaths and translations of the avant-garde.....	115
Reorganizing the networks of the avant-garde .....	122
The “world traveler” of film criticism: the multiple, and forgotten, lives of Juan Piqueras.....	127
Bypassing the “circuits in charge of cinema”: Moussinac and critical spectatorship.	142
Avoiding the “dance in a cul-de-sac”: Potamkin and leftist film culture in the USA	154
Cinema, night school .....	166
Chapter 3. A Vernacular National Cinema: Amateur Filmmaking in Catalonia (1932– 1936).....	170
The emergence of amateur cinema and the “love” of filmmaking.....	174
From hikers to filmmakers: the CEC and amateur cinema in Catalonia .....	183
A “difficult art”: the distinguished space of the amateur.....	187
Friendship bonds and international networks .....	202
Filling the eyes of the young: amateur filmmaking as national cinema .....	209
Chapter 4. “A Formidable and Decisive Medium”: Institutionalizing Cinema in Interwar Spain (1929-1936) .....	219
Film, education, and the state in the interwar period.....	224
World fairs, visual culture, and global capitalism .....	238
The return of the empire: the 1931 Congress of Hispanic American Cinematography .....	243

Catching up with modernity: the Cinema Committee of the Generalitat de Catalunya .....	259
Cinema on the move .....	267
Conclusion: The Disorganized Transmission of Modernity in Spain and the Afterlives of the Pedagogical Impulse of Noncommercial Cinema.....	276
References.....	284
Works cited.....	284
Films cited.....	315

### **List of Abbreviations**

**AEAR:** Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires

**CEDA:** Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas

**CEC:** Centre Excursionista de Catalunya

**CHC:** Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía

**CICI:** Congrès International du Cinéma Indépendant, not to be confused with the Commission Internationale de Coopération Intellectuelle

**CPUSA:** Communist Party of the United States of America

**CNT:** Confederación Nacional de Trabajo

**COMINTERN:** Communist International

**CCGC:** Comité de Cinema de la Generalitat de Catalunya

**IAFC:** International Amateur Film Congress

**IECI:** International Educational Cinematograph Institute

**IICI:** Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle

**IAC:** Institute of Amateur Cinematographers

**ILE:** Institución Libre de Enseñanza

**MIP:** Ministerio de Instrucción Pública

**MOPR:** International Red Aid

**PCF:** Parti Communiste Français

**PCE:** Partido Comunista de España

**PSOE:** Partido Socialista Obrero Español

**RRP:** Partido Republicano Radical

**VGIK:** All-Soviet Institute of Cinematography

## List of Figures

Figure 1. <i>Wreck of the Vizcaya</i> (American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1903). Courtesy of the Library of Congress. ....	9
Figure 2. Proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic in the Sant Jaume square of Barcelona (April 14, 1931). Photograph from Josep Maria Sagarra, Banda Municipal de Barcelona. ....	11
Figure 3. Stills from <i>Esencia de verbena</i> (Ernesto Giménez Caballero, 1930). Courtesy of Filmoteca Española. ....	15
Figure 4. On the left photograph from Gabriel Casas, “Dia del llibre 1932” (“1932 book day”). Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya. On the right image of a Misiones Pedagógicas film screening in a remote village, “Niños andaluces en el cine de Misiones.” .....	25
Figure 5. Façade of the Spanish Pavilion in the 1937 International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life in Paris with emphasis on the educational spirit of the Second Republic. ....	30
Figure 6. Stills from <i>Battleship Potemkin</i> and the newsreel that captured the funeral of Anarchist hero Buenaventura Durruti in 1936, <i>The Mass Tribute to Buenaventura Durruti</i> (CNT-FAI, 1936). ....	33
Figure 7. Stills from the 1926 educational and promotion film <i>¿Qué es España?</i> Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Valencia. ....	36
Figure 8. Mobile screen improvised by members of the Misiones Pedagógicas, 1932. Courtesy of the Residencia de Estudiantes, Madrid. ....	40
Figure 9. Photograph from the shooting of <i>Cinco Minutos de Españolada</i> (Rafael Gil, 1935). Taken from Juan Ignacio Valenzuela Moreno’s thesis on the filmmaker. ....	66

Figure 10. Vicente Escudero with a 16mm camera he bought in New York in 1932. Photo by Carmita García in <i>Nuestro Cinema</i> Issue 5 (October 1932). .....	68
Figure 11. Covers for the books on Soviet cinema <i>Panorama del Cinema en Rusia</i> (Carlos Fernández Cuenca, 1930) and <i>El Cinema Soviètic</i> (Josep Palau, 1932), and advertisement for F. Slang's book <i>Battleship Potemkin</i> in the newspaper <i>El Sol</i> (December 1930). .....	72
Figure 12. Handout for the 21st session of the Cineclub Español, in which <i>Battleship Potemkin</i> was screened after three years of unsuccessful attempts. ....	74
Figure 13. Cover and first page of the F.Lang's book <i>El Acorazado Potemkin</i> (1930). Courtesy of the Pavelló de la República library. ....	77
Figure 14. Cover from Jaume Miravittles book <i>Contra la Cultura Burguesa</i> . Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya.....	79
Figure 15. Josep Renau's posters for <i>Chapaev</i> and <i>We are from Kronstadt</i> (circa 1936-1937). Courtesy of the Pavelló de la República library. ....	81
Figure 16. <i>AC Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea</i> cover of Issue 4 and page 30 of Issue 3 with stills from Soviet films screened in the Cineclub Proa Filmófono. ....	87
Figure 17. Still from <i>Man with a movie camera</i> (Chelovek s kinoapparatom, Dziga Vertov, 1929), cover of Josep Renau's book <i>Función Social del Cartel</i> (Nueva Cultura, 1937), and still from <i>Un Chien Andalou</i> (Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, 1929).....	90
Figure 18. Stills from <i>La Ruta de don Quijote</i> . Filmoteca Española.....	94
Figure 19. Stills from <i>Earth</i> , amateur films <i>Untitled home movie</i> (Delmir de Caralt, circa 1935) and <i>El blat</i> (Salvador Rifa, 1933), <i>Old and New, Galicia</i> (Carlos Velo, 1936), and <i>Las Hurdes, tierra sin pan</i> (Luis Buñuel, 1933). ....	96

Figure 20. Stills from <i>Old and New</i> and <i>La Aldea Maldita</i> in <i>Nuestro Cinema</i> Issue 3, pp. 78-79 and 87.....	98
Figure 21. Stills from <i>Votad al Frente Popular</i> (unknown author, circa 1936). The conservation state of the fragile reversible 16mm film prevents for now its projection so photographs of the film are shown instead. Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya.....	103
Figure 22. Poster promoting the film <i>L'Exercit Popular Neix</i> (Comité pro Ejército Popular Regular, 1937), whose screening in the Palau de la Música would be accompanied by three Soviet films and a representation of the one-act play <i>The Trench</i> . Courtesy of the Pavelló de la República library.....	105
Figure 23. Dedicated picture taken in the USSR from Joris Ivens and the team of the film <i>Komsomol</i> (1933) to the "Nuestro Cinema collective." In <i>Nuestro Cinema</i> , issue 10 (March 1933). .....	116
Figure 24. Dedicatory of Rafael Alberti to Juan Piqueras in the book cover of a 1929 reprint of <i>La Amante</i> (1925). Courtesy of the Biblioteca Valenciana. ....	130
Figure 25. Studio <i>Nuestro Cinema</i> advertisement in <i>Nuestro Cinema</i> , issue 16 (March-April 1935). .....	138
Figure 26. Letter from schoolteacher José Becerril Madueño to Juan Piqueras, September 1935. Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica. ....	140
Figure 27. Cover of Léon Moussinac's influential book <i>Naissance du Cinema</i> (1925); "La critique des spectateurs" column in <i>L'Humanité</i> . .....	143
Figure 28. Cover of <i>L'Éducateur Prolétarien</i> (issue 1) and section devoted to educational cinema in page 39 (1932). .....	147



Figure 29. Letter of Juan Piqueras as representative of the AEAR to the Cine-Teatro Club in Madrid. Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica. ....	150
Figure 30. Léon Moussinac visiting the nearby front line during the second International Congress for the Defense of Culture in Valencia (1937).....	152
Figure 31. Nosotros theater group from Madrid asking for plays to their US comrades in the journal <i>Workers Theatre</i> (1933).....	155
Figure 32. <i>Experimental Cinema</i> subscription advertisement (Issue 3, February 1931) and similar advertisement translated in <i>Nuestro Cinema</i> (Issue 10, March 1932).....	156
Figure 33. Newspaper clipping with news from Potamkin's course at the New School (1932). Courtesy of the New School. ....	163
Figure 34. From top left: Logo of Mezhrabpom film studio, International Red Aid in Germany, Cover of August 1930 <i>New Masses</i> issue, and USA Workers Film, and Photo League Logo...	164
Figure 35. Joan Salvans Piera at the Encantat Gran peak (taken by Albert Oliveras i Folch, July 1927) and photograph of the Maladeta peak where we can see a film camera from Salvans (original title says "Salvans films the Maladeta", taken by Albert Oliveras i Folch, 1927). Arxiu Fotogràfic Centre Excursionista de Catalunya. ....	178
Figure 36. Amateur filmmaker in a trip organized by the CEC to Barèges (France) in 1929. Photograph by Carles Fargas i Bonell. Arxiu Fotogràfic Centre Excursionista de Catalunya. ..	179
Figure 37. Pathé-Baby advertisement in <i>La Vanguardia</i> , January 6, 1924. ....	184
Figure 38. Proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic in Barcelona (April 14, 1931). Images taken by anonymous amateur filmmakers. Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya.....	186
Figure 39. Advertisement for amateur film store with its own theatre (Sala Kino's) in Barcelona. In issue 11 of <i>Cinema Amateur</i> (Spring 1936). Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya.....	188

Figure 40. Cover of <i>Cinema Amateur</i> issue 10 and reference to Soviet montage in that same issue.....	190
Figure 41. Stills from <i>H20</i> and <i>Aigua</i> . Filmoteca de Catalunya. ....	191
Figure 42. Stills from <i>Memmortigo?</i> (Delmir de Caralt, 1933). Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya. ....	192
Figure 43. Stills from <i>Diaris</i> . Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya. ....	195
Figure 44. Last shot of <i>Diaris</i> . Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya. ....	196
Figure 45. Delmir de Caralt <i>Untitled Home Movie</i> (circa 1935). Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya. ....	200
Figure 46. Posters for the 1935 IV International Amateur Film Contest and I Congress (Issues 7 and 8 of <i>Cinema Amateur</i> ). ....	203
Figure 47. Picture of Luciano De Feo and the Romania Pavilion in <i>La Vanguardia</i> newspaper. ....	236
Figure 48. 1929 Barcelona International Exposition and its famous Light Exhibit. Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya. ....	239
Figure 49. 1929 Seville Ibero-American Exposition Poster by Gustavo Bacarisas. ....	241
Figure 50. Poster for the CHC preparatory sessions held in Barcelona. Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya ....	246
Figure 51. Telegram from Francesc Macià to Josep Carner i Ribalta in which the president of Catalonia receives with enthusiasm the idea of making a "Catalan film" and looks forward to seeing him in person soon (1933). ANC1-818-T-345. ....	260
Figure 52. Photograph by Gabriel Casas of the Cinema Services headquarters located at the 1929 International Exhibition Romania Pavilion. Circa 1937. ANC1-5-N-3445. ....	262

Figure 53. Photograph by Gabriel Casas of an educational film screening organized by the CCGC. Circa 1934. ANC1-5-N-3458.....	264
Figure 54. Photograph of the CCGC exhibit that probably took place in their headquarters in the former Romania Pavilion of the 1929 International Exhibition (Gabriel Casas, ANC1-5-N-3446, circa 1934-36).....	270

## Tragic Prologue as Means of Historical Context

It is ironic that Spain, a baffling *terra incognita*, should have become the screen on to which outsiders projected their own concerns with such luminous clarity. The more fractured and opaque that rough Iberian square, the more those abroad made it the focus of their certainties. The Spanish Civil War appeared to alien eyes as a clash of international creeds. It seemed to crystallise the universal opposition between bosses and workers, between Church and State, between obscurantism and enlightenment.

Piers Brendon, 2001.<sup>1</sup>

Like its devil and its god, every era has had this most precious of gifts: the image of the new life, long-awaited, desired, 'possible.'

Henri Lefebvre, 1961.<sup>2</sup>

-At this moment, only the Republic of pedagogues is in force.  
-There are worse republics than ours. For instance, of militaries, or bankers.

Javier Pérez Andújar, 2007.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Piers Brendon, *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s* (London: Pimlico, 2001), 307. Emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes, September 1959-May 1961* (London; New York: Verso, 1995), 65.

<sup>3</sup> Javier Pérez Andújar, *Todo lo que se llevó el diablo* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2013), 13.

On July 24, 1936, an Anarchist group executed businessman, politician, and amateur filmmaker Joan Salvans Piera near the Matadepera-Talamanca road (minutes away from the current location of the Catalan Film Archive) and seven other prominent members of the industrial bourgeoisie of Terrassa. Around the same day, and seven hundred kilometers away, Marxist film critic Juan Piqueras was executed by Fascist troops near the Venta de Baños train station in Palencia, where he had stopped to rest from an ailing stomach ulcer. Salvans had been an active part of the amateur film movement that had developed throughout Catalonia in the early 1930s. The movement had its own journal *Cinema Amateur* (1932-1936) and helped organize the first International Amateur Film Congress (herein referred to as IAFC) in Sitges and Barcelona in 1935. Salvans had won local and national awards, and had just finished a new film, *L'enemic de Venus*, when the Civil War broke out. Piqueras had created *Nuestro Cinema* (1932-1935), the first transnational journal published in Spanish specifically devoted to analyzing film as a social and political expression. He was a nodal figure in the expanded leftist radical film culture that promoted film clubs, avant-garde and political cinema, smallgauge filmmaking and critical spectatorship projects throughout the world. His initiatives and lasting impact on Spanish cinema will emerge throughout every chapter of the dissertation.<sup>4</sup>

Although diametrically opposed in their political affiliations (the former representing the

---

<sup>4</sup> It is important to clarify that Piqueras was, as his good friend Léon Moussinac, a convinced Stalinist. Since his personal archive was destroyed during the Second World War, when his wife Ketty González fled Paris in 1940 and exiled to Dominican Republic and later Venezuela, we have no way of knowing the extent of this allegiance to Stalin's regime, his awareness of the purges, or his precise role (if any) within the Comintern, PCE (Partido Comunista de España), and PCF (Parti Communiste Français). We only have his writings on film (which tend to favor socialist realism), but nothing about his exact political inclinations and responsibilities within the Communist apparatus. His endless curiosity, open mindedness and dynamism hardly fits the prototype of conservative Stalinist (or, as the Civil War would soon prove on Spanish soil with the extermination of the POUM by the Soviet secret police, murderous paranoia and allegiance to Moscow) that is usually associated with the term. I prefer to think of Piqueras as an intellectual dazzled by socialist modernity and convinced of the importance of consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union and promote social revolution elsewhere, but one that would have become estranged with the sinister methods to achieve these ends. We can ultimately only speculate and hope for hidden documents to emerge (perhaps in the archives of the Comintern in the USSR) and clarify the extent of Piqueras's awareness of Stalin's policies during the 1930s.

powerful, and elitist, Catalan industrial bourgeoisie and the later communism and the rise of the proletarian class into the public sphere), their trajectories were united by their efforts to explore the multiple dimensions and uses of cinema beyond the commercial screen. These efforts belong to the mostly overlooked history of amateur filmmakers, militant critics, teachers, scientists, politicians, activists, and artists and their use of moving images as a tool for social, political, and cultural emancipation during the vibrant and convulsive years of the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939). This process was directly connected to the decline of the Bourbon restoration period and the search for new directions for the country.<sup>5</sup>

In January 1930, the dictator Primo de Rivera stepped down from power, opening a process of intense political transformation. In the following decade Spain would experience constant clashes between the dying old order and the multiple new orders that attempted to replace it. A transitional authoritarian regime led by General Berenguer (1930-1931) was followed by the proclamation of the Second Republic on April 14, 1931. The first two years of the progressive left coalition led by Manuel Azaña (known as the *Bienio Progresista*) attempted to rapidly modernize the country with laws on land reform, education, divorce, women's vote, the army, economy, culture, etc.; however, new laws were met with both constant strikes and reactionary right-wing conspiracies. An Anarchist insurrection in January 1933 ended tragically with the Casas Viejas incident in Cadiz when the Civil Guard (*Guardia Civil*) brutally killed twenty-four people, antagonizing leftist parties (especially Anarchists, Communists and most Socialists) who referred scornfully to the government as the *bourgeoise Republic*.

These events, together with the overall political instability, precipitated the advanced elections of November 1933, when the left was defeated and a new government composed of the

---

<sup>5</sup> This system was put in place in 1874 after the end of the First Spanish Republic and was largely based on the figure of the king and rigged elections that ensured the rotation of liberals and conservatives in power.

Radical Republican Party (lead by Alejandro Lerroux, herein RRP) and the Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Right-wing Groups (Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas, herein CEDA) was formed. This right-wing reactionary coalition attempted to undo most of the work achieved by the first Republican progressive government (the period is often referred to as the Bienio Negro, or Black Biennium).<sup>6</sup> The inclusion of three Fascist-oriented ministers of the CEDA in the government and the impoverishment of worker conditions triggered a proletarian revolution in Asturias in October 1934, which was brutally repressed by the army in an operation commanded by generals Francisco Franco and Manuel Goded.

In Catalunya, these events lead president Lluís Companys to break with the Spanish government and declare the Catalan State inside a Federal Spanish Republic on October 6th. The failure of these insurrections, ensuing repression, and incarceration of thousands of politicians and citizens bought the fragile right-wing coalition some time. But a series of corruption cases in which Lerroux was directly involved forced the exit of the RRP from the government in December 1935, which prompted yet again the call for advanced elections on February 1936. The surprising victory of the Popular Front (which miraculously gathered together all the left, from liberal republicans to Socialists, Communists and the explicit support of Anarchist unions like the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, herein CNT) was widely celebrated, and the Republic's original transformative project seemed to be recovered. But a military rebellion led by general Franco launched on July 18, 1936, shattered these dreams. The failure of the coup, after fierce popular resistance and the loyalty of segments of the military to the legitimate government, inaugurated the Spanish Civil War, which lasted until the defeat of the Republic on

---

<sup>6</sup> See Angel Viñas and Julio Aróstegui, eds., *En el combate por la historia: La República, la Guerra Civil, el franquismo* (Barcelona: Pasado&Presente, 2012), 53–87.

April 1939, when Franco's thirty-six years of dictatorship started.<sup>7</sup>

The emergence, international consolidation, and lasting effects of noncommercial film culture amidst this incredibly convulsive and complex context are the subject of this dissertation. Throughout its four chapters, I will analyze how film journals, clubs, amateur contests, film policy, portable projectors, smallgauge cameras, educational screenings, university seminars, political parties, propaganda efforts, congresses and many other institutional initiatives related to the pedagogical impulses aimed at the transformation of the Spanish society after the proclamation of the Second Republic. Many of the initiatives and archival documents associated with these developments are discussed for the first time in this thesis, the result of four years of research I conducted in the following archives: the Filmoteca de Catalunya (Barcelona), Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya (Barcelona), Pavelló de la República (Barcelona), Filmoteca Española (Madrid), Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid), Archivo Histórico del Partido Comunista (Madrid), Biblioteca Valenciana (Valencia), Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris), Henri Storck Foundation (Brussels), and the Media History Digital Library (USA).<sup>8</sup>

In what follows, I lay out the methodological framework that informs my approach to

---

<sup>7</sup> Obviously, this very short summary of the main political events that marked the Second Spanish Republic is incomplete and over schematic. But this is not a thesis on Spanish 1930s history, but on how film culture initiatives intervened in the emergence of new social, political and cultural formations in this context. For more detailed historical context see Julián Casanova, *The Spanish Republic and Civil War* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Paul Preston, *The Last Days of the Spanish Republic* (New York: Harper Collins, 2017); Paul Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War: Reform, Reaction, and Revolution in the Second Republic, 1931-1936* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1978); Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth: An Account of the Social and Political Background of the Civil War* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Ángeles Egido and Ángel Viñas, eds., *La Segunda República y su proyección internacional: la mirada del otro* (Madrid: Catarata, 2017); Julio Gil Pecharromán, *Segunda República española (1931-1936)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2006); Eduardo González Calleja, *La Segunda República española* (Barcelona: Pasado & Presente, 2015); Manuel Tuñón de Lara, *Tres claves de la Segunda República: la cuestión agraria, los aparatos del estado, Frente Popular* (Madrid: Alianza, 1985); Josep Pla and Xavier Pericay, *La Segunda República española: una crónica, 1931-1936* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Although I have tried to be as thorough as possible in this archival research process, the sheer volume of materials housed in these repositories makes it impossible to have included all documents relevant for this thesis. I hope to be able to continue in the future with the many leads to follow that I have found over these four years. All translations of documents and quotes throughout the dissertation in Spanish, Catalan, French, and Italian are mine unless specified otherwise.



Spanish interwar noncommercial film culture. I begin by contextualizing the cultural production of the Second Republic within the end of the Spanish empire, after the loss of the remaining overseas colonies in 1898. The consequences of the *failed empire* are especially present in the work of intellectuals and institutions that desired to construct a new national narrative and image for Spain (by either leaving behind or recuperating the memory of the lost colonial power). The past/future dialectic created by these competing projects runs through the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the Second Republic's radicalized public sphere; at the same time, different ideologies (bourgeois liberalism, socialism, anarchism, communism, fascism) were competing for political, social, and cultural hegemony, while the fragile Republic was under constant attack from reactionary right-wing and extra-parliamentary segments (to the point of having to introduce a Law of Defense of the Republic in October 1931).<sup>9</sup>

To conceptualize the complex set of fractures and continuities with the past (and the future) reflected in moving image culture in Spain in the 1930s, I propose thinking about the concept of *disorganized modernity*, which refers to the cultural production of contexts in which the industrial revolution did not thoroughly modernize a given society but that nonetheless exhibited a remarkable cultural and political presence. This concept is intrinsically linked to the pedagogical impulses that attempted to transform Spanish society after the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic and its break with a reactionary and profoundly unequal old order. Lastly, I mobilize the overlooked vibrancy and scope of Spain's film culture in the 1930s (for a country that never had a strong and sustained film industry) to introduce the concept of *film*

---

<sup>9</sup> Most of these attacks were publicly articulated through the cultural association and journal, *Acción Española* (launched among others by writer Ramiro de Maetzu), as well as *Arriba* and *Libertad*, two journals of the Falange Española (precursor of the later Falange Tradicionalista Española and Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista that organized politically Franco's dictatorship). These initiatives continued the work of philosopher, writer, and Fascist politician Ramiro Ledesma Ramos and the journal *La Conquista del Estado* (March-September 1931), which was inspired by the Italian publication *La Conquista dello Stato*. Most of them received financial help from the Italian Fascist party.

*culture in the absence of film production*. With this scholarly intervention, I seek to expand on the recent reorientation of film history from the overwhelming focus on commercial cinema to the role of moving images in society well beyond the limiting scope of the entertainment industry.

As I hope to have conveyed by the end of the thesis, moving image culture was, in fact, much more important in Spain (and in many other contexts) during the 1930s than the production of a sustained commercial industry. By ignoring this, historians have missed a large part of the medium's impact on society, creating a blind spot in our historical understanding of how film and media interrelated with many of the political, cultural, and social transformations of the world throughout the 20th century. Looking at film history through the prism of film culture allows us to fill this void, discovering how cinema attracted governments, leftist critics, and bourgeoisie amateur filmmakers alike.

The “image of the new life, long-awaited, desired, possible” that Henri Lefebvre locates at the core of every society was violently interrupted by the Civil War as the assassinations of Piqueras and Salvans tragically reflect. For intellectuals, institutions, and governments, this new life was not necessarily articulated in any specific form, but in a general transformative horizon that left behind decades of political and social stagnation to construct a new, and more just, society. My purpose is to retrace how this rather vague idea was put into practice by a series of film culture initiatives deeply informed by Spain's changing political and social landscape, as well as international developments that arrived at the country via journals, newspapers, critics, film clubs, and other nodes in the network of ideas and practices that constitutes cinema.

## Introduction/Roadmap: The Imperative of (Film) Culture in Interwar Spain

The Spanish-American war, to the United States merely an opportunity for a patriotic capitalist demonstration of sanitary engineering, heroism and canned-meat scandals was to Spain the first whispered word that many among the traditions were false. The young men of that time called themselves the generation of ninety-eight.

According to temperament they rejected all or part of the *museum of traditions* they had been taught to believe was the real Spain; each took up a *separate road* in search of a Spain which should suit his yearnings for beauty, gentleness, humaneness, or else vigor, force, *modernity*. The problem of our day is whether Spaniards evolving locally, anarchically, without centralization in anything but repression, will work out *new ways of life* for themselves, or whether they will be drawn into the festering tumult of a Europe where the system that is dying is only strong enough to kill in its death-throes all new growth in which there was hope for the future. The Pyrenees are high.

John Dos Passos, 1922.<sup>10</sup>

The classes that govern our country are not interested in providing the people with effective pedagogical instruments—and cinema is one to the greatest extent. They prefer to leave them in their ignorance, since the greater the lack of education, the greater is the level of slavery.

Mateo Santos, 1931.<sup>11</sup>

Intellectualized labor is the same as constructive intelligence. The warmth that maintains them and the current that brings them together is a noble duty and is always compatible with a dignity that doesn't come from laws or statutes, but from a much deeper and intense impulse: *the imperative of culture*.

Jaume Serra Hunter, 1930.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> John Dos Passos, *Rocinante vuelve al camino* (Madrid: Cenit, 1930), 68–69. In Gayle Rogers, “Restaging the Disaster: Dos Passos and National Literatures after the Spanish-American War,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 36, no. 2 (2013): 73. Emphasis added.

<sup>11</sup> Mateo Santos, “El cine como instrumento pedagógico,” *Popular Film*, no. 234 (February 5, 1931).

<sup>12</sup> J. Serra Hunter, “L'imperatiu de la cultura,” *L'Hora* 1, no. 1 (December 10, 1931): 4.

## 1. Silky and unforgettable memories of the Spanish Empire

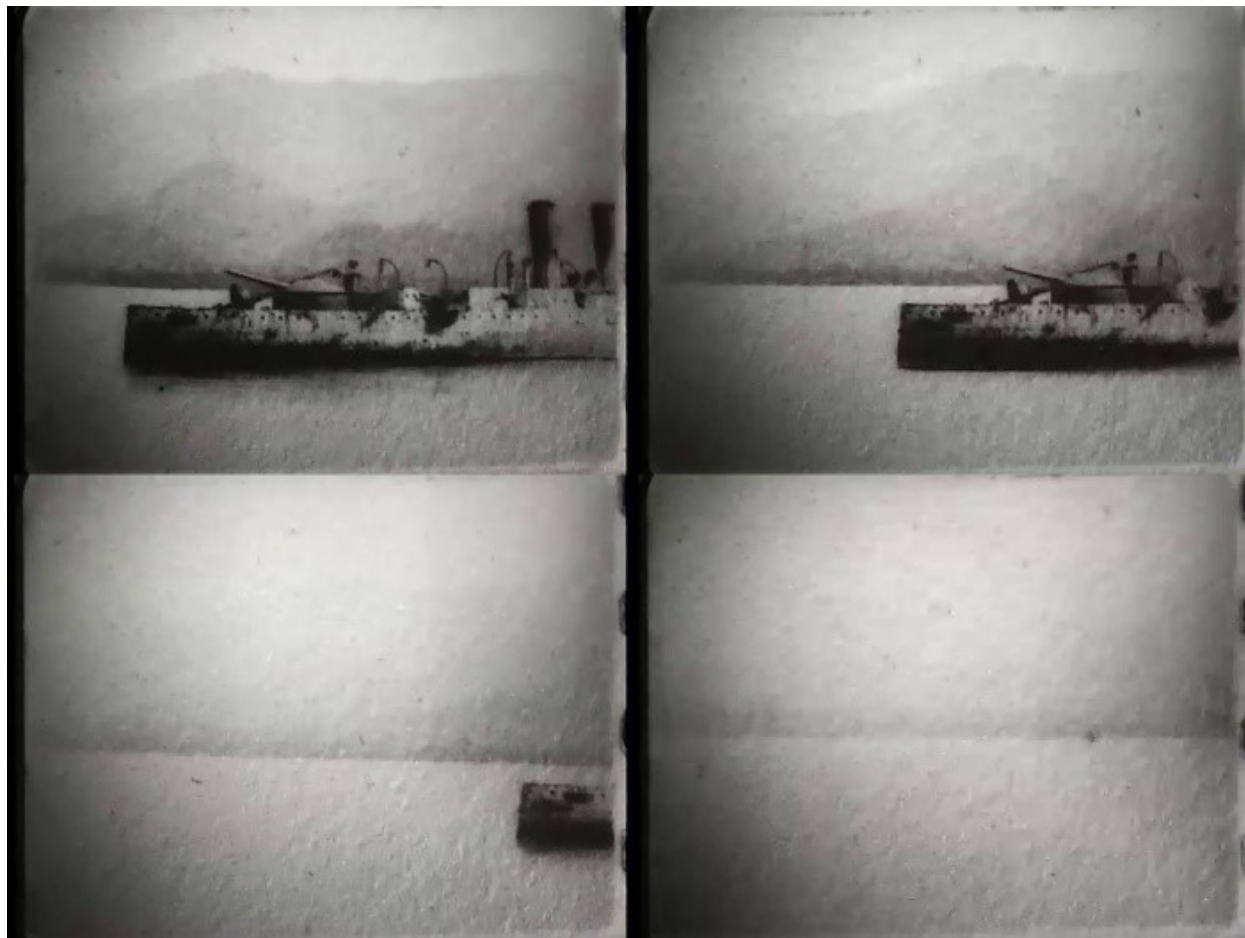


Figure 1. *Wreck of the Vizcaya* (American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1903). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

On July 4, 1898, the above film was shot off the coast of Santiago de Cuba by a Biograph operator after the naval battle that saw the Spanish fleet completely destroyed by the United States (Figure 1). The armored cruiser *Vizcaya*, heavily damaged, had been abandoned and was about to sink. The single shot film consists of a phantasmagorical panorama that shows the wrecked boat, which it then leaves out of the frame as the camera continues to pan left. It is worth quoting in full the description of the film from the Biograph catalogue:

This is a wonderfully impressive picture, taken on the morning after the battle in which the Spanish navy was destroyed. This battleship, once the "Pride of Spain," is shown a

ruined hulk on the beach, the terrible effect of the guns of Uncle Sam's warships being apparent everywhere. Contrasted with our earlier picture of the "Viscaya" in New York Harbor ["Vizcaya" under full headway], the "Viscaya" here presents a woeful appearance.<sup>13</sup>

The text reflects the humiliation inflicted on the former empire that had once ruled over large parts of the world and had now lost its "pride." As with the Vizcaya cruiser in the film, Spain left the sphere of international geopolitical power after the 1898 loss of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Philippines, and Guam and the subsequent defeat in the Spanish-American war. These developments were called the *desastre del 98* (disaster of 1898) by Spanish authorities and society, which plummeted into a deep moral, political, and social crisis. In the following decades the country struggled to assert its geopolitical position in the new capitalist world order. It mixed introspective and autocratic diplomatic policies with new colonial campaigns in Morocco, declared itself neutral in the First World War, later attempted to have an active role in the League of Nations, and ultimately became a battleground for international solidarity and anti-Fascist struggle during the Civil War (1936-1939) and an ally of Hitler through better part of the Second World War.<sup>14</sup>

To understand the effects that the disaster of 1898 had in the socio-political and cultural context of interwar Spain in general, I suggest applying a failed empire framework that accounts for the country's displaced position as a former global power that then reacted by embarking on an often contradictory struggle between tradition and modernity. Throughout the following

---

<sup>13</sup> "Wreck of the 'Vizcaya,'" image, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, accessed May 15, 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/98500519/>.

<sup>14</sup> Sebastian Balfour and Paul Preston, eds., *Spain and the Great Powers in the Twentieth Century* (London: New York: Routledge, 1999); Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

decades, intellectuals and institutions attempted to both redirect and rescue the nation. The coincidence of cinema's emergence with the symbolic loss of the last overseas colonies also must be considered. The new medium appeared in Spain as the country was facing the consequences of the loss of the empire and the rejection of the "museum of traditions" that John Dos Passos's opening quote describes. With the disappearance of the last remnants of the glorified colonial past—except parts of Morocco and Equatorial Guinea—Spain faced a fractured identity as a peripheral actor in industrialized Europe with a nonetheless rich and influential cultural past. Different political and cultural actors began to theorize and discuss the direction Spain should take after this turning point, and cinema played a central role in the construction of this new and uncertain national project.



Figure 2. Proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic in the Sant Jaume square of Barcelona (April 14, 1931). Photograph from Josep Maria Sagarra, Banda Municipal de Barcelona.

This thesis, though, is not about Spain's 1898 loss of colonies and consequent geopolitical demise, but about the effects that the reality of a failed empire had in the cultural production of the country thirty years after, when the fall of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and the explosion of moving image culture allowed for a new society to be imagined and, finally, put in practice and represented on the screen. The empty shot that ends the *Wreck of Vizcaya* film was, so to speak, filled with the images, many of them shot by amateur filmmakers and photographers, of the proclamation of the Second Republic on April 14, 1931 and the crowds of people celebrating in the streets (Figure 2). For the first time in decades, it seemed possible to break with the past, something which the previous period of Bourbon Restoration had been incapable, or unwilling, of achieving. After a thirty-three-year ellipsis where only a few intellectuals and pedagogues had been working to break Spain's cultural isolationism and traditionalist spirit,<sup>15</sup> a transformative and emancipatory national project based on social equality and modernization was devised as an optimistic follow up to the ruins of the former empire and its "woeful appearance."

As the different chapters of the dissertation reflect, though, the image of the failed empire did not simply disappear as in the Biograph film. It remained off-camera, so to speak, and greatly informed the cultural production of Spain in the following decades.<sup>16</sup> For some it enabled a nostalgic reclaiming of Spain's utmost centrality in the cultural production of Europe in the last centuries (for instance in painting and literature through figures like Miguel de Cervantes, Luis

---

<sup>15</sup> Promoted by a key progressive pedagogical institution: the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (ILE) which later created the Residencia de Estudiantes and the Junta de Ampliación de Estudios (JAE). In Catalonia there was the Escuela Moderna promoted by Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia and the Institut Escola. See the introduction and chapter four for more information on these initiatives.

<sup>16</sup> And one can argue that it has done so up to the current moment in Spain. See the exhibit organized by the Centre de Cultura Contemporànea de Barcelona (CCCB) "The Baroque D\_effect Politics of the Hispanic Image" (November 2010-February 2011) and its catalogue; Jorge Luis Marzo and Tere Badia, eds., *El d\_efecte barroco: polítiques de la imatge hispana; guia d'interpretació* (Barcelona: Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, 2010).

de Góngora, Lope de Vega, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, Francisco Goya, Diego Velázquez, or El Greco). For others it provided a departure point from which to rekindle Spain's status as the mother nation of Hispanic culture and articulate a Spanish-speaking front to face Hollywood (see chapter four). The failed empire was also equated with an old and hegemonic Castilian culture to be surpassed (especially for Catalan, Basque, and Galician intellectuals as discussed in chapter three). We can finally mention leftist intellectuals, who were at once very much attached to the nationalistic idea of rebuilding the glory of a racialized Spanish culture (see chapter one) but were at the same time very receptive to Marxism through radical film culture projects (chapter two).<sup>17</sup>

This nostalgic resilience of the failed empire, which I relate to what Paul Gilroy has called “postcolonial melancholia,”<sup>18</sup> has been little explored in Spain in relation to the cultural production of the Second Republic.<sup>19</sup> Scholars have focused more on the immediate effects of the great disaster in the so-called Generación del 98 (Generation of ‘98, which describes the intellectuals and artists that came to the fore of Spanish cultural life after the loss of the colonies and that attempted to *cure* the dying nation and surpass its corrupt, ignorant and localist institutions).<sup>20</sup> But less work has been done on the persisting, and multifaced, effects of Spain's

---

<sup>17</sup> The multiple and competing versions of nationalism that followed the end of Empire in Spain can be paradoxically equated with the Italian context in those same years, where the consolidation of Mussolini's colonial project (epitomized by the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935) spurred, to quote Neelam Srivastava, a “nationalism that rejects imperialism and supports internationalist solidarities.” Neelam Srivastava, *Italian Colonialism and Resistances to Empire, 1930-1970* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), 8. This crucial connection between Spanish and Italian interwar societies is yet to be fully explored.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Scholars have mostly focused on how the authors of the Generación del 98 reacted to the emergence of cinema. See Rafael Utrera, *Modernismo y 98 frente a cinematógrafo* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1981).

<sup>20</sup> The metaphor of the *diseased* or *dying* nation was widely used at the time to describe the situation of the country after the loss of the colonies—especially following Lord Salisbury's famous “Dying Nations” speech given on May 4<sup>th</sup> 1898 for the conservative party that was inspired by the collapse of the Spanish empire and conceived as a warning to Great Britain's own colonial enterprise. Salisbury divided the world in living and dying nations, where the former “would gradually encroach on the territory of the dying.” Sebastian Balfour and Alejandro Quiroga, *The Reinvention of Spain: Nation and Identity since Democracy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 29. Such biopolitical metaphors can be found extensively in the work of intellectuals of the time. See the description



failed empire on the film culture of the following decades, especially in relation to the transformative moment opened up by the proclamation of the Second Republic on April 1931.<sup>21</sup>

Take for instance the avant-garde film *Esencia de verbena* (1930) from Ernesto Giménez Caballero, director of *La Gaceta Literaria* (1927-1931)<sup>22</sup> and the Cineclub Español and representative of Spain at the International Educational Cinematograph Institute in Rome (herein IEICI). The film was made in 1930 and was shown at the IIème Congrès International du Cinéma Indépendant (second International Congress of Independent Filmmakers, herein CICI) in Brussels that same year. This ten-minute city symphony is divided into twelve parts that analyze from different perspectives the verbenas (open air-fairs) that happen in Madrid throughout the year. Instead of focusing on the usual topics of city symphonies (the modern elements of the city, technologies, communication, electrification, etc.), the film blends tradition and modernity through images of popular entertainments and art (fairs, virgins, folklore, paintings from Goya, bullfighting) with avant-garde artists (using paintings from Francis Picabia, Maruja Mallo, Pablo Picasso and the figure of writer Ramón Gómez de la Serna as an improvised actor that vertebrates the different segments) and cinematographic techniques of fragmentation and collage

---

of philosopher Ortega y Gasset of Spain as a “fatigued organ” or a diseased “body” in José Ortega y Gasset, *España invertebrada: bosquejo de algunos pensamientos históricos* (Madrid: Calpe, 1921), 25, 48–50, 63.

<sup>21</sup> The work of Marta García Carrión is the only exception, although she does not explicitly connect the highly nationalistic discourse of film critics and policymakers in the interwar period with the desastre del 98 and the persistence of the failed empire. Marta García Carrión, *Por un cine patrio: cultura cinematográfica y nacionalismo español (1926-1936)* (Valencia, Spain: Universitat de Valencia, 2013), 113–209.

<sup>22</sup> *La Gaceta Literaria* was a key publication for the modernization of cultural debates during the interwar period. It included essays on literature, poetry, theatre, music, cinema, painting, and architecture and provided an outlet for some of the most important critics and intellectuals of Spanish culture. The journal came to an abrupt end in 1931 when the embrace of fascism by its director Ernesto Giménez Caballero’s put him at odds with the leftist positioning of many of its contributors. The Cineclub Español was organized by *La Gaceta Literaria* and became the center of avant-garde film culture in Spain throughout its three seasons (1928-1931), providing an outlet for experimental, scientific and, especially, Soviet cinema to be shown for the first time in Spain. It helped consolidate a film club culture that would rapidly spread throughout the country after the end of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (see chapter one). Both *La Gaceta Literaria* and the Cineclub Español were instrumental for avant-garde film and visual culture to take hold and spread throughout Spain in the late 1920s and early 1930s. They were also a key outlet were Valencian Marxist critic Juan Piqueras (one of the main protagonists of this thesis) and filmmaker Luis Buñuel (among other key figures in the Spanish avant-garde) developed their interests and knowledge of Soviet moving image culture (see chapter one).

(Figure 3). In the last segment of *Esencia de verbena*, Giménez Caballero describes hydrangea flowers as an essential part of the verbena, since they decorate the “Manila shawls, silky and unforgettable memories of the old Spanish empire.”



Figure 3. Stills from *Esencia de verbena* (Ernesto Giménez Caballero, 1930). Courtesy of Filmoteca Española.

The film’s apparently contradictory and chaotic blend of surrealism, documentary, folklore, modernism, and nostalgia for the lost empire—and made by an avant-garde agitator who was instrumental to the careers of many Marxist critics and filmmakers but who eventually turned towards fascism—is a perfect illustration of the manifold referents, artistic currents, and political ideologies that collided during the interwar period in Spain. Following Dipesh Chakrabarty’s call to “write into the history of modernity the ambivalences, the contradictions,

the use of force, and the tragedies and the ironies that attend it”<sup>23</sup> I pose the notion of disorganized modernity as a conceptual framework from which to analyze the role of moving image culture in the Spanish whirlwind of the 1930s. In the following section I unpack this argument, and its specific importance to the emergence of film culture in Spain during the period.

## 2. Disorganizing modernity

The word *complex* is probably the most common term used to describe the political, social, and cultural context of the Second Spanish Republic. Scholars like Jordana Mendelson and Estrella De Diego, for instance, speak of how the “complex and often contradictory relationship between art and politics” during those convulsive years was highly informed by the “tremors” that circulated throughout the European cultural networks (especially the tensions between pure and socially committed art).<sup>24</sup> This “drive toward modernity” (to use Mendelson and De Diego’s expression)<sup>25</sup> paradoxically united Fascist acolytes, bourgeois intellectuals, wealthy amateur filmmakers, and Marxist critics in their efforts to create a new national narrative and image. Mendelson has analyzed how these competing images largely relied on the impulse to *document* the social, cultural, and political reality of Spain through moving images, photography, and graphic art: “It is in Spain, perhaps more than any other country, where the discourse on documents shaped the relationships that artists and intellectuals established between national realities and modern ambitions.”<sup>26</sup> Historians like Gerald Brenan have used the metaphor of the

---

<sup>23</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Provincializing Europe: Postcoloniality and the Critique of History,” *Cultural Studies* 6, no. 3 (October 1992): 352, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502389200490221>.

<sup>24</sup> Jordana Mendelson and Estrella De Diego, “Political Practice and the Arts in Spain, 1927-1936,” in *Art and Journals on the Political Front, 1910-1940*, ed. Virginia Carol Hagelstein Marquardt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 183.

<sup>25</sup> Mendelson and De Diego, 183.

<sup>26</sup> Jordana Mendelson, *Documenting Spain: Artists, Exhibition Culture, and the Modern Nation, 1929-1939* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), xxiii.

*labyrinth* to try and illustrate this complexity, but in this thesis I opt for articulating a new conceptual category through which to think through the fractured, contradictory, varied or chaotic nature of Spanish politics and culture during the Second Republic: a disorganized modernity. With this, I seek to insert the Spanish context into, and ultimately challenge, the recurrent focus of scholarship on cinema and modernity on the production of highly developed capitalist countries and its effects on the *rest* of the world.

The use of terms such as *disorganization*, *chaos*, *fragmentation*, *acceleration*, *disorientation*, *revolution*, *vertigo* or *melting* are constant amongst cultural and intellectual histories of the interwar period and modernity. See for instance Philipp Blom's use of *fracture* to define the interwar years in *Fracture: Life and Culture in the West, 1918-1938*,<sup>27</sup> or Eduardo Hernández Cano's analysis of Kracauer's essays on culture and mass society as a portrait that revealed the "disorder of contemporaneous time, of a society fractured in different parts of its structure."<sup>28</sup> We can also cite Marshall Berman's famous description, based on Marx's previous use of these words to describe the emergence of the bourgeoisie, of the experience of modernity as the moment when "all that is solid melts into the air,"<sup>29</sup> Eric Hobsbawm's description of the age of "catastrophe" that comprises the two World Wars as a moment where suddenly the "huge colonial empires" were "shaken and crumbled into dust," or Walter Benjamin's famous notion of "shock" and the over-stimulation of the senses provoked by modernity.<sup>30</sup> Finally, Susan Martin Márquez also uses the trope of *disorientation* to discuss the vexed identity and cultural

---

<sup>27</sup> Philipp Blom, *Fracture: Life and Culture in the West, 1918-1938* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Eduardo Hernández Cano, "Palabras sobre imágenes: autoridad intelectual, ensayo y cultura visual de masas en España (1927-1937)" (New York University, 2015), 16.

<sup>29</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Viking Penguin, 1988).

<sup>30</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914 - 1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 7; Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 155–200.

production of Spain as both an Orientalizing and Orientalized country.<sup>31</sup> In this uncertain and fast-changing scenario, it is difficult to locate the role of culture in the transformations that swept across the world. This is especially so in contexts such as Spain, a former empire that had ruled over the world a few centuries ago but had arrived late to the industrialization process.

The capitalist development of the country had been slowed down (especially in rural areas) by an antiquated aristocracy that longed for the good old days of empire to come back, while in most large cities (Barcelona, Madrid, Bilbao, Valencia, Terrassa, Sabadell, Reus, etc.) the industrial models of England or France were avidly imported but not fully developed into a diversified and internationalized market.<sup>32</sup> From abroad also came a host of ideas (anarchism, communism, fascism, socialism), technologies (radio, small gauge cameras, mass production of consumer objects) and cultural expressions (avant-garde, proletarian, socialist realism, futurist) that were incorporated into a local context trapped between the urge to surpass the old order without neglecting tradition, and the perennial appeal of the lost imperial glory.

Time had almost stopped in the vast estates of rural Castile and Andalusia that were controlled by powerful landowners who exploited the landless peasants,<sup>33</sup> while in urban centers the speed of modern life dissolved traditional barriers of political, social, and cultural order. This is perhaps best expressed in Ilya Ehrenburg's 1932 account of the first months of the Second Spanish Republic, where he comments on the unparalleled anachronisms of Spanish society: millionaires in luxury cars; illiterate peasants travelling by donkey; lavish meals in the Ritz in

---

<sup>31</sup> Susan Martin-Márquez, *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 9.

<sup>32</sup> Jordi Nadal, *El fracaso de la revolución industrial en España, 1814-1913* (Esplugues de Llobregat: Editorial Ariel, 1975); Francesc Artal, *Economía crítica, una perspectiva catalana* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1973).

<sup>33</sup> To give an example, in the south 0.6% of the population (rich landowners) controlled 52% of the total available land. In Spain the overall ratio was of 0.1% to 28.6% of the land. See Edward E. Malefakis, *Agrarian Reform and Peasant Revolution in Spain: Origins of the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 19.

Madrid; and the images of malnourished children in remote villages.<sup>34</sup> In addition, this dissertation looks at the consolidation of a mass media cultural industry (epitomized by the figure of Ricardo Urgoiti, whose father had founded the newspaper *El Sol* and who would create the most important radio station in Spain, Unión Radio), a key film distribution and production company (Filmófono--where Luis Buñuel and Juan Piqueras worked), and finance journals (*Nuestro Cinema*) and film clubs (Proa-Filmófono) that were instrumental to the emergence of noncommercial film culture.<sup>35</sup>

In the words of writer John Dos Passos, Spain was a “temple of anachronisms,” in which you could “feel the *strata* of civilization” and recognize a pre-capitalist dignity that coexisted with materialist progress.<sup>36</sup> Trotsky’s economic theory of uneven and combined development in the USSR and other “backward” countries (like Spain in the 1920s and 30s) is useful here to explain this blend of cultural, economic, and social realities: “Unevenness, the most general law of the historic process, reveals itself most sharply and complexly in the destiny of the backward countries. Under the whip of external necessity, their backward culture is compelled to make leaps. From the universal law of unevenness thus derives another law which, for the lack of a better name, we may call the law of *combined development*—by which we mean a drawing together of the different stages of the journey, a combining of the separate steps, an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms.”<sup>37</sup> In Spain, the leaps undertaken by this uneven development brought about the erosion of social boundaries, something feared by the ruling

---

<sup>34</sup> Il’iã Grigorevich Ehrenburg, *España, república de trabajadores* (Barcelona: Melusina, 2008), 16.

<sup>35</sup> Josetxo Cerdán, “Buñuel, Urgoiti: las sesiones sonoras del ‘Cineclub Español,’” *Vertigo. Revista de Cine*, no. 11 (1995): 12–17; Luis Fernández Colorado and Josetxo Cerdán, *Ricardo Urgoiti los trabajos y los días* (Madrid: Filmoteca Española, 2007); Vicente J. Benet, *El cine español: una historia cultural* (Barcelona: Ediciones Paidós, 2012), 77–80.

<sup>36</sup> Ignacio Martínez de Pisón, *Enterrar a los muertos* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2005), 38; Rogers, “Restaging the Disaster: Dos Passos and National Literatures after the Spanish-American War,” 67.

<sup>37</sup> Leon Trotsky and Max Eastman, *History of the Russian Revolution* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2008), 5. Emphasis in original.

elites which, as Peter Wagner has analyzed in relation to Western Europe, promoted an “organized modernity” (based on liberal democracy, governance, social class and the nation-state) to “re-establish control over social practices.”<sup>38</sup> Much has been written on how modernity was *organized* into the categories that Wagner lists (especially by Weberian scholars),<sup>39</sup> but less work has been done on that to which these categories reacted against; the disorganized modernity that I argue characterized Spanish society during the 1930s. The concept of disorganization has been mostly used in political philosophy and social economy to describe the breaking up by postmodernism and late capitalism of the institutions (state, unions, corporations, communities, social class, etc.) that dominated social life during the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and the subsequent social atomization that emerged from this process).<sup>40</sup>

In this thesis I suggest going back to the initial disorganization to which these institutions reacted against, to trace the transformative and emancipatory projects that have been forgotten amid the chaos and destruction described by Hobsbawm’s age of catastrophe. I don’t mean to create a romanticized vision (in line with Dos Passos’s view of Spanish society) of the climate of rupture, occasional violence, and revolution that characterized Spanish society in the early 1930s, but to simply pose the notion of disorganized modernity as a conceptual category through which to think through the cultural production of the time and its relation to the political and social fields. Moreover, it is important to remember that, just as sociologist John Urry

---

<sup>38</sup> Peter Wagner, *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 73; Gerard Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity: A Historical and Political Sociology of Europe* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 224.

<sup>39</sup> See for instance John Law, *Organizing Modernity* (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1994); Larry J. Ray and M. I. Reed, eds., *Organizing Modernity: New Weberian Perspectives on Work, Organization, and Society* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>40</sup> Wagner, *A Sociology of Modernity*, 156; Claus Offe and John Keane, *Disorganized Capitalism: Contemporary Transformations of Work and Politics* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1985); Scott Lash and John Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, 2003, 47.

distinguishes between “organization ‘at the top’ and organization ‘at the bottom,’”<sup>41</sup> we should distinguish between *disorganization at the top* and *disorganization at the bottom*. Many of the initiatives I analyze throughout the thesis (especially those that stemmed from radical film culture) were bottom-up projects aimed at transforming (disorganizing) the old power structures that ruled Spanish society and its cultural production (needless to say new organizations had to be created for this purpose, as we will see in chapter two). Others, such as the amateur film movement analyzed in chapter three were devoted to creating a self-contained and exclusive circuit of artistic experimentation, which was nonetheless completely at odds with the organization of a commercial film industry. Finally, the top-down initiatives promoted by the Spanish and Catalan state institutions explored in chapter four were certainly focused on organizing and controlling film culture to the benefit of their own national projects, but they were also aimed at challenging the status quo of Hollywood dominated world film market and Castilian nationalism respectively.

By looking at the concept of disorganization from this dialectic perspective we realize that the opposite of organization was not necessarily an empty void of anarchy and chaos, but of alternatives to the ordering of the society according to capitalist principles of modernity (which have in turn dominated scholarly approaches to film and modernity, mostly focused on the United States and the influence of the commercial film industry from highly developed countries and liberal democracies in less developed contexts).<sup>42</sup> Through the different film culture

---

<sup>41</sup> John Urry, “Disorganised Capitalism,” *Marxism Today*, October 1988, 30–33.

<sup>42</sup> See for example Miriam Hansen, “The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism,” *Modernism/Modernity* 6, no. 2 (1999): 59–77, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.1999.0018>; Laura Marcus, *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Even recent collections that have significantly decentered this narrative of cinema and modernity, especially by looking at East Europe, completely overlook Southern Europe: Daniël Biltreyst, ed., *Cinema Audiences and Modernity: An Introduction* (Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2012). As the title itself of this excellent edited collection humbly acknowledges, the task of expanding our understanding of cinema’s role in



initiatives that appear in this thesis we discover a disorganized modernity that was not only informed by speed, progress, technology, industry and the avantgarde, but also by social emancipation, education, critical spectatorship, rural and natural imagery, tradition, folklore, nationalistic discourses, and international revolutionary aesthetics and politics. All these elements complicate what Stuart Hall calls the “one track view” of history and modernity whereas the latter is “really *one* thing, towards which every society is inevitably moving, though at different rates of development.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, Spain, as many other contexts not fully attuned to the dominant Western-style modernity linear narrative, was developing its own form of cultural modernity.

As Jo Labanyi discusses when discussing Federico García Lorca’s thrilling experience in New York, the poet adapted perfectly to the cultural life in the metropolis precisely because, paraphrasing Nestor García Canclini, “the avant-garde was most brilliant, not in advanced capitalist countries, but in those (like France, Italy, Spain or Latin America) where modernization was belated and uneven, thus producing a particularly violent ‘shock of the new.’”<sup>44</sup> Although I certainly share the idea that our understanding of modernity should be expanded beyond the limiting reach of advanced capitalist societies, I think we should also surpass the trope of the “shock of the new,” which presumes a naïve and ignorant periphery that is transformed by an encounter with a learned center. As this thesis shows, news about global developments and cultural initiatives travelled more, and farther, than we may think, and thus the relationship between centers and peripheries was much more of a dialogue than a shocking

---

modernity is only yet beginning as scholars from widely different contexts move beyond Hansen’s vernacular modernism argument.

<sup>43</sup> Stuart Hall, ed., *Formations of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 9–10. Emphasis in original.

<sup>44</sup> Jo Labanyi, “Cinematic City: The Spanish Avant-Garde, Modernity and Mass Culture,” *Journal of Romance Studies* 8, no. 2 (June 2008): 28; Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

encounter (as Labanyi develops in her essay).<sup>45</sup>

This applied both to individuals and institutions. Take for instance the trajectory of Marxist critic Juan Piqueras, who grew up in a humble peasant family from Requena (near Valencia), attended night school so he could help in the mill during the day, was sent to Valencia thanks to the encouragement and support of his teachers, took his first steps as a film critic in Barcelona and Madrid after winning a film criticism contest, and eventually settled in Paris as a key node in avant-garde and leftist international circles. Piqueras was a complete outsider to these cultural networks, usually dominated by bourgeois intellectual-types, but nonetheless managed to create *Nuestro Cinema* one of the most important transnational film journals in Europe (as we will see in chapters one and two). His humble origin in the rural periphery of Valencia was not a hindrance to be forgotten after the shock of the new in the capital of modernity par excellence (Paris), but in fact was of vital importance in his decision to bridge avant-garde and socially oriented approaches in *Nuestro Cinema* and his overall project to promote a proletarian film culture in Spain.

The same blend of foreign influences and local appropriations can be traced in the initiatives of the Spanish and Catalan governments to instrumentalize film for instructional purposes (analyzed in chapter four). Both institutions understood, and were perfectly aware of, the way film was being used in the USSR, Italy, Germany, or France to bridge tradition and modernity in the interests of the state and promote social cohesion (with disturbing effects in totalitarian societies). As the description of a mobile film projection organized by the Misiones Pedagógicas (Pedagogical Missions, an educational initiative of the Republican government analyzed in the following section) stated in relation to the screening of film for the first time in

---

<sup>45</sup> As Mendelson also mentions, the “shock of the new was tempered by the weight of the nation’s tradition and customs.” Mendelson, *Documenting Spain*, xxxv.

the town of Valdepeñas de la Sierra (Guadalajara) in 1932: “In relation to cinema, they are more interested in the familiar than in the exotic. They are dazzled by the appearance of a great city, but if in a window of the metropolis there is a cat, they are very happy to see the cat.”<sup>46</sup>

By incorporating traditional elements of Spanish society and culture into the narrative of Republican progress and dissolution of old orders, intellectuals and institutions adopted a new method of nation building aimed at bridging the new and the familiar. In the next section I show how this project was intrinsically linked to a series of pedagogical impulses that were at the core of the Republican project and were met with violent rejection by the traditional centers of power (church, estate owners, industrialists, aristocracy, military, etc.), who looked to liquidate these transformative energies through the coup d'état of July 18, 1936.

### 3. The pedagogical impulse and the question of the masses

I have chosen these two images (Figure 4) to introduce the concept of a *pedagogical impulse* since for me they encapsulate the complexity of the relationship between cultural production and the socio-political transformation that Spain went through in the early 1930s. The historical period opened by the loss of the last colonies in 1898 also marked the emergence of popular classes as a central element in the political life of the country.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> *Patronato de Misiones Pedagógicas* (Madrid, 1934), 31. See also Julio Montero Díaz and José Cabeza San Deogracias, eds., *Por el precio de una entrada: estudios sobre historia social del cine* (Madrid: Ed. Rialp, 2005), 150.

<sup>47</sup> As Sebastian Balfour argues, the growing immigration to urban areas, and the constant upheavals in industrialized areas increases in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ultimately politicized many intellectuals, especially after the fall of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic. See Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898-1923* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 86–87.



Figure 4. On the left photograph from Gabriel Casas, “Dia del llibre 1932” (“1932 book day”). Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya. On the right image of a Misiones Pedagógicas film screening in a remote village, “Niños andaluces en el cine de Misiones.”<sup>48</sup>

In the first image a boy stares curiously—from the outside—at a bookstore's window display, where one finds (among many other publications) a journal on communism, a book on Queen Isabel II (who was overthrown by the first Spanish Republic in 1868), and the modernist newspaper *Mirador*, which became one of the main outlets for film criticism in Catalonia and organized a film club under the same name during the 1930s. The second image captures the ecstatic faces of a group of children in a remote Spanish village in Andalucía as they watch a film—either a Charles Chaplin or Mickey Mouse short or an instructional film according to testimonies. The screening had been organized by the Misiones Pedagógicas, an illustrated project developed by prominent intellectuals during the Second Spanish Republic to bring culture—including literature, theatre, film, painting, and photography—to remote areas of the country.<sup>49</sup> In its brief years of operation this initiative organized 2,395 projections in village

<sup>48</sup> *Patronato de Misiones Pedagógicas*, 20.

<sup>49</sup> María García Alonso, “Intuiciones visuales para pueblos olvidados. La utilización del cine en las Misiones Pedagógicas de la Segunda República Española,” *Cahiers de civilisation espagnole contemporaine. De 1808 au temps présent*, no. 11 (September 26, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4000/ceec.4861>; Jordana Mendelson, “The Misiones Pedagógicas and Other Documentary Excursions,” in *Documenting Spain: Artists, Exhibition Culture, and the Modern Nation, 1929-1939* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 93–123; Alejandro Tiana Ferrer, *Las Misiones Pedagógicas: educación popular en la Segunda República* (Madrid: Catarata, 2016); Eugenio Otero Urtaza, *Las Misiones Pedagógicas: una experiencia de educación popular* (Sada, A Coruña: Edición do Castro, 1982); Eugenio Otero Urtaza and María García Alonso, eds., *Las Misiones Pedagógicas, 1931-1936* (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Residencia de Estudiantes : Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, 2006). I

squares, schools, asylums, nursing homes, prisons, and civic centers.<sup>50</sup>

Both images reflect the cultural and educational effervescence of a society that was experiencing an accelerated pedagogical impulse on all fronts, with the hope of leaving behind decades of failed modernization attempts. As historian González Calleja mentions, “the will to participate in the public life [of the country] thrived as never before in Spanish history.”<sup>51</sup> The new constitution, approved on December 1931, declared in its first article that Spain was “a republic of workers of all types, structured around freedom and justice,” and the Republican government declared it a priority to secularize education and create an extensive network of public schools throughout the country.<sup>52</sup> Article 48 of the constitution included this commitment and legally bound culture and education, as part of the common life of the society to come: “The service of culture is an essential attribution of the state, which will guarantee it through educational institutions linked with the unified school system.”<sup>53</sup>

As Antonio Molero Pintado has mentioned, this reforming spirit was ultimately devoted to changing the individual and collective bases of social relations in Spain and creating a new “civic contract” that appealed to both traditional and modernizing elements in society and that was firmly rooted in a “democratic system of life.”<sup>54</sup> This was the basis of the “new life” (to quote Lefebvre’s opening quote) desired by intellectuals, social institutions, and governments in Spain. *New* and *life* should be understood here as floating signifiers that different political factions appealed to and gave specific form to according to their own agendas and concrete

---

have chosen not to include the Misiones Pedagógicas as an object of study precisely because it has been widely addressed by scholars, inadvertently obscuring many other film culture pedagogical initiatives that appear throughout this thesis.

<sup>50</sup> *Patronato de Misiones Pedagógicas*, 90.

<sup>51</sup> González Calleja, *La Segunda República española*, 14.

<sup>52</sup> “Constitución de la República Española,” December 9, 1931.

<sup>53</sup> “Constitución de la República Española,” 14.

<sup>54</sup> Antonio Molero Pintado, “El pensament educatiu republicà, utopia o realitat?,” *Educació i Història: Revista d’Història de l’Educació*, no. 11 (2008): 16, <https://doi.org/10.2436/20.3009.01.21>.

cultural policies. To attract citizens to these competing national projects and initiatives, many of them resorted to mass means of communication and culture. For philosopher Jaume Serra Hunter, dean of the University of Barcelona from 1931-1933, stated that “The new culture opposes two vital and fertile conceptions: the duty of learning and the courageousness of a search for truth that is never entirely satisfied [...] The current time can be decisive for the development of humanity. This idea is not born out of a utopia, but from a reality that *catches your eye* and reaches to the spirit.”<sup>55</sup> As the quote than opens the introduction states, for Serra Hunter the duty of intellectuals and politicians was not only to construct the new society through “laws and statutes,” but to encourage an “*imperative of culture*” that could reach every citizen in the country.<sup>56</sup>

In this context, film and photography were seen by government officials, intellectuals and teachers as a key instrument in such ambitious educational program, which planned to create a total of 27,000 schools and hire 5,000 teachers a year in a country with elevated levels of illiteracy (31.15% in 1930).<sup>57</sup> The activities of the Misiones Pedagógicas, or that of the *Comité del Cinema de la Generalitat de Catalunya* (Cinema Committee of the Catalan government, herein CCGC) are only two examples; in chapter four I provide the first English language study

---

<sup>55</sup> Serra Hunter, “L’Imperatiu de la cultura.”

<sup>56</sup> Serra Hunter. Emphasis added.

<sup>57</sup> Mariano Pérez Galán, *La Enseñanza En La Segunda República*, Ed. de Manuel de Puelles Benítez, 28 (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2011); Rodolfo Llopis and Antonio Molero Pintado, *La revolución en la escuela: dos años en la dirección general de primera enseñanza* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2005); Antonio Molero Pintado, *La reforma educativa de la Segunda República española: primer bienio*, Aula XXI 15 (Madrid: Santillana, 1977). As Pérez Galán details in his book, these numbers (and the support for a secular education) varied according to the different governments that Spain had during the Second Republic. In the first progressive biennium (1931-1933) over 10,000 schools were built, and the annual budget for education was raised by 28% in 1932 and 18% in 1933. See Antonio Molero Pintado, “La Segunda República española y la enseñanza (primer bienio),” *Revista de Educación*, no. 240 (1975): 56, 57. For the statistic on illiteracy see María G. Núñez Pérez, *Trabajadoras en la Segunda República: un estudio sobre la actividad económica extradoméstica (1931 - 1936)*, 16 (Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1989), 51–58. This number varied greatly when comparing rural with urban areas. Just as an example the illiteracy rate in Barcelona at the same time was significantly lower; 21.38%. See José Luis Oyón, José Maldonado, and Eulàlia Griful, *Barcelona 1930 un atlas social* (Barcelona: Edicions UPC, 2001), 19.

of this latter initiative. In addition to such pedagogical efforts, innumerable private and public developments in mobile projections, film sessions for children, educational film libraries, and film clubs accompanied by conferences are also discussed throughout the following four chapters. These type of initiatives—together with progressive pedagogical institutions such as the Junta de Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas (herein JAE), the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (herein ILE), the Residencia de Estudiantes, and the Instituto-Escuela that were already in place before 1931 (but which found in the first government of the Second Republic its closest political ally)—created an expansive and lively climate of emancipation through culture and education.<sup>58</sup>

In the words of Rodolfo Llopis, appointed head of primary education in 1931 and advisor to the IECI, the school would become “the ideological weapon of the Spanish revolution,” a revolution that in order to endure had to take refuge in pedagogy.<sup>59</sup> This ambitious program, headed by the ministry of education Marcelino Domingo, had widely different referents: from the work of Jules Ferry in France, to José Vasconcelos in Mexico, and Anatoly Lunacharsky in the USSR.<sup>60</sup> The international circulation and local translation of social, political, and cultural

---

<sup>58</sup> See González Calleja, *La Segunda República española*, 320–55; Mercedes Samaniego Boneu, *La Política Educativa de La Segunda República Durante El Bienio Azañista*, Historia de España En El Mundo Moderno : Estudios 6 (Madrid: C.S.I.C. Escuela de Historia Moderna, 1977). For an excellent analysis of the international models that inspired this progressive pedagogical impulse see Eugenio Manuel Otero Urtaza, “Els orígens del pensament educatiu de la Segona República,” *Educació i Història: Revista d’història de l’educació*, no. 11 (2008): 50–74, <https://doi.org/10.2436/20.3009.01.23>.

<sup>59</sup> Mercedes Samaniego Boneu, *La política educativa de la Segunda República durante el bienio azañista* (Madrid: C.S.I.C. Escuela de Historia Moderna, 1977), xii; these ideas were developed by the pedagogue in Llopis and Molero Pintado, *La revolución en la escuela*. This openly politicized vision of education from Socialist and Communist pedagogues was at odds with the liberal progressive idea of the secular unified school promoted by the ILE since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. But the transformative window of opportunity opened up by the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic filed down these differences in a common effort to transform the country through new models of education. This climate of understanding would only last briefly, and as the political situation radicalized the divergence of opinions on the instrumentalization of education (summarized in the struggle between a liberal state school system and a free school with openly leftist ideology) would ultimately slow down the process of educational reform.

<sup>60</sup> Samaniego Boneu, *La política educativa de la Segunda República durante el bienio azañista*, 95–96.

referents is another key characteristic of 1930s Spanish society, and, although explicitly analyzed in chapter two in relation to proletarian film culture, it can be traced in all of the initiatives explored in the thesis. This “expanding culture” (to use Raymond Williams’s description of the socio-cultural matrix created by education, the public, and means of communication)<sup>61</sup> assimilated an array of national and international referents with no precedent in the country’s history.<sup>62</sup> The cultural policy of the Republic was directed towards the creation of a *pueblo-ciudadanía* (people-citizenship) that could sustain the fragile democracy in the years to come.<sup>63</sup> As we will see in chapter one, this entailed the inclusion of popular culture and folklore as constitutive elements of modernity, clearly departing from the perceived image of modernity as an expression solely of progress and modernization.

Despite the constant efforts by reactionary and conservative elites to undermine this project of popular and cultural emancipation, to the point of orchestrating two coup d’états against the Republic (José Sanjurjo in 1932 and Franco et al in 1936), this policy was successful in generating enough support for the democratic state that both rebellions failed (the second inaugurating the Civil War after the opposition of popular classes through the organization of improvised militias). The pedagogical impulse of the Republic was also literally inscribed in the façade of Spain’s pavilion in the 1937 Paris International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life (Figure 5), reminding neighboring democracies of what was at stake in the Civil War (a call that only the USSR and the International Brigades chose to answer). The current longing in many progressive sectors in Spain for a similar pedagogical and emancipatory spirit to

---

<sup>61</sup> As described by Tony Pinkney in the introduction to Raymond Williams, *Politics of Modernism: [Against the New Conformists]*, ed. Tony Pinkney (London ; New York: Verso, 2007), 9; Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), 140–41.

<sup>62</sup> Francisco Caudet, *Las cenizas del Fénix: la cultura española en los años 30* (Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre, 1993); Manuel Tuñón de Lara, *Medio siglo de cultura española: (1885 - 1936)* (Madrid: Editorial Tecnos, 1977).

<sup>63</sup> Idoia Murga Castro, José María López Sánchez, and Jorge de Hoyos, *Política cultural de la Segunda República española* (Madrid: Editorial Pablo Iglesias, 2016), 11.



be applied in the country testifies to the lasting effects of such pedagogical impulses.<sup>64</sup>



Figure 5. Façade of the Spanish Pavilion in the 1937 International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life in Paris with emphasis on the educational spirit of the Second Republic.

The photographs in

Figure 4, discussed earlier, also convey the complexity of the pedagogical impulse promoted by the cultural policy of the Second Republic and the ambiguous relationship between culture, indoctrination, growing participation of citizens in the public sphere, and politics, that plunged the country into a dynamic of increasing radicalization and social tension. Until what point was the so-called “masses” just *looking* from outside the glass window like the child in Gabriel Casas’s photograph or towards the improvised screen set up by enthusiast cultural missionaries and intellectuals? What space and position did popular classes—the majority of the population in a deeply unequal society—occupy in this pedagogical sphere? The answer is

---

<sup>64</sup> See for example the 2006 approval (with the opposition of the right-wing Popular Party) of a law proposed by Izquierda Unida (United Left, IU) and the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Socialist Party, PSOE) that formally recognized the Second Republic as the first genuinely democratic regime in Spain and declared 2006 as the official year of historical memory. Carlos Cué E., “El congreso conmemora la II República con la oposición del PP,” *El País*, April 28, 2006, [https://elpais.com/diario/2006/04/28/espana/1146175216\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/2006/04/28/espana/1146175216_850215.html).

complex since the concept of the *masses* or *people* was appropriated by virtually every political and cultural institution throughout the 1930s. Take for instance how historian Enric Ucelay reminds us of the emphasis that Catalan regionalist movements put into developing cultural institutions that could incorporate the “malleable” and “culturally virgin” masses of illiterate migrants from Spain.<sup>65</sup> This strategy of expanding the social base of Catalanism by incorporating popular classes into the cultural narratives and spaces previously reserved to elites was met with great suspicion and rejection by the ruling bourgeoisie, which warned against the “watering down of culture.”<sup>66</sup> As chapter three shows, amateur cinema became a refuge for some of these bourgeois industrialists, who saw in smallgauge cinema a new cultural space that popular classes could not access at the time.

Throughout the dissertation we will see how the issue was approached from different perspectives via initiatives ranging from critical spectatorship, film clubs, mobile projections, state policies, or educational screenings. And it is important to have in mind that the people-citizenship policy of the government was contested from all ideological standpoints. Radical film critics criticized the patronizing attitude of enlightened intellectuals and called for a proletarian cinema that emerged organically from the working class itself, although as we will see in chapters one and two this position was not devoid of hypocrisy (since most film clubs were in fact oriented towards an intellectual leftist elite). Bourgeois sectors, such as the Catalan amateur filmmakers and conservative liberals, shared Ortega y Gasset’s aversion to the masses and their advance “to the foreground of the social plane, occupying the spaces, using the tools and enjoying the pleasures previously reserved for the minority.”<sup>67</sup> Reactionary right wing and

---

<sup>65</sup> Enric Ucelay da Cal, *La Catalunya populista: imatge, cultura i política en l’etapa republicana (1931-1939)* (Barcelona: La Magrana, 1982), 18.

<sup>66</sup> Ucelay da Cal, 19.

<sup>67</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *La rebelión de las masas* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2009), 82.

catholic sectors criticized the emancipatory projects of the Republic with constant euphemistic mentions about the “gravity of the situation” caused by the “uncertain future” opened by the questioning of the social, political, and religious order.<sup>68</sup> There was no consensus even among leftist intellectuals.

As poet Antonio Machado warned in his closing speech for the 1937 Second International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture celebrated in Valencia: “the mass-men doesn’t exist, it is an invention of the bourgeoisie [...] We must distrust the topic of the human masses. A lot of people with good faith, our best friends, use it today without realizing that the term comes from the enemy: from the capitalist bourgeoisie that exploits men and needs to degrade them. We must be very careful. Nobody saves the masses, but in turn, they can always be shot at. Careful!”<sup>69</sup> Contrary to this position (which included a veiled criticism of the USSR, “our best friends”), Marxist critics and writers like Piqueras or César Vallejo defended the term as an expression of proletarian pride, fraternal spirit and anti-individualist philosophy. One of Vallejo’s last poems, written in November 1937 just months before his death in Paris, is appropriately titled “Mass” (Masa), and poignantly recalls the force that the image of an internationalist worker movement had in the mind of leftist intellectuals:

When the battle was over,  
and the fighter was dead, a man came toward him  
and said: "Do not die; I love you so!"  
But the corpse, it was sad! went on dying.  
[...]  
Millions of persons stood around him,

---

<sup>68</sup> See the infamous May 7, 1931, pastoral from cardinal Pedro Segura against the Republic and in defense of traditionalist Catholic monarchy; Pedro Segura y Sáez, “Nuevo estado de cosas,” *ABC*, May 7, 1931. Segura quoted the following passage from the bible, which is a perfect summary of the attitude of the church and the powerful elites against the Republic; “when the enemies of Jesus’ reign advance with determination *no catholic can afford to remain inactive*, retired in his home or dedicated exclusively to his private affairs.” Segura y Sáez, 36. Emphasis in original. The text develops this idea into an open opposition to the Republican government, with all Catholics united in a “tight phalanx” (“apretada falange”), a premonition of the Fascist-Catholic union that would rule Spain during 36 years of ruthless dictatorship.

<sup>69</sup> Antonio Machado, “Sobre la defensa y la difusión de la cultura,” *Hora de España*, no. 8 (August 1937): 11–19.

all speaking the same thing: "Stay here, brother!"  
 But the corpse, it was sad! went on dying.  
 Then, all the men on the earth  
 stood around him; the corpse looked at them sadly,  
 deeply moved; he sat up slowly,  
 put his arm around the first man; started to walk...<sup>70</sup>



Figure 6. Stills from *Battleship Potemkin* and the newsreel that captured the funeral of Anarchist hero Buenaventura Durruti in 1936, *The Mass Tribute to Buenaventura Durruti* (CNT-FAI, 1936).

We can imagine this poem accompanying a screening of *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*, Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) or the newsreel that captured the funeral of Anarchist hero Buenaventura Durruti in 1936 (*The Mass Tribute to Buenaventura Durruti*, CNT-FAI) or other revolutionary and propagandistic films that circulated in film clubs and battlefield screenings during the early 1930s and Civil War years (Figure 6). A large part of this thesis, especially chapters one and two, is devoted to exploring how moving image culture was used as an instrument of cultural enlightenment and as a representation of the large sections of the population that had remained invisible both to the power circles and cultural elites of the country. But we will also see, in chapters three and four, how these same instruments were used either as

<sup>70</sup> Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo, *Neruda and Vallejo: Selected Poems*, ed. Robert Bly et al. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 268–69. Neruda and Vallejo, 268–69. The poem was written on November 10, 1937.

an expressive, and reactionary, tool for the powerful industrial bourgeoisie or as a form of governance and geopolitical diplomacy in the hands of state institutions.

Ultimately, cinema was seen by many educators, intellectuals, critics, and politicians as the most appropriate pedagogical instrument to civilize or control the population, given the elevated levels of illiteracy and the ability of the medium to captivate amazed audiences.<sup>71</sup>

Although the topic will be analyzed in detail in chapter two, I want to clarify here the relationship between moving images and education that this thesis puts forward. I understand film pedagogy both as a set of practices involving educational uses of film and as a cultural imperative towards the creation of new social orders (in and outside the space of the classroom).<sup>72</sup> Echoing Gramscian educational theory and its emphasis on alternative education in shaping a counterculture against hegemonic forces, I argue that pedagogy was the driving force behind such practices, relations and discourses.<sup>73</sup> The different initiatives I analyze acknowledged that culture could not be separated from relations of power and capitalist knowledge structures imposed by pedagogical practices, and thus an alternative counter-

---

<sup>71</sup> See on cinema and education: Alexis Sluys, *La cinematografía escolar y post-escolar* (Madrid: La Lectura, 1925); Fernando Camarero Rioja, “Teoría y práctica del cine educativo en España (1895-1923),” *Cahiers de civilisation espagnole contemporaine. De 1808 au temps présent*, no. 11 (September 26, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4000/ceec.4843>; Joan Ferrés Prats, “Cine y educación social: ¿desconocidos, rivales o aliados?,” *Educación Social: Revista de Intervención Socioeducativa*, no. 39 (2008): 13–29; Fernando Redondo Neira, “Aproximación al conocimiento de las primeras realizaciones en el uso didáctico del cine en la universidad española: noticias y testimonios,” *Quaderns de Cine*, no. 1 (2007): 7–17, <https://doi.org/10.14198/QdCINE.2007.1.02>; Maria del Mar Pozo Andrés, “El cine como medio de alfabetización y de educación popular. Primeras experiencias,” *Sarmiento: Anuario Galego de Historia y Educación*, no. 1 (1997): 59–75; Eduardo Rodríguez Merchán, “La enseñanza del cine en España: perspectiva histórica y panorama actual,” *Comunicar* 15, no. 29 (2007): 13–20; Alicia Alted Vigil, “El cine educativo en España (hasta 1936),” *Historia Social*, no. 76 (2013): 91–106; Alicia Alted Vigil and Susana Sel, eds., *Cine educativo y científico en España, Argentina y Uruguay* (Madrid: Editorial Universitaria Ramón Areces, 2016).

<sup>72</sup> Scholars usually reduce the impact of educational cinema and film pedagogy to the space of the classroom and of official educational programs, but as this thesis shows the pedagogical impulse of cinema had a much wider social and political effect. See Susana Sel, “Cine, pedagogía y exilio. Un recorrido entre España y Argentina en los años 40,” *Cahiers de civilisation espagnole contemporaine. De 1808 au temps présent*, no. 11 (September 26, 2013): 49, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ceec.4884>.

<sup>73</sup> Carmel Borg, Joseph A. Buttigieg and Peter Mayo (eds), *Gramsci and Education* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), p. 41.

education had to be devised, since “every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and worldwide field, between complexes of national and continental civilizations.”<sup>74</sup>

Following this argument, and the explicit reference—often overlooked—to the “international and worldwide field,” I argue furthermore that we cannot understand the pedagogical aspects of alternative film culture of the 1930s from a strictly nation-based perspective. Such conception of film as an educational resource committed to the reality of the population greatly departed from the purely commercial interests in creating a Spanish film industry, but it also involved issues of elitism, representation, indoctrination, and agency. These types of contradictions characterized the relationship between culture, politics, and society in Spain of the 1930s, but were already present in the mid-late 1920s.

In 1926, Luis Araquistáin (Spanish journalist and PSOE member) and Cayetano Coll y Cuchí (Puerto Rican intellectual with strong affiliations to Spain) presented *¿Qué es España?*, a documentary they had directed to support a series of conferences on Spanish culture to be held in Mexico, Antilles, and other Central American countries.<sup>75</sup> The film compiled images of important scientists, writers, philosophers, educators, and other Spanish intellectuals, as well as the spaces where they carried on their different pedagogical efforts.<sup>76</sup> Together with the conferences, the film was to convey objectively “The scientific truth, the historical emotion, and the hope of melting Spanish and Hispanic Americans in a joint feeling of presence and futurity

---

<sup>74</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1971), 350.

<sup>75</sup> Ignacio Lahoz Rodrigo, “De ayer a hoy. ¿Qué es España? y la salvaguarda del patrimonio cinematográfico español,” *Archivos de La Filmoteca: Revista de Estudios Históricos Sobre La Imagen*, no. 70 (2012): 168.

<sup>76</sup> You can watch the complete and restored version of the film here: <https://vimeo.com/83834466>.

around a common culture.”<sup>77</sup> The direction this future should take was clear; towards a Spain integrated in modern European society and as far away as possible from old stereotypes of “bullfighting circus and tambourine.”<sup>78</sup> The film provided a catalogue of local “great minds,” avoided any images of folklore, popular culture, or even historical events. Instead, it focused on achievements in the agricultural, economic, and cultural fronts to reflect the modernization of the country and reclaim its place amongst modern Europe (ideally impressing their Latin American associates and luring them into a Hispanic cultural front controlled by Spain, a project that, as we will see in chapter four, was carried into the Second Republic).

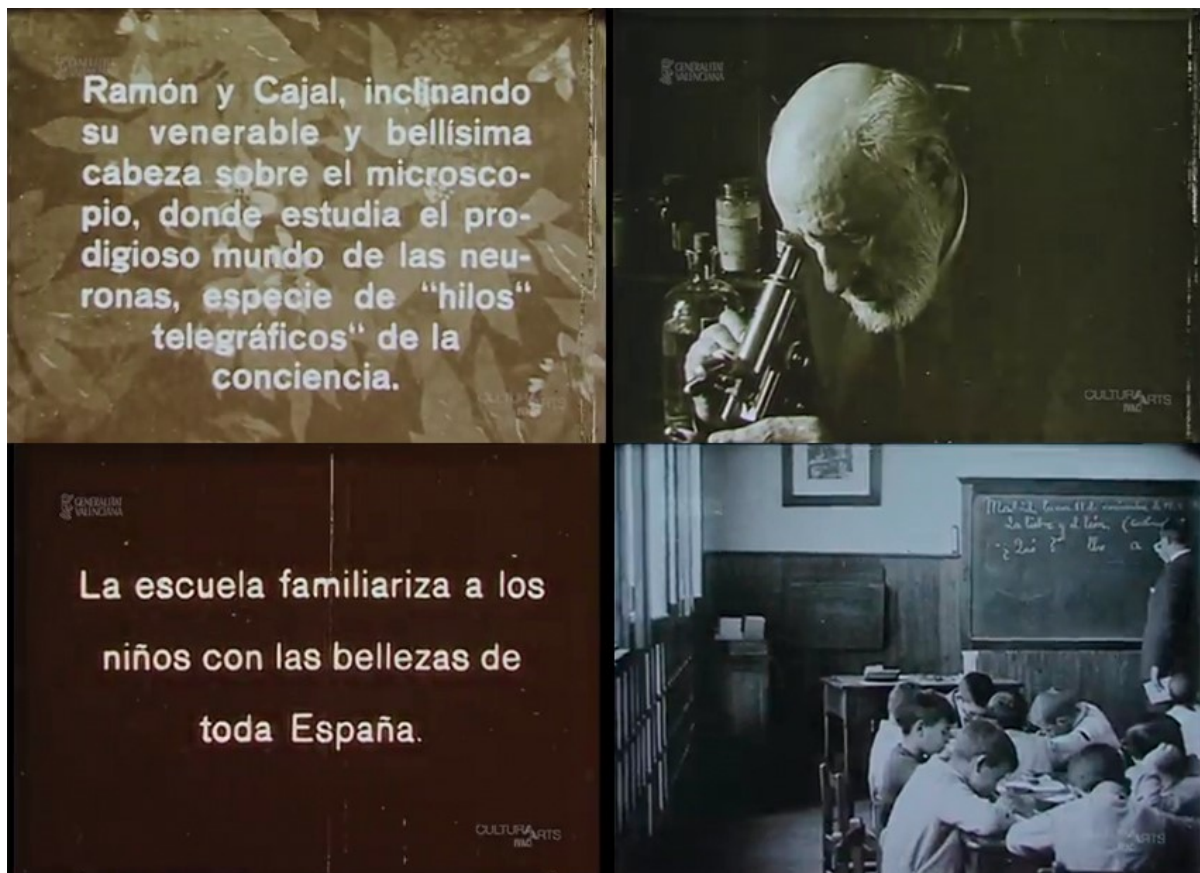


Figure 7. Stills from the 1926 educational and promotion film *¿Qué es España?* Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Valencia.

<sup>77</sup> Lahoz Rodrigo, “De ayer a hoy. ¿Qué es España? y la salvaguarda del patrimonio cinematográfico español,” 168.

<sup>78</sup> Lahoz Rodrigo, 168.

One of the most prominent figures in the film is Santiago Ramón y Cajal, histologist and neuroscientist who had been awarded the Nobel prize for his study on neurons in 1906 (and who was a great enthusiast of color photography and its applications in science, even publishing a book on the topic in 1912).<sup>79</sup> The film introduced him as “inclining his beautiful head over the microscope, studying the prodigious world of neurons, sort of telegraphic wires of conscience” (Figure 7). With this metaphor, the film creates a suggestive connection between the work of the renowned scientist and the medium of cinema, which was seen by many intellectuals as the best way to direct these “wires of conscience” and catch up with the promises of a belated modernity. The emphasis of the film, though, is not solely on revered figures of Spanish knowledge, but also on the recipients of the different pedagogical efforts they were part of—namely, young pupils and children. Many scenes in *¿Qué es España?* are devoted to schools and education in Spain, highlighting the importance that pedagogy and knowledge transmission had for the future of the country. The school was, also, a place to integrate citizens into a new national narrative, “familiarizing children with the wonders of all of Spain” (Figure 7) Released at the height of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, the film already pointed to the intersections between noncommercial cinema, education, and the nation that would intensify through the following years.

In what follows I explain the conceptual framework that informs my analysis of Spanish noncommercial film culture from 1931 to 1936, which, despite its impressiveness, has been repeatedly ignored by most historians, who have preferred to focus on the Civil War years or simply dismissed the period as a barren land from which Buñuel emerged as a “meteor.”<sup>80</sup> As I

---

<sup>79</sup> See Santiago Ramón y Cajal, *La fotografía de los colores: fundamentos científicos y reglas prácticas* (Madrid: Nicolás Moya, 1912). Cajal’s career was deeply tied to the beginnings of scientific photography, as he developed methods to take images of neurons through ultrarapid photographic plates he had invented.

<sup>80</sup> Román Gubern, *Historia del cine Vol. 1* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1971), 477. Repeated in Román Gubern, *Historia del*



will show in detail in the first chapter, this can't be farther from the truth, since Spain had a remarkable film culture circuit that came to the fore in the absence of sustained commercial film production. I put forward the concept of film culture in the absence of film production to analyze film initiatives in contexts without strong film industries that were nonetheless hugely important for the development of such countries' own form of modernity through everyday media practices, official cultural policies, and transnational networks of collaboration and circulation.

#### 4. How can noncommercial cinema matter more?

While calls for a reexamination of historiography as centered on the social and cultural significance of cinema have become standard,<sup>81</sup> their scope has tended to still be limited to commercially produced or art cinema. Since the early 2000s, film studies scholarship has popularized concepts such as *useful cinema*, *nontheatrical*, *orphan*, *industrial*, or—more simply—*noncommercial* to analyze the social, political, and cultural relevance of the medium beyond commercial cinema with theatrical exhibition. As Benoit Turquety has recently proposed, it is important to rethink the epistemological paradigm through which scholars have narrowly understood cinema (based exclusively on commercial fiction films), to include an expanded corpus of technologies and experiences that have informed people's relationship with the medium across the world.<sup>82</sup> Turquety offers a model of analysis that surpasses classical film theory and its screen-passive spectator apparatus and poses cinema as an everyday cultural device instead. This questioning of what *cinema has been* can be extended to a reevaluation of

---

*cine* (Anagrama, 2014), 1816.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Maltby, "How Can Cinema History Matter More?," *Screening the Past*, no. 22 (2006), <http://tlweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/screeningthepast/22/board-richard-maltby.html>; Richard Maltby, Daniël Biltreyst, and Philippe Meers, eds., *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

<sup>82</sup> Benoît Turquety, "Comprendre le cinéma (amateur): épistémologie et technologie," in *L'amateur en cinéma. Un autre paradigme. Histoire, esthétique, marges et institutions.*, ed. Valérie Vignaux and Benoît Turquety (Paris: AFRHC, 2017), 17–26.

film history itself by making *noncommercial film culture matter more* in our understanding of how moving images intersected with social, political, and cultural movements throughout recent history.

This “necessary reorientation of the questions we ask of our film and media history” as Haidee Wasson and Charles Acland call for,<sup>83</sup> has opened innumerable avenues for research, introducing into academic discourse experiences and materials previously overlooked by knowledge production. Scholars have begun to reconstruct the powerful effects that these various cinematic practices had on the way modern life was experienced and imagined in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. These studies include, for instance, the documentation and analysis of the efforts by colonial authorities to subjugate the colonized,<sup>84</sup> the circulation of radical political imaginaries through informal networks of exhibition,<sup>85</sup> the intersection of different educational initiatives and cinema,<sup>86</sup> the use of film in the industrial environment,<sup>87</sup> and the crossovers between amateur and professional practices since the first decades of film

---

<sup>83</sup> Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson, eds., *Useful Cinema* (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2011), 17.

<sup>84</sup> Eric A. Stein, “Colonial Theatres of Proof: Representation and Laughter in 1930s Rockefeller Foundation Hygiene Cinema in Java,” *Health and History* 8, no. 2 (2006): 14–44, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40111541>; Lee Grieveson, Colin MacCabe, and British Film Institute, eds., *Empire and Film* (London: Palgrave Macmillan on behalf of the British Film Institute, 2011).

<sup>85</sup> See for instance Charles Musser, “Introduction: Documentary before Verité,” *Film History* 18, no. 4 (2006): 355–60; Bert Hogenkamp, “Léon Moussinac and The Spectators’ Criticism in France (1931-34),” *Film International* 1, no. 2 (February 2003): 4–13, <https://doi.org/10.1386/fiin.1.2.4>; Trevor Stark, “‘Cinema in the Hands of the People’: Chris Marker, the Medvedkin Group, and the Potential of Militant Film.,” *October*, no. 139 (2012): 117–50; Mariano Mestman and David Oubiña, eds., *Las rupturas del 68 en el cine de América Latina: contracultura, experimentación y política* (CABA, Argentina: Akal, 2016); Sébastien Layerle, *Caméras En Lutte En Mai 68: Par Ailleurs Le Cinéma Est Une Arme* (Paris: Nouveau monde, 2008); Pablo La Parra-Pérez, “Workers Interrupting the Factory. Helena Lumbreras’s Militant Factory Films between Italy and Spain (1968-78),” in *1968 and Global Cinema* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2018), 363–84.

<sup>86</sup> Haidee Wasson, *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Paola Bonifazio, *Schooling in Modernity: The Politics of Sponsored Films in Postwar Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson, *Inventing Film Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible, eds., *Learning with the Lights off: Educational Film in the United States* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>87</sup> Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau, eds., *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

history.<sup>88</sup>



Figure 8. Mobile screen improvised by members of the Misiones Pedagógicas, 1932. Courtesy of the Residencia de Estudiantes, Madrid.

How can we describe these experiences, and how do they fit in with the narrative of film history as we know it? As Thomas Elsaesser aptly concludes, when examining this corpus of films, it is “advisable to suspend all pre-existing categorizations.”<sup>89</sup> Previous scholarly approaches don’t work well when applied to this particular history of moving images, since they were based on entirely different historical paradigms. Elsaesser himself, in reference to industrial

---

<sup>88</sup> Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film: Meaning and Practice, 1927-77*, Studies in Popular Culture (Manchester; New York: New York: Manchester University Press ;Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Charles Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema: The Rise of North American Movie Making, 1923-1960* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015).

<sup>89</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, “Archives and Archaeologies: The Place of Non-Fiction Film in Contemporary Media,” in *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 22–23.

films, suggests specifically to focus on three questions when approaching such materials: who commissioned the films, what occasion where they made for, and to what use were they put?<sup>90</sup> His approach could be generalized to consider the broader social, cultural, and institutional factors behind the production and circulation of noncommercial cinema.

The importance of adopting this expanded understanding of the medium cannot be understated. It helps us see how the assumptions that film was largely either a monetary business in search of impressionable audiences, or else an aesthetic pursuit for the artistic elites has in effect obscured the rich history of cinema's other functions. Institutions beyond production companies, motivations beyond purely commercial reasons or aesthetic pursuits, and uses of film beyond entertainment begin to draw a different—and more complex—picture of the role moving images played throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. In this expanded history, stars, movie palaces, and studios are perhaps less important for understanding the experience of modernity through film than the personal and institutional matrix of educational film initiatives, film policy, amateur filmmaking, proletarian cinema, and many other noncommercial film initiatives that “cultivated” the collective and social dimension of the medium amidst constant political upheaval. This new understanding of our objects of study allows us to focus on issues of civic engagement, education, governance, everyday media practices, and political dissent without abandoning questions of aesthetic experience or authorship; instead, the aim is to bring these questions into the broader spheres of cultural and social life.

An important part of this overlooked history has to do with the institutionalization of film culture during the 1930s. Very little critical work has been done on the institutions that enabled moving images to be produced, circulated, and exhibited. This is especially problematic given

---

<sup>90</sup> Elsaesser, 22.

that in virtually every context no films are produced without institutional help (public or private), and their exhibition uncontrolled by regulations and government agencies, communities organized through clubs or film academies, etc. In this sense, we know a lot about what moving images signify and represent, but not so much about the forces and structures that shaped the medium's existence and trajectory. In this dissertation, I focus on the context of Spanish production in the 1930s to propose a model of analysis that accounts for the role of institutions in shaping film culture. This implies moving away from the idea that film is an autonomous artform or industry and acknowledging in our analysis of the medium its imbrication with multiple social, economic, and political realms.

My approach is informed by political economic approaches to media, such as Lee Grieveson's recent study on how "media was fashioned to supplement forms of territorial and economic imperialism during the interwar years."<sup>91</sup> Grieveson explores how film and other media are inextricably tied to the expansion of the liberal economic and political world system, not only through the production of film as a profitable commodity in itself, but especially through its use by state and private institutions as a particularly effective pedagogical instrument:

media was disseminated through newly created educational networks and used to educate and socialize particular populations in new "productive" practices and identities. The films, and the institutions that produced and circulated them, were part of an expansive liberal praxis, driven by political and economic elites to establish new forms of subjective, economic, and political order fit for the new modality of mass production, consumption, and corporate and monopoly capital.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Lee Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations: Media, Capital, and the Liberal World System* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 1.

<sup>92</sup> Grieveson, 2.

In chapter four I analyze the way Spanish and Catalan governments used film to shape cultural and political identities, expanding Grieverson's analysis of film's role in the liberal economic system and its governance efforts to include its relationship with the nationalistic discourses that accompanied such processes in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is important to clarify what I mean by an *institution* and what does a process of *institutionalization* consist of in terms of the histories I analyze throughout the thesis. Discussions on the nature of institutions mostly stem from social theory and economics, which understand the term as either a system of rules, a type of social organization, or both.<sup>93</sup> For Geoffrey Hodgson institutions are “durable systems of established and embedded social rules that structure social interactions” which he calls “social-norm systems.”<sup>94</sup> That is, institutions attempt to organize society in a particular (and stable) way. This is done through rules that are able to “mold the capacities and behavior of agents in fundamental ways: they have a capacity to change aspirations instead of merely enabling or constraining them.”<sup>95</sup> This dialectic is key in understanding the role of cultural institutions in contexts such as interwar Spain, where access to the public sphere was allowed to traditionally excluded populations, but usually from a patronizing and top-down perspective of social control and cultural harmonization.<sup>96</sup>

As social anthropologist Joao de Pina Cabral states, “Written into the way in which we have come to use the word ‘institution,’ there is a modernist disposition to see society as a formally coherent system that imposes itself upon individuals.”<sup>97</sup> This hierarchical view of what constitutes an institution ultimately leads to believe that every institution will be at the service of

---

<sup>93</sup> Jan-Erik Lane and Svante O. Ersson, *The New Institutional Politics: Performance and Outcomes* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 23.

<sup>94</sup> Geoffrey M. Hodgson, “What Are Institutions?,” *Journal of Economic Issues* 40, no. 1 (2006): 13.

<sup>95</sup> Hodgson, 7.

<sup>96</sup> See for instance how the Misiones Pedagógicas completely excluded non-Castilian culture from their repertory.

<sup>97</sup> Pina Pina-Cabral De, “Afterword: What Is an Institution?” *Social Anthropology* 19, no. 4 (2011): 479.

power (be it state or private capital). As the two first chapters of this thesis show this was certainly not the case in Spain, where institutions beyond the established political, social, and cultural realms sought to crumble this same “instituted” system (to use Cornelius Castoriadis notion of the potential of a radical imaginary to subvert the established imaginary of any given society).<sup>98</sup> On the other side, chapters three and four focus on institutions in the service of industrial elites and state power, which nonetheless also saw the act of instituting as, in Pina Cabral’s words, “to prop up, to grant entity status to a certain aspect of the world by situating it relationally.”<sup>99</sup> This is the conception of institutionalization this thesis puts forward: the ability of institutions (of any kind) to provide the space for cultural productions to relate with the political, social, and cultural realms.

The interwar period is a time of special obsession with *organizing* social, cultural, and political life nationally and transnationally after the disaster of World War I. As part of the efforts to avoid another world conflict, institutions were devised to implement normative frameworks of control and education through cultural expressions: mainly, cinema, literature, and theatre. Regardless of the ideology behind such initiatives (e.g. liberal democracy, fascism, communism, etc.) the objective was clear: to use film to mobilize and organize the population amidst the escalating political turmoil of the 1920s and, especially, the 1930s. This became especially important in a context of growing participation of citizens in the public sphere.<sup>100</sup> For

---

<sup>98</sup> Cornelius Castoriadis, *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 153.

<sup>99</sup> Pina-Cabral De, “Afterword: What Is an Institution?,” 492.

<sup>100</sup> This was supported through an impressive network of associations such as athenaeums, social clubs, choirs and all kinds of participative initiatives both in urban and rural settings. Many of these initiatives were related to socialist or anarchist parties and institutions. They were especially important for the exhibition of film in rural areas. See Pedro Nogales Cárdenas and José Carlos Suárez, *El nostre cinema paradís: els inicis del cinema als pobles del Tarragonès* (Tarragona: Arola Editors, 2014); Pedro Nogales Cárdenas and José Carlos Suárez, *La nostra gran il·lusió: els inicis del cinema als pobles del Montsià* (Tarragona: Publicacions URV, 2018). In urban settings the importance of the street as a key space of socialization for popular classes (who usually lived in overcrowded dwellings) cannot be understated. For example Jose Luis Oyón has analyzed how the conquest of the street by popular classes in Barcelona enhanced the creation of strong neighborhood communities, some of which still persist

example, it is no coincidence that the first film schools emerge at this point in widely different political systems; in 1919, the first film school of the world is created in the Soviet Union (later known as VGIK); in 1929, the University of Southern California organizes the first courses of what will be known as the School of Cinematic Arts in the United States; in 1935, the Experimental Center for Cinema (Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia) is inaugurated in Rome under Mussolini's direct influence, and, as we will see in chapter four, the Catalan government was about to open a film school in 1936 when the Civil War broke out.<sup>101</sup> In this sense, the attempts of Spanish and Catalan governments to organize the industry, create film schools and regulate the medium (described in chapter four) mirror similar efforts from state and private institutions all over the world. These developments in the interwar years lead to the consolidation of film schools and archives that greatly influenced generations of cinephiles, film critics, scholars, and filmmakers.

Beyond these efforts by state institutions to instrumentalize cinema, film journals also became key spaces for the dissemination of new trends, ideas, films, theoretical approaches, and uses of moving images. The journal *Nuestro Cinema* stands out throughout this thesis as a central node in the vibrant film culture networks that transformed the cultural landscape of the country. Other journals such as *Popular Film* or *Arte y Cinematografía* were more widely circulated, but in Piqueras's journal a sustained defense of cinema's transformative social role was reflected.<sup>102</sup>

---

today. See José Luis Oyón, *La quiebra de la ciudad popular: espacio urbano, inmigración y anarquismo en la Barcelona de entreguerras, 1914-1936* (Barcelona: Ediciones del Serbal, 2008), 315–22.

<sup>101</sup> Duncan James Petrie, "Theory, Practice and the Significance of Film Schools," *Scandia* 76, no. 2 (2010): 31–46; Masha Salazkina, "(V)GIK and the History of Film Education in the Soviet Union, 1920s-1930s," in *A Companion to Russian Cinema*, ed. Birgit Beumers (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2016), 45–65.; Masha Salazkina, "Soviet–Italian Cinematic Exchanges: Transnational Film Education in the 1930s," in *The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building and the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Europe, 1919-1945*, ed. Malte Hagener (New York: Berghahn, 2014), 180–98.

<sup>102</sup> For a very useful overview of the relationship between journals, art, and politics from 1927 to 1936 see Mendelson and De Diego, "Political Practice and the Arts in Spain, 1927-1936."



Together with journals like *Orto*, *Octubre*, *La Gaceta del Arte* or *Nueva Cultura*, *Nuestro Cinema* created a shared imaginary of revolutionary politics and moving images in a context where the commercial exhibition of Soviet films was banned. This network materialized the 1930 call of the journal *Nueva España* for young intellectuals to create a new democratic and inclusive culture: “above all, it is the duty of the young to intervene, in an effective way, in this propaganda [...] founding organs of opinion that bring the need for a new politics of democracy and of intervention in public life to the most remote towns.”<sup>103</sup>

Throughout the thesis I analyze the different responses to this call to democratize the public sphere through media and culture in 1930s Spain: from leftist journals and film clubs; to exclusive bourgeois movements that reacted specifically against the growing participation of citizens in culture and politics; and, finally, official institutional powers and their incorporation of cinema into popular education and nation building policies. In the following paragraphs I analyze how these histories only emerge when applying a new perspective to Spanish film history that focuses on film culture and noncommercial cinema in the absence of a strong film industry during better part of the interwar period.

### Rethinking Spanish film history through film culture

A necessary first step in the reexamination of Spanish film history through noncommercial cinema that this thesis proposes is to clarify my understanding of the term *film culture*. Following critic and theorist Guillem Díaz-Plaja’s description of culture as “cultivation,”<sup>104</sup> we can define film culture as everything that contributes to the development of cinema, in and besides the projection of a film in a screen for an audience. Janet Harbord has

<sup>103</sup> “Editoriales: las fuerzas nuevas,” *Nueva España* 1, no. 6 (April 15, 1930): 2.

<sup>104</sup> Guillem Díaz-Plaja, *Una cultura del cinema: introducció a una estètica del film* (Barcelona: Publicacions de La Revista, 1930), 35. Emphasis in original.

articulated this as the “spaces, networks, structures and flows through which film travels” between audience and text.<sup>105</sup> This includes the movies themselves, but also the discourses attached to the medium’s aesthetic and political realities and possibilities in film journals, the publication of books on the subject and its intersections with other media (literature, theater, radio, graphic art, etc.), the creation of fan communities, associations and organizations such as film clubs, festivals and contests, and last but not least the instrumentalization of all these elements by public and private institutions. This definition is greatly influenced by Kaushik Bhaumik’s description of film culture as “a complex matrix of perceptions and practices that went beyond the actual event of showing and viewing films.”<sup>106</sup>

Understanding film culture as a “set of social practices that included writing, arguing, and reading about films on a wide and public scale that was significant unto itself,” as Haidee Wasson describes the “discursive horizon” of film, is a central element of this thesis.<sup>107</sup> Instead of identifying a series of isolated practices and discourses related to moving images, such as film criticism, journals, film clubs, public institutions, documentary, amateur, or political filmmaking, I understand these elements as nodes in an expanding network of circulation that was not only intermedial (ranging from newspapers to books, journals, film, photography, graphic art, theatre, etc.) but also actively transnational from the very beginning. Harbord describes the wide-reaching appeal of film as a “dynamic at work between forms of mobility and stasis, networks of flow and centers of production, a horizontal surface and a vertical hierarchy” between fixed nationhood “institutions of policy formation and funding” and mobile “mechanisms of

---

<sup>105</sup> Janet Harbord, *Film Cultures* (London; Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002), 2, 5.

<sup>106</sup> Kaushik Bhaumik, “Cinematograph to Cinema: Bombay 1896-1928,” *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 42.

<sup>107</sup> Wasson, *Museum Movies*, 15.

circulation” and dissemination.<sup>108</sup> It was this dialectic openness of film culture to the developments of Spanish 1930s society and its disorganized modernity that attracted critics and intellectuals to the medium beyond its commercial dimension.

In this expansive conception of film culture it is quite difficult to distinguish between commercial and noncommercial film culture, since the later was always informed in some way or another by the former and they both shared very similar outlets (journals, theaters, books, etc.) and even objects (films produced by commercial houses as we will see with the example of Ramon Biadiu’s 1934 documentary *La ruta de don Quijote* discussed in chapter one, or even the few Soviet films that managed to find their way into Spain). In this sense, we can only differentiate noncommercial film culture by looking at the driving force behind its activities, which was not to make money and develop an industry, but to use moving images as an educational, expressive, or emancipatory tool instead.

As Malte Hagener states when discussing the emergence of film culture during the interwar period, this process implied that cinema “was starting to be taken seriously as an aesthetic object and social force, and this has to be taken into account when trying to understand the political, social, and aesthetic modernity that came to dominate industrialized countries before the Second World War.”<sup>109</sup> In this dissertation I extend Hagener’s argument beyond the limiting scope of “industrialized countries” to those contexts, such as Spain, in which the modernizing impulse of moving images was developed transversally across society regardless of the lack of a strong film industry and still incipient capitalist development (which coexisted with a semi-feudal agrarian reality for over half of the population).<sup>110</sup> Hagener identifies the avant-garde, the nation-state,

---

<sup>108</sup> Harbord, *Film Cultures*, 8.

<sup>109</sup> Malte Hagener, ed., *The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building and the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Europe, 1919-1945* (New York: Berghahn, 2014), 1–2.

<sup>110</sup> In the 1930 Census agricultural workers were still the most numerous working force with almost 4 million

and the industry as the three main elements in the emergence of film culture in the interwar period, to which I would add the pedagogical impulses that swept the world in the disorganized modernity opened up by the end of the first world War, the Soviet revolution, the 1929 crack, the rise of fascism, the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic and the eruption of the Civil War in 1936.

I don't discuss Spanish commercial film production in detail since it has been amply researched from multiple perspectives (encompassing almost the entirety of Spanish film historiography).<sup>111</sup> This has obscured an extraordinary number of initiatives through which moving image culture intersected with the social, political, and cultural transformations mentioned in the previous sections. As Maria Antonia Paz Rebollo and Jose Cabeza San Deogracias mention in their foundational article on non-fiction cinema during the Second Spanish Republic "La realidad que vieron los españoles" ("The reality that Spaniards saw"), most research on the history of film in Spain during the II republic has focused on the analysis of particular Spanish films, especially fiction films (with the exception of the work of Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí as we will see later, which are nonetheless seen as rare exceptions that are more French than Spanish).<sup>112</sup> Their analysis touches upon one of the main problems of Spanish film historiography; its overwhelming focus on commercial cinema.

---

people, followed by about 2 million industrial workers (including metalworkers and other ancillary professions), almost 500,000 in the commercial sector, 387,000 in the domestic service, 273,000 liberal professionals, 225,000 law enforcement, 115,000 miners, or 85,000 civil servants. See "Censo de población de 1930," Census, 1930. Nonetheless the tendency was towards an increasing industrial workforce and concentration of population in cities. For Shlomo Ben-Ami this was a very important factor in the changes of the social structure and consequent challenges to old politics and power. Frances Lannon, Paul Preston, and Raymond Carr, eds., *Elites and Power in Twentieth-Century Spain: Essays in Honor of Sir Raymond Carr* (Oxford [England] : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1990), 74.

<sup>111</sup> See among others, Gubern, *Historia del cine*; José María Caparrós Lera and Rafael de España, *Historia del cine español*, 1. ed (Madrid, España: T&B Editores, 2007); Román Gubern, ed., *Historia del cine español* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2009); José Luis Castro de Paz et al., eds., *La nueva memoria: historia(s) del cine español (1939-2000)* (Perillo-Oleiros (A Coruña): Vía Láctea, 2005).

<sup>112</sup> María Antonia Paz Rebollo and Jose Cabeza San Deogracias, "La realidad que vieron los españoles. El cine de no-ficción durante la II República española (1931-36)," *Hispania* LXX, no. 236 (2010): 737-64.

Given the perennial problems of creating a strong Spanish film industry throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the disastrous effects of the transition from silent to sound cinema (which paralyzed the film industry almost entirely during 1930 and 1931),<sup>113</sup> this has largely resulted in a history of lamentations and lost opportunities, especially in relation to the 1930s.<sup>114</sup> Besides the more obvious problem of neglecting numerous film experiences (educational, scientific, amateur, militant, domestic) that this perspective entails, there is the added problem that a history based on the film industry is necessarily a history of, and from, power, or at least of the dominant cultural, social and political discourses of the country. This problematic is of special importance when approaching the 1930s, when the Spanish film industry was mostly dominated by rich investors who were only interested in using the medium to make money, while countless other initiatives used the medium for entirely different purposes, including pedagogical efforts, political struggle, nation-branding, cultural diplomacy, or simply as an expressive tool that

---

<sup>113</sup> The insufficient investment by the film industry in adapting itself to sound cinema created a deep crisis in an already weak industry that North American companies rapidly exploited. Neither film producers or exhibitors had the funds or the will to take the risk and pay for sound technology, and as a result the local industry tanked. As an example, Martínez-Bretón mentions that of the 840 films exhibited in Madrid during the 1931-1932 season, only *six* had been produced in Spain. See Juan Antonio Martínez-Bretón, *Libertad de expresión cinematográfica durante la II República española, 1931-1936* (Madrid: Fragua, 2000), 27. Emphasis added. The situation began to change in the following season, when the Spanish film industry rekindled itself through initiatives like the Orphea and Filmófono studios in Barcelona or the C.E.A (Cinematografía Española Americana), E.C.E.S.A (Estudios Cinema Español in Madrid and CIFESA. In 1935 Spain counted with 3450 theaters, only behind USA, USSR, England, Germany, Italy, and France. See Martínez-Bretón, 31. This situation created an excellent opportunity for companies like Paramount, Metro Goldwyn Mayer, and Fox, who had the financial muscle to invest in the technological infrastructure in exchange for taking over a quite profitable market (In exchange for paying for the conversion to sound, exhibitors had to blind book films from the major Hollywood studios).

<sup>114</sup> See for example how Fernando Méndez-Leite speaks of how in the 1930s “almost everyone [in the industry] gave up,” Manuel Rotellar comments on the “distressing impotence of these pygmies without sling [Spanish film directors] against the celluloid Goliath [Hollywood] to which they dare confront,” or how even Roman Gubern dismisses the activities of the Catalan Cinema Committee that I discuss in chapter four as “almost inexistent.” Fernando Méndez-Leite, *Historia del cine español* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1965), 320–21; Manuel Rotellar, *Cine español de la República* (Festival Internacional Del Cine San Sebastián, 1977), 11; Gubern, *Historia del cine español*, 130. Exceptions include Román Gubern, *El cine sonoro en la II República (1929-1936)* (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 1977); José María Caparrós Lera, *Arte y política en el cine de la República (1931-1939)* (Barcelona: Edit. 7 1/2: Edic. Universidad, 1981). Although even in these works noncommercial film initiatives are dismissed as failed attempts that didn’t “bear fruits,” Gubern, *El cine sonoro en la II República (1929-1936)*, 230. The best analysis of film culture of the interwar period can be found in the only history of Spanish cinema that incorporates cultural studies into its methodology: Benet, *El cine español*, 55–151.

captured the convulsive social dynamics of the time. My dissertation retraces many of these initiatives, contributing to the recent reorientation of Spanish film historiography along the lines of an expanded understanding of cinema as an eminently social and political actor.<sup>115</sup> In this, I follow Emeterio Diez Puertas's call to leave aside mythomaniacal approaches to Spanish film history, which is overwhelmingly focused on commercial cinema, great directors, good (or bad) films, canons, aesthetics, etc. and focus instead on a history of the medium that "deals with the material, lived, and symbolic activity observable in the relation between people and cinema in a particular social formation."<sup>116</sup>

To illustrate the limitations of Spanish film history that this expanded approach makes evident, let's go back to Rebollo and Deogracias's key article on nonfiction films during the Second Republic. After pointing out the overwhelming focus of Spanish film historiography on fiction films, they mention that their study of non-fiction films during the Second Republic is based on "screened cinema" (meaning films with theatrical exhibition) since films that were screened are the only ones that have an "influence" in society.<sup>117</sup> This, I argue, is only true if you follow the classic paradigm of what is cinema and, consequently, its dependence on a theatrical

---

<sup>115</sup> See for example Benet, *El cine español*; Sonia García López, *Spain is us: la Guerra Civil española en el cine del Popular Front, 1936-1939* (València: Universitat de València, 2013); García Carrión, *Por un cine patrio*; Jo Labanyi and Tatjana Pavlovic, eds., *A Companion to Spanish Cinema*, Wiley-Blackwell Companions to National Cinemas (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Joan M. Minguet Batllori, *Cinema, modernitat i avantguarda (1920-1936)* (Valencia: E. Climent, 2000); Fernando Ramos Arenas, "Un cine leído. Cultura cinematográfica, censura y especulaciones en la España de la década de los sesenta," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 18, no. 3 (July 3, 2017): 239–53; Alfonso Puyal, *Cinema y arte nuevo: la recepción filmica en la vanguardia española (1917-1937)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2003).

<sup>116</sup> Emeterio Diez Puertas, *Historia social del cine en España* (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 2003), 9–21. Diez Puertas distinguishes three periods in Spanish film history (Francoist period, first years of democracy, and the wave of historians that began working in the 90s with the expansion of universities throughout Spain). The latter group (in which we can include Jostxo Cerdán, Vicente Benet, Miguel Fernández Labayen, Marta García Carrión, María Antonia Paz Rebollo, Sonia García López, or José Cabeza San Deogracias among others) has certainly broken with this fetishist approach to film history in their individual works, but at the same time hasn't managed to publish a collective and systematic new history of Spanish cinema from a cultural studies perspective. Vicente Benet's cultural history of Spanish cinema remains to this date the only exception.

<sup>117</sup> Paz Rebollo and Cabeza San Deogracias, "La realidad que vieron los españoles. El cine de no-ficción durante la II República española (1931-36)," 742.

screen-paying spectator apparatus. But what happens with everything related to film beyond a movie theater for a paying audience? Doesn't this have an effect in society as Diez Puertas argues? What about journals, film clubs, associations, public and private institutions, state policy and initiatives, informal projections, political propaganda, militant cinema, educational and scientific films, the use of film by different professional collectives such as doctors, scientists, researchers, architects, explorers, or simply wealthy film enthusiasts and their small gauge cameras?

Take for instance, Fernando Ramos Arenas's recent essay "Un cine leído" (A read cinema), where the author makes an important argument regarding the role of film journals during the Franco dictatorship (focusing on the 1950s and 60s), when certain films could not be seen but were amply discussed and "read."<sup>118</sup> This created a paradoxical situation where a "particularly active film culture" was at the same time affected by "strong limitations" (in terms of censorship and actual circulation of films).<sup>119</sup> This was also the case in the 1930s, in which material and political limitations were no obstacle for the development of multiple film culture initiatives that greatly informed the everyday life of Spanish society during the Second Republic. The four chapters that comprise this thesis are devoted to different aspects of this *particularly active film culture* and, to paraphrase the opening quote from John Dos Passos, to the separate (and sometimes converging) roads through which intellectuals, institutions, and politicians worked out *new ways of life* and social organization in 1930s Spain through moving images.

## 5. Chapter breakdown

The first chapter, "From Bullfighters to Red Sailors: The Influence of Soviet Film

---

<sup>118</sup> Ramos Arenas, "Un cine leído. Cultura cinematográfica, censura y especulaciones en la España de la década de los sesenta."

<sup>119</sup> Ramos Arenas, 239.

Culture in pre-Civil War Spain (1931-1936),” explores how a remarkable radical film culture was created in Spain despite the lack of a strong film industry and a ban on Soviet cinema that was not lifted until 1936. It focuses on a circle of Marxist intellectuals who called for a transformation of Spain's film culture from an anemic version of Hollywood to a new cinema devoted to social change. In the absence of relevant political filmmakers at the time, figures like Juan Piqueras, Antonio del Amo, Mateo Santos or Cesar M. Arconada became the center of an alternative film culture project radiated from the pages of journals such as *Nuestro Cinema*, *Pueblo*, *Mundo Obrero*, *Popular Film*, or *Octubre*. They successfully introduced Soviet cinema, Agitprop, and social documentary into Spanish cultural circles, paving the way for the proliferation of proletarian film clubs and revolutionary film screenings during the Civil War and significantly influencing the propaganda efforts of the Republican government.

The second chapter, “Film Called into Action: Juan Piqueras, Léon Moussinac, Harry Alan Potamkin and the *Internationale* of Film Pedagogy,” follows this project of creating a Spanish proletarian cinema into the international networks of radical film culture circulation that Spain was part of well before the outbreak of the Civil War. Establishing Piqueras as a nodal point in these networks, the chapter explores how the avant-garde’s transformative energies were *translated* across the Atlantic into local pedagogical initiatives based on critical spectatorship, smallgauge filmmaking and worker organization. Translation (understood both literally as the translation of foreign texts into native languages and metaphorically as the adaptation of international film initiatives into local contexts) emerges throughout the chapter, and the dissertation in general, as a key component of 1930s moving image culture.

Contrasting the openly politicized film culture discussed in the first two chapters, I will continue my assessment of noncommercial film culture in Spain with the overlooked, but highly



relevant, bourgeois amateur film movements that developed in Catalonia around cinema associations and excursionist centers. In the third chapter, “A Vernacular National Cinema: Amateur Filmmaking in Catalonia (1932–1936),” I focus on the little-known history of the Centre Excursionista de Catalunya (Catalan Excursionist Centre, herein CEC) and its fundamental role in the organization of international amateur film contests and congresses. Beyond the institutional role of the CEC, the chapter explores the film production of Catalan bourgeois amateur filmmakers, and how their defense of amateur cinema as guarantor of the artistic essence of cinema was aligned with a class-conscious anxiety about the prominence of the so called mass in Spanish society. The chapter also explores how the inclusion of these materials in film history allows us to rethink accepted narratives on the emergence of moving image culture. In this sense, it also revises the negative categories (nonprofessional, noncommercial, nontheatrical, etc.) used by scholars to describe these materials, offering instead a definition of amateur cinema based on its distinct modes of production, exhibition, and distribution.

In the final chapter, “‘A Formidable and Decisive Medium’: Institutionalizing Cinema in Interwar Spain (1929-1936),” I analyze how the importance of film as a pedagogical tool (in all its different forms explored until now) coalesced in a series of official institutional policies on cinema, education and governance in Spain. The politics of this relationship and their relationship with international developments will be fleshed out through two different case studies; the 1931 CHC (Hispanic American Film Congress) and the CCGC, created in 1933. Both initiatives reflect the interest of state institutions in using film as a political and cultural instrument at the service of nationalistic narratives, either through film policy and cultural diplomacy or by setting up government-sponsored educational film initiatives and mobile

screenings.

The assassination of Piqueras and Salvans with which I opened in the prologue epitomizes the tragic end met by the transformative forces that swept Spain after the proclamation of the Second Republic on April 1931. Franco's failed coup against the democratic government in July 18, 1936, the ensuing Civil War, and the thirty-six-year dictatorship that followed the defeat of the Republic not only destroyed the pedagogical impulses that had attempted to dissolve Spain's traditional centers of power (the church, the aristocracy, powerful landowners, local oligarchs, reactionary elements of the military, banks, etc.), but also erased the memory of these same transformative projects. My dissertation recovers many of these initiatives devoted to modernizing Spain through noncommercial moving image culture from 1931 to 1936. With this, I seek to counter the widespread notion that Spain was a "terra incognita" (as described in Piers Brandon's opening quote) yet to be discovered by the world with the eruption of the Civil War, and I argue instead that the country was well inserted into the international circuits of noncommercial film culture circulation that disseminated avant-garde, educational, amateur, and militant film initiatives throughout the world. The aim of the dissertation is, then, to include the Spanish context into 1930s film scholarship, from which it has been largely excluded, showing how it can illuminate new perspectives on the emergence of film culture, the avant-garde, film education, institutionalization and cinema beyond the commercial screen.

**Chapter 1. From Bullfighters to Red Sailors: Alternative Film Culture and Socialist Modernity in Spain (1931-1936)**

I was born—respect me! —with cinema.  
 Under a network of cables and airplanes.  
 When the carriages of royalty were abolished  
 and the Pope got into a car.  
 [...]
   
 Who are you, of steal, ray, and lead?  
 -Another lightning, the new life.

Rafael Alberti, 1929.<sup>120</sup>

Oh, prodigious cinema! Oh, rebel spirit of tsarist Russia! You have come to teach [love] lessons to the weak, waking us from our apathy. When your lessons were denied to us, we longed to learn them more. We want Soviet films! We want the truth!

Francisco-Mario Bistagne, 1930<sup>121</sup>

Nuestro Cinema can't but accept, on good terms, a cinema capable of freeing us from today's ideological poverty. That is, a cinema with depth, with an open mind, with social content [...] A cinema that was born with Eisenstein, with Pudovkin [...]

Juan Piqueras, 1932<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>120</sup> Rafael Alberti, *Cal y canto, 1926-1927*, El Libro de Bolsillo; Sección Literatura 842 (Madrid: Alianza, 1981), 93–95.

<sup>121</sup> Francisco-Mario Bistagne, “Aguila caudal,” *Arte y Cinematografía* 22, no. 360 (April 1931): 5–6.

<sup>122</sup> Juan Piqueras, “Itinerario de Nuestro Cinema,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 1 (1932): 1.

In her foundational study of Chinese cinema in the 1920s and 30s, Zhang Zhen puts forward an approach that differs from a common scholarly default—namely, a fixation with Western film history temporalities. Instead, Zhen considers the “competing versions of modernity, on the ‘non-synchronous synchronous’ global horizon of film culture” that developed in most parts of the world beyond the industrial centers of production of the medium.<sup>123</sup> In line with Stuart Hall’s previously quoted challenge to the “one track view” of history and the notion I have posed of a *disorganized modernity* in Spain, Zhen suggests we stop imposing a framework of analysis deeply attached to industrialized Western countries to describe the *rest* of the world’s engagement with moving images in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To overcome the temporalities and periodizations this framework imposes (for instance, when certain film histories began, or even the brackets around the existence of particular histories) she poses a scholarly shift from “early cinema” to “early *film culture*” to fully account for the “more productive interdisciplinary approach to the study of early film history in specific cultural locations” beyond the creation of a commercial film industry *per se*.<sup>124</sup> Zhen is, of course, not alone in asserting the importance of such a shift; a similar argument is made by, among others, Ravi Vasudevan, when he suggests conceptualizing cinema as “a form and institutional matrix” (in line with the ideas on film culture mentioned in the introduction) dispersed in space and developed in heterogenous timescales “such that the mainstream public format appears as only one element in a menu of historical possibilities.”<sup>125</sup> Citing the work of Sudhir Mahadevan on itinerant cinemas and informal moving image practices and technologies in India,<sup>126</sup> Vasudevan

---

<sup>123</sup> Zhen Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xviii.

<sup>124</sup> Zhang, xviii.

<sup>125</sup> Ravi Vasudevan, “In the Centrifuge of History,” *Cinema Journal* 50, no. 1 (2010): 136, 137.

<sup>126</sup> Sudhir Mahadevan, “Traveling Showmen, Makeshift Cinemas: The Bioscopewallah and Early Cinema History in India,” *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 2010): 27–47, <https://doi.org/10.1177/097492760900100106>.

calls for a film history that accounts for how “cinema inflects the conditions of historical being, seeping through the very textures of everyday practice.”<sup>127</sup>

It may look rather strange to begin a chapter on Spanish radical film culture of the 1930s with references to such apparently unrelated geographical contexts, like China and India, but the fact is that Zhen and Vasudevan’s insights are of great importance when addressing the specificities of the medium’s development beyond the dominant nations of modernity: France and the United States. Their arguments are not only applicable to non-Western contexts, but also to the uneven development of cinema in Europe beyond industrially advanced countries. Southern and Eastern Europe’s remarkable film cultures were developed, for instance, in quite different forms and at distinct paces than in these scholarly centers of attention. In the case of Spain, although the country was just a few hundred miles south of the place where cinema was allegedly invented in the Grand Café of Paris in 1895, it remained an exoticized former empire considered at once *European* and *un-European*.<sup>128</sup> Eric Hobsbawm describes the country as *out of sync* with what he considers modernized Europe; “Spain was a peripheral part of Europe, and its history had been persistently out of phase with the rest of the continent from which it was divided by the wall of the Pyrenees.”<sup>129</sup> But in 1935, one could attend a screening of the latest avant-garde or Soviet film sensation in a film club, watch a Hollywood smash hit in one of the

---

<sup>127</sup> Vasudevan, “In the Centrifuge of History,” 140. Both scholars surpass the limiting reach of Miriam Hansen’s vernacular modernism theory which, despite its utmost importance and validity, has confined discussions of film culture beyond the West to precisely the adoption and re appropriation of Hollywood as the necessary model of modernity. See Hansen, “The Mass Production of the Senses.”

<sup>128</sup> See for example how Malcolm Deas, in a book that pays homage to Raymond Carr, describes the famous historian’s first encounter with Spain: “Of his first impressions he remembers the seasonal workers in the railway station at Leon ‘with their sickles and sacks’. The problems of this *European/un-European* country dimly began to interest him.” Lannon, Preston, and Carr, *Elites and Power in Twentieth-Century Spain*, 5. Emphasis added. For scholar Mónica Bolufer Spain was seen by travelers and foreign intellectuals since the 18th and 19th century as the “negative model of Western civilization and progress.” Mónica Bolufer, “Orientalizing Southern Europe?: Spain Through the Eyes of Foreign Travelers,” *The Eighteenth Century* 57, no. 4 (2016): 454, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ecy.2016.0031>.

<sup>129</sup> Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, 156.

2,700 theaters in the country (seventh overall in the world),<sup>130</sup> attend an amateur film screening with films from all over the world, buy 16 and 9.5mm cameras in a dedicated store in Barcelona, read about the innovations in film pedagogy in the *International Review of Educational Cinematography*'s version in Spanish, or enjoy an educational screening with portable 16mm projectors in schools, civic centers, worker clubs and village squares in remote areas of the country.

In terms of film culture, Spain was very much *in sync* with similar developments in film beyond the “wall of the Pyrenees.” How to approach, then, the countless film initiatives that exploded in Spain’s disorganized modernity in the early 1930s, especially when they were only partially related to film production per se? How and where did they interrelate with the efforts to construct a new national narrative in line with the pedagogical impulses aimed at transforming Spanish society through cultural and social emancipation and mass participation in the public sphere?

This chapter expands the established coordinates of Spanish film history (based overwhelmingly on commercial fiction cinema) by focusing on how a network of critics and intellectuals adapted international models of radical film culture to the country’s social, cultural, and political developments. By importing and translating books, journals, news, films, and modes of alternative spectatorship and filmmaking to Spain, these figures disseminated a new social and political role of cinema beyond the commercial screen, greatly informing the “historical beings” that emerged in Spain with the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931. I look beyond the influence of French and North American film culture in Spain and focus in

---

<sup>130</sup> Marta García Carrión, *Cine, modernidad y cultura popular en los años treinta: ciclo de cine* (València: Museu Valencià de la Il·lustració i de la Modernitat, 2017), 5. See also Emilio C García Fernández, *El cine español entre 1896 y 1939: historia, industria, filmografía y documentos* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2002), 247. García Fernández raises this number of theaters to 3450.

particular on Soviet film culture and other revolutionary aesthetic and political models that were equally instrumental in shaping the country's vibrant cinematic culture of the 1930s. Critic Juan Piqueras and Comintern propagandist Willy Münzenberg emerge throughout the chapter as such key figures in these circuits of cultural collaboration aimed at transforming Spanish film culture and society at large.<sup>131</sup>

While it is indisputable that the Spanish Civil War was a key moment for internationalist communists of the period,<sup>132</sup> an importance amplified by several foreign film productions that focused on Spain during that time (most notably, perhaps, Joris Ivens's, André Malraux's and Romen Karmen's famous films),<sup>133</sup> surprisingly little scholarly attention has been paid to the Spanish context preceding these developments—often making an assumption about and focusing solely on Spain's perceived intrinsic cultural poverty and political isolation.<sup>134</sup> For instance, the generally accepted narrative is that Spain was a country of little interest to the USSR until the Asturian miners' strike of 1934, the subsequent adoption of the Popular Front against fascism strategy in 1935, and the eruption of the Civil War in 1936.<sup>135</sup> However, in this chapter I argue

---

<sup>131</sup> The Comintern was the institution founded in 1919 by Lenin to coordinate the different international Communist parties from Moscow. In chapter two I analyze how these nodes and networks intersected with their counterparts throughout the world, using Piqueras's own personal trajectory (living in three contexts—Spain, France, and the USSR—at the same time) as an example of what I call the *international* of film pedagogy.

<sup>132</sup> Epitomized in Peter Weiss, *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, ed. Joachim Neugroschel (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

<sup>133</sup> For example, *L'Espoir* (André Malraux, made in 1938 but not released until 1945), *Ispaniya* (Esfir Schub, 1939), where Karmen is listed as camera operator, or the famous *The Spanish Earth* (Joris Ivens, 1937), in which Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos collaborated. For an excellent analysis of these films and the international bifurcations of Spanish propaganda during the war see García López, *Spain is us*.

<sup>134</sup> We can cite as exceptions the work of Daniel Kowalsky on the presence of Soviet culture in pre Civil War Spain, Marta García Carrión's work on Juan Piqueras and Mateo Santos and Vicente Sánchez Biosca's work on the relationship between Soviet cinema and Fascist aesthetics in Spain: Daniel Kowalsky, *Stalin and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); García Carrión, *Por un cine patrio*, 306–21; V. Sanchez-Biosca, "The Cinematic Image of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera: Somewhere between a Leader and a Saint," *Screen* 50, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 318–33, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjp014>.

<sup>135</sup> This perception has been certainly aided by the complex nature of the diplomatic relations between the USSR and the different Republican governments. Spain officially recognized the Bolshevik government only in 1933 after an agreement reached by Fernando de los Ríos and Nikolai Ostrovskii. Shortly after, Anatolii Lunacharskii was appointed USSR ambassador in Madrid, and Julio Álvarez Del Vayo as his counterpart in Moscow. But in September 1933 Azaña's government was replaced by populist (so-called centrist) Alejandro Lerroux, and new

that a very different history emerges if we look beyond the political presence of the USSR in Spain and focus on the influence of Soviet film culture in noncommercial film circuits since the end of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Instead of reducing these developments to a mere reflection of Soviet cinema, I take seriously and explore the ideologically and artistically complex negotiations between the local and the transnational motivations and effects of this dynamic—including the specific shape that radical film culture took in Spain from 1931 to 1936.

Taking this insight as a starting point, the following pages offer a different perspective on Spanish pre-Civil War modernity through the multiple initiatives that appropriated, and sometimes mistranslated, the aesthetics, methods, initiatives, and politics of avant-garde and leftist visual culture at that time.<sup>136</sup> For many critics and intellectuals the best model to follow for developing an alternative film culture could be found in the Soviet Union's successful film policy of promoting didactic, avant-garde and political works. It provided a new generation of Spanish film critics with a language of revolutionary aesthetics in its capacity to dissolve the old conservative order. While early Soviet cinema as a historical point of reference for building a national film industry and a culture of film education has been generally acknowledged, the

---

elections called for December of that year. Del Vayo's nomination was cancelled, and the sudden death of Lunacharskii that same December left the situation as before. In 1934, similar negotiations took place between the catholic right wing CEDA government and USSR League of Nations delegate Maskim Litvinov, but the October revolution in Asturias disrupted the process once more. It would not be until the Popular Front victory in the February 1936 elections that diplomatic relationships were really actualized with the official exchange of ambassadors taking place in August 1936, a month into the civil war. This contrasts with the uninterrupted diplomatic relations between Spain and Nazi Germany during the 1930s. As Julio Montero analyzes in an excellent article, this relationship was used by Germany to disseminate Nazi propaganda throughout Spain (especially amongst the German community and using 16mm projectors and informal screening venues such as German schools). See Julio Montero, "Para captar alemanes. La propaganda nazi en la España de la Segunda República mediante películas (1933-1936)," *Comunicación y Sociedad XX*, no. 2 (2007): 111–31.

<sup>136</sup> As mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, much work has been done on the use of visual culture during the Civil War period, but not that much on how propaganda efforts developed organically from previous initiatives implemented during the first years of the Republic (1931-1936), save for the already mentioned cases of Jordana Mendelson, Sandie Holguin, Marta García Carrión, and Eduardo López Cano. The film histories analyzed in this chapter are, in this sense, a prologue to the foundational work of scholars like Sonia García López, Miriam M. Basilio, Román Gubern, Vicente Sánchez Biosca, Magí Crusells, José Caparrós Lera or José San Deogracias.



appeal of the Soviet model to peripheral countries in Europe, like Spain and Italy, is only beginning to be explored.<sup>137</sup> The Soviet approach to modernity, with equality, social justice and inclusion of the masses in every realm of public life (especially politics and media) as nonnegotiable elements of progress, fitted perfectly with the “participatory form of life” ethos that came to define society in interwar Spain;<sup>138</sup> it also provided a desirable alternative to the conservative or capitalist forms of modernity promoted by the traditional elites. The multiple initiatives (across the ideological spectrum) that emerged out of this encounter, and their influence in the propaganda efforts of the Republican government during the war, are the main focus of the chapter.

Before analyzing these explicitly politicized networks and initiatives, though, it is important to explain how they were deeply indebted to the surprisingly rich film culture that developed in Spain during the interwar period in the absence of a strong film industry. Even though this film culture was largely shaped through liberal bourgeois notions of culture as well as intellectual elites, and was particularly attuned to Hollywood, it created the infrastructure

---

<sup>137</sup> See Masha Salazkina, *In Excess Sergei Eisenstein's Mexico* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Masha Salazkina, “Moscow-Rome-Havana: A Film-Theory Road Map,” *October* (January 1, 2012): 97–116, [https://doi.org/10.1162/OCTO\\_a\\_00082](https://doi.org/10.1162/OCTO_a_00082); Salazkina, “Soviet–Italian Cinematic Exchanges: Transnational Film Education in the 1930s”; Enrique Fibla Gutierrez, “Revolutionizing the ‘National Means of Expression’: The Influence of Soviet Film Culture in Pre-Civil War Spain,” *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies* 8, no. 1 (April 1, 2016): 95–111, [https://doi.org/10.1386/cjcs.8.1.95\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/cjcs.8.1.95_1). Not to mention its influence in more distant contexts such as Latin America, which has been recently articulated by Sarah Ann Wells, establishing suggestive parallels with the Spanish context: Sarah Ann Wells, “Parallel Modernities? The First Reception of Soviet Cinema in Latin America,” in *Cosmopolitan Film Culture in Latin America*, ed. Rielle Edmonds Navitski and Nicolas Poppe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 151–75. Salazkina provides a comprehensive analysis of the Italian case, but the Spanish context has not yet been addressed to the same extent. Recent exceptions include Fernando Ramos Arenas, “Film Criticism as a Political Weapon: Theory, Ideology and Film Activism in *Nuestro Cinema* (1932–1935),” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 36, no. 2 (April 2, 2016): 214–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2016.1167466>; Eva Touboul, “Entre divertissement et arme: le cinéma selon *Nuestro Cinema* (1932–1935),” ed. F. Etienvre et S. Salaün, *Les travaux du Crec en ligne*, 2004, 184–208.

<sup>138</sup> José María Báez y Pérez de Tudela, *Fútbol, cine y democracia: ocio de masas en Madrid, 1923-1936* (Madrid: Alianza, 2012), 30. See also Ricard Vinyes’s description, in his book on the Catalan revolutionary Sebastià Piera Llobera, of the importance of “public activities” during the Second Republic for those who wanted to “change their lives and, by extension, their country, the world”, and who eagerly followed the “great hopes” that came from the USSR. Ricard Vinyes, *El soldat de pandora: una biografia del segle XX* (Barcelona: Proa, 1998), 10, 42.

which enabled the development of leftist film initiatives in subsequent years as the political context radicalized in Spain. The proliferation of film clubs and journals, the translation of books and articles from foreign authors, the consolidation of non-fiction cinema in commercial screens, and the popularization of smallgauge film technologies among intellectuals and governmental initiatives, are essential parts of this alternative history of Spanish cinema—one that developed besides, and ultimately surpassed, the commercial industry.

### **Dissipating the “white fog”: noncommercial film culture in Spain**

In his study of film journals from 1930 to 1939 in Spain, scholar Aitor Hernández Eguíluz identifies at least forty-two film-specific journals published throughout those vibrant years.<sup>139</sup> José María Caparrós Lera also mentions the existence of at least twenty nine film clubs (I will detail their importance to this history later).<sup>140</sup> To these numbers we have to add the numerous film-related sections and initiatives in education, literature, theatre, and architecture journals as well as worker and public service associations.<sup>141</sup> Likewise, numerous books on cinema were published in Spain. Some were translations of works from French or English (such as those published on Soviet cinema as we will see later), others were publications from film critics and intellectuals on the status of the seventh art, stars, genres, or the social, educational, and political dimension of the medium.<sup>142</sup> Most of them reflected, in their references and

---

<sup>139</sup> Aitor Hernández Eguíluz, *Testimonios en huecograbado: el cine en la 2ª República y su prensa especializada 1930-1939* (Valencia: Instituto Valenciano del Audiovisual y Cinematografía, 2010), 28. A search in the Filmoteca de Catalunya (from 1929 to 1939) raises this number to 49 in Spanish and four in Catalan.

<sup>140</sup> José María Caparrós Lera, *Arte y política en el cine de la República (1931-1939)*, 1a ed (Barcelona: Edit. 7 1/2: Edic. Universidad, 1981), 29; Román Gubern, *El Cine Sonoro En La II República (1929-1936)* (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 1977), 211–15.

<sup>141</sup> To name just a few; *AC Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea*, *Acción Cinegráfica*, *Butlletí dels Mestres*, *Revista de l'Institut Escola*, *Revista Internacional del Cinema Educativo* (IECI), *Mundo Obrero*, *Orto*, *Nueva Cultura*, *Octubre*, *Radio-Barcelona*, *Mirador*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Sol*, *El Diluvio*, or *ABC* among many others.

<sup>142</sup> We can mention, among others, Manuel Villegas López, *Arte de Masas: Ruta de Los Temas Filmicos* (Madrid: GEI, 1936); Manuel Villegas López, *Espectador de sombras* (Madrid, 1935); Francisco Ayala, *Indagación del cinema* (Madrid: Mundo Latino, 1929); Luis Gómez Mesa, *Variiedad de la pantalla cómica: una gran clase de*

bibliographies, a comprehensive knowledge of what was being published around the world on the medium.<sup>143</sup> Manuals on filmmaking technique and how the industry worked also proliferated.<sup>144</sup> Writers and poets paid homage and took inspiration from the medium, sometimes even emulating a cinematographic style in their creations. Take for instance the poem from Alberti that opens the chapter (and his book devoted to film comics *Yo era un tonto y lo que he visto me ha hecho dos tontos*),<sup>145</sup> Federico García Lorca and his script titled *Viaje a la luna*), Francisco Ayala and his collection of short stories *Cazador al alba*, Ramón Gómez de la Serna's novel *Cinelandia* (where the protagonist travels to a glittering Hollywood) and Carranque de Ríos's book *Cinematógrafo*, a very interesting account of the deceits and miseries of the film industry in Spain (which ends with the suicide of its protagonist, a failed writer and silent cinema actor).<sup>146</sup> Against the romanticized vision of Hollywood from De La Serna, de Ríos describes the dazzling effects of the cinematographic dream: "They were the dreamers of a new art [...] they

---

*cinema* (Madrid: Biblioteca Altantico, 1932); Luis Gómez Mesa, *Los films de dibujos animados* (Barcelona: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930); Luis Gómez Mesa, *España en el mundo sin fronteras del cinema educativo* (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Revista de las Españas, 1935); M.F. Alvar, *Cinematografía pedagógica y educativa* (Madrid: J. M. Yagües, 1936); Luis Gómez Mesa, *Cinema educativo y cultural: aportaciones informativas* (Madrid: Instituto Cinematográfico Ibero Americano, 1931); A Llorca, *Cinematógrafo educativo* (Madrid: Librería y Casa Editorial Hernando S.A., 1933); Pedro Sangro Ros y de Olano, *El cinematógrafo: consideración académica de algunos de sus problemas* (Madrid, 1936); Castilla F. Blanco, *El cinema educativo y gracián, pedagogo* (Madrid: Imprenta Beltrán, 1933); Jose Peirats, *Lo que podría ser un cinema social* (Madrid: Ediciones de la Revista Blanca, 1934); Josep Palau, *El cinema soviètic* (Barcelona: Catalonia, 1932); Benjamín Jarnés, *Cita de ensueños* (Madrid: GECEI, 1936); Carlos Fernández Cuenca, *Panorama del cinema en Rusia* (Madrid: Compañía iberoamericana de publicaciones, 1930); Carlos Fernández Cuenca, *Historia anecdótica del cinema* (Madrid: CIAP, 1930).

<sup>143</sup> Marta García Carrión highlights for example the numerous works in English, German and French cited by Fernández Cuenca in his book *Historia anecdótica del cinema*. Marta García Carrión, "Historia(s) de nuestro cine. Nacionalisme en la primera historiografía cinematográfica," *Afers: fulls de recerca i pensament* 32, no. 86 (2017): 84.

<sup>144</sup> Josep Carner-Ribalta, *Com es fa un film* (Barcelona: Barcino, 1934); Charles Ottley, *The Cine-Amateur Workshop* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1935); James W. Moore, *Cine Travel Plans* (New York: Amateur Cinema League, 1935).

<sup>145</sup> Rafael Alberti, *Sobre los ángeles: yo era un tonto y lo que he visto me ha hecho dos tontos* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1981).

<sup>146</sup> Francisco Ayala, *Cazador en el alba* (Madrid: Ediciones Ulises, 1930); Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *Cinelandia* (Madrid: Nostromo, 1974); Andrés Carranque de Ríos, *Cinematógrafo: novela* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1936). For an extremely useful analysis of the fascination of cinema for writers and the complex relationship between popular art and bourgeois fascination it entailed, expressed in the literary construction of the cinematic city, see Labanyi, "Cinematic City."

ate very little but dreamt with the white fog that crushes against the screens of the world.”<sup>147</sup>

Such was the currency of the medium among the Spanish intellectual elite, which soon became dissatisfied with the “white fog” produced by commercial cinema. For all the golden promises of this industry, the reality was that the film business was much more interested in importing formulaic foreign productions and exporting exoticized and stereotypical versions of Spanish society than in developing a cinema that reflected the new life that emerged after the proclamation of the Second Republic.

The paradoxical absence of a strong Spanish film industry during the nationalistic Primo de Rivera dictatorship had paved the way for a French and American domination of the Spanish market,<sup>148</sup> except for some local films that mostly reproduced the stereotypes of the so-called *españolada*—cheap productions based on popular melodramatic romances and old values, one-act farces, and basic comic sketches. Spain exported—and imported—an image of a stratified and ignorant society that had very little to do with the everyday reality of the country, but that was nonetheless hugely popular (and which probably had a lot to do with the negative image of the country as out of sync with the rest of Europe).<sup>149</sup> To give an example of the lasting effects of this policy, the first Spanish sound film was titled *Futbol, amor y toros (Soccer, Love and Bullfighting)*, Florián Rey, 1931), a title that touched upon common stereotypes attributed to Spain. Most producers were quite unfamiliar with the medium and only saw cinema as a cheap investment, or in the words of historian Fernando Mendez-Leite, a “gamble” in which an insufficient amount of money would be invested with the hopes of obtaining a large return or

---

<sup>147</sup> Carranque de Ríos, *Cinematógrafo: novela*, 6. For an interesting reading of the book as a reflection of the difficulties of Spanish society to change see Antonio Candau, “El arte mudo de ‘Cinematógrafo’ de Carranque de Ríos,” *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 47, no. 1 (June 1994): 86–95.

<sup>148</sup> Especially given the excellent relations between the Spanish dictatorship and Mussolini’s regime in Italy, which had put special emphasis in the creation of an Italian Fascist cinema as the main pillar in its cultural policy.

<sup>149</sup> For an exhaustive (and much more complex and nuanced) analysis of the *españolada* genre see García Carrión, *Por un cine patrio*.

otherwise accept a small loss.<sup>150</sup>



Figure 9. Photograph from the shooting of *Cinco Minutos de Españolada* (Rafael Gil, 1935). Taken from Juan Ignacio Valenzuela Moreno's thesis on the filmmaker.<sup>151</sup>

The obsession of the commercial film industry with these topics was such that in 1935 filmmaker Rafael Gil would make a short parody amateur film titled *Cinco Minutos de Españolada* (*Five Minutes of Españolada*, which he sent to the 1936 Berlin International Amateur Film Festival). The film satirized this stereotypical image created by Spanish cinema through an exaggerated history of passion, bullfighting and a tragic car accident. The encounter between the bullfighter and the car that we can see in the surviving photographs of the film (Figure 9) is a perfect illustration of the clashes between old stereotypes and new cultural models that cinema allowed for during the 1930s. Gil's parody also exemplifies how the medium had become a sophisticated instrument of cultural critique. This new critical function of cinema,

<sup>150</sup> Méndez-Leite, *Historia del Cine español*, 310.

<sup>151</sup> Juan Ignacio Valenzuela Moreno, "Revisión de la obra de un cineasta olvidado Rafael Gil (1913-1986)" (Universidad de Córdoba, 2017), 517.

together with the consolidation of non-fiction films in Spanish screens that the next paragraphs analyze, showed critics and audiences how cinema could also become a window into the social, cultural, and political realities of the country.

As we saw in the introduction, the advent of the Second Republic had promised to drastically change the cultural landscape of the country. Education and the creation of a new national cultural policy became a priority for the liberal authorities, which attempted to unite Spaniards through their rich artistic heritage.<sup>152</sup> The thirst to learn about foreign and local realities, and the tiring formulaic nature of fiction films, also increased the presence of documentaries and newsreels in theaters, to the point of becoming as present as fiction films in screens throughout the country by 1936.<sup>153</sup> Rebollo and Deogracias also highlight the popularization of *Informaciones cinematográficas*, short reports on specific and varied themes (from sports to politics and society). In 1935, thirty eight of these newsreels were released, including thirteen on political events such as the repression of the Asturias revolution and the new right-wing politics of the CEDA.<sup>154</sup> These initiatives, together with government sponsored documentaries and screenings that we will discuss in chapter four, familiarized the public with

---

<sup>152</sup> This policy earned the opposition of most political factions. The Catholic conservatives criticized their lack of religious content, radical leftists saw it as bourgeois intellectualism and asked for an end of Soviet film censorship, and regional nationalisms in Catalonia and Basque Country were insulted by the absolute centrality of Spanish language and culture in these initiatives.

<sup>153</sup> Paz Rebollo and Cabeza San Deogracias, “La realidad que vieron los españoles. El cine de no-ficción durante la II República española (1931-36),” 743–48. As Rebollo and Deogracias detail in their excellent article, most newsreels were from foreign companies and very little content on events happening in Spain was included in them (or if so it was censored by the authorities). The most important newsreels were from North American companies; *Revista Paramount*, *Noticiero Fox*, *Noticiero RKO*, *The March of Time* (from Raymond Fielding but distributed by Radio films), *Radiofónicas* from Warner Brothers, *Instantáneas* (Columbia), and those products produced specifically for the Hispanic market such as *Sucesos sensacionales* (Hispano American Films), *Curiosidades* (Columbia), *Curiosidades Mundiales* (Hispano Fox Film). French newsreels also had an importance presence, including *Éclair Revue*, *Éclair Journal*, *France Actualité*, *Pathé Tone* and *Noticiero Gaumont*, as well as German (*UFA*), British (*Gaumont British*) or Italian (*Luce*). In terms of commercial documentaries, Rebollo and Deogracias have identified 736 screened from 1931 to 1936 (out of which only 47 are classified as specifically political or historical). Most of them were touristic films devoted to specific geographic locations (both Spanish and Foreign), as well as other ethnographic (from an exoticizing and colonialist perspective) and educational productions on sports, scientific discoveries, modern technologies, etc.

<sup>154</sup> Paz Rebollo and Cabeza San Deogracias, 749–53.

the use of moving images as a pedagogical instrument, although many of these films avoided touching sensitive political issues in depth and, according to Rebollo and Deogracias, their “analysis of reality was dependent on the curious, the instructional, and the sensational.”<sup>155</sup> In other words, most commercial non-fiction works corresponded to top-down productions designed to solidify established orders (be it liberal capitalism, governments, wealthy elites, large estate owners, monarchies, colonial powers, the military, the Church, etc.).



Figure 10. Vicente Escudero with a 16mm camera he bought in New York in 1932. Photo by Carmita García in *Nuestro Cinema* Issue 5 (October 1932).

Nonetheless these commercial non-fiction experiences influenced individuals from different professions and cultural realms, who were entranced by cinema’s ability to both express and capture immediate realities and convey them to any kind of audience (paying spectators,

---

<sup>155</sup> Paz Rebollo and Cabeza San Deogracias, 764.

friends, children, people who had never seen cinema, etc.). Take for instance the famous Flamenco dancer Vicente Escudero, who in 1932 bought a 16mm camera after a tour in the United States, with the idea of emulating some of the films he had seen in the Studio 28 and Les Ursulines theaters in Paris (Figure 10).<sup>156</sup> Instead of copying this avant-garde model tailored to intellectual elites, Escudero used the camera to film his fellow flamenco dancers in the Sacromonte gypsy neighborhood of Granada. After editing the material and receiving an enthusiastic response from friends, he decided to screen the film in a primary school in Andalucía. The experience was so fulfilling that he began a tour of schools throughout Castile, carrying his films and a portable 16mm projector.

This example is telling of how noncommercial film was increasingly adopted as the preferred instrument to incorporate traditionally excluded elements of society into the narrative and image of modernization encouraged by the pedagogical impulses that characterized the Second Republic. This, of course, was of great interest for the government, which understood very well the potential of cinema beyond the commercial screen. As the film program curated by Karen Fiss for the exhibit “Encounters with the 1930s” (Reina Sofia Museum, October 2012-January 2013) reminds us, screenings at the time included “documentaries, newsreels, advertisements, animation, industrial, commercial and experimental cinema,” reflecting the “diversity of the cinematographic experience” offered to spectators (to which I would add the growing variety of screening venues).<sup>157</sup> The session of this program devoted to Spanish films exemplified this diversity, and was focused on four documentaries that Luis Buñuel curated for the Spanish pavilion in the 1937 Paris International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern

---

<sup>156</sup> “Vicente Escudero amateur cinematográfico,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 5 (October 1932): 156–57.

<sup>157</sup> Karen Fiss, “El cine de 1930. Flores azules en un paisaje catastrófico” (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2012). For more information on this exhibit see Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, ed., *Encuentros con los años '30* (Barcelona ; La Fabrica: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2012).



Life. These were the ethnographic films *La Ruta de Don Quijote* (Ramón Biadiu, 1934) and *Almadrabas* (Carlos Velo and Fernando G. Mantilla, 1934), as well as two Civil War propaganda films: *Madrid* (Manuel Villegas López, 1937) and *Espagne 1936* (Jean-Paul Dreyfus, 1937).<sup>158</sup> According to Fiss, the different artistic expressions and works presented at the Pavilion were intended to showcase the country's "balance between modern progress and commitment with its cultural roots."<sup>159</sup>

Film allowed for such synthesis of old and new, as the educational and ethnographic documentaries curated by Buñuel (and the other artworks presented in the 1937 pavilion) reflected.<sup>160</sup> This connection of modern media (photography, print, theater, painting, radio, and especially cinema) with tradition and the non-modern (or non-synchronous, to cite Zhen) elements of modernity that still dominated daily life in Spain has been less explored than the usual pairing of cinema with urban life, speed, industrialization, leisure, etc. Different media were used to incorporate citizens into the new life of the country, regardless of the immense distances between urban centers and rural communities.

Jordana Mendelson has discussed this ambivalent dimension of visual culture during the 1930s by analyzing the reliance on traditionalist aesthetic movements (such as pictorialism) of ethnographic photography and the film initiatives of the Misiones Pedagógicas in remote rural

---

<sup>158</sup> Many more films were screened in the Pavilion, including other ethnographic and geographic documentaries, propaganda films, the newsreel *España al Día* and the fiction films *La hija de Juan Simón* (Nemesio Sobrevila and Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1935) and *La travesía molinera* (Harry D'Abbadie D'Arrast, 1934). For a complete account of the importance of film in the 1937 Pavilion see Alfonso Puyal, "Películas junto a pinturas: cine en el pabellón español de la Exposición Internacional de París 1937," *Hispanic Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (February 2015): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1179/1468273714Z.000000000108>; Román Gubern, "Exhibiciones cinematográficas en el Pabellón Español," in *Pabellón Español 1937: Exposición Internacional de París: Madrid, 25 junio-15 septiembre 1987*, Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura. Dirección General de Bellas Artes y Archivos, 1987), 173–80. And for the cultural politics exhibited by the Pavilion and its blend of tradition and modernity see Jordana Mendelson, *El Pabellón Español: París, 1937* (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central, 2009).

<sup>159</sup> Fiss, "El cine de 1930. Flores azules en un paisaje catastrófico," 4.

<sup>160</sup> This point has also been argued recently by Marta García Carrión. See García Carrión, *Cine, modernidad y cultura popular en los años treinta*, 9, 23–36.

villages throughout Spain.<sup>161</sup> For Mendelson, the mix of avantgarde aesthetics, artistic propaganda, and “rural archetypes” paradoxically united the imaginaries of leftist and Fascist cultural production in their defense of an eternal bastion of traditions, habits, and peasant values.”<sup>162</sup> Likewise, Jo Labanyi has discussed the 1920s Spanish avant-garde’s unique blend of “pre-modern popular and modern mass-cultural forms.”<sup>163</sup> Instead of looking at film as a medium eminently devoted to capturing and reflecting modern life and progress, I think it’s important to acknowledge how cinema also became a space where tradition and modernity could go hand in hand, reflecting the actual everyday social, political, and cultural life of the country (which had remained invisible in the commercial screen).

For this perspective to develop, new aesthetic models attuned with the pedagogical impulses of the time had to be found. As we have seen Spain’s film culture in the late 1920s was mostly devoted to promoting foreign and local commercial films that had very little to do with the reality of most Spanish citizens. This notion of the medium as a capitalist entertainment was promoted by most film critics (who were usually paid by film exhibitors), and only challenged (before the proclamation of the Second Republic on April 1931) by avant-garde screenings in the Residencia de Estudiantes organized by Luis Buñuel, the few film clubs such as Cineclub Español or Studio Cinaes that were able to show Soviet films,<sup>164</sup> modernist journals like *Mirador*

---

<sup>161</sup> Jordana Mendelson, *Documentar España: los artistas, la cultura expositiva y la nación moderna, 1929 - 1939* (Madrid: Ediciones de la Central, 2012), 167, 170. Likewise, Miriam Basilio has examined the “points of rupture” of non-modernist art exhibited in the 1937 Paris Pavilion as an example of the “contested terms used to define the role of art and the best way to mobilize the masses in Republican Spain.” Miriam Basilio, *Visual Propaganda, Exhibitions, and the Spanish Civil War* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 95.

<sup>162</sup> Mendelson, *El Pabellón Español*, 17. My translation from Spanish. As Mendelson concludes in her text (via a quote from a review of the Pavilion by Jean Selz); “Folklore is a formidable propaganda instrument.” Mendelson, 41. The appeal of Spain’s traditional values can also be traced in the work of John Dos Passos, who in the words of writer Ignacio Martínez de Pisón, ardently defended a romanticized idea of the country’s “old virtues” against the “materialist North American society” and the appeal of liberal capitalism for the progressive pedagogues of the ILE and the Residencia de Estudiantes. Martínez de Pisón, *Enterrar a los muertos*, 41.

<sup>163</sup> Labanyi, “Cinematic City,” 23.

<sup>164</sup> S.H., “Films russos als Studios Cinaes,” *L’Hora* 2, no. 8 (February 17, 1931): 19.

or *La Gaceta Literaria*, magazines like *Popular Film* (directed by the Anarchist intellectual Mateo Santos),<sup>165</sup> or openly politicized leftist publications like *L’Hora: Setmanari d’avançada* or *Solidaridad Obrera*.<sup>166</sup> Critics and intellectuals looked outside for referents that could be adapted into the local context and hopefully encourage an alternative film culture to emerge.



Figure 11. Covers for the books on Soviet cinema *Panorama del Cinema en Rusia* (Carlos Fernández Cuenca, 1930) and *El Cinema Soviètic* (Josep Palau, 1932), and advertisement for F. Slang’s book *Battleship Potemkin* in the newspaper *El Sol* (December 1930).

Among the models available, Soviet cinema and its narrative of historically oppressed populations leading the new society to come seemed to be the best suited. As we will see later in the chapter in detail, the Soviet conception of a new life (based on showing how the old gave

<sup>165</sup> Pau Martínez Muñoz, *Mateo Santos: cine y anarquismo: república, guerra y exilio mexicano* (Barcelona: P. Martínez, 2015); Gerard Pedret Otero, “La quimera de la gran pantalla: periodisme, grups llibertaris i cinema a Catalunya (1926-1937)” (Universitat de Barcelona, 2015), 92–108, <https://www.tesisenred.net/handle/10803/394087>.

<sup>166</sup> Ricard Vinyes, “El diletantisme intel·lectual dels comunistes catalans. Àngel Estivill,” *L’Avenç* 2, no. 29 (August 1980): 46–51; Gerard Pedret Otero, “El cine en la prensa libertaria en Catalunya durante la II República,” *FILMHISTORIA Online* 27, no. 1 (June 26, 2017): 21–38. *L’Hora* explicitly called cinema a “Capitalist and bourgeois affair”, callin in its pages for more Soviet films to arrive to Spain beyond the few that were screened in bourgeois film clubs. See “Art i Cinema,” *L’Hora* 2, no. 39 (October 2, 1931): 7.

way to the new), though, was often mistranslated and adapted to fit the aforementioned balance between modernity and tradition. News arrived via books on Soviet cinema published in other languages, such as Léon Moussinac's *Le Cinema Soviétique* (1928), which was translated into Spanish in 1931, or *L'Art dans la Russie Nouvelle; Le Cinema* (1927), by René Marchand and Pierre Weinstein, from which Díaz-Plaja copied the Tekhnikum class list for his 1930 book *Una Cultura de Cinema*.<sup>167</sup> In addition, updates about society and culture in the USSR were also received from first-person experiences of individuals such as Álvarez Del Vayo who published *La Nueva Rusia* in 1926,<sup>168</sup> and Rafael Alberti, who wrote a series of articles titled "Noticieros de un poeta en la URSS" (News from a poet in the USSR) for *Luz* newspaper between July and August 1933. There were also several books published on Soviet cinema (Fig. 11), like Josep Palau's *El cinema soviètic: cinema i revolució* or Carlos Fernández Cuenca's *Panorama del cinema en Rusia*,<sup>169</sup> not to mention the regular articles on Soviet culture and society published in journals and newspapers from all political stances, such as *Mirador*, *La Revista de Catalunya*, *D'ací i d' allà*, *Nuestro Cinema*, *Cinegramas*, *Cine Art*, and *Popular Film*.

Watching Soviet films, though, was an entirely different matter. As Mantilla remembered in the pages of *Nuestro Cinema*, Soviet cinema barely served as a model for a future Spanish cinema since there were very few "concrete references" available (that is, films that were actually screened in Spain). But its revolutionary fame was such that the filmmaker states the following a few sentences later: "The cinema to come should be the opposite to what we have: stimulating, energetic, as opposed the opium. It should be *something like Soviet cinema*... You see,

---

<sup>167</sup> Léon Moussinac, *Le cinéma soviétique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1928); René Marchand and Pierre Weinstein, *L'Art dans la Russie nouvelle* (Paris: Rieder, 1927).

<sup>168</sup> Julio Álvarez del Vayo, *La nueva Rusia* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1926).

<sup>169</sup> Fernández Cuenca, *Panorama del cinema en Rusia*; Palau, *El cinema soviètic*.

I haven't been able to contain myself!"<sup>170</sup> Discussing Soviet cinema was, therefore, quite common at the time, but watching films was an entirely different matter (as was the case in much of the world)<sup>171</sup> given that the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, Berenger regime, and even the Republican government banned their commercial exhibition.<sup>172</sup>

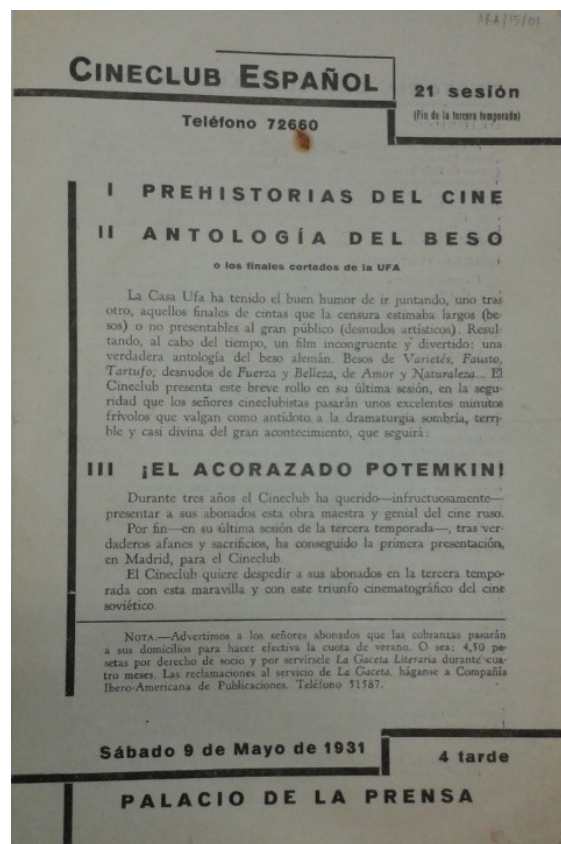


Figure 12. Handout for the 21st session of the Cineclub Español, in which *Battleship Potemkin* was screened after three years of unsuccessful attempts.

<sup>170</sup> “Primera encuesta de Nuestro Cinema,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 5 (October 1932): 130. Emphasis added.

<sup>171</sup> For Latin America see Welles, “Parallel Modernities? The First Reception of Soviet Cinema in Latin America.”

<sup>172</sup> Initially the government lifted the ban and allowed the screening of *Ivan the Terrible* only days after the proclamation of the Republic. An advertisement in the newspaper *Crisol* announced the release, of the “Soviet film banned by a Royal decree in the past dictatorship.” “Cine Madrid ¡Por fin! Ivan el Terrible,” *Crisol*, April 23, 1931. The great commotion that *Battleship Potemkin*’s screening at the Cineclub Español created, and the fact that it was screened in the popular Ateneo de Madrid (close to Anarchist positions) that same month made the government reconsider its position and reissue the ban. See “Prohibición de la película ‘El Crucero Potemkin,’” May 11, 1931, 6; “Ateneo de Madrid. Resumen del curso de conferencias 1830-1931,” *La Libertad*, August 1, 1931, 8. During the progressive biennium (1931-33) Republican authorities feared the revolutionary potential of Soviet cinema and didn’t remove the ban inherited from Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship. This angered leftist critics and gave cause to their accusations of the government as a bourgeois Republic. The Radical Republican Party and CEDA were certainly not interested in changing the situation when they came to power during the black biennium, so it would not be until the eruption of the Civil War in 1936 that the ban was effectively lifted.

Soviet film enthusiasts had to resign themselves to wait for exclusive film clubs like the Cineclub Español to bring these films (Figure 12), and in the meantime they read about them in the books and journals mentioned above. Bourgeois avant-garde film clubs were not considered a threat by the authorities and were allowed to screen the few Soviet films obtained thanks to the non-official contacts of certain personalities with the USSR. As is the case with similar film clubs across Europe (perhaps except for Léon Moussinac's experiences in France with *Les Amis de Spartacus* as analyzed in chapter two),<sup>173</sup> the context of this first Soviet film showcase was far removed from the original proletarian audiences intended for these films. The Cineclub Español membership was largely bourgeois, and the screening took place in the lavish Ritz hotel in Madrid and later in the distinguished Palacio de Prensa building (inaugurated by the King Alfonso XVIII in April 1930). The government naively assumed that film club audiences and organizers were unconnected to any leftist political movement. What the authorities didn't fully understand was the role of the Cineclub as a pedagogical institution. In its own programming notes, the film club mentioned that "the Cineclub Español has been the first Spanish film school," and goes on to enumerate the number of directors, producers, and distributors involved in the association.<sup>174</sup> It successfully created the first relevant network of alternative cinemas in Spain, and although it was bourgeois in nature, it provided a training ground for the upcoming generation of radical film critics.

In January 1930, Piqueras selected Soviet films to be screened at the Cineclub Español, and he later went on to co-direct the Cineclub Proa- Filmófono with Luis Bunuel after the former club ceased to exist in 1931. Cineclub Proa- Filmófono also catered to similar audiences in

---

<sup>173</sup> See chapter two and Hogenkamp, "Léon Moussinac and The Spectators' Criticism in France (1931-34)."

<sup>174</sup> *Cineclub Español*, May 1931, Program handout. This handout included a brief history of the organization, a summary of the films projected, and a reflection on the cultural and educational importance of the organization (it would be the last session of the Cineclub).

distinguished settings. Nonetheless, radical film culture gradually broke away from these selective contexts in which they had originated. By the mid-1930s, film clubs existed in many different contexts, including those organized by unions, student associations, and worker cooperatives, and even in the trenches of the Civil War, which is explored more fully at the end of this chapter.. The apparently marginal role of these film clubs made them seem historically insignificant at first glance. However, they circulated international films and ideas that influenced key figures in Spanish 1930s noncommercial film culture like Piqueras, Buñuel, Velo, Mantilla, Biadiu, Antonio del Amo, or Gil. As Piqueras himself acknowledged in his short “History of film” published in *Nuestro Cinema* in 1933, these experiences had put them in direct dialogue with similar initiatives throughout Europe:

in the same way as the first films of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Room [sic], reached the film clubs of France, we have been able to see in Spain *El pueblo del pecado*, *Ivan el terrible*, *Tempesatd sobre Asia*, *El Acorazado Potemkin*, and *La línea general* in the film club of *La Gaceta Literaria*. In the same way we have seen *Arsenal*, *October*, *The Road to Life*, *Turkhib*, in the Cineclub Proa Filmofono. Similar examples can be found in the Film Society in London, the Film Liga in Holland, the Federation of film clubs in Belgium, and similar organizations in Germany, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, and some Latin American countries.<sup>175</sup>

Beyond these rare screenings in bourgeois film clubs (in the early 1930s), Soviet film enthusiasts could glimpse a few images of mythical films like *Battleship Potemkin* in the intermedial, and very little known, loophole that editors found with the publication of a book in 1930 about Eisenstein’s film by F. Slang (originally published in German in 1926) that included seventeen

---

<sup>175</sup> Juan Piqueras, “Historiografía del cinema,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 8–9 (February 1933): 41.

stills from the film and three photographs of the 1905 uprising (Figure 11).<sup>176</sup> The book was published by the editorial house Cenit in a collection titled “Live Documents.”<sup>177</sup> It had a price of 6.5 pesetas and was reviewed by philosopher and politician José Fernández Díaz in the newspaper *El Sol* and described as being “devoted to freedom.”<sup>178</sup> Permissions to reproduce the film stills were given by several institutions associated with Willy Múnzenberg’s media conglomerate (Prometheus, Russ-Photo, and Das Neue Russland; I will discuss the role of this media conglomerate in Spain later in the chapter).

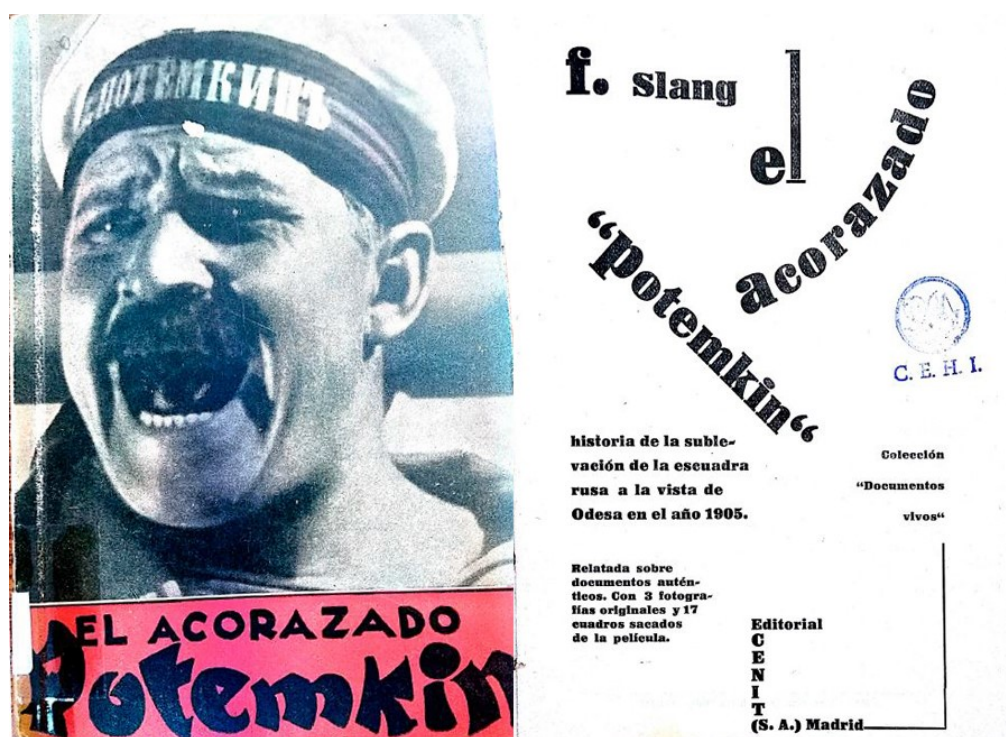


Figure 13. Cover and first page of the F.Lang's book *El Acorazado Potemkin* (1930). Courtesy of the Pavelló de la República library.

Ultimately, the appeal of the emancipatory aesthetics of Eisenstein, Pudovkin or

<sup>176</sup> F. Slang, *El Acorazado "Potemkin": historia de la sublevación de la escuadra rusa a la vista de Odesa en el año 1905: redactada sobre documentos auténticos* (Madrid: Cenit, 1930). The book can be consulted at the Pavelló de la República library in Barcelona.

<sup>177</sup> For a brief overview of this surprisingly under researched editing house see Gonzalo Santonja Gómez-Agero, “Breve perfil de la editorial Cenit (Madrid, 1928-1936),” *1616: Anuario de la Sociedad Española de Literatura General y Comparada*, no. 5 (1983): 129–39.

<sup>178</sup> José Díaz Fernández, “Los libros nuevos,” *El Sol*, December 7, 1930.



Dovzhenko was high across the ideological spectrum, becoming a transversal, intermedial, and multiuse aesthetic model for those looking to influence the shape of Spain's new society. To this note, it is worth reproducing the prologue of Lang's book, which insists on the appeal of Soviet culture and society as representing the birth of a new historical time: "We aim to reflect in these pages one of those moments when a *new era* is born. To account, with the most absolute force of the facts, for a fragment of universal history. Nothing more, that is, nothing less. If they are conscious of their responsibility, there is no better teacher than history for a people capable of thinking and their leaders."<sup>179</sup>

This idealized conception of Soviet film was opposed to the bourgeois culture that communist intellectuals like Jaume Miravittles (future head of the Catalan Propaganda Commissariat during the Civil War) associated with the elites that ruled the country in his 1931 book *Contra la Cultura Burguesa* (Figure 14).<sup>180</sup> In this pamphlet, published by the publishing house of *L'Hora* journal,<sup>181</sup> Miravittles fleshes out the importance of creating a new culture capable of demolishing the bourgeois building "based on appearances and forms" and propagated by the "tempting sirens" of cinema, theatre, and press in the hands of capitalist interests.<sup>182</sup> For him leftist political parties had certainly created a revolutionary atmosphere, but were lacking "a crystallizing element capable of unleashing the *storm*."<sup>183</sup> I now turn to how Spanish intellectuals from widely different ideologies and professions increasingly began to look East for this "crystallizing element," making use of the infrastructure and networks of noncommercial film culture to promote *something like Soviet Cinema* as an aesthetic and

---

<sup>179</sup> Slang, *El Acorazado "Potemkin": historia de la sublevación de la escuadra rusa a la vista de Odesa en el año 1905: redactada sobre documentos auténticos*, 11.

<sup>180</sup> Jaume Miravittles, *Contra la cultura burguesa* (Barcelona: L'Hora, 1931).

<sup>181</sup> Which was the expressive organ of the Bloc Obrer i Camperol.

<sup>182</sup> Miravittles, *Contra la cultura burguesa*, 8, 23.

<sup>183</sup> Miravittles, 12. Emphasis added.

political model inspired by socialist modernity but tailored to the specificities of the Spanish context and its own cultural traditions.



Figure 14. Cover from Jaume Miravittles book *Contra la Cultura Burguesa*. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya.

### **“Something like Soviet cinema”: intellectuals and the appeal of socialist modernity**

The last room of the National Art Museum of Catalonia (MNAC, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya) newly revamped modern art collection (by art historian Juan José Lahuerta) is devoted to propaganda efforts during the Spanish Civil War. The visitor encounters an impressive display of posters devoted to the fight against fascism, worker movements, brotherhood with the USSR, and promotion of Soviet films like *My iz Kronshtadta* (*We are from Kronstadt*, Efim Dzigan, 1936, also known as *Los Marineros de Kronstadt*) and *Chapaev* (Georgi Vasilyev and Sergey Vasilyev, 1934). The posters for these last two films were designed by artist

Josep Renau (Figure 15), who had brought Marxist thought into the analysis of Spanish culture via the journal *Orto* (1932-1934) and regularly contributed to Piqueras' *Nuestro Cinema*.<sup>184</sup> The posters are a perfect illustration of how agitprop Soviet aesthetics had made their way into the Spanish visual culture of time (as can also be seen in the work of other graphic artists such as Manuela Ballester or Helios Gómez). Renau had become familiarized with Soviet montage theory (especially the work of Pudovkin) thanks to his conversations with Piqueras, with whom he had a very close relationship.<sup>185</sup> In the same room one can also watch a looped projection of different newsreels from Laya Films, the propaganda production company of the Government of Catalonia during the war, which also distributed Soviet films until its disappearance in 1938. Both elements are a testament to the central presence of Soviet cinema during the Civil War. But the enthusiastic reception of films, novels, theatre, and graphic art, which run parallel to the exponential growth and influence of the Spanish Communist Party (Partido Comunista de España, herein PCE) during the war, did not emerge out of nowhere.

Many intellectuals such as Renau, Piqueras, Alberti, Arconada, Ballester, or Buñuel had been absorbing and disseminating revolutionary aesthetics through journals, film clubs, worker unions, and Friends of the Soviet Union associations,<sup>186</sup> paving the way for the impressive

---

<sup>184</sup> Carl-Henrik Bjerström, *Josep Renau and the Politics of Culture in Republican Spain, 1931-1939: Re-Imagining the Nation*, 2017; Hernández Cano, "Palabras sobre imágenes: autoridad intelectual, ensayo y cultura visual de masas en España (1927-1937)," 369–434.

<sup>185</sup> Mendelson, *El Pabellón Español*, 24.

<sup>186</sup> Although in this chapter I focus more on unofficial (non-government) initiatives, we should mention briefly the importance of VOKS (All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries/Vsesoiuznoe Obshchestvo Kul'turnoi Sviazi s zagranitse) and AUS, the two most important official venues aimed at disseminating a positive image of Soviet culture and society among Spanish citizens. The former was in the USSR and was administratively subordinate to the Comintern and its Foreign Relations Secretary, while the latter was controlled by the International Committee of Soviet Union Friends (which itself was subordinated to VOKS) and had different branches across Spain, with a central office in Madrid. In the absence of an official Soviet diplomatic mission, they filled this space and helped disseminate a positive image of Soviet culture while at the same time gathering useful information about the Spanish society and its key intellectual figures for the Comintern's use. See M. Garrido Caballero, "Las relaciones entre España y la Unión Soviética a través de las Asociaciones de Amistad en el siglo XX" (Universidad de Murcia, 2006).

cultural production in support of the Republican government after Franco's military coup on 18 July 1936. These initiatives had different levels of autonomy and political agendas (with special mention to Socialist and Anarchist movements which are not covered here),<sup>187</sup> but they all shared the objective of inciting a political awakening and transformation of the bourgeois intellectual type into proletarian intellectuals, directly or indirectly, at the service of the worker cause.



Figure 15. Josep Renau's posters for *Chapaev* and *We are from Kronstadt* (circa 1936-1937). Courtesy of the Pavelló de la República library.

From afar, the USSR appeared as the materialization of the kind of society that was being

<sup>187</sup> This omission is only due to the lack of necessary space, and to the fact that the figures I analyze in the chapter were all members of the PCE or PCF. Either way Socialist, Anarchist, and Communist cultural initiatives crossed paths continuously. Buñuel for instance was a member of the PCF but publicly stated his allegiance to Anarchism. As we see later in the chapter, the Socialist leader Julio Álvarez Del Vayo, Foreign affairs minister during the war, was one of the most important figures in the introduction and promotion of Soviet cinema in Spain. For an excellent overview of Anarchist film culture (and its intersections with other leftist institutions) before the Civil War see Pedret Otero, "La quimera de la gran pantalla: periodisme, grups llibertaris i cinema a Catalunya (1926-1937)." See also Otero, "El cine en la prensa libertaria en Catalunya durante la II República"; Martínez Muñoz, *Mateo Santos*; Pau Martínez Muñoz, "La Cinematografía anarquista en Barcelona durante la Guerra Civil 1936-1936" (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2008).

demanded by scientists, writers, artists, teachers, and filmmakers. It seemed to have successfully merged progressive culture and politics with economic planning in a decade in which the economic slump was taken to signal the death knell of capitalism. These cultural figures created the first friends of the Soviet Union associations and even became active members of the PCE. As described by Julián Marías and Manuel Tuñón de Lara, Spanish intellectuals had become politicized in the wake of the loss of the colonies in 1898; their anxieties about Spain's supposed backwardness fed their own self-image as the vanguard that would push their country into modernity.<sup>188</sup> For them, it was of primary importance to break down the wall isolating Spanish intellectuals from international, or at least European, contexts, under Miguel de Unamuno famous phrase, "[...] Spain remains to be discovered, and it will only be discovered by Europeanized Spaniards."<sup>189</sup> However, this sense of a national project did not necessarily produce any single political identity, but was, instead, directed towards the urge for economic, cultural and political modernization of Spain under a variety of ideological guises.<sup>190</sup>

The Soviet Union seemed a viable model to follow for some intellectuals, but for many others like Socialist Luis Araquistáin it was "[...] more than a revolution, a social dissolution."<sup>191</sup> In a way, this strong attraction to the USSR reflected the crisis of the Spanish mindset, which was desperately striving to break with the conditions that made the past rather than the future the privileged image of utopia, but without a clear image of what the socio-political future was supposed to look like, or what role was to be allotted to the so-called masses or the people in this transformation. As Marta García Carrión has analyzed in detail, in this cultural revolution the

---

<sup>188</sup> See Julián Marías Aguilera, "España ante la historia y ante sí misma 1898–1936," ed. Menéndez Pidal (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1994); Coloquio sobre Historia Contemporánea de España, *Los orígenes culturales de la II República* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1993).

<sup>189</sup> Marías Aguilera, "España ante la historia y ante sí misma 1898–1936," 68.

<sup>190</sup> As I mentioned before, what it also created, though, was a nationalistic, and neocolonialist, exaltation (across the ideological spectrum) of the Spanish *race* through cultural production that is analyzed in more detail in chapter four.

<sup>191</sup> Luis Araquistáin, "Comentarios: la nueva dialéctica histórica," *El Sol*, May 18, 1925.

idea of recovering the lost glory of the *failed empire* had a surprising currency among progressive intellectuals. Leftist critics such as Piqueras or Santos exhibited in their writings a strong nationalistic, neocolonial, and racialized discourse based on a centralized nation that would act as an “intellectual Hispanic meridian.”<sup>192</sup> Despite the social orientation of the national cinema that leftist critics had in mind, its centralist nationalism (rejecting the incorporation of other languages and cultures from Spain) and biopolitical exaltation of the Hispanic race was paradoxically far from the progressive internationalism of Marxist leftist politics. It is yet another example of the mistranslations and local appropriations that characterized the circulation of politics and culture in the 1930s. These ideological disparities reflect the complexity of what Gerald Brenan called “the Spanish labyrinth”; the complex political and social paths, often blocked, folding one on the other, into which intellectuals led themselves, identifying their pursuit of power with the construction of a better future.<sup>193</sup> In the following paragraphs we enter this labyrinth through cinema, exploring the relationship between politics and aesthetics that made the USSR an appealing project to the eyes of the Spanish rebelling citizen and the bourgeois amateur alike.

Although many of the Soviet films which inspired the Spaniards in the late 1920s and early 1930s belong to what we generally consider the avant-garde—*Battleship Potemkin*, *Staroye i novoye* (*Old and New*, aka *The General Line*, Sergei Eisenstein, 1929), *Storm Over Asia*, *Konets Sankt-Peterburga* (*The End of St. Petersburg*, Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1927)—it was their realist capacity (understood as a privileged relationship between the art form and the social

---

<sup>192</sup> García Carrión, “Historia(s) de nuestro cine. Nacionalisme en la primera historiografía cinematográfica,” 91; García Carrión, *Por un cine patrio*, 316–21.

<sup>193</sup> Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth an Account of the Social and Political Background of the Spanish Civil War*, 2014.

material and cultural reality it represents) that held most sway in the discourse of the time.<sup>194</sup> By the mid-1930s films like *Chapaev* and *We are from Kronstadt* (now considered classics of socialist realism) were cited as the models to follow given the impending threat of Fascism and the conservative turn of Stalin's cultural policy. This search for new aesthetic and political models for Spanish cinema in foreign contexts was intertwined with nationalistic calls to develop an essentially Spanish film culture. Take, for instance, the words of Anarchist critic and director Mateo Santos when answering the question "What orientation (aesthetic, ideological, educational, etc.) should the national production follow? He replies: "The only one possible; that which displays in the celluloid an image and a landscape that can be identified as genuinely Spanish."<sup>195</sup> Santos had regularly defended the need for a Spanish proletarian film culture and praised Soviet films (not the Communist state that controlled them, which he abhorred as an Anarchist) in the politically and content-wise diverse publication (albeit more eschewed towards a libertarian approach) *Popular Film*, which he edited.<sup>196</sup> Why didn't he make an explicit reference to Soviet cinema (which he otherwise usually praised) in his reply, choosing instead to talk about a "genuine Spanish image"? I would argue that his reply embodies the generalized sentiment amongst Spanish politicized critics that a future national cinema should develop its own form of realism.<sup>197</sup>

---

<sup>194</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of this theory of cinema as a collective instrument of "critical consciousness" (in opposition to idealist and individualist models of art as an autonomous realm) and its transhistorical and transnational articulations see Salazkina, "Moscow-Rome-Havana: A Film-Theory Road Map," 106–7.

<sup>195</sup> Mateo Santos, "Una encuesta sobre el cinema español," *Cine Art* 1, no. 12 (December 30, 1933).

<sup>196</sup> For an analysis of this publication and its relationship to Spanish politics see Mendelson and De Diego, "Political Practice and the Arts in Spain, 1927-1936." Santos praised Soviet cinema as a formidable "educational" tool at the service of the mass. Mateo Santos, "El cinema al servicio de las ideas," *Popular Film*, no. 257 (July 16, 1931).

<sup>197</sup> As Paul Wood argues in his text "Realisms and Realities", realism as a term has been wrongly equated with classicism and figurative approaches (or Socialist realism), sidelining its conception as a representation of material social, cultural and political realities by whatever means chosen (even abstraction). Wood summarizes this idea in Bertolt Brecht's statement that "Realism is not a mere question of form [...] Reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must also change." See Paul Wood, "Realism and Realities," in *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art between the Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, in association with the Open University, 1993), 254–64.

In this sense, Soviet aesthetics was the model, but as critic and writer César M. Arconada (who had by now written two novels inspired by Soviet culture: *Turbina*, in 1930, and *Los pobres contra los ricos*, in 1933)<sup>198</sup> remarked, this did not mean that Spain had to copy exactly the USSR's film industry and aesthetics but develop its own form of realism according to the characteristics of the Spanish context. The proletarian revolution had not taken place in Spain, so the transformation of capitalist culture would have to begin within the system, waiting for the uprising that would "build a new era of justice, were proletarian cinema and art [would] develop in complete unity with life."<sup>199</sup> Due to their lack of means of production, Soviet aesthetics was especially important for radical film critics as a way to create the material conditions for a revolutionary culture.<sup>200</sup> In other words, it was not so much about making Soviet-style films, but about educating the public on the social function of cinema and to creating the breeding ground from which a leftist film production would come.

The paradox at the heart of this story taps into the very problem which plagued the Comintern leaders throughout the 1920s and 30s: how to create an authentic proletarian culture within the confines of the bourgeois sphere and take advantage of the politicization that had generated a splinter progressive bourgeois sector as a reaction to the rise of fascism. In Spain, the transversal desire for modernization and dissolution of an old order opened a window of opportunity for leftist politics to spread via cultural production and appreciation of revolutionary aesthetics, especially amongst young intellectuals. Cinema was seen as an ideal medium to break the isolation of the country and insert it in the cosmopolitan and politicized networks of cultural

---

<sup>198</sup> César M Arconada, *La turbina: (1930)*, ed. Gonzalo Santonja (Palencia: Cálamo, 2003); César M Arconada, *Los pobres contra los ricos* (Madrid: Publicaciones Izquierda, 1933).

<sup>199</sup> César M. Arconada, "Hacia un cinema proletario," *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 8-9 (February 1933): 94.

<sup>200</sup> In this, Marxist critics echoed the discussions between Socialism in one country (Stalin) and permanent revolution (Trotsky) strategies, which divided leftist parties throughout the Republican period and into the war, when the Stalinist secret police murdered Trotskyian leaders such as Andreu Nin and other members of the POUM, precipitating the infamous May 1937 clashes between Anarchists, Communists, and Socialists in Barcelona.



production (be it avantgarde, pedagogical, revolutionary or even fascist) that were rebelling against the old order. When, in 1932, Samuel Ros commented in *Nuestro Cinema* on the recent investments by bourgeois producers in the Spanish film industry, he criticized precisely the absence of young people in the industry (those artists and intellectuals born with cinema);

“The books on foreign cinema that arrive in Spain are in young hands. The few books written in Spain about cinema are from young writers. The only criticism of foreign studios come from young eyes. But nonetheless there are no young names in the ranks or future projects of the new companies. Why?...Why? [Sic] Painters who are forced out of expositions because their paintings are not like those of other magnificent artists who were born with the idea of the frame. Sculptors who model forms that don’t work for the old gods of mythology or public garden personalities. Authors who, amidst the paralysis of the stage, desire the mobility of cinema. They were all born with cinema and yearn unconsciously for their celluloid destiny.”<sup>201</sup>

These young minds ignored by the industry (critics, writers, poets, filmmakers, artists, scientists and journalists) started to become politically involved at different levels of militancy, engaging with local and international institutions. Figures like Federico García Lorca were able to create the famous La Barraca itinerant theater thanks to the help from the Republican government and the Residencia de Estudiantes.<sup>202</sup> Others—such as poet Rafael Alberti and writer María Teresa León—made use of the Republic’s policy of cultural exchange and traveled to countries like Germany, from which they could visit the Soviet Union and report back an idealized vision of the Communist society (highly mediated by authorities).<sup>203</sup> Given the reality

---

<sup>201</sup> Samuel Ros, “Los alegres millones del cinema español,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 3 (August 1932): 71–73.

<sup>202</sup> Ian Gibson, *Vida, pasión y muerte de Federico García Lorca (1898-1936)* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1998).

<sup>203</sup> They were given a scholarship from the JAE to research new forms of theater in France and Germany. For a

of a semi-industrialized economy, widespread rural poverty, harsh working conditions, and the growing power of worker organizations, it is not surprising that Soviet culture and society, which was also rapidly modernizing a country known for its uneven development, would seem to be a model for the Spanish intellectual elite.



Figure 16. *AC Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea* cover of Issue 4 and page 30 of Issue 3 with stills from Soviet films screened in the Cineclub Proa Filmófono.

Thus the attraction to Soviet culture was surprisingly transversal and caught the attention of a broad spectrum of intellectuals, from Marxist critics and poets to moderate leftist politicians, bourgeois amateur filmmakers, and even fascist leaders.<sup>204</sup> Antonio Bonet is a good example of this class-crossing bourgeois admiration for Soviet cinema, which the Comintern capitalized on.

---

complete account of their journeys see Allison Taillot, “El modelo soviético en los años 1930: los viajes de María Teresa León y Rafael Alberti a Moscú,” *Cahiers de civilisation espagnole contemporaine*, no. 9 (December 11, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.4000/ccec.4259>. For more on fellow travelers to the USSR and their mediated views of Stalinist Soviet Union see Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>204</sup> For the appeal of Soviet cinema for Fascist critics see Labanyi, “Cinematic City,” 25; Sanchez-Biosca, “The Cinematic Image of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera,” 325–26. Biosca also traces the importance of rural imagery in the idea of the “eternal authentic Spain” exhibited by Fascist films after the war.

He was a prominent architect and member of the Group of Spanish Artists and Technicians for Contemporary Architecture (GATEPAC, Grupo de Artistas y Técnicos Españoles Para la Arquitectura Contemporánea), which published a journal called *A.C. Documents of Contemporary Activity/A.C. Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea*. In its issues, one is surprised to find numerous mentions of Soviet cinema among pleas and plans for a selective, rationalist architecture and design inspired by Le Corbusier and explicitly supported by Catalan authorities such as president Francesc Macià.<sup>205</sup>

In its third issue it included two stills from *The End of St. Petersburg* and *Arsenal* (Aleksandr Dovzhenko, 1929) as advertisements for the Cineclub Proa Filmófono (Figure 16). And in the fourth issue of 1931, an article devoted to *Putyovka v zhizn* (*The Road to Life*, Nikolai Ekk, 1931) described it as “the first Soviet sound feature.”<sup>206</sup> What is even more surprising is that the anonymous article, quite possibly written by Bonet himself, praises the communal aspect of Soviet society. Considering the difficulties for the circulation of Soviet films in Spain at the time, it is noteworthy that the article is contemporaneous to the release of the film (June 1, 1931, in the USSR), showing how connected certain intellectuals were with the cultural life of the Soviet Union.

The bourgeois intellectual imagination was captivated both by the will for experimentation and the utopian transformative projects taking place in the USSR (we will see a concrete example of the appeal of Soviet montage for the Catalan amateurs in chapter three). Coming out of Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship and decades of relative cultural isolation, the newness of the Soviet project—which was arriving late to Spain, compared to other European

---

<sup>205</sup> Oscar Miguel Ares, “Sert, Le Corbusier y el pla Macià: heterodoxia y contradicciones formales,” *DC Papers*, no. 19–20 (2010): 175–82.

<sup>206</sup> “El primer film sonoro de la URSS,” *AC Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea*, no. 4 (1931): 29.

countries—appealed greatly to these self-fashioned Spanish intellectuals precisely as a stimulating horizon onto which to project their hopes and aspirations for a different Spanish society in cultural terms (regardless of their ideological orientation). For example, when the journal *Revista de Occidente*—founded by philosopher José Ortega y Gasset as a cultural referent for a new enlightened Spain—reviewed the first screening of *Battleship Potemkin*, critic Antonio Marichalar highlighted how Eisenstein’s film “is not a communist but a revolutionary film. Its effect is not to persuade, convince, praise, or propagate something. Its objective is to disturb one’s spirit [...] A film like this can ignite anyone with a minimum instinct of rebellion and critical spirit. It can turn him against constituted power, regardless of his convictions and the regime he supports.”<sup>207</sup> The challenge facing leftist cultural activists was to find a way to transfer these “revolutionary” energies aroused by Soviet aesthetics from minority intellectual circles to proletarian masses.

In this confusing (but also thrilling) whirlwind of referents, political upheavals, and social transformations that characterizes the 1930s, cinema became a very attractive medium for intellectuals in their struggle to leave behind Spain’s antiquated, conservative and corrupt society.<sup>208</sup> Central figures in the cultural spheres of the time proudly claimed to have been “born with cinema”—as Alberti’s poem on the “new life” promised by modernity states. The poet later described cinema as a “pupil” exposed to the “wind” in a text he wrote on a 1949 Uruguayan experimental film while he was in the Punta del Este lighthouse and in exile.<sup>209</sup>

---

<sup>207</sup> Antonio Marichalar, “Visto y oído,” *Revista de Occidente*, no. 95 (May 1931): 195–97.

<sup>208</sup> For a concise description of this paradoxical state of mind see Jordana Mendelson, “Episodios, superposiciones y dispersiones: una revisión de historias de los años treinta,” in *Encuentros con los años 30* (Madrid: La Fábrica: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2012), 15–29. Mendelson highlights the impossibility of constructing a unitary definition of the 1930s, and opts instead to embrace the contradictions, palimpsests and non-linear trajectories of intellectuals, their discourse and creations, and the networks of circulation and exchange they followed.

<sup>209</sup> The text was titled “Pupila al Viento: Palabras Sincrónicas para un Film de Enrico de Grass [sic] sobre Punta del Este” and was written by Alberti after he saw the images shot by Italian filmmaker Enrico Gras and Uruguayan film

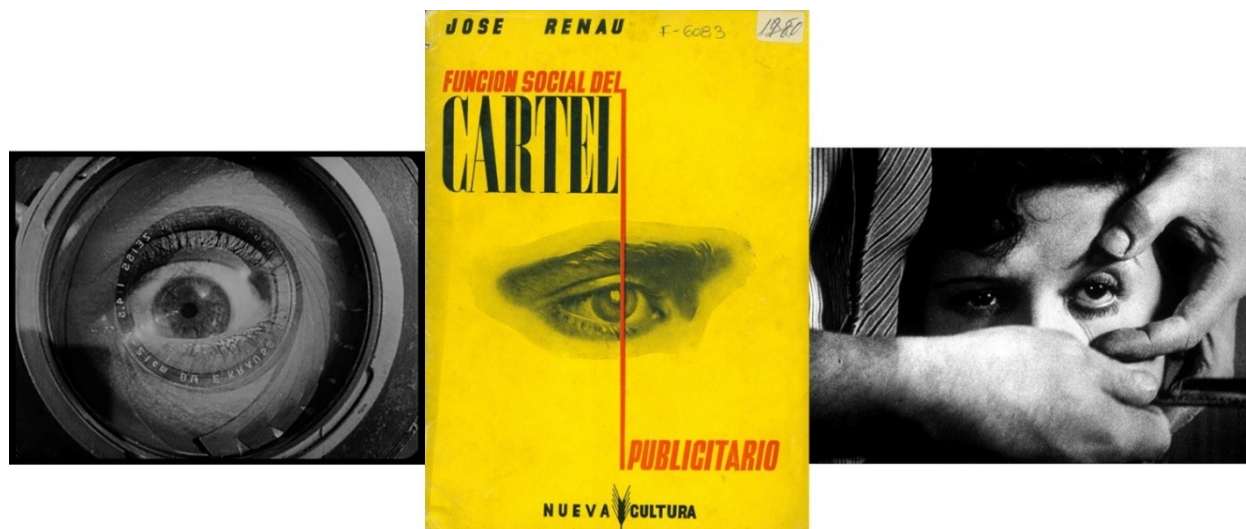


Figure 17. Still from *Man with a movie camera* (Chelovek s kinoapparatom, Dziga Vertov, 1929), cover of Josep Renau's book *Función Social del Cartel* (Nueva Cultura, 1937), and still from *Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, 1929).

This metaphor encapsulates perfectly the role of cinema in Spain during the 1920s and 1930s: both an eye (pupil) opened to the social and political upheavals of the time (wind) and a means of incorporating citizens into the violently shattered “Republic of pedagogues” described in the dialogue from Javier Pérez Andújar’s novel *Todo lo que se Llevó el Diablo* that opens the dissertation.<sup>210</sup> Indeed, the word *pupil* also refers to the figure of the *student*, underscoring the educational role that cinema would play in Spain during the Second Republic. This pedagogical dimension of cinema was a key, and often overlooked, element of the materiality of the cinematographic gaze, identified with the human eye (the pupil) as a defining trope of radical

---

critic, director, and producer Danilo Trelles (who was also the director of the Festival Internacional de Cine Documental y Experimental in Montevideo from 1954 to 1971) in the editing room. The film was commissioned by the Comisión Nacional de Turismo de Uruguay and recited by Alberti and María Teresa León. You can watch it in the following link; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eg78Cn2HFVs>. Accessed August 13, 2018.

<sup>210</sup> Pérez Andújar, *Todo lo que se llevó el diablo*, 13. When historian Román Gubern wrote his foundational book on the relationship between cinema and the intellectual elites of the 1920s and 1930s in Spain he used the words “Projector de Luna” (moon projector) from Cesar M. Arconada’s book *Vida de Greta Garbo* to title it: Román Gubern, *Proyector de luna: la generación del 27 y el cine* (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1999). This poetical reference to the dreamlike quality of cinema certainly captures the fascination that the medium exerted in the creative output of writers and artists, but it is focused only in the fabulist dimension of moving images, leaving aside the allure of film as a pedagogical instrument of social and political struggle. For an evocative analysis of the metaphor of the moon in Lorca’s cinematic writings see Labanyi, “Cinematic City,” 29–31.

modernist visual culture and its repurposing of cinema as a tool for social transformation (Figure 17).<sup>211</sup>

Although this has mostly been analyzed through Dziga Vertov's theory of the "Cine Eye,"<sup>212</sup> I hope to demonstrate here how similar ideas on the instrumentalization of moving images at the service of social change were translated into the local context, articulating a distinct conception of moving images as a bridge between tradition and modernity. In 1931, Piqueras described this in his essay, "Educational and Cultural Meaning of Soviet Cinema," as the synthesis of "emotion" and "education" when describing the film *Turksib* (Viktor Turin, 1929), a documentary on the construction of the Siberia-Turkestan railroad.<sup>213</sup> The critic finds it important to quote the film's director's assertion that "The central theme of Soviet art is the building of a socialist society, the new life that emerges in the Soviet Socialist Republics. Our reality provides the artist's creative genius an infinite variety of themes. And these new themes demand to be treated in new ways."<sup>214</sup>

To try and give this radical film culture a theoretical and programmatic consistency, as well as a definitive proletarian direction, Piqueras launched *Nuestro Cinema* in 1932. The journal's attempts to adapt the specificities of Soviet cinema to the realities of Spanish society and film culture, while at the same time being attentive to international developments, are the

---

<sup>211</sup> Juan Antonio Millón, *Lluís Guarnier: el legado de una pasión literaria* (Valencia: Conselleria de Cultura, Educació i Esport, 2007), 53.

<sup>212</sup> Annette Michelson and Kevin O'Brien, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov* (Berkeley [u.a.: Univ. of California Press, 2008); Yuri Tsivian, ed., *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the Twenties* (Gemona, Udine: Le Giornate del cinema muto, 2004); E.A. Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth: The Documentary Moment in Early Soviet Culture* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), <https://books.google.es/books?id=cngINQAACAAJ>; Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, eds., *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994); Joshua Malitsky, "Ideologies in Fact: Still and Moving-Image Documentary in the Soviet Union, 1927-1932: Ideologies in Fact," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 20, no. 2 (December 2010): 352-71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1395.2010.01074.x>.

<sup>213</sup> Juan Piqueras, "Sentido educativo y cultural del cine soviético," *El Sol*, January 1, 1931, 8.

<sup>214</sup> Piqueras, "Sentido educativo y cultural del cine soviético."

subject of the following section.

### ***Nuestro Cinema* and the cultivation of radical film culture**

Described in 1937, by renowned film historian Georges Sadoul, as the “best film journal in Capitalist Europe,”<sup>215</sup> *Nuestro Cinema* released thirteen issues from 1932 to 1933, and four more in 1935, creating a shared proletarian cinematographic imaginary through its editorials, film stills, illustrations, advertisements and articles—many of them written by Piqueras and Spanish critics, writers, and artists, such as Del Amo, Rafael Sender, Cesar M. Arconada, Buñuel or Renau, as well as translations from Béla Balázs, Eisenstein, Ilya Trauberg, Pudovkin, Karl Radek, Anatoli Lunacharsky,<sup>216</sup> Ivan Anisimov (director of the Gorki Institute), G. Liss (Soyuzkino’s deputy director), Joris Ivens, Moussinac, Georges Méliès, or René Clair. The journal had a marked internationalist spirit and included an “International News” section that covered Europe, the USSR, North America, Latin America, and Asia. This dimension was highlighted in the journal’s self-promotion, which declared itself to be “the only truly international Spanish journal, written by international collaborators and inspired by an international direction.”<sup>217</sup> It also published the first essays on Spanish film history, penned by Piqueras himself throughout several articles in 1932; for a double issue in 1933 (8 and 9), he wrote a forty-three page history of film.<sup>218</sup>

---

<sup>215</sup> Georges Sadoul, “Les Rebelles Ont Fusillé Le Louis Delluc Espagnol Juan Piqueras,” *Regards*, January 28, 1937, 159.

<sup>216</sup> Former People’s Commissariat for Education, representative of the USSR to the League of Nations, and appointed ambassador to Spain in 1933. Lunacharsky died on December 26th 1933 in France, on his way to take office as ambassador in Madrid.

<sup>217</sup> *Nuestro Cinema* 14 (January 1935). Issues 14-17 of the journal had no page numbers, applicable to all other such references.

<sup>218</sup> Juan Piqueras, “Panorama del cinema hispánico,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 3 (August 1932): 80–87; Juan Piqueras, “Panorama del cinema hispánico,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 2 (July 1932): 42–47; Juan Piqueras, “Panorama del cinema hispánico. Segunda parte: del cine mudo al film sonoro y parlante,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 5 (October 1932): 145–50; Juan Piqueras, “Panorama del cinema hispánico. Segunda parte: versiones y sincornizaciones en español,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 6 (November 1932): 175–79; Piqueras, “Historiografía del cinema.”

As the quote from Piqueras that opens the chapter indicates, the aim of the journal was to free the worker from the “ideological poverty” of mainstream films, and from the false image of Spanish society reflected in the *españolada* genre, looking to inaugurate an entirely new visual regime. The journal’s title echoed Sergei Tret’iakov’s 1928 essay, “Our Cinema” (although the critic never mentioned this article, it can be read as a programmatic roadmap for the journal’s quest against capitalist cinema’s “ideological poverty” and “taming of the masses).”<sup>219</sup> Such discussions on the social and political role of the medium continued throughout the following years and, in a survey promoted by *Nuestro Cinema* in 1935, the following questions were asked: “1) Should censorship authorities treat Soviet cinema differently or the same as any other foreign cinema? 2) Do you consider Soviet cinema as a factor to be considered in the cinematographic, artistic, and cultural development of Spain? 3) If so, is it due to its technique or its content?”<sup>220</sup>

Five of the most relevant intellectuals of the time—Benjamín Jarnés, Francisco Ayala, Antonio Espina, García Lorca and Sender—replied. All of them firmly opposed any form of film censorship, except perhaps for what they called “stupid” American films and highlighted the undeniable importance of Soviet filmmaking as an educational and cultural model for Spain (with praise for both technique and content). Sender specified, however, that content should also be “local,” and mentioned the importance of linking revolutionary thought with the “national means of expression.”<sup>221</sup> They also focused on the degree of reception and attraction that Soviet films had amongst the masses, an issue that Spanish critics and educators considered to be

---

<sup>219</sup> Sergei Tret’iakov, “Our Cinema,” *October* 118 (October 2006): 27–44, <https://doi.org/10.1162/octo.2006.118.1.27>.

<sup>220</sup> “Segunda encuesta de Nuestro Cinema: convocatoria y cuestionario,” *Nuestro Cinema* 2, no. 17 (1935): 66–67.

<sup>221</sup> These discussions developed in the numerous film journals of the time, which included editorials, surveys, and articles referring to the situation and future of a Spanish national cinema. See “Consejos a los directores españoles,” *Cinegramas*, no. 1 (1934): 1. Santos, “Una encuesta sobre el cinema español”; Juan Piqueras, “Cinema español; callejón sin salida,” *Nuestro Cinema* 2, no. 15 (1935): 3.



crucial in order to achieve a truly emancipated society. Soviet cinema and its national narrative provided a serious alternative to cinema as alienating entertainment and distraction, offering instead a space for collective cohesion that mixed the old and the new with a just future in mind. This idea, constantly disseminated in the pages of *Nuestro Cinema*, made its way into the generation of critics, filmmakers and intellectuals that attempted to transform the base of Spain's film culture.



Figure 18. Stills from *La Ruta de don Quijote*. Filmoteca Española.

The film *La Ruta de don Quijote* is a perfect case in point of how the traditionally downtrodden segments of Spanish society were incorporated into the new society desired both by the Republican government and the critics of *Nuestro Cinema*—the film mirrored similar images they could find in the Soviet films discussed in journals or in the few film clubs that managed to screen the films of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Preobrazhenskaia, or Dovzhenko. Directed by Biadiu for CIFESA (main production company at the time in Spain alongside Filmófono),<sup>222</sup>

<sup>222</sup> As we will see in chapter four, Biadiu became a key figure in the Catalan Government Propaganda Services during the war, directing documentaries and newsreels. He had also attended Guillem Díaz-Plaja's university film course in 1932, where he was surely taught the virtues of Soviet cinema as expressed on the latter's book *Una*

the film provided a documentary illustration to some passages of Cervantes's famous novel set in the Castilian countryside.<sup>223</sup> Piqueras enthusiastically endorsed the film and managed to distribute it in France with great critical success.<sup>224</sup>

Although initially conceived for the commercial market, *La Ruta de don Quijote* enjoyed a noncommercial afterlife in the propaganda efforts of the Republican government in the 1937 Paris exposition alongside the work of fellow filmmakers Velo and Mantilla—both of whom recognized the influence of films like Eisenstein's *Old and New* in their work and created a film club in Madrid (Cineclub FUE, Frente Universitario Español)<sup>225</sup> to screen Soviet films.<sup>226</sup> As in the works of Velo and Mantilla, *La ruta de don Quijote* paid special attention to the hard labor of the landless peasants that the Republican government was trying to free from the feudal oppression of powerful estate owners.<sup>227</sup> Against the mythical backdrop of the novel, its passages are quoted throughout the film, Biadiu places images of wheat harvesters under the severe sun of the Castilian landscape. In this, the film departed from the romanticized and exoticizing

---

*Cultura del Cinema* (1930).

<sup>223</sup> Santos Zunzunegui, in his recently reedited book *Historias de España*, discusses the film from an eminently formalist point of view, detaching his analysis from any of the international referents and influences that this section traces. Santos Zunzunegui, *Historias de España: de qué hablamos cuando hablamos de cine español*, 2018, 36–46.

<sup>224</sup> Gubern, “Exhibiciones cinematográficas en el Pabellón Español,” 177.

<sup>225</sup> Fernando Redondo Neira, “Carlos Velo. Memoria de las imágenes en su tiempo histórico,” *Cine Documental*, no. 4 (2011). We don't know which Soviet films were screened at the Cineclub FUE, but given that, according to Daniel Kowalsky, *Old and New* was already being screened in 1931 in Madrid, Barcelona, and Alicante it is quite likely that it was done so in Velo and Mantilla's film club and that Biadiu saw the film in Barcelona. See Kowalsky, *Stalin and the Spanish Civil War*, 336.

<sup>226</sup> Among them *Battleship Potemkin*, with a courtesy visit from the Guardia Civil. In an interview conducted by Aranzubia Cob, Basque intellectual Julián Antonio Ramírez recalls how the screening was stopped halfway to inform the audience that the Civil Guard was waiting outside of the venue in order to arrest the attendants of this Cineclub FUE session on the grounds of “revolutionary” activities. Asier Aranzubia Cob, “Julián Antonio Ramírez: inventario de actividades filmicas,” *Ikusgaiak* 6 (2003): 146.

<sup>227</sup> The government had introduced in 1932 an ambitious agrarian reform law (Ley de Reforma Agraria) to fight against estate owners, but the conservative and traditionalist forces that represented landowner interests (even in the progressive government itself, whose president Niceto Alcalá-Zamora was a rich landowner) blocked its application through different means (including violence, corruption, smearing campaigns in the media and economic dirty war by banks). The resulting meager advances and slow application of the reform angered peasants and radicalized the position of the anarchist unions against what they called the bourgeois republic. See Ricardo Robledo, “Los males del latifundismo: la hora de la reforma agraria,” in *En el combate por la historia: la República, la guerra civil, el franquismo* (Barcelona: Pasado&Presente, 2012), 101–21.

conception of ethnographic and anthropological documentaries that had become quite popular at the time in Spanish commercial screens.<sup>228</sup> Instead, the film *documented* the realities of Spain's belated modernity and embraced tradition and rural peripheries as equally constitutive elements of the new Spanish society conceived by the Republic.<sup>229</sup>



Figure 19. Stills from *Earth*, amateur films *Untitled home movie* (Delmir de Caralt, circa 1935) and *El blat* (Salvador Rifa, 1933), *Old and New, Galicia* (Carlos Velo, 1936), and *Las Hurdes, tierra sin pan* (Luis Buñuel, 1933).

*La Ruta de don Quijote* does not include explicitly political commentary, but we can nonetheless trace the scenes of peasants harvesting wheat to the imagery displayed in Soviet films—such as *Earth* (*Zemlya*, Alexander Dovzhenko, 1930) or Eisenstein's *Old and New*—admired by Spanish film critics, filmmakers and enthusiasts, and commonly quoted as inspiring examples for a Spanish cinema devoted to social struggle (Figure 19).<sup>230</sup> This imagery of rural

<sup>228</sup> For a detailed analysis of these films (and commercial non-fiction films in general during the Second Spanish Republic) see Paz Rebollo and Cabeza San Deogracias, “La realidad que vieron los españoles. El cine de no-ficción durante la II República española (1931-36).” In pages 757-758 the authors give a detailed list of documentaries devoted to crafts, labor, and traditional forms of work.

<sup>229</sup> I signal here to Mendelson's description of documentary as a “social and artistic equalizer, a form of representation shared by the avant-garde and the masses” that forged “connections” between the urban centers and rural peripheries in Spain. Mendelson, *Documenting Spain*, xxii, xxiv.

<sup>230</sup> For example Mateo Santos explicitly mentions *Old and New* as a film that should be screened by the Misiones

labor was shared across the political spectrum with different objectives in mind and can also be seen in the amateur films produced by the Catalan bourgeoisie (included in the same figure). The hard work of wheat harvesters—and other workers such as the farmers depicted in *Galicia* or the peasants who painstakingly build terrace fields in *Las Hurdes, tierra sin pan*—was associated with traditionally oppressed or forgotten segments of society, and represented in documentaries as a way to blend the rural and urban realities of the country (and, ultimately, the old and new), emulating the images of rural communities depicted in the films of Dovzhenko, Eisenstein and other Soviet filmmakers. Mateo Santos, for instance, described how Soviet filmmakers didn't “[...] point their cameras to the past. If they do so it is to create a contrast with the present. In their hands, the camera becomes a giant pupil that captures today's images in all their severity [...].”<sup>231</sup> The original emphasis of Soviet cinema on modernizing technologies, such as tractors, and mechanization replacing old and inefficient harvesting methods was, though, completely elided. In the non-synchronous global horizon of film, Spanish filmmakers and critics were not yet ready to let go of the old (tradition), especially now that it had reached the screen for the first time.

As an example, two large stills from *Old and New*, screened by the Cineclub Proa-Filmófono that Piqueras and Luis Buñuel directed, were included in *Nuestro Cinema*'s third issue as part of an article from Anissimov on the filmography of Sergei Eisenstein (Figure 20). The images chosen make no reference to the film's emphasis on how the old makes room for the new and focus instead on the traditional agrarian imaginary that could be easily translated to the Spanish context. In fact, a few pages later in that same issue Piqueras praised the film *La aldea*

---

Pedagógicas. Mateo Santos, “La cruzada de la cultura. Misiones Pedagógicas,” *Popular Film*, no. 287 (February 11, 1932).

<sup>231</sup> Santos, “El cinema al servicio de las ideas.”

*Maldita* (Florian Rey, 1930) as a sincere production that “possesses real fragments of truly Spanish life,” including an image from the film’s rural imagery that we can ascribe to the stills extracted from *Old and New* (Figure 20).<sup>232</sup>

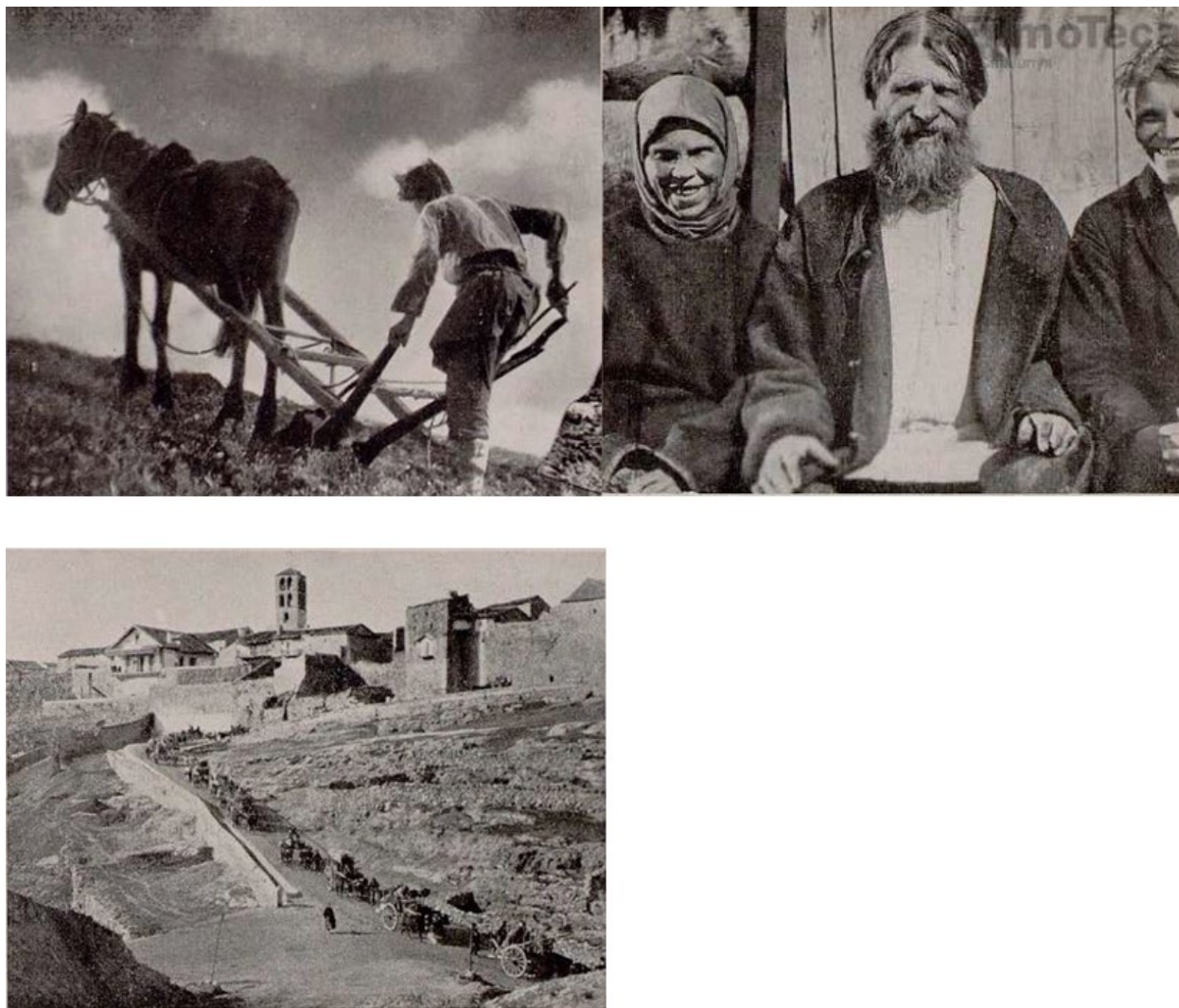


Figure 20. Stills from *Old and New* and *La Aldea Maldita* in *Nuestro Cinema* Issue 3, pp. 78-79 and 87.

This focus on the *cultivation* of the Spanish land by critics and filmmakers was inextricably linked to the nurturing of film culture as a pedagogical tool devoted to amplifying and promoting the “real fragments of truly Spanish life” that rarely appeared in the commercial

<sup>232</sup> Piqueras, “Panorama del cinema hispánico,” August 1932, 87.

screen. This idea was echoed by figures like M. Alvar in his book, *Cinematografía pedagógica y educativa* (*Educational and Pedagogical Film*, 1936), where he highlights film's ability to “often create a force and truth greater than reality itself [...] If the new pedagogy is to be inspired in life, cinema represents the most appropriate exaltation.”<sup>233</sup> For filmmakers like Mantilla, documentary films in general were the only way to make up for cinema's lack of “simplicity and depth” and turn the camera towards everything that the commercial screen had ignored until then.<sup>234</sup> Mantilla's statement can be linked to Piqueras's answer to the question “How do you think that the future Spanish film production should be focused?” in *Nuestro Cinema*'s first survey on cinema—he states that he would “begin immediately with a documentary cinema, with the certainty that it will also be a revolutionary cinema.”<sup>235</sup> For him, the didactic nature of documentaries was very useful: “Through this cinema Basque miners can understand why and how their Andalusian comrades fight and vice versa. It can also teach the proletariat that is beginning the class struggle many things that are hidden and that would reaffirm them in their demands.”<sup>236</sup>

These ideas were adapted from the news that Piqueras and other members of *Nuestro Cinema* received from the USSR via journals, newspapers, and their own international contacts and networks. These secondary sources (so to speak) were complemented with first-hand engagements with Soviet film culture in film clubs and exhibitions. For example, in 1932, *Nuestro Cinema* announced an itinerant exhibition on the Soviet film industry organized by the “pan-unionist, Ukrainian, and Transcaucasia societies, with the help of Soyuzkino, that will visit

---

<sup>233</sup> Alvar, *Cinematografía pedagógica y educativa*, 13.

<sup>234</sup> “Primera encuesta de Nuestro Cinema.”

<sup>235</sup> Juan Piqueras, “Colofón a la primera encuesta de Nuestro Cinema,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 7 (December 1932): 203.

<sup>236</sup> Piqueras, 203.

Amsterdam, Rome, *Madrid*, Paris, and other European cities.”<sup>237</sup> The exhibit included information on educational films, mobile film initiatives such as the cine-train and rural projections, film schools, and a program of Soyuzkino and VUFKU films (Vse-Ukrains'ke Foto Kino Upravlinnia/All-Ukrainian Photo Cinema Administration)—we can easily imagine the presence of Dovzhenko’s film *Earth* or Eisenstein’s *Old and New* as point of references for local filmmakers and critics.

These types of projects devoted to the circulation of Soviet film and culture were usually managed by Willi Münzenberg—former Young Communist International head and German Communist Party (KPD) member and, most importantly, head of the Comintern’s propaganda conglomerate. The enterprise involved the management of several newspapers and magazines across Europe, as well as sponsoring exhibitions and talks to international worker organizations. It was under these auspices that Mezhrabpom Film Studio, a production and distribution (under the name Prometheus-Film) company with headquarters in Berlin but physically located in Moscow, was created.<sup>238</sup> *Storm over Asia*, *The End of St. Petersburg*, and *The Road to Life* were among the films it produced, and were some of the first Soviet films screened (and highly praised) in Spain. While Willi Münzenberg’s activities have received significant attention, his relationships with key Spanish cultural figures related to film have been largely unexplored.

In 1933, Münzenberg moved to Paris, after fleeing Berlin, to oversee anti-fascist propaganda in Paris,<sup>239</sup> which put him in contact with many Spanish intellectuals (such as Álvarez Del Vayo, who had helped introduced Soviet cinema into Spain in the late twenties).<sup>240</sup>

---

<sup>237</sup> “Una Gran exposición del cinema soviético,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 2 (July 1932): 61–62. Emphasis added.

<sup>238</sup> Babette Gross, *Willi Münzenberg: A Political Biography* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1974), 148.

<sup>239</sup> Gross, 270.

<sup>240</sup> Álvarez Del Vayo was a Soviet film enthusiast and would be appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1936. According to Babette Gross, Del Vayo and Münzenberg had met in Berlin years before, were the former worked in a Latin American newspaper and the latter was beginning his career as a propaganda impresario for the USSR (Gross,

In 1934, when the Asturias October revolution failed, Münzenberg became actively engaged in helping many of the political refugees that fled to France. This threw him into the same spheres as Juan Piqueras, who was hosting some of those same refugees in his Paris house.<sup>241</sup> Likewise, Piqueras's job in Paris—selecting films for the distribution and production company Filmófono—put him in contact with Münzenberg through Prometheus.<sup>242</sup> Lastly, the journal *Octubre* (created by Rafael Alberti and María Teresa León) and newspapers *Mundo Obrero* and *Pueblo*, where Antonio del Amo, Piqueras and other leftist film critics wrote, formed part of the media conglomerate managed by the German propagandist.

These connections intensified with the eruption of the Civil War. Münzenberg became an important connector in the international solidarity campaign with the Spanish Republic under fascist attack. He was in contact with Buñuel,<sup>243</sup> who was in Paris working for the Spanish embassy, coordinating the production, exhibition, and circulation of documentaries and newsreels in solidarity with the Republic.<sup>244</sup> Antonio del Amo worked as the assistant director and cameramen for these films, presumably with a camera that Buñuel had given him.<sup>245</sup> The particular trajectory of del Amo, from a twenty-year-old film critic for *Popular Film* magazine, to Juan Piqueras's disciple and director of *Nuestro Cinema* in Spain, to PCE member, to

---

271.)

<sup>241</sup> Juan Manuel Llopis, *Juan Piqueras, el "Delluc" español*, vol. 2 (Valencia: Filmoteca, Generalitat Valenciana, 1988), 138.

<sup>242</sup> Founded by businessmen Ricardo Urgoiti in 1929, the company would be of vital importance for both Buñuel and Piqueras, providing financial support as their main employer in the early 1930s. The former would be hired as director of the film production department in 1934, and the latter was responsible of selecting films for Spanish distribution from France. Although Urgoiti was not a communist he was indeed aligned with a left-wing ideology, actively supporting the Republic after the fascist rebellion. He can be considered as a key "financial benefactor" of the initiatives analyzed in this chapter, both as employer of its most relevant figures and financial supporter of Piqueras' *Nuestro Cinema*.

<sup>243</sup> In an interview with fellow Spanish exiled writer Max Aub, Buñuel acknowledged that in August 1936 he carried money from the Spanish War Ministry in Madrid to Münzenberg in Paris, although the details of the operation, especially what the money was for, are unknown. See Max Aub, *Luis Buñuel, novela* (Granada: Cuadernos del Vigía, 2013), 156.

<sup>244</sup> Román Gubern, *Los años rojos de Luis Buñuel* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2009), 289.

<sup>245</sup> Gubern, 272.



battlefront newsreel filmmaker in only four years is exemplary of the vertiginous rhythm of cultural and political transformations in the 1930s. It also testifies to the success of the Comintern's recruitment of intellectuals as the political situation in Spain radicalized.

This policy of internationalizing Soviet film also extended to institutional figures, who were invited to Moscow either by the Comintern or VOKS. Such was the case of Catalan politician Josep Carner i Ribalta, head of the film section of the Catalan Propaganda Commissariat during the Civil War (and representative of the Catalan government in the 1934 IECCI international congress of educational cinema). Ribalta visited Moscow in 1936, toured the Soyuzkino studios and VGIK film school, and came back to Catalonia with a handful of educational documentaries that surely influenced titles produced by Laya Films such as *Catalunya màrtir* (*Catalonia Martyr*, 1938), *Conquesta de Teruel* (*Conquest of Teruel*, 1938, codir. Manuel Berenguer) or *Transformació de la indústria al servei de la guerra* (*Transformation of the Industry at the Service of War* 1938).<sup>246</sup> These works, alongside foreign revolutionary films, were projected to soldiers in the Aragon front by the mobile exhibition services of the Propaganda Commissariat.<sup>247</sup> The “cultivation” of cinema had thus extended from a circle of bourgeois cinephiles gathered in the Ritz to the front lines of the Civil War. The specific influence of this radical film culture circuit in the propaganda efforts and film production of the Republican government and leftist cooperatives during the conflict is the main

---

<sup>246</sup> Josep Carner-Ribalta, *De Balaguer a Nova-York passant per Moscou i Prats de Mollo. Memories* (Edicions Catalanes de Paris, 1972), 167–68. For more information on the work of Ramón Biadiu and the Generalitat de Catalunya Propaganda Commissariat's relationship with the USSR see José María Caparrós Lera, Ramon Biadiu Cuadrench, and Miquel Porter i Moix, *Petita història del cinema de la Generalitat: 1932-1939* (Mataró: Robrenyo, 1978); Mercè Biadiu Ester and José María Caparrós Lera, *Ramon Biadiu (1906-1984): cineasta d'avantguarda* (Súria; Manresa: Ajuntament de Súria; Centre d'Estudis del Bages, 2007); Josep Puigsech Farràs, *La revolució russa i Catalunya* (Vic: Eumo, 2017); Ramón Breu, *La Catalunya soviètica: el somni que venia de Moscou* (Badalona: Ara Llibres, 2011).

<sup>247</sup> R.S. Noguer, *El cine en la España republicana durante la Guerra Civil (1936-1939)* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 1993), 217.

focus of the final section of the chapter.

### Mimicking the struggle of the red sailors

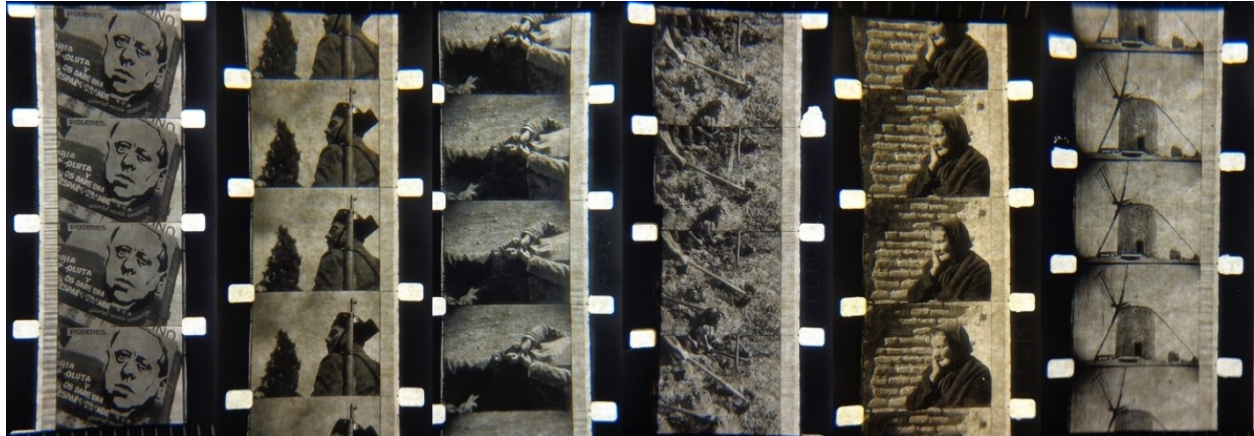


Figure 21. Stills from *Votad al Frente Popular* (unknown author, circa 1936). The conservation state of the fragile reversible 16mm film prevents for now its projection so photographs of the film are shown instead. Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya.

What started as a fad about Soviet films among Spanish cinephiles had evolved rapidly— as political unrest became more widespread—into an expanding proletarian film culture. A film recently found in the archives of Filmoteca de Catalunya (whose pre-1940s smallgauge collection remains mostly uncatalogued)<sup>248</sup> titled *Votad al Frente Popular*—presumably shot a few months before the elections—reflects the consolidation of the visual imagery circulated by *Nuestro Cinema* and the films with which I opened the chapter (Figure 21).<sup>249</sup> The Popular Front’s political identity (represented by a poster of its candidate Manuel Azaña) is opposed to the repressive forces of the state represented by a Guardia Civil (Civil Guard, the military police hated by the workers), which oppress the wretched of the Spanish earth: the peasants, workers, union members, and poor segments of society that leftist critics and filmmakers wanted to place

<sup>248</sup> Since February 2018 I am heading the research and curatorial project *Out of the home! Amateur film beyond the domestic space* at the Filmoteca de Catalunya to help catalogue this collection and organize an exhibit, international seminar, and film program.

<sup>249</sup> Miguel Anxo Fernández, *Las imágenes de Carlos Velo* (México, D.F: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2007), 35; “Primera encuesta de Nuestro Cinema.”

at the center of a new national cinema.<sup>250</sup>

The author could very well be filmmaker Mantilla, who in his reply to *Nuestro Cinema*'s first survey on the state of cinema mentioned that if a revolutionary cinema was made possible in Spain he would make films on the struggle between Andalusian peasants and the Guardia Civil. Either way, the film was an attempt to find in contemporary images of inequality and coercion (as opposed to past images of imperial glory) the coherent set of symbols that could bind together the new society projected by the Republican government.<sup>251</sup>

Sadly, the victory of the Popular Front in the elections of February 1936, was not accepted by most reactionary segments of Spanish society (the aristocracy, landowners, monarchists, the church, fascists, segments of the military and the Civil Guard, etc.), who tried to achieve by violence what they had not been able to attain in the urns. A military coup lead by Franco and other figures finally took place in July 18, 1936, inaugurating the Civil War. The conflict boosted the production of newsreels—as we saw with the Laya Films example—in support of the Republic, and the screening of Soviet films also increased. In October 1936, communist leader José Díaz gave a speech after a projection of *We are from Kronstadt* in the Cine Monumental in Madrid, where he praised the struggle of the “red sailors” and reminded the audience that this was the fight they would experience in the following months.<sup>252</sup> A poster to promote the film—displayed in the MNAC room mentioned in the introduction—was designed by Josep Renau (Figure 15). According to several newspaper reports, a few weeks after Díaz's speech Antoni Coll, a Republican soldier, emulated a famous scene from the film—in which a

---

<sup>250</sup> In 1950 Buñuel would make a film in Mexico, *Los olvidados* (*The Young and the Damned*) with Spanish exiled technicians, a film that can be seen as homage to these efforts of representing the damned and the oppressed in Spain cut short by the Civil War and subsequent Fascist dictatorship.

<sup>251</sup> For more on how the Republican government attempted to create these common symbols during the Civil War See Basilio, *Visual Propaganda, Exhibitions, and the Spanish Civil War*, 15.

<sup>252</sup> José Díaz, *Tres años de lucha* (Paris: Editions de la Librairie du Globe, 1970), 112.

Bolshevik soldier destroys an enemy tank with a hand grenade—by taking down several national tanks.<sup>253</sup>



Figure 22. Poster promoting the film *L'Exercit Popular Neix* (Comité pro Ejército Popular Regular, 1937), whose screening in the Palau de la Música would be accompanied by three Soviet films and a representation of the one-act play *The Trench*.<sup>254</sup> Courtesy of the Pavelló de la República library.

A unified union (Sindicato Único de la Industria Espectáculos, SUEP) was created by the

<sup>253</sup> The story may have well been a propaganda manouever from the Republican government to lift the moral of those defending Madrid, although it was recounted in at least six different sources (*El Sol*, *ABC*, *El Mono Azul*, *Heraldo de Madrid*, *Ahora*, *Solidarida Obrera*). José Cabeza San Deogracias, “Buscando héroes la historia de Antonio Col como ejemplo del uso de la narrativa como propaganda durante la Guerra Civil española,” *Historia y Comunicación Social*, no. 10 (2005): 37–50.

<sup>254</sup> In the newspaper article that informs about the screening the films are titled *Golpe por Golpe*, *Caballería Soviética*, and *Juventud*, which I haven’t been able to trace back to known Soviet films (they are likely short documentaries circulated during the war by the Comintern). See “Un mes de propaganda,” *La Vanguardia*, April 8, 1937.

CNT to represent all workers in the realm of performance, entertainment and visual culture. Film production companies (some collectivized, others turned into cooperatives or nationalized under the Spanish and Catalan government's control) emerged throughout the country.<sup>255</sup> We can mention among others Mantilla's Cooperativa Obrera Cinematográfica (mix of communists and socialists) where Antonio del Amo worked as assistant director for the film *Julio 1936*,<sup>256</sup> Film Popular (managed by the PCE) which produced among others *Nueva vida en el campo* (1937), Laya Films (the aforementioned company created by the Catalan Propaganda Commissariat which produced the newsreel *España al día* and a few documentaries), the Cinema section of the Comité del Ejército Popular (Popular Army Committee, CEP, which released a film titled *L'Exèrcit del poble neix* in 1937, Figure 22),<sup>257</sup> and the Sección de Cine de la Oficina de Información y Propaganda de la CNT (Cinema section of the Information and Propaganda Office of the CNT), which produced the first film on the Civil War, *Reportaje del movimiento revolucionario en Barcelona* (1936, directed by critic Mateo Santos, director of the journal *Popular Film*).

By 1938, Del Amo had become the director of the cinema section of the Forty-Sixth "El Campesino" Division, of the Fifth Army Corps. There, he codirected with Rafael Gil the film *Soldados campesinos* (1938) with nonprofessional actors. With their collaborative mode of production, use of nonprofessional methods, and focus on the everyday struggles of a population under Fascist threat these initiatives intuitively put into practice the "cinema with depth, with an open mind, with social content" that *Nuestro Cinema* had called for in its first editorial back in

---

<sup>255</sup> For a detailed analysis of the collectivization of cinema during the Civil War see: Martínez Muñoz, "La Cinematografía anarquista en Barcelona durante la Guerra Civil 1936-1936"; Pedret Otero, "La quimera de la gran pantalla: periodisme, grups llibertaris i cinema a Catalunya (1926-1937)."

<sup>256</sup> Román Gubern, *Luis Buñuel: The Red Years, 1929-1939* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 245.

<sup>257</sup> The film can be accessed in its French version uploaded by Cine Archives: <https://vimeo.com/194274925>

1932. Ultimately, films were made and distributed during the war both to entertain the population and distract them from the terrible bombings of German and Italian aircrafts, lift soldier morale in the front and motivate them for upcoming battles, document the war efforts and, very importantly, to ask for help abroad. For this last objective they made use of the networks of cultural collaboration opened by figures like Piqueras, Buñuel, Álvarez Del Vayo, Teresa León, Alberti, and many other intellectuals who had looked outside for that which would transform the Spanish social, political, and cultural reality.<sup>258</sup>

The Comintern, which had successfully introduced Soviet films in Spain through its network of intellectuals in the hope that it would eventually spread to the politically radicalized Spanish society, was now harvesting the fruits of a well-planned cultural policy. Only six years after the first session devoted to Soviet cinema organized by the Cineclub Español in the Ritz (January 1930), a revolutionary film culture had been created in the midst of a set of bourgeois cinephile avant-gardists, transforming the base of a Spanish militant cinematic culture that would thrive during the Civil War and disappear in the first decades of Franco's regime (due to its brutal repression of dissidence),<sup>259</sup> before re-emerging in the different underground anti-dictatorship Marxist movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Indeed, the scope and appeal of Soviet cinema and the radical film cultures it inspired has proven transhistorical as well as transnational throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1968-69 experimental filmmaker Antonio Artero included the group *Juan Piqueras* (which took their name from the Valencia critic) as a key node in the network of oppositional film practices that inspired the militant "Sitgistas" movement (Fig. 14).<sup>260</sup> Forty years after the last issue of *Nuestro*

---

<sup>258</sup> Chapter three follows these networks to similar projects on revolutionary film culture in France and the USA.

<sup>259</sup> It is estimated that about 50,000 people were executed or died in prison after the war by the regime.

<sup>260</sup> I thank Pablo La Parra-Pérez and Lur Olaizola for pointing me (literally) to this connection as we visited the exhibit *Machines for Living. Flamenco and Architecture in the Occupation and Vacating of Spaces* (La Virreina

*Cinema* was published, critics Carlos and David Pérez Merinero devoted a book (*Del Cinema Como Arma de Clase*, 1975) to Piqueras and the history of his journal, stating that “Cinema has to be, if it wants to achieve its historical mission, an instrument of culture and education against the chloroform of consciences. This pedagogical role has to focus especially in offering the proletariat lessons that can be used in their current struggle for liberation.”<sup>261</sup> As elsewhere during this period of the long sixties, filmmakers and activists turned to Marxist film criticism from the 1920s and 1930s, as a viable point of reference for militant thought and practice in the 1970s.

The pedagogical and transformative capacities of Soviet cinema identified by Piqueras in particular with the films of Eisenstein and Pudovkin—“a cinema capable of freeing us from today’s ideological poverty”—had thus made their way into the long sixties.<sup>262</sup> Such programmatic position recaptured in the form of writings, alternative exhibition spaces, production cooperatives, and films was re appropriating the project for a radical film culture in the absence of film production promoted in the pages of *Nuestro Cinema* and by the multiple initiatives analyzed throughout the chapter. They were also inadvertently paying homage to the critic’s last printed words, written only a month before his assassination in a review of *Chapaev* for the newspaper *Mundo Obrero* on June 16, 1936; “As with all worthy works, [*Chapaev*]

---

Centre de l’Imatge, Barcelona, February 23-May 5 2018). The Sitgistas were a group of filmmakers from the Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía who rejected the collaborationist (called *posibilismo*) attitude of progressive filmmakers with the film administration of José María García Escudero and defended instead a truly oppositional, and militant, attitude against the dictatorship’s cultural production. See Enrique Fibla-Gutiérrez and Pablo La Parra-Pérez, “Turning the Camera into a Weapon: Juan Piqueras’s Radical Noncommercial Film Projects and Their Afterlives (1930s-1970s),” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 18, no. 4 (2017): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14636204.2017.1380148>; José Luis Castro de Paz and Julio Pérez Perucha, “Militancia y posibilismo,” in Juan Antonio Bardem. *El cine a codazos* (Ourense: Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente de Ourense, 2004), 21–31.

<sup>261</sup> Carlos Pérez Merinero and David Pérez Merinero, eds., *Del cinema como arma de clase: antología de Nuestro cinema 1932-1935* (Valencia: F. Torres, 1975), 19.

<sup>262</sup> For more on these transhistorical connections see Fibla-Gutiérrez and La Parra-Pérez, “Turning the Camera into a Weapon: Juan Piqueras’s Radical Noncommercial Film Projects and Their Afterlives (1930s-1970s).”

responds objectively and subjectively to its moment, and whenever that moment is to be revisited—throughout time—it will always be contemporary.”<sup>263</sup> In the following chapter I focus on how Piqueras’s ideas and initiatives on film education and critical spectatorship were also in synchrony with those of radical film critics in France and the USA, establishing an unspoken dialogue with the *internationale* of film pedagogy that swept the world from East to West in the whirlwind of the 1930s.

---

<sup>263</sup> Llopis, *Juan Piqueras, el “Delluc” español*, 1988, 2:144.



**Chapter 2. Film Called into Action: Juan Piqueras, Léon Moussinac, Harry Alan Potamkin  
and the *Internationale* of Film Pedagogy**

Commitment is a necessary, but never a sufficient, condition for a writer's work acquiring an organizing function. For this to happen it is also necessary for the writer to have a teacher's attitude [...] The crucial point, therefore, is that a writer's production must have the character of a model: it must be able to instruct other writers in their production and, secondly, it must be able to place an improved apparatus at their disposal.

Walter Benjamin, 1934.<sup>264</sup>

There are no such things as contracts. The cinema *circuits* are in charge.

Léon Moussinac, 1933.<sup>265</sup>

Look at how it advances fast in the wind from the East,  
from the red steppes of hunger.  
Don't let the workers hear its voice,  
prevent its whistle from penetrating into the factories,  
don't let peasants sight its raised sickle.  
Stop him!  
As he is able to jump seas  
traversing the entire geography [...]   
A ghost runs through Europe,  
the world.  
We call it comrade.

Rafael Alberti, 1933.<sup>266</sup>

---

<sup>264</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht* (London: Verso, 2003), 98.

<sup>265</sup> Richard Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, vol. 1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), 107.

<sup>266</sup> Rafael Alberti and María Asunción Mateo, *90 poemas* (Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre, 1992), 61–62.

In 1931, New York critic Harry Alan Potamkin published a manifesto titled “A Movie Call to Action!”, in which he encouraged film critics to educate workers and called for the creation of a Film Action Federation.<sup>267</sup> The ultimate goal of both initiatives was to mobilize the cinematic apparatus beyond commercial purposes, envisioning a pedagogical role that would educate spectators in social justice and political action. His arguments and concrete proposals are strikingly similar to those of French critic Léon Moussinac, who only a few months earlier had announced his project for a Fédération Ouvrière de Ciné-Photo (Cine-Photo Worker Federation, or FOCP) in Paris.<sup>268</sup> Two years later (in 1933), Spanish critic Juan Piqueras would publish a very similar manifesto titled “Hacia una federación de cineclubs proletarios” (Towards a Spanish Federation of Proletarian Film Clubs), echoing Potamkin and Moussinac’s arguments.<sup>269</sup> All three manifestos, and the corresponding developments they spurred, advocate a radical educational imperative to promote critical spectatorship and filmmaking initiatives made by, and for, workers. Together these overlooked figures of film culture allow for a triangulation of the spaces where cinema, education, and politics came together in search of an “improved apparatus” of film as a tool for social emancipation. In their theorization of the political and social role of cinema, and in the corresponding actions taken to give these ideas material shape, the work of these critics testifies to the porous boundaries between film discourse and practice, through which the medium inserted itself into everyday realms of social and political struggle during the 1930s.

Following the intersecting paths of Potamkin, Moussinac and Piqueras (and their personal

---

<sup>267</sup> Harry Alan Potamkin, “A movie call to action!,” *Worker’s Theatre*, July 1931. Reprinted in Harry Alan Potamkin, *The Compound Cinema: The Film Writings of Harry Alan Potamkin*, ed. Lewis Jacobs (New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1977), 583–586.

<sup>268</sup> Léon Moussinac, “Une Fédération Ouvrière de Ciné-Photo,” *L’Humanité*, March 8, 1931.

<sup>269</sup> Juan Piqueras, “Hacia una Federación Española de Cineclubs Proletarios,” *Nuestro Cinema* 2, no. 13 (1933): 214–16.

and institutional networks),<sup>270</sup> this chapter focuses on the generative relationship between Spanish, French, and North American radical film culture during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Building on the nodes and networks detailed in the previous chapter, I explore how the expanded international leftist front used film as a pedagogical instrument to organize worker struggles across borders. I do so to provide an alternative reading of the materialist avant-garde as a *translatable* model for the establishment of emancipatory projects based not only on aesthetics ruptures, but also social and political transformation. I use the concept of translation as articulated by Henri Barbusse when he describes intellectuals (“philosophers, critics or poets”) as “the translators of an idea amidst the chaos of life.”<sup>271</sup> Piqueras, Moussinac, and Potamkin translated the global networks of the avant-garde and militant initiatives into their own local realities. They thereby created what Masha Salazkina (following Mary Louise Pratt) calls *contact zones*: social and political spaces where different cultural traditions and hierarchies meet.<sup>272</sup> As this chapter (and the dissertation in general) shows, the film culture of 1930s Spain was largely shaped through these contact zones, thanks to the efforts of film critics and intellectuals in translating international political, cultural, and social developments into local organizations, initiatives, and movements. This example shows how, as Salazkina argues, translation has always been “constitutive of film production, exhibition and circulation, rather than [a] separate

---

<sup>270</sup> Both Moussinac and Piqueras have been labeled as “Stalinist pawns” and marginalized until recently by French and Spanish film historians respectively. See Léon Moussinac, Valérie Vignaux, and François Albéra, *Léon Moussinac: un intellectuel communiste, critique et théoricien des arts* (Paris: Association française de recherche sur l’histoire du cinéma, 2014), 14; Fibla-Gutiérrez and La Parra-Pérez, “Turning the Camera into a Weapon: Juan Piqueras’s Radical Noncommercial Film Projects and Their Afterlives (1930s-1970s),” 347. As Vignaux explains, it has taken a change in the approaches and methodologies in film historiography — from a history of films to the focus on the creation of film culture in itself— for the importance of Moussinac (and Piqueras and many other figures) to emerge with full force.

<sup>271</sup> See Valérie Vignaux, “Léon Moussinac, critique de cinéma ou intelligence d’un art vivant,” in *Léon Moussinac : critique et théoricien des arts*, ed. Valérie Vignaux and François Albera, vol. 1 (Paris: Afrhc, 2014), 7.

<sup>272</sup> Masha Salazkina, “Introduction: Film Theory in the Age of Neoliberal Globalization,” *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, no. 2 (2015): 341; Rossen Djagalov and Masha Salazkina, “Tashkent ‘68: A Cinematic Contact Zone,” *Slavic Review* 75, no. 02 (2016): 280, <https://doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.75.2.279>.

[process] that befall[s] cinema after it has already been made.”<sup>273</sup>

It is important to acknowledge that in this chapter I only cover a small part of the emergence of what Thomas Waugh has described as the “conscience of cinema,” when a series of individuals and collectives shifted from the western avant-garde towards a “militant workers’ culture” largely articulated through documentary cinema and radical film culture practices.<sup>274</sup> I look beyond the initiatives, networks, and institutions of the art film avant-garde, which Malte Hagener and others have rightly—but also incompletely—described as the sources for the emergence of film culture.<sup>275</sup> The geographic trajectories I trace (Spain-France-USA-USSR) are surprisingly absent from such ground-breaking works. I bring these histories together by posing two questions: how did radical film culture circulate in the 1930s as a reaction against both escapist entertainment and the pure-art cinema?; and how did the shift from an aesthetic to a politicized avant-garde intersect with proletarian institutions in contexts as varied as Spain (a relatively poor country without a strong film industry but with an effervescent political and film culture), France (the cradle of avant-garde film culture and point of reference for Spanish critics) and the USA (the center of commercial film production and advanced capitalism)?

Choosing three figures from disparate contexts presents obvious methodological challenges, especially in addressing the specificities of each context while maintaining a coherent discourse on their common contribution to the emergence of radical film culture. One of the aims of this chapter, therefore, is to account for the different temporalities of avant-garde

---

<sup>273</sup> Masha Salazkina, “Translating the Academe: Conceptualizing the Transnational in Film and Media,” in *The Multilingual Screen: New Reflections on Cinema and Linguistic Difference* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 20.

<sup>274</sup> Thomas Waugh, *The Conscience of Cinema: The Works of Joris Ivens 1912-1989* (Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 25–28, <https://doi.org/10.5117/9789089647535>.

<sup>275</sup> Malte Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back: The European Avant-Garde and the Invention of Film Culture, 1919-1939* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007); Malte Hagener, ed., *The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building and the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Europe, 1919-1945* (New York: Berghahn, 2014).

and political film cultures that surface when previously overlooked nodes like Spain are given central consideration. Such a methodology creates a necessarily unsystematic, and at times seemingly anachronistic, historiography of radical film culture.<sup>276</sup> Only by following this model can we trace the multiple “applied avant-gardes” (to use Ian Christie’s term)<sup>277</sup> into which alternative film evolved, overcoming the narrative that “after 1930 the European Avant-garde virtually ceased to exist.”<sup>278</sup>

To address the heterogeneity of this history it is useful to invoke Bert Hogenkamp’s methodological approach to the diverging histories of workers’ film movements in western European countries in the interwar period, and their relationship to the different national Communist Parties. He reminds us that “not only were they different from country to country, but quite often simply the presence of one or more inspiring, organizing artist seems to have been more decisive than the political importance attached by the national CP to the grouping.”<sup>279</sup> In this sense, what served as a common aspiration among Piqueras, Moussinac, and Potamkin was the concept of radical film pedagogy explained in the introduction, which was realized differently according to the specificities of their different projects and the institutions that I discuss throughout the chapter.

Cinema was perceived worldwide as an educational resource, given the elevated levels of illiteracy and the power of the medium to captivate diverse audiences. For critics like Piqueras,

---

<sup>276</sup> I use the terms *anachronism* and *unsystematic* in a positive sense, echoing Jacques Rancière’s articulation of the relation between different temporalities against ‘homogeneous blocs or signifying totalities, as in the books we read as children’. See Kristin Ross, “Historicizing Untimeliness,” in *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*, ed. Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 27; Fibla-Gutiérrez and La Parra-Pérez, “Turning the Camera into a Weapon: Juan Piqueras’s Radical Noncommercial Film Projects and Their Afterlives (1930s-1970s).”

<sup>277</sup> Ian Christie, “The Avant-Gardes and European Cinema before 1930,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 451.

<sup>278</sup> David Curtis, *Experimental Cinema* (New York: Universe Books, 1971), 33.

<sup>279</sup> Bert Hogenkamp, “Workers’ Film in Europe,” *Jump Cut*, no. 19 (December 1978), <https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC19folder/WorkersFilmDialog.html>. Accessed July 6, 2018.

Moussinac, and Potamkin, film was also the perfect vehicle for political revolution and solidarity. The medium spoke in the global language of images, connecting their different pedagogical efforts to a tacit *internationale* of film education. The trajectories and initiatives promoted by these figures were part of radical film culture projects that spread throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s. They should be understood in the context of the popularization of small-gauge filmmaking technology, the collective organization of film culture initiatives by clubs, political platforms and workers' associations, and the rapid radicalization of a public sphere increasingly affected by the competing projects of fascism, communism, and liberal democracy.<sup>280</sup> As I show in the next section, the cultural formation that had spearheaded the political and artistic avant-gardes had to give way to new strategies, its transformative spirit translated into institutions at the service of the working class and anti-fascism.

### **The deaths and translations of the avant-garde**

The projects of Piqueras, Moussinac, and Potamkin were deeply indebted to the modernist networks that had pushed for film's status as a distinct art-form capable of capturing the fragmentary nature of the modern world and its contradictions.<sup>281</sup> But in the face of an increasingly radicalized political and social context, revolutionary aesthetics was not enough: the radically transformative potential of film had to be mobilized and organized beyond bourgeois

---

<sup>280</sup> To this note, and as outlined in chapter one in relation to the Spanish context, the importance of the Comintern in providing the material support and inspiration for many of these initiatives is key. In Spain and France, the PCE and PCF provided institutional cover for organizations such as the AEAR and its local Spanish branch, which was largely organized around the journal *Octubre*, finding outlets as well in the proletarian newspapers *L'Humanité*, *Regards*, *La Scène Ouvrière*, *Pueblo* or *Mundo Obrero*. The ties to the Communist Party put these initiatives in touch with a broader international circuit of leftist artists and intellectuals, in particular the thriving experimental cinematic culture in Europe and the Soviet Union. In the USA the CPUSA was in constant conversation with these institutions via the work of the International Red Aid (MOPR), the WIR and outlets such as *Daily Masses*, *Workers Theatre* or *Experimental Cinema*.

<sup>281</sup> Bill Nichols, "Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde," *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 580–610.

institutions in order to affect society as a whole. In this sense, art was not abstractly dissolved into life, but into the creation of specific cultural institutions at the service of artistic and political emancipation. As Valérie Vignaux argues in regard to Moussinac, for him “the issue was not only the legitimation of cinema as an art-form or heritage, but rather, its institutional recognition as a mass media.”<sup>282</sup> It is in this spirit of institutional organization that political initiatives and “spaces of artistic and cultural sociability”<sup>283</sup> (or contact zones) were envisioned and created by the critics analyzed in the chapter.

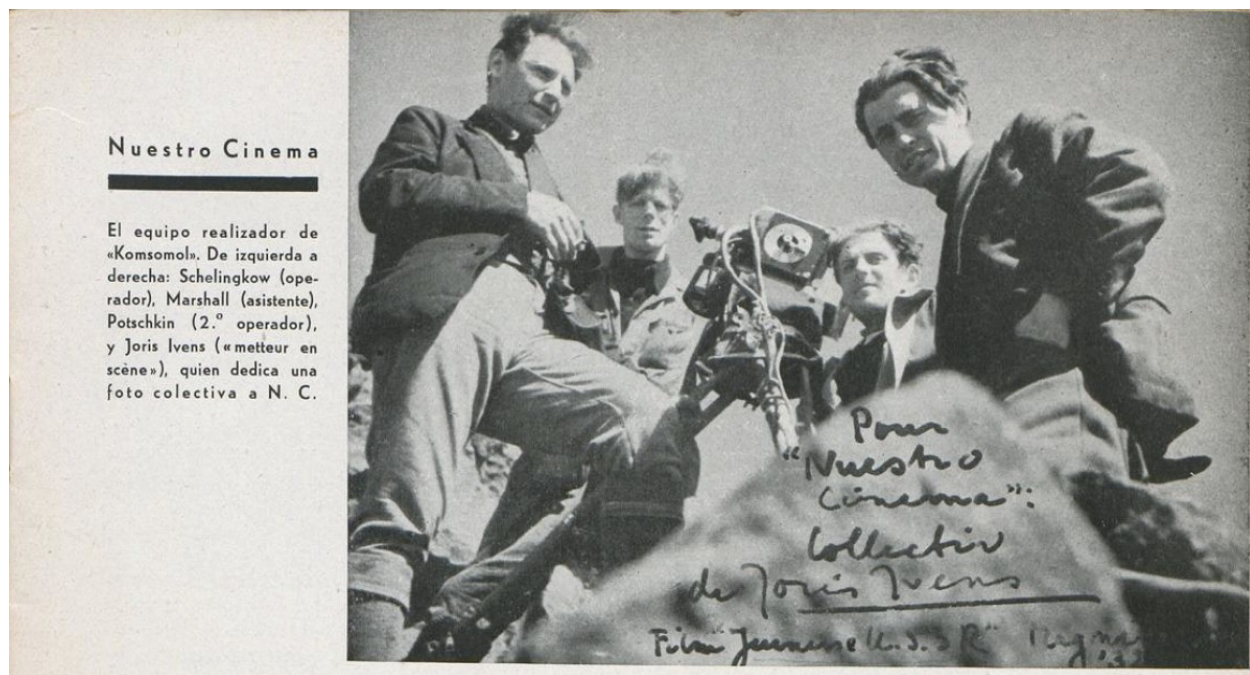


Figure 23. Dedicated picture taken in the USSR from Joris Ivens and the team of the film *Komsomol* (1933) to the "Nuestro Cinema collective." In *Nuestro Cinema*, issue 10 (March 1933).

In their calls for international travel, foreign-language publishing, translation, and mobility, Piqueras, Moussinac, and Potamkin followed what Raymond Williams describes as “the true

<sup>282</sup> Valérie Vignaux, “Léon Moussinac, intellectuel communiste,” in *Léon Moussinac : un intellectuel communiste*, ed. Valérie Vignaux and François Albera, vol. 2 (Paris: Afhrc, 2014), 19.

<sup>283</sup> Valérie Vignaux, “Léon Moussinac théoricien du cinéma : d’une poétique des arts à une politique de la culture,” in *Léon Moussinac : un intellectuel communiste, critique et théoricien des arts*, ed. François Albera and Valérie Vignaux (Paris: Association française de recherche sur l’histoire du cinéma, 2014), 133.

social bases of the early avant-garde,”<sup>284</sup> challenging the borders of the old order. They established a transnational network of radical film culture that connected the seemingly disparate political realities of the USSR, Spain, France, USA, and the Netherlands (among many others) through film journals, clubs, and congresses (as Figure 23 exemplifies). For instance, we know that Léon Moussinac and Juan Piqueras travelled to the USSR in the early 1930s and that they knew each other when the latter moved to Paris in 1930.<sup>285</sup> They both attended the second CICI in Brussels in November 1930, alongside key figures in the independent cinema community like Joris Ivens (Holland), Jean Vigo (France), and Hans Richter (Germany).<sup>286</sup> Likewise, Harry Alan Potamkin immersed himself in avant-garde film culture during a 1926 visit to Paris, where he must have met Moussinac, and later attended the first Congress of Revolutionary Writers in Kharkov (6–15 November 1930) as part of a delegation for *New Masses*, the Marxist newspaper closely associated with the Communist Party USA (from herein, CPUSA).<sup>287</sup> Ultimately, my conception of the avant-garde is aimed at understanding how the transformative spirit and impulse of this formation was translated into practices beyond the realm of aesthetics. With this idea in mind, we can identify new genealogies of 1930s film culture, some of them crucially connected to later developments in film education, documentary cinema, and radical film criticism and activism.<sup>288</sup>

Consequently, this chapter also reassesses the shift from a formalist to a materialist avant-

---

<sup>284</sup> Williams, *Politics of Modernism*, 59.

<sup>285</sup> Juan Piqueras, “Con Joris Ivens,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 12 (June-July 1933): 177–82.

<sup>286</sup> Juan Piqueras, “Cinema independiente en 1930,” *La Gaceta Literaria*, no. 97 (1931): 14–15.

<sup>287</sup> J. Q. Neets, “A Letter from Soviet Russia,” *New Masses*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (1930), p. 14,” *New Masses* 6, no. 6 (1930): 14; Douglas C. Wixson, *Worker-Writer in America: Jack Conroy and the Tradition of Midwestern Literary Radicalism, 1898-1990* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 187.

<sup>288</sup> See in this respect the Special Issue edited by Jonathan P. Eburne and Rita Felski in *New Literary History* on legacies and reexaminations of the avant-garde as “productive site for methodological and historical invention, and not merely a monument to the glorious past of radical art.” Jonathan P. Eburne and Rita Felski, “Introduction,” *New Literary History* 41, no. 4 (2010): vi, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2010.0031>.



garde. Piqueras, Moussinac, and Potamkin are paradigmatic figures of alternative interwar film culture who, echoing Tom Gunning's words (tinged with Benjaminian metaphors), not only "grasped this promise of cinema as it flickered up, as the moment of its peril, and perhaps extinction, approached,"<sup>289</sup> but also took this promise into the realm of political emancipation. These three critics gradually departed from the autonomous aesthetic circles that had initially nurtured their fascination for film, developing projects and institutions focused on critical pedagogy.<sup>290</sup> Contrary to Peter Bürger's notion that the avant-garde was only institutionalized after World War II by what he calls the neo-avant-garde (and thus losing its revolutionary potential),<sup>291</sup> I show how this materialist avant-garde embraced institutionalization precisely to transform everyday life, convinced that popular education was an essential part of cultural democratization.<sup>292</sup> Bürger's assessment of what he calls the historical avant-garde (referring to the interwar period) is based on a formalist understanding of the term, which leaves aside its nature as a transformative network of movements, institutions, critics, and artists who sought to transform the social order.<sup>293</sup> As Oliver Quintyn reminds us, this didn't mean a tout court rejection of the 1920s avant-garde movement, "among which one could still inscribe and acquire critical and political uses and meanings," but to identify elements pertinent to the volatile 1930s

---

<sup>289</sup> Tom Gunning, "Encounters in Darkened Rooms: Alternative Programming of the Dutch Filmliga, 1927-1931," in *The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building and the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Europe, 1919-1945*, ed. Malte Hagener (New York: Berghahn, 2014), 72-117.

<sup>290</sup> As François Albera reminds us, Moussinac understood his critical work as an action that was in great part pedagogical. See François Albera, "Moussinac et Son Double : Décor, Décoration, Arts Décoratifs," in *Léon Moussinac, Un Intellectuel Communiste*, ed. Valérie Vignaux and François Albera, vol. 2 (Paris: Afrhc, 2014), 40.

<sup>291</sup> Peter Bürger, Bettina Brandt, and Daniel Purdy, "Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde: An Attempt to Answer Certain Critics of 'Theory of the Avant-Garde,'" *New Literary History* 41, no. 4 (2010): 697, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2010.0034>.

<sup>292</sup> Vignaux, "Léon Moussinac, intellectuel communiste," 19.

<sup>293</sup> See François Albera, *L'avant-garde au cinéma* (Paris: Colin, 2005); Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back*; Olivier Quintyn, *Valences de l'avant-garde: essai sur l'avant-garde, l'art contemporain et l'institution* (Paris: Questions Théoriques, 2015); François Bovier, "L'avant-garde dans les études filmiques," *1895. Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze [En ligne]* 55 (2008), <http://journals.openedition.org/1895/4120>.

context, and put them at the service of proletarian and anti-fascist struggle.<sup>294</sup> This is the project into which Piqueras, Moussinac, and Potamkin channeled their energies and their local and international contacts, symbolically pronouncing the death of the avant-garde and its translation into a new materialist cultural formation.

In 1931 Potamkin published an article titled “The death of the bourgeois film” in the Dutch journal *Front*, foreshadowing a very similar essay (“Muerte de la vanguardia” / Death of the avant-garde) that Moussinac published in *Nuestro Cinema* (translated by Piqueras) only a few months later. In the case of Potamkin, his focus was not solely on the avant-garde but on any type of cinema that ignored the social: “The bourgeois cinemas everywhere are devoted to the gratification of the ‘minimum’—the maximum of illusions to guarantee a minimum of dissent.”<sup>295</sup> For him, the main difference between the “dead bourgeois film” and the rising social cinema could be located “at the source—in the aim, the social mind, the subject matter” of the latter. The films produced by the dominant class served the purpose of diminishing dissidence, in an enchanting “dance in a cul-de-sac.”<sup>296</sup> Potamkin attempted to bypass this cinematic dead end through his film criticism and pedagogical initiatives, engaging with the growing network of international leftist film culture, but also adopting an increasingly pragmatic view of the role film could play in social change. He was conscious that the task was not a simple one, and that it could only be undertaken through institutions such as film clubs, journals, and filmmaking cooperatives. The “Movie Call to Action!” manifesto from 1931 can be read as a tentative road map for this ambition, which Potamkin, Moussinac, and Piqueras each tried to follow in all possible directions in their respective contexts and internationally.

---

<sup>294</sup> Quintyn, *Valences de l'avant-garde*, 18.

<sup>295</sup> Harry Alan Potamkin, “The death of the bourgeois film,” *Front* (April 1931). Reprinted in Potamkin, *The Compound Cinema*, 164–69.

<sup>296</sup> Potamkin, 164.

In 1932, Piqueras included a Spanish translation of Léon Moussinac's 1931 article "L'Avant-Garde"<sup>297</sup> in the "current problems" section of his journal *Nuestro Cinema*. A new title was added to the essay ("Muerte de la vanguardia" / "Death of the Avant-garde") in a gesture that tellingly underscored the materialist shift of most leftist critics.<sup>298</sup> The French critic had solemnly pronounced the death of a cultural formation that had discovered the medium's nature as a "means of education and propaganda for the masses," but could no longer, given the technical and economic crisis of the medium, be sustained or become effective under the same configuration.<sup>299</sup> For Moussinac, the avant-garde's absolute focus on aesthetics—and a concomitant disregarding of economics and technical changes in the industry—was to blame for this premature death. Its desire for autonomy from other spheres of production had ultimately rendered the movement inoperative for social and political struggle in a context of world economic crisis, heightened worker struggle, ascendant fascism, and looming world war. Although Moussinac did not explain what exactly would succeed the avant-garde, he did imply that it would be an *organization* capable of overcoming the technical problems created by the consolidation of sound cinema, while continuing to address the challenges faced by the formation now pronounced dead.

This veiled allusion to the USSR as the guarantor of a new avant-garde is typical of the polemical direction taken by many intellectuals during the 1930s. Their political commitment created an irreconcilable split in the avant-garde between those who defended the independence and autonomy of artistic creation and those who thought art should be instrumentalized by the

---

<sup>297</sup> Léon Moussinac, "L'Avant-garde," *L'Humanité*, September 8, 1931.

<sup>298</sup> Moussinac updated the essay one more time as part of his book *L'Age Ingrat du Cinéma* (1933), in a section titled "The Condition of International Cinema." See Léon Moussinac, *L'Age ingrat du cinéma* (Paris: Editeurs Français Réunis, 1967), 331–54. Richard Abel translated a section in Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, 1:105–11.

<sup>299</sup> Léon Moussinac, "Muerte de la vanguardia," *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 7 (December 1932): 204–5.

proletarian cause, following the imposition of socialist realism under Stalin.<sup>300</sup> *Nuestro Cinema* clearly aligned itself with this second option: for the journal, it was in the Soviet Union that the “living pulse of cinematography” could be found, as opposed to the dead end (the “cul-de-sac”) of the avant-garde.<sup>301</sup> The methodological shift advocated by Piqueras, Moussinac, and Potamkin—from aesthetics-based approaches, in line with 1920s impressionist French film theory, to a Marxist-materialist historiography that foregrounded the economics of the production process—was informed by similar political objectives (mainly a proletarian revolution), but the tactics were certainly not homogeneous. They were inspired and guided by the Soviet model, but their projects for a radical pedagogy were directed to transform their own local film cultures, establishing the link between cinema and society—in political and economic terms—that artistic autonomy had explicitly rejected until then:

The true “Art for all” should never consist of turning people into spectators, rather the opposite: it consists of mastering what was previously the particular property of the specialists of art –mastering all of the qualities and abilities necessary to build and organize raw material. That comes first. Second is the involvement of the masses in the processes of “creation,” which until now only individuals have used to conduct their “liturgies.”<sup>302</sup>

These words, taken from Sergei Tret'iakov's 1923 essay “Art in the Revolution and the Revolution in Art,” summarize the Soviet-inspired participatory spirit behind the cultural actions

---

<sup>300</sup> This split is usually explained through the Aragon affair of 1932–33, when André Breton and Louis Aragon exchanged a series of articles on the convenience of submitting art's independence to a particular political cause and institution such as the PCF. The incident ended with Breton's intervention in the 1935 AEAR Congress and the definitive split between Surrealism and Communism. See Raymond Spiteri and Donald LaCoss, eds., *Surrealism, Politics and Culture* (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate, 2003), 110–28.

<sup>301</sup> A.W. Lunacharsky, “El cinema soviético: el cinema revolucionario soviético,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 1 (June 1932): 14.

<sup>302</sup> Sergei Tret'iakov, “Art in the Revolution and the Revolution in Art (Aesthetic Consumption and Production),” *October* 118 (October 2006): 11–18, <https://doi.org/10.1162/octo.2006.118.1.11>.

sponsored by Marxist critics and intellectuals. Yet, although their actions were united by a common objective and inspiration—the transformation of the artistic realm to serve the proletarian cause—they developed asymmetrically. In the following section I analyze how the materialist turn of the avant-garde was structured through concrete organizational initiatives that circulated in the expanded leftist front during the 1930s. I will then trace these back to how Piqueras, Moussinac, and Potamkin translated these developments into their own local contexts.

### **Reorganizing the networks of the avant-garde**

In 1931, the critics Korea Senda (in Japan) and Heinz Lüdecke (in Germany) called for what Bert Hogenkamp translates as the “agit-propisation of cinema,” advocating a leftist film movement based on smallgauge technology and mobile projections, and thus bypassing the commercial filmic apparatus.<sup>303</sup> This project departed radically from the original intentions of leftist critics around the world to emulate the standard film production of the USSR, offering an alternative model better suited to the difficult contexts (both in terms of financing and censorship) in which Piqueras, Moussinac, and Potamkin developed their radical film culture initiatives. Although it initially met with suspicion by those who wished to create their own Soyuzkino or Mezhrabpom film studios and produce local versions of *Battleship Potemkin* or *Strike* (*Stachka*, Sergei Eisenstein, 1925), it was ultimately adopted as a bottom-up strategy to transform film culture from the base.

As Walter Benjamin’s opening quotation expresses, for an effective organization of any alternative culture, *commitment* had to be accompanied by *pedagogy* (understood as the creation and transmission of alternative cultural, social and political organizational models). As Vignaux

---

<sup>303</sup> Hogenkamp, “Léon Moussinac and The Spectators’ Criticism in France (1931-34),” 5.

argues in reference to Moussinac’s own “engagement,” the critic ultimately realized that the antagonism between a cultivated approach to the arts and popular education could be surpassed by a “spectatorship politics” in which critical work was “concomitant with a reflection on technique and a propensity for pedagogy based on democratizing and popular aims.”<sup>304</sup> Indeed, the trajectories of Piqueras, Moussinac, and Potamkin share a common trait in their emphasis on critical spectatorship and education as a necessary first step in the creation of proletarian film culture. They were not only connected in their trajectories—sometimes directly, sometimes tacitly—but they also produced a shared discourse on film activism that became a *model* across borders.

Many more key figures in this history could have been included—such as Menno ter Baark and Joris Ivens in Holland, Ivor Montagu and Ralph Bond in the UK or Willi Münzenberg, Heinz Lüdecke, and Koreya Senda in Japan and Germany, to name but a few<sup>305</sup>—but this chapter focuses on the specific connections between Spanish radical film culture and its French and American counterparts for the sake of providing a concrete transnational example of how the avant-garde was *translated*, not only from aesthetic to political languages and objectives, but also across national borders and between distinct local contexts. In other words, when assessing the shift from an aesthetic to a materialist avant-garde, one must be aware both of the *local vernacular* (so to speak) of the avant-garde and the global networks of circulation through which it has been translated. Although there were shared aspirations and references, the avant-garde did not speak the same language in every context. But it was always in conversation

---

<sup>304</sup> Vignaux, “Léon Moussinac théoricien du cinéma : d’une poétique des arts à une politique de la culture,” 114–15.

<sup>305</sup> See Gunning, “Encounters in Darkened Rooms: Alternative Programming of the Dutch Filmiga, 1927-1931”; Bert Hogenkamp, *Deadly Parallels: Film and the Left in Britain, 1929-1939* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986); S. McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow’s Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West, 1917-1940* (Yale University Press, 2003); Gross, *Willi Münzenberg*.

with numerous worker film initiatives—some emerging from avant-garde movements, others sponsored by the Workers International Relief (herein WIR) section in their respective countries<sup>306</sup>—across the world.

Important to this larger history are the efforts of Willi Münzenberg (who had invited Moussinac to the USSR in 1927) and others in Germany to organize film production for the political Left via distribution and production companies such as Prometheus (analyzed in chapter one) and Weltfilm (a noncommercial film distributor in small-gauge formats), or the noncommunist leftist organization Volksfilmverband (People’s Film Association, or VFV).<sup>307</sup> In the UK, the London Workers’ Film Society organized regular screenings and was integrated in the nationwide Federation of Workers’ Film Societies (FOWFS), which created a distribution and production company called Atlas Films Co. to import Soviet films and produce a newsreel titled *Workers Topical News*.<sup>308</sup> As a last example, we can cite the Vereeniging voor Volks Cultuur (Association for Popular Culture, or VVVC) in Holland, created by the Communist Party Holland (CPH) to “increase the effectiveness of its film shows” and produce a workers’ newsreel in which Ivens was involved.<sup>309</sup> All these initiatives reflected Gramsci’s “double conviction that theory which could not be translated into terms of fact was useless abstraction, while political action not guided by theory was fruitless and impulsive.”<sup>310</sup> This dictum is echoed

---

<sup>306</sup> Worker photography also saw a huge surge in those same year. See Jorge Ribalta, ed., *El movimiento de la fotografía obrera, 1926-1939: ensayos y documentos* (Madrid: TF, 2011).

<sup>307</sup> Sabine Hake, *The Cinema’s Third Machine: Writing on Film in Germany, 1907-1933* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 185–211; Thomas G. Plummer, ed., *Film and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 2007); David Welch, “The Proletarian Cinema and the Weimar Republic,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 1, no. 1 (January 1981): 3–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439688100260011>.

<sup>308</sup> See Hogenkamp, *Deadly Parallels: Film and the Left in Britain, 1929-1939*, 45; Ralph Bond, “Cinema in the Thirties: Documentary Film and the Labor Movement,” in *Culture And Crisis In Britain In The Thirties*, ed. Jon Clark, Margot Heinemann, and Carole Snee (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979), 241–56.

<sup>309</sup> Waugh, *The Conscience of Cinema*, 112–14.

<sup>310</sup> Carmel Borg, Joseph A. Buttigieg, and Peter Mayo, eds., *Gramsci and Education* (Lanham, Md. ; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 251.

in the final line of Potamkin's 1931 manifesto: "Action without theory is aimless, theory without action is sterile."<sup>311</sup> In this, such practices anticipated the discourses on critical film spectatorship and political action of the Long Sixties. It also provides an interesting counterpoint to Perry Anderson's assertion that western Marxism experienced an increasing divergence of theory and practice between 1918 and 1968, especially aggravated in the 1930s.<sup>312</sup>

This network intersected with existing practices of international film circulation that had been developing in previous years under the auspices of avant-garde movements. Take, for instance, the journal *Close Up* (1927–33), published from Switzerland by a group of American and British artists called The Pool Group. It had correspondents in Moscow, Berlin, Paris, Geneva, London, New York, and Los Angeles, and an equally international list of authors devoted to "theory and analysis" instead of "gossip."<sup>313</sup> In the USA, *Experimental Cinema* (1930–34) followed a similar path, exploring the "principles of world cinema" in order to "orient those individuals and groups scattered throughout America, Europe and U.S.S.R. that are working to liberate the cinema from its stereotyped symbolism."<sup>314</sup> Beyond the pages of film journals, the growing institutionalization of film in government initiatives informed the creation of the IECI in Rome (and similar institutions that I analyze in chapter four). The IECI's creation was decided at an International Congress of Cinema held in Paris in 1926. Although scholars rarely mention the fact, congresses on film were not uncommon at the time, with topics ranging from educational cinema, censorship, amateurism, independent cinema, and even geopolitical relations.<sup>315</sup> All these examples make evident that film was discussed as much as a social and

---

<sup>311</sup> Potamkin, *The Compound Cinema*, 586.

<sup>312</sup> Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: Verso, 1987), 29.

<sup>313</sup> James Donald, Anne Friedberg, and Laura Marcus, eds., *Close up: 1927-1933 ; Cinema and Modernism* (London: Cassell, 1998), 10.

<sup>314</sup> "Announcement," *Experimental Cinema*, no. 1 (February 1930): 1.

<sup>315</sup> See chapter four for detailed examples of these initiatives and the ideology and purpose behind them.



political form as it was an art form. Film culture travelled, and with it ideas about the medium's function in society beyond elite cultural circles and aesthetics.

The interwar period was, then, not so much a period of *competition* between avant-garde and radical film culture, but of *intersection* (and translation) instead. Figures like Moussinac, Potamkin, and Piqueras bridged both realms, ultimately deciding to integrate the transformative energies of the former into the institutional projects of the latter. In the following sections I analyze specific initiatives from these critics that stood at this crossroad between radical cultural expressions and institutional initiatives in an attempt to *reanimate* the avant-garde as a political and social education tool.

Instead of following a chronological order—from Moussinac to Potamkin to Piqueras—I begin with the Spanish critic in order to trace back how the works of Moussinac and Potamkin echoed beyond their respective contexts, and how all three critics intersected in the diffuse, sometimes erratic, but influential genealogy of radical film culture during the 1930s. Opening with the work of Piqueras is also a way to recognize his centrality to the consolidation of such an international circuit, despite having been relatively neglected by scholars until quite recently.<sup>316</sup> Piqueras's mobile position—both in terms of geography and of critical thought—is key for the triangulation of interwar film culture undertaken by this chapter, shifting the boundaries of established film history to provide an alternative map of film culture circulation.<sup>317</sup>

---

<sup>316</sup> In Spain, exceptions to this include Llopis, *Juan Piqueras, el "Delluc" español*, 1988; García Carrión, "Historia(s) de nuestro cine. Nacionalisme en la primera historiografia cinematogràfica"; García Carrión, *Por un cine patrio*; Gubern, *Luis Buñuel*; Fibla Gutierrez, "Revolutionizing the 'National Means of Expression'"; Fibla-Gutiérrez and La Parra-Pérez, "Turning the Camera into a Weapon: Juan Piqueras's Radical Noncommercial Film Projects and Their Afterlives (1930s-1970s)"; Ramos Arenas, "Film Criticism as a Political Weapon"; Pérez Merinero and Pérez Merinero, *Del cinema como arma de clase*.

<sup>317</sup> Masha Salazkina, "Introduction to Juan Piqueras: Amateur Cinema in 'Nuestro Cinema,'" *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 4 (2012): 138–39; Lisa Jarvinen, "Juan Piqueras Biography," *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 4 (2012): 139–41.

## The “world traveler” of film criticism: the multiple, and forgotten, lives of Juan Piqueras

As we saw in chapter one, Piqueras created *Nuestro Cinema* (the first Marxist journal specifically devoted to film published in Spanish) in 1932, in an attempt to revolutionize film criticism in Spain. In this section I focus on how Piqueras’s position as a key node in transnational networks of radical film culture gave shape to this unique publication. It was directed by Piqueras from his home in Paris, printed in Barcelona, and had its headquarters in Madrid.<sup>318</sup> The journal was devoted to the promotion of proletarian and social cinema, in opposition to the capitalist-oriented film industry that dominated Spanish screens at the time—mainly Hollywood and French productions—as well as escapist *españoladas*, which dispensed altogether with social commentary in favor of escapist entertainment and were enthusiastically endorsed by spectators.<sup>319</sup> In this context, as Eva Touboul reminds us, “*Nuestro Cinema* placed itself at the cleavage point between bourgeois and social revolutionary cinema.”<sup>320</sup> The journal published few reviews on films, instead favoring theoretical articles on a wide range of aspects regarding the industrial, ideological, artistic, and political nature of film and its relationship to the social fabric.

It may seem quite striking that the “best film journal in capitalist Europe”—according to Georges Sadoul, one of the most important film historians of the era—<sup>321</sup> appeared in a country like Spain. It is certainly the case if we follow the traditional map of film history, which focuses overwhelmingly on commercial film production and is thus blind to other forms of cinematic

---

<sup>318</sup> For another English-language source on Piqueras, see Lisa Jarvinen’s translation of, and introduction to, an essay from Piqueras’s on multilingual versions of films; Juan Piqueras, “Poorly Timed Campaigns: Versions, Dubbing, Subtitles,” in *The Multilingual Screen: New Reflections on Cinema and Linguistic Difference*, ed. Tijana Mamula and Lisa Patti, trans. Lisa Jarvinen (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

<sup>319</sup> Gubern, *El cine sonoro en la II República (1929-1936)*, 97. Gubern proves in this book how over 50% of films produced in Spain were adaptations of literary works or remakes of other films (mostly based on melodramatic novels).

<sup>320</sup> Touboul, “Entre divertissement et arme: le cinéma selon *Nuestro Cinema* (1932–1935).”

<sup>321</sup> Sadoul, “Les rebelles ont fusillé le Louis Delluc espagnol Juan Piqueras.”

circulation and discourses. As we saw in the introduction and in chapter one, a survey of early 1930s Spanish film culture shows that there were more than fifty-eight film-related journals and dozens of film clubs throughout the country.<sup>322</sup> Spain also had a Comité de Cinematografía (Film Committee), which was created to institutionalize film, organize congresses, and provide a regulatory framework for the medium. Moreover, Spanish film culture looked beyond its borders, sending delegates to the IECI in Rome and the CICI congress in Brussels. This is the thriving cultural milieu into which Piqueras launched *Nuestro Cinema*. His decision, despite living in Paris, to publish a journal in Spanish, mainly distributed in Spain, speaks to the decentralized nature of film culture at the time.

Piqueras had moved to Paris in May 1930 and was brought into the orbit of the Parti Communiste Français (French Communist Party, herein PCF) via figures such as Sadoul and Moussinac. At the same time—and fulfilling the original intention behind his relocation—he also entered the avant-garde circles of René Clair, Germaine Dullac and their like. Indeed, when *La Gaceta Literaria* described Piqueras’s move to France, it used the following description: “Inspired by his great vocation—and devotion—to cinema, Juan Piqueras has gathered all the theoretical cinematographic knowledge acquired in Spain and has gone to Paris to study the seventh art from the inside, in its practical mechanics. From this first step that is Paris, he will later jump—very soon—to the dominions of the greatest and most universal movies; New York and Hollywood.”<sup>323</sup>

It is true that Piqueras did work in the Joinville studios—which had been bought by Paramount Pictures to produce French- and Spanish-speaking versions of Hollywood films—but

---

<sup>322</sup> Hernández Eguíluz, *Testimonios en Huecograbado*, 28.

<sup>323</sup> Llopis, *Juan Piqueras, el “Delluc” español*, 1988, 2:78.

he rapidly became dissatisfied with the types of films produced there, and consequently spearheaded a campaign to boycott Paramount Spanish-version films on the basis of their “mediocrity, falsehood, and lack of personality.”<sup>324</sup> The studio offered Piqueras a considerable amount of money to silence his criticism but he refused, instead intensifying his attack on capitalist cinema. Given this incident, and Piqueras’s subsequent steps towards the promotion of proletarian cinema, it is clear that the move from France was not going to be towards Hollywood but back to Spain—via Paris and the USSR—in order to organize a new generation of radical film critics.

In his account of this first year in Paris, written for the newspaper *La Semana Gráfica*, and in an interview for the journal *Film Star* which described him as a “world traveler gentlemen of film criticism,”<sup>325</sup> Piqueras revealed that after giving up on the Joinville Studio job he travelled to the second CICI congress in Brussels in November of 1930. There he served as the Spanish delegate alongside Ernesto Giménez Caballero (and presented the latter’s 1930 film *Esencia de Verbena* analyzed in the introduction).<sup>326</sup> He also delivered a talk discussing the situation of Hispano-American cinema, the absence of good filmmakers in Spain, and the positive influence of Soviet cinema on a future Spanish cinema. Next, he mentioned plans to travel to Moscow in August, in order to witness Soviet film production in person and spend a few months in the USSR.<sup>327</sup> His objectives were, in his own words, to “travel, read, learn, write, produce, teach,” a description that resonates with Potamkin’s and Moussinac’s goals as engaged internationalist film critics with a clear pedagogical spirit.<sup>328</sup> Alberti had already foreseen

---

<sup>324</sup> Llopis, 2:81–82.

<sup>325</sup> Llopis, 2:65.

<sup>326</sup> Llopis, 2:82.

<sup>327</sup> I have not been able to confirm this visit, which may have been cancelled due to Piqueras’s health problems (he suffered from a stomach ulcer from which he frequently relapsed) or is awaiting confirmation once the Comintern archives in Moscow are fully opened (although he probably travelled with a pseudonym).

<sup>328</sup> As I detail in the conclusion of the dissertation, Josep Renau describes Piqueras as a tireless person who was very

Piqueras's role as first and foremost an educator in 1929, when, in a dedicatory to Piqueras in a copy of Alberti's book *La Amante* (1925), he included a drawing with a blackboard (Figure 24).

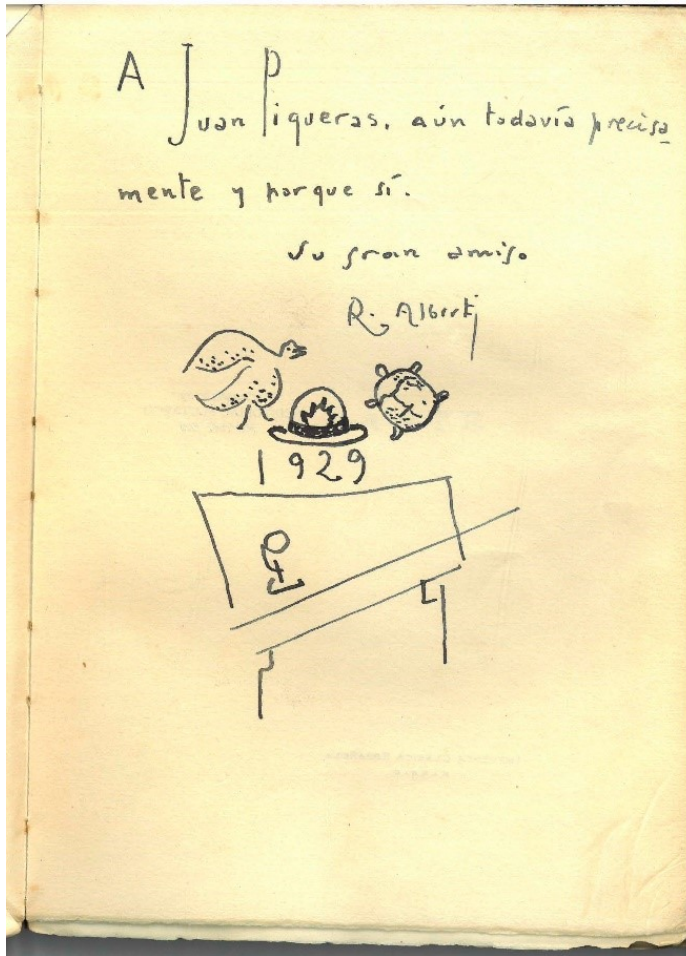


Figure 24. Dedicatory of Rafael Alberti to Juan Piqueras in the book cover of a 1929 reprint of *La Amante* (1925).<sup>329</sup> Courtesy of the Biblioteca Valenciana.

The importance of the second CICI for 1930s film culture has been overlooked by scholars (most likely due to the lack of archival materials available compared to the previous meeting at La Sarraz in 1929). But it was in Brussels where the educational imperative of avant-garde cinema was definitely associated with proletarian struggle and critical spectatorship

---

hard to pin down and was always in motion, developing projects, bringing films into Spain, travelling to international gatherings, and who, most importantly, “had an enormous influence in us [1930s Valencian intellectuals and artists]. A big, big influence.” Juan Manuel Llopis, “Los amigos de Juan Piqueras,” *Oleana: Cuadernos de Cultura Comarcal*, no. 1 (1985): 41.

<sup>329</sup> Rafael Alberti, *La Amante* (Madrid: Plutarco, 1929).

projects, becoming a watershed moment for critics like Piqueras, Moussinac, and Potamkin and their respective projects. In La Sarraz the crisis of the avant-garde had emerged as a central topic amidst the popularization of sound cinema and the politicization of many members of the movement.<sup>330</sup> The difficulties of finding a common ground to define the independence of avant-garde cinema and how to blend its social and artistic aims were especially patent. For instance, Béla Balázs warned his fellow participants of the “the danger of formalism,” to which Hans Richter replied that abstract films shouldn’t be prejudiced as aesthetic experiments.<sup>331</sup> Although the 1929 congress was a watershed moment in which many famous members of the avant-garde (including Eisenstein, Balázs, Ruttmann, Ivor Montagu, Richter, and Cavalcanti) gathered together, it ultimately became more of a coda of a previous formation than a new beginning for the avant-garde.

Despite Moussinac’s calls for the creation of a federation of cine clubs and a “Coopérative Internationale du Film Independent,”<sup>332</sup> the congress made evident the difficulties of finding a middle ground between films “for an art circle” and “popular art,” and the issue was left unresolved.<sup>333</sup> The Brussels meeting (in which both Moussinac and Piqueras were present) picked up on the problematic and suggested to extend the avant-garde project to the so-called masses through educational initiatives:

The International Congress of Independent Cinema as well as the national film club leagues have the duty to defend the spiritual and artistic independence of film against commercial influences, the poisoning of public opinion, and the attacks on the true spirit

---

<sup>330</sup> Roland Cosandey and Thomas Tode, *Le 1er Congrès international du cinéma indépendant: La Sarraz, septembre 1929: quand l’avant-garde projetait son avenir* (Perpignan: Institut Jean Vigo, 2000).

<sup>331</sup> Cosandey and Tode, 17.

<sup>332</sup> Vignaux, “Léon Moussinac théoricien du cinéma : d’une poétique des arts à une politique de la culture,” 168.

<sup>333</sup> Cosandey and Tode, *Le 1er Congrès international du cinéma indépendant*.

of cinema. To continue with these efforts, they consider that it's not only necessary to count with the support of the intellectual public, but from all the mass of spectators. Because of this, they have tasked themselves with undertaking with all their means and power the *education of the public* so that they [the public] can exert as quickly as possible a happy influence on the general [film] production.<sup>334</sup>

The explicit mention to the importance of incorporating the general public through educational initiatives in the fight against capitalist commercial cinema is indicative of the direction that the avant-garde energies took for figures like Moussinac, Potamkin, and Piqueras. The inclusion of the working class in the visual imaginary of cinema was paramount for many leaders of the leftist avant-garde, who saw this as an unavoidable step given the mass nature of the medium. As Joris Ivens discussed in relation to *Misère au Borinage* (Henri Storck and Joris Ivens, 1934): “Cinema is in its essence an art within the reach of the mass. However, it has never been used to interest this mass in its own evolution, its own manifestations [...] The worker is an unknown character on the screen.”<sup>335</sup>

Since there are no diaries of the congress's sessions it is impossible to discern the extent of Piqueras and Moussinac's interactions. But judging from the projects initiated (and continued) by Moussinac in previous years—such as the film club Amis de Spartacus; the Critique des Spectateurs column in *L'Humanité*; and the PCF Huma films (I will analyze all of these in the later section focused on the French critic)—and Piqueras's own initiatives—the founding of *Nuestro Cinema* one year after the congress; the creation of a worker-oriented cine-club called Studio Nuestro Cinema; and his project to develop a proletarian amateur film production—it is

---

<sup>334</sup> “Deuxième Congrès International du Cinéma Indépendant,” *La Revue du Cinéma* 3, no. 18 (January 1931): 70. Emphasis added.

<sup>335</sup> Jacqueline Aubenas, *Hommage à Henri Storck / Films 1928-1985, Catalogue Analytique* (Bruxelles, 1995), 29.

clear that the 1930 congress came at a pivotal moment for the socially oriented avant-garde, which was now translating its aesthetic revolution to the social and political realm as well as to other realms of film culture, such as amateur cinema and spectator criticism. This didn't imply a categorical rejection of radical aesthetics and surrealist methods. When Moussinac returned from Brussels and published his summary of the congress in *L'Humanité*,<sup>336</sup> he did so alongside an article on Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's *L'Age D'Or* (1930), where he praised the film's unprecedented "flock of kicks in the ass" to bourgeois conventions, stating that "*L'Age d'Or* is not a film about the proletariat, but we can affirm that, to a certain extent, it serves its [proletarian] revolutionary designs."<sup>337</sup> As I mentioned before, although the avant-garde as an autonomous aesthetic movement was dead for Moussinac and Piqueras, its revolutionary energies and tactics were not to be completely disavowed.

For instance, in *Nuestro Cinema* César M. Arconada praised Buñuel's later film *Las Hurdes, tierra sin pan*, arguing that beyond films "which show us what we want to see," there were others that "show us what we wouldn't normally see because of multiple reasons; because it is ugly, sad, vulgar, or bitterly poor."<sup>338</sup> Arconada celebrated Buñuel's turn to "realism" and his departure from a "complicated intellectualism," without devaluating his previous films *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Age D'Or*, which he also described as "magnificent."<sup>339</sup> Such conception of the new realism as a logical consequence and maturation of avant-garde experimentation is best illustrated in the critic's description of *Las Hurdes* in relation to Buñuel's career: "the world, in its classic form, in its vertical and concrete lines, has been reintegrated to his deepened and

---

<sup>336</sup> Léon Moussinac, "Le Deuxième Congrès du Cinéma Indépendant," *L'Humanité*, December 7, 1930.

<sup>337</sup> Léon Moussinac, "L'Age d'Or," *L'Humanité*, December 7, 1930.

<sup>338</sup> César M. Arconada, "Luis Buñuel y las Hurdes; el film," *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 15 (February 1935): 9.

<sup>339</sup> Arconada.



misplaced surrealist eyes.”<sup>340</sup> Such aesthetically conservative positions (akin to Stalin’s) were shared with other materialist critics, for example in Moussinac’s description of documentary filmmaking as a “rude but fine path to activism.”<sup>341</sup> This path implied, as this chapter insists on, concrete institutional initiatives aimed at solidifying local and international networks of film culture circulation.

It was around this time that Clair invited Piqueras to work as assistant director on his film *À nous la liberté* (René Clair, 1931).<sup>342</sup> But instead of embracing his adoption into the avant-garde circles of Paris, Piqueras found himself at odds with what he saw as Clair’s “humanist sentimentalism,” which “whipped the dominant classes but without defending the oppressed classes or their concrete ideals.”<sup>343</sup> Immediately after abandoning the film set, Piqueras began to prepare *Nuestro Cinema*, which, under the subtitle “Cuadernos Internacionales de Valorización Cinematográfica” (International Notebooks of Cinematographic Evaluation), sought to defend “a cinema capable of freeing us from today’s ideological poverty. That is, a cinema with depth, with an open mind, with social content. A cinema that is not the current one, which is in the hands of those who are interested in a mass ignorant of what cinema could teach them.”<sup>344</sup>

This position was certainly not without paradox, especially in terms of how much the proletarian class was an active part of these developments rather than just an imagined subject talked about by leftist intellectuals. Indeed, the fact that Piqueras and many of the writers in *Nuestro Cinema* came from working-class backgrounds—without the wealthy upbringing of most avant-garde members—hints at the emergence of what Gramsci calls an “organic”

---

<sup>340</sup> Arconada.

<sup>341</sup> Barnard, Timothy., “From Impressionism to Communism: Léon Moussinac’s Technics of the Cinema, 1921-1933,” *Framework* 42 (2000): 8.

<sup>342</sup> Llopis, Juan Piqueras, *el “Delluc” español*, 1988, 2:87.

<sup>343</sup> Juan Piqueras, “En torno a René Clair,” *Cinegramas*, no. 78 (March 8, 1936).

<sup>344</sup> Piqueras, “Itinerario de Nuestro Cinema.”

proletarian intellectual in Spain.<sup>345</sup> But there was also a great distance between the ideal working-class spectator envisioned by them and the actual interests of the public. For instance, Piqueras claimed in 1932 that “the public, despite how badly oriented and treated it is, despite the social and aesthetic disdain it endures, has decisively turned his back to superficial cinema, to imperialist films disguised as pacifist, to individualistic cinema that ignores complex problems, to operettas, to white comedies, and in sum to everything old and expired.”<sup>346</sup> But the fact is that North American films largely dominated the Spanish exhibition market. As an example, in 1934 only twenty-one Spanish films were released, compared to 214 Hollywood productions. Moreover, the few local productions that made it to theatres were mostly *españoladas*.

Nonetheless, Piqueras’s efforts to incite critical spectatorship mark an important moment in radical film culture, when the utopian future tense of the avant-garde was replaced by the present tense of workers’ struggles against capitalism. This new framework is exemplified in Piqueras’s comments on *Nuestro Cinema*’s first survey of the medium, launched in the second issue of the journal in 1932. Questions included the role of the social in cinema, genres beyond commercial cinema, and the status and possibilities of a Spanish film industry. In his analysis, the critic noted the absence of replies from members of the “old literary avant-garde, intellectuals, and Hispanic film club snobs,” who had arrived late to cinema, after the “great public.”<sup>347</sup> This he counterposed to the anonymous replies of “unknown voices through which we perceive new feelings, aspirations, and formations [...] For them cinema has stopped being a distraction and most of them recognize the cultural, social, and educational meaning that we

---

<sup>345</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quintin Hoare (New York: International Publ, 1985), 10.

<sup>346</sup> Juan Piqueras, “Nuestro itinerario: política y cinema,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 4 (September 1932): 110–11.

<sup>347</sup> Piqueras, “Colofón a la primera encuesta de Nuestro Cinema,” 198.

extol.”<sup>348</sup> Considering how Moussinac and Potamkin had moved from aesthetics-based film criticism to political and ideological action in the previous years, it is clear that Piqueras internalized their eschewal of avant-garde purist cinema in favor of a radical film pedagogy that would operate beyond intellectual elites.

Two issues of the journal later, Piqueras would formally introduce Moussinac to Spanish readers, with a preface to Moussinac’s review of *Zlatye Gory/The Golden Mountains* (Sergei Yutkevich, 1931). Piqueras described him as the only genuinely independent French film critic: “His attacks against capitalist bourgeois cinema, his eminently *pedagogical* role with the proletarian readership of L’Humanité, his acidic campaigns against all those films imposed upon us, his own books on cinema, make Léon Moussinac the first *militant* of this cinematographic journalism created by the revolutionary press.”<sup>349</sup> I underscore the terms *pedagogical* and *militant* as they neatly summarize the change in priorities for the Spanish critic, who had left his native Valencia for Paris in search of “the center of cinema”—with an eye on Hollywood—and landed in the French film avant-garde circles. But he had then become involved in initiatives and institutions such as the Hispano-American Cinema Congress, the IECI and CICI meetings, and different film clubs in Spain. He had finally found in Moussinac the mirror onto which to project his aspirations as film critic and cultural agitator. Piqueras recognized in him a new mode of cultural activism and engagement that combined a defense of alternative cinema against the commercial system with a clear political alignment with the proletarian cause.<sup>350</sup> In this sense Piqueras’s 1932 use of the term *militant* speaks to a radical change in the conceptualization of

---

<sup>348</sup> Piqueras, 198.

<sup>349</sup> Juan Piqueras, “Los nuevos films; Montañas de Oro, filme soviético de Youtkewitch,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 4 (September 1932): 119. Emphasis added.

<sup>350</sup> It is important to stress that I do not mean to project the 1960s significations of the term *militant* into the 1930s, but to suggest instead that the imaginary associated with committed intellectuals in cinema can be traced back to the internationalist networks I describe in this chapter.

the public role of socially committed film critics, which arguably shifted from criticizing commercial capitalist cinema to capitalism itself. Not only this, but their realm of influence expanded from weekly or monthly columns in film journals to a whole array of activities interrelated with politics and education.

In the case of Spain, Piqueras realized that a large-scale proletarian film production faced insurmountable obstacles, and so he opted instead to promote alternative radical film culture networks and institutions. The idea was inspired by Moussinac's FOCP, whose ultimate goal was to mobilize the cinematic apparatus beyond commercial purposes, envisioning a pedagogical role that would educate spectators in social justice and political action (in line with the statement cited above from the CICI congress in Brussels). Piqueras translated this project into the Spanish context by calling for the creation of a Spanish federation of proletarian film clubs in order to disseminate a revolutionary film culture throughout Spain.<sup>351</sup> The idea was to unite the growing number of proletarian-oriented film clubs, such as the Sindicato Banca y Bolsa (Madrid), Cineclub Proletario (Santander), Cine Studio Popular (Valencia) or Cineclub Avançada (Terrassa), into a well-structured distribution network of militant films that would bypass the government's censorship of official commercial channels.

Although the project was focused on distribution and not production, it was hoped that the propagation of a militant film culture would also motivate a localized proletarian film production. This had already happened in the Sindicato Banca y Bolsa, which produced a film – *El Despertar Bancario/The Banking Awakening*, unfortunately now lost—on the labor conditions of the workers, but there is little to no evidence of similar examples elsewhere.<sup>352</sup> To try and give

---

<sup>351</sup> Juan Piqueras, 'Hacia una federación Española de cineclubs proletarios' ('Towards a Spanish federation of proletarian film clubs'), *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 13 (1933), pp. 214–16. Piqueras, "Hacia una Federación Española de Cineclubs Proletarios."

<sup>352</sup> As mentioned by Cineclub Sindicato Banca y Bolsa director Julio González Vázquez in Julio González Vázquez,



screening of films to members of a private society without having to submit them to censorship. Sessions were held every Sunday in the Pleyel cinema in Madrid, with branches established in other Spanish cities, such as Valencia. Discussing the objectives of the initiative, Antonio del Amo said: “we have organized these sessions so that, once the series end, attendees draw instructional conclusions that allow them to see with more clarity the perspectives that cinema can offer as an art and as an educational instrument.”<sup>354</sup> The film club was conceived as more of a course than a series of individual screenings, and it covered a wide range of film styles and ideologies in an effort to give audiences a comprehensive understanding of the history of the medium. Across its nine sessions, it showed films from Eisenstein, Buñuel, Ivens, Olga Preobrazhenskaya, G.W. Pabst, King Vidor, Jean Renoir, and Walter Ruttmann.

Although it largely failed to reach the working-class audience it envisioned, the initiative was, in line with similar projects spearheaded by Moussinac and Potamkin, a key step towards a critical spectatorship pedagogy. These initiatives had appeared elsewhere in Europe, for example in the Dutch Film Liga (Nederlandsche Film Liga), whose experiments in film programming Tom Gunning describes as a “pedagogical process, educating the audience to new viewing habits.”<sup>355</sup> This blend of politically oriented and artistic avant-garde cinema was aimed at creating an alternative film culture that could counter the hegemony of commercial cinema. As Gunning explains, the rejection of Hollywood from such initiatives was “not simply cultural snobbery [...] but a belief that detouring vision into fictional illusionist fantasy blunted film’s capacity to uncover the secrets of the world.”<sup>356</sup> For Piqueras, this necessarily implied uncovering the secrets of capitalism, showing instead the actual experience of labor, concealed

---

<sup>354</sup> Antonio Del Amo Algara, “Apertura de Studio Nuestro Cinema,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 14 (January 1935).

<sup>355</sup> Gunning, “Encounters in Darkened Rooms: Alternative Programming of the Dutch Filmliga, 1927-1931,” 95.

<sup>356</sup> Gunning, 112.

by commercial escapist cinema.

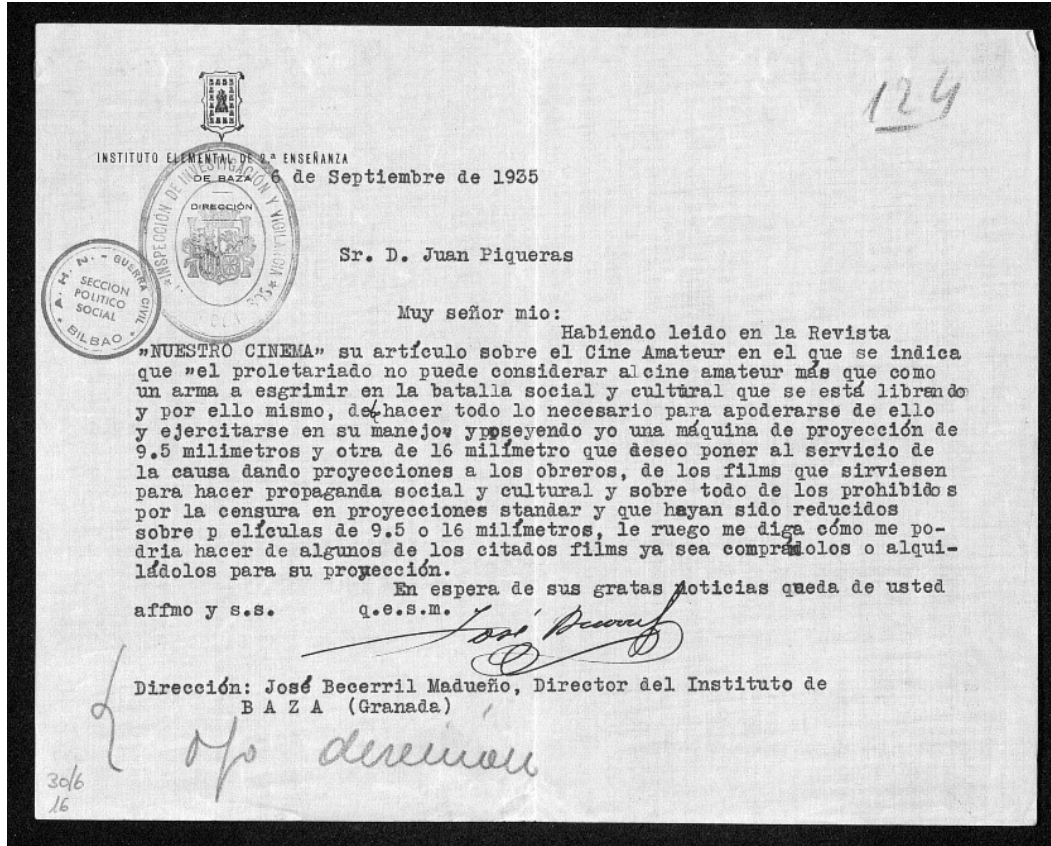


Figure 26. Letter from schoolteacher José Becerril Madueño to Juan Piqueras, September 1935. Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica.

In this sense, given the urgencies of an increasingly radicalized Spanish society, and to enhance the real possibilities for a proletarian film production, Piqueras inaugurated a section in the last issue of *Nuestro Cinema* that was devoted to amateur cinema, with a manifesto titled "Nuestro cine amateur en Nuestro Cinema" (Our amateur cinema in Nuestro Cinema). This called for a proletarian appropriation of amateur cinema in order to begin an alternative cinema movement that "depicts the life and essential struggles of the proletariat in the world, that shows its ideas and initiatives, its labors and problems."<sup>357</sup> Piqueras saw amateur film as a means to

<sup>357</sup> Juan Piqueras, "Nuestro cine amateur en Nuestro Cinema." Reprinted in Pérez Merinero and Pérez Merinero, *Del cinema como arma de clase*, 75-77.

document the life of the workers by introducing it into the public visual sphere of the time. He signaled the countless advantages of small-gauge filmmaking over mainstream production, including cost, ubiquity of projection, and the absence of state censorship over substandard formats (8, 9.5, 16 and 17.5mm). The latter was a key loophole through which a proletarian film culture could be introduced in Spain, given that Soviet films were still banned by the Second Spanish Republic government.

A few months after Piqueras had published his proposal for a proletarian amateur cinema, the critic received a letter from José Becerril Madueño, director of a school in Baza (Granada), in which the educator expressed great interest in the initiative, offering his own 9.5 and 16mm projector to the cause and inquiring where to buy films to project in the school (Figure 26).<sup>358</sup> Becerril would organize educational screenings for state schools throughout 1936, although these efforts were put on halt by the eruption of the Civil War in July.

Although the federation of film clubs and amateur film production projects were hardly implemented, they still stand as a remarkable attempt to mobilize film for political action in a critical moment in the country's history. Moreover, they show how film culture was expanding its realms of action well beyond the limits of commercial cinema. Léon Moussinac and Harry Alan Potamkin had already proposed similar projects and ideas in France and the USA respectively. Together they were part of an international network of film critics, directors, scriptwriters, and technicians who had grown discontented with both commercial capitalist cinema and avant-garde's apolitical positioning. In their search for a viable alternative to such problems, they experimented with the possibilities of the medium beyond movie palaces, traditional star-oriented film journals, film criticism, or even professional filmmaking, exploring

---

<sup>358</sup> "Correspondence from José Becerril Madueño to Juan Piqueras," September 6, 1935, Fichero General Político-Social ES.37274.CDMH/9.8.10, File N° 00056261, Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, Spain.



the political usefulness of the medium. In the next section, I turn my attention to Moussinac and his tireless efforts to bypass the circuits of commercial film distribution, exhibition, and production in France, which he clearly saw as the main obstacle towards the full realization of the medium as an instrument of social change.

### **Bypassing the “circuits in charge of cinema”: Moussinac and critical spectatorship**

It is important to stress that Moussinac, Piqueras, and Potamkin did not always think of cinema in such straightforwardly political terms. As with most avant-garde film critics during the 1920s, the defense of an autonomous realm for cinema as art was their guiding principle. But this allegiance to the avant-garde did not exclude a growing awareness of the social possibilities of the medium beyond artistic expression. As Valerie Vignaux contends, the narrative is far more nuanced than that of a sharp distinction between a 1920s cinephilic approach to film as the seventh art and a sudden turn towards activist cinema in the 1930s.<sup>359</sup> For her, the early work of Moussinac already clearly prefigures the later widespread politicization of French film culture. In 1925 he had created a travelling movie theatre called the Cinéma du Peuple (Cinema of the People), with the objective of educating a critical public against capitalist cinema. Shortly afterwards, Moussinac highlighted the educational role of film in his column for *L'Humanité* (the Communist newspaper and main organ of the PCF from 1920 to 1994), suggesting “if cinema inspires us because of its prodigious expressive possibilities from an artistic point of view, it captivates us no less for the *pedagogical role* it’s bound to fulfil.”<sup>360</sup> Education, then, emerged as a central element alongside aesthetics in the struggle for an alternative circuit to commercial fiction cinema. He was also very aware of the institutional potential of film, criticizing the use of

---

<sup>359</sup> Valérie Vignaux, “Léon Moussinac and L’Humanité as a Cinematic Force,” *Études Photographiques*, May 2011, <https://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/3468>. Accessed July 6, 2018.

<sup>360</sup> Léon Moussinac, “Cinéma et enseignement,” *L’Humanité*, December 24, 1926. Emphasis added.

moving images by the French government as “colonial and chauvinistic propaganda” as well as the censorship of most films from the USSR, and the medium’s neglected educational potential (save for catholic-oriented and liberal bourgeois initiatives).<sup>361</sup> It was this last element of institutional film policy that increasingly attracted Moussinac after the late 1920s.



Figure 27. Cover of Léon Moussinac’s influential book *Naissance du Cinema* (1925);<sup>362</sup> “La critique des spectateurs” column in *L’Humanité*.

In 1929 Moussinac founded the aforementioned film club, Les Amis de Spartacus. It was aimed at a mixed audience of working-class people and highbrow cinephiles, and devoted most of its programming efforts to introducing banned Soviet films such as *Mat/Mother* (Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1926) or *Oktyabr’: Desyat’ dney kotorye potryasli mir* (*October: Ten Days That Shook the World*, Sergei Eisenstein 1928). The aim was to counter the state’s institutional film censorship policy, opposing to the thirty-two official censors the *organization* of spectators

<sup>361</sup> Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, 1:109.

<sup>362</sup> Léon Moussinac, *Naissance du cinéma* (Paris: J. Povolozky, 1925).

through the club's activities.<sup>363</sup> Although shut down just months later by French authorities, the exhibition and distribution success of *Les Amis de Spartacus* (the initiative reached 10,000 members and organized numerous packed screenings) proved that a sizeable organization against capitalist cinema was possible. Moussinac expanded the project from distribution and exhibition into the realm of critical spectatorship, inaugurating a weekly space for reader reviews and comments called "La Critique des Spectateurs" in *L'Humanité* (Figure 27).<sup>364</sup> The column was introduced in 1931 and lasted until 1934. It was inspired by the workers correspondent movement in the USSR (known as *rabcors*).<sup>365</sup> The main objective was to continue the work on spectator organization that had begun with *Les Amis de Spartacus*, with Moussinac acting as coordinator and editor of an initiative that taught spectators how to analyze film critically through weekly commentaries and models.<sup>366</sup> It was this kind of educational spirit that Piqueras applied to the initiatives analyzed in the previous section.

When it came to proletarian film production, however, the situation was different. Moussinac was worried about the production of films with smallgauge formats—such as 9.5, 17.5 and 16mm—since they would "destroy" the plastic qualities of images and become a "dangerous experience for the party."<sup>367</sup> On the other hand, the PCF had financed its own production company (Huma Films), and was probably afraid to sponsor a grassroots initiative that could easily escape the party's centralized control. But if one looks at subsequent developments, such as the PCF's use of amateur proletarian documentary productions during the 1932 election campaign, or Moussinac's later insistence on sponsoring smallgauge worker films,

---

<sup>363</sup> Léon Moussinac, "Des 'Trente-Deux' Aux 'Amis de Spartacu,'" *L'Humanité*, March 10, 1928. Emphasis in original.

<sup>364</sup> For a detailed analysis of the initiative and Moussinac's role in radical film culture initiative in interwar France see Hogenkamp, "Léon Moussinac and The Spectators' Criticism in France (1931-34)."

<sup>365</sup> Hogenkamp, 6.

<sup>366</sup> Léon Moussinac, "Un succès," *L'Humanité*, January 1, 1932.

<sup>367</sup> Léon Moussinac, "Quelques précisions nécessaires," *L'Humanité*, October 7, 1928.

we can see how film production was certainly never discarded, just approached with some suspicion. It is true that it did not take off in the way *Les Amis de Spartacus* did as an exhibition circuit; however, one must account for the added difficulties of production in terms of expenses and supply of material, not to mention proper training in basic cinematographic techniques.<sup>368</sup>

Such issues prompted Moussinac to remain cautious about the effectiveness of grassroots and amateur worker filmmaking, but this did not imply their categorical rejection. He was especially attracted to the ubiquity of small-gauge cinema, and the potential to organize screenings rapidly in almost any setting with portable 16mm projectors. But he also warned against the bourgeois domination of amateur cinema culture in France at the time.<sup>369</sup> It is important to contextualize his hesitant view on amateur cinema as a response to a proposal by Victor Barel (Secretary of the PCF in the Alpes-Maritimes region) in *Cahiers du Bolchévisme*, in which Barel advocated for the use of small-gauge cinema for propaganda purposes.<sup>370</sup> Barel's relegation of the aesthetic qualities of potential films as secondary to their revolutionary content alarmed Moussinac, who was politically committed but also a fervent advocate of the expressive values of cinema. Barel not only discussed the production of amateur films with 9.5mm Pathé-Baby cameras in detail—including prices of equipment, programming examples, and exhibition considerations—but also stressed the general need to document the life of the worker from a local perspective, as well as the creation of a Cinémathèque Centrale at the service of proletarian associations nationwide. In the following pages I show how Moussinac eventually incorporated such ideas into his plans for a radical filmmaking federation.

---

<sup>368</sup> Hogenkamp, *Deadly Parallels: Film and the Left in Britain, 1929-1939*; Hake, *The Cinema's Third Machine*.

<sup>369</sup> Léon Moussinac, "Responsabilités," *L'Humanité*, September 9, 1932; "Le cinéma d'amateurs," *L'Humanité*, September 9, 1932.

<sup>370</sup> Victor Barel, "Comment attirer des assistants à nos causeries pour sympathisants," in *Cahiers du Bolchévisme 1928*, vol. 2 (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1977), 672–74. See also Hogenkamp, "Léon Moussinac and The Spectators' Criticism in France (1931-34)," 5.

After the shutdown of Les Amis des Spartacus, Moussinac continued to promote an expanding activist film culture. It did not have the financial means to fight commercial cinema on its own terms, but it set the stage for the later emergence of what we now consider political filmmaking, especially given the role of French Popular Front-sponsored films during the Spanish Civil War. The shift towards an active proletarian film culture intensified in the early 1930s. In February 1931, Moussinac published an article titled “Pour Un Cinema Ouvrière” (“Towards a proletarian cinema”) in *L’Humanité*, in which he called for the organization of proletarian cinema against “capitalism’s formidable propaganda instrument.”<sup>371</sup> This proletarian cinema enrolled active spectators who would cheer or whistle at films in movie theatres, as well as amateur filmmaking groups to create worker newsreels and short political documentaries. The project also included a catalogue of approved films, including Soviet and commercial works, to be projected in organizations, Communist councils, and so on, through a shared system of distribution. The resemblances to Barel’s ideas are remarkable. The article ended with the open question: “Which organization will take the fortunate and necessary initiative of creating the proletarian cinema of France?” Only a month later Moussinac announced the birth of such an organization—the FOCP.<sup>372</sup>

The FOCP was to be constituted by a congress that would gather together every proletarian-oriented organization involved in “methodically educating through cinema and photography.”<sup>373</sup> This included unions, cooperatives, local WIR sections, the Fédération sportive du travail (Worker Sports Federation), Maisons du Peuple (Houses of the People), local councils, study groups, and other types of clubs. Moussinac laid out a very clear idea of the FOCP’s

---

<sup>371</sup> Léon Moussinac, “Pour un cinema ouvrier,” *L’Humanité*, February 1, 1931.

<sup>372</sup> Moussinac, “Une Fédération Ouvrière de Ciné-Photo.”

<sup>373</sup> Moussinac, “Un succès.”

structure, which would be organized in five sections: propaganda and administration, operations, technical, production, and photography (including amateur).



Figure 28. Cover of *L'Éducateur Prolétarien* (issue 1) and section devoted to educational cinema in page 39 (1932).

Although the lack of party support and necessary financial means reduced the scope of his project, it still stands as a remarkable attempt to reorient the avant-garde into an explicitly activist cinema. The overlaps with Piqueras's projects also testify to the influence of such ideas in the expanded leftist cinematic front. Moreover, Moussinac's projects found echoes beyond the pages of *L'Humanité* and the FOCP. In 1932, the first issue of the journal *L'Éducateur Prolétarien* (Figure 28) included an article titled "Le cinéma éducateur" (Educational cinema), which announced the first "social film" award of the journal to the educational film *Prix et*

*profits* (*Price and Profits*, 1932), made by a proletarian cooperative.<sup>374</sup> The article was written by R. Bayou, a teacher from the small town of Camblanes, and inaugurated a permanent section on educational cinema, sponsored by formations such as Coopérative Interscholaire du Jura. It included technical tips, amateur equipment sale notices, contests, and information on educational cinema around the world. Bayou praised the attributes of a film where “the stars are the potatoes” and the drama is centered on “everyday life,” inviting further submissions for a script contest on similar educational and proletarian themes. During the following years, *L’Educateur Prolétarien* would continue to promote educational cinema—both state-sponsored and amateur initiatives—intuitively putting into practice Barel and Moussinac’s plans for a proletarian smallgauge film production.

Despite their importance for the consolidation of film and education, initiatives such as *L’Educateur Prolétarien* have been overlooked by film historians, who have focused on more cinema-oriented primary sources. In Spain, for instance, a similar journal devoted to educational film, *Acción Cinegráfica*, appeared in 1931, but the initiative lasted for just one issue. In the USA we can think of *Visual Education* (1920–24), the journal of the Society for Visual Education. Accepting the imbrication of film in a wide variety of realms beyond the commercial screen necessarily broadens our research scope and allows for key discoveries in unexpected places. For example, the extension of Moussinac’s film activism cannot be fully grasped unless we look beyond his writings in film-specific journals. It was in the pages of leftist newspapers like *L’Humanité* and *La Scène Ouvrière*, the monthly journal of the Fédération du Théâtre Ouvrier de France (French Federation of Worker Theatre), that Moussinac developed his discourse on educational uses of film. In December 1926 and January 1927, the French critic

---

<sup>374</sup> R. Bayou, “Le cinéma éducateur,” *L’Educateur Prolétarien*, no. 1 (October 1932): 39–42.

published a series of articles in *L'Humanité* that called for government funding to be directed towards educational film programs in schools. The objective was to encourage the general development of education and culture.<sup>375</sup> Later he would use the pages of *La Scène Ouvrière* to present his project on spectator criticism, aimed at “transforming the taste of the public, educating them with a marked dialectic sense.”<sup>376</sup> Both objectives—the use of film to enhance education and the training of critical spectatorship—are driving forces behind the film pedagogy *internationale* that I map in this chapter.

Continuing his expanding activities, in 1936 Moussinac created, together with Renoir and Henri Jeanson, the journal *Ciné-Liberté*. It was the publication of the Alliance du Cinema Independent (Alliance of Independent Cinema, or ACI),<sup>377</sup> which had adopted the same name (*Ciné-Liberté*) at the end of 1935, producing the film *La vie est à nous* (*Life Belongs to Us*, Jean Renoir, 1936), proletarian newsreels, and propaganda films in support of the Second Spanish Republic. The main objective of the journal was to “fight for a truthful French cinema” and “defend cinema” in general, in line with the 1935 plea by the Congrès International des Écrivains Pour la Défense de la Culture (International Congress for the Defense of Culture) to defend all forms of culture against the impending Fascist threat.<sup>378</sup> The warning became dramatically real in July 1936, when the Spanish Popular Front—which had won the general election a few months earlier—came under attack from a Fascist rebellion lead by General Francisco Franco, sparking the Spanish Civil War (1936–39).

---

<sup>375</sup> Moussinac, “Cinéma et enseignement”; Léon Moussinac, “À Propos Du Film d’enseignement. Conclusions,” *L'Humanité*, January 14, 1927.

<sup>376</sup> Léon Moussinac, “La voix des spectateurs, les critiques ouvriers,” *La Scène Ouvrière*, January 1, 1932.

<sup>377</sup> Dudley Andrew, *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 217.

<sup>378</sup> Léon Moussinac, “Enfin voici Cine-Liberté, un vrai journal de cinéma,” *L'Humanité*, May 22, 1936.



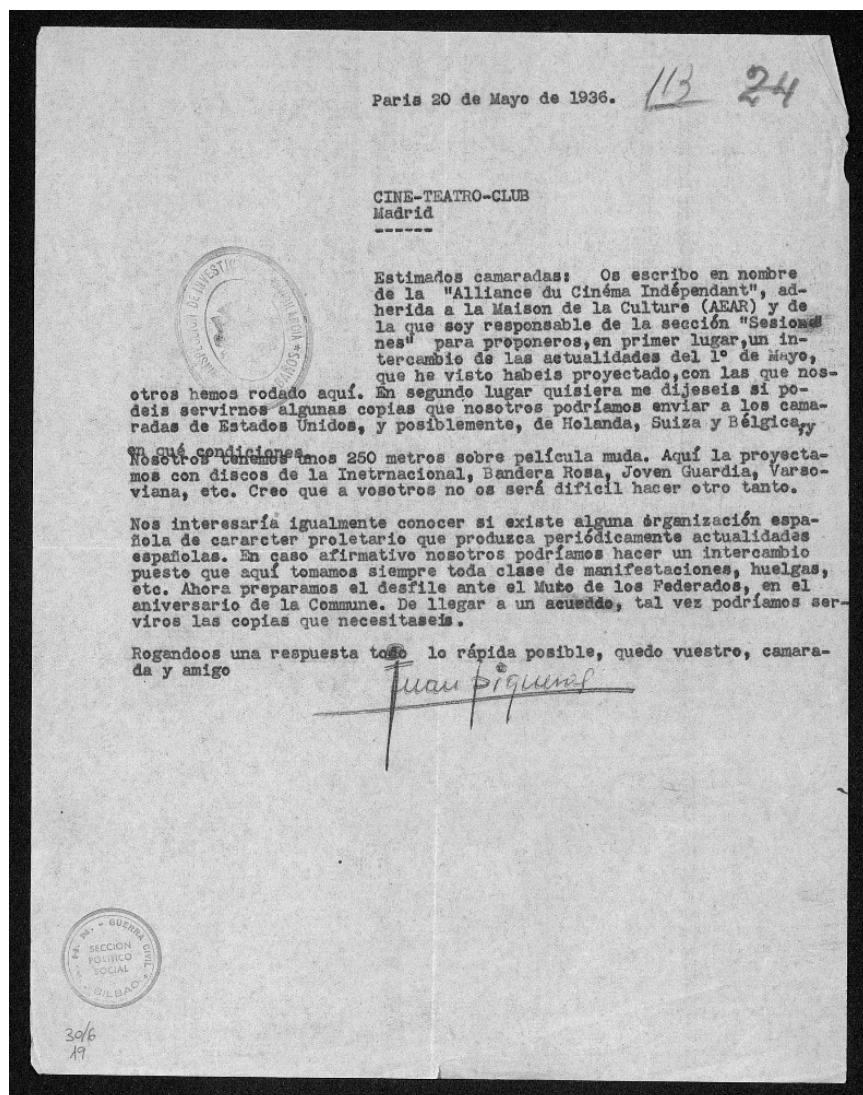


Figure 29. Letter of Juan Piqueras as representative of the AEAR to the Cine-Teatro Club in Madrid. Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica.

Right before the outbreak of the conflict, the PCF had been intensifying its links with the PCE as the situation in Spain became increasingly volatile. Having recovered from stomach ulcer surgery, and having closed *Nuestro Cinema* for financial reasons, Piqueras had resurfaced to become the liaison between Ciné-Liberté and its Spanish counterparts. He had been working for the AEAR since 1935, helping Spanish exiled workers who had participated in the Asturias

revolution of 1934.<sup>379</sup> In May 1936 Piqueras sent a letter to an agitprop theatre association called the Cine-Teatro Club in Madrid, informing them that he was working for the Alliance du Cinéma Indépendant (adhered to the AEAR's Maison de la Culture), in charge of their "sessions" segment (presumably a film program). He suggested the exchange of newsreels (actualités) between the ACI and its Spanish counterparts and asked for copies of Cine-Teatro films to be sent to "our comrades in the United States and possibly Holland, Switzerland, and Belgium" (Figure 29).<sup>380</sup> Having been away from Spain for some time due to his involvement with the 1934 Asturian workers in exile—and with *Nuestro Cinema* out of the picture—Piqueras was especially interested in identifying an interlocutor in his home country to rekindle his project of small gauge radical filmmaking—an "organization of proletarian nature that periodically produces Spanish newsreels."<sup>381</sup> The struggle to bring to the screen Ivens's "unknown character" continued and was now one of the main objectives of the materialist avant-garde after having successfully nurtured a radical film culture from which production could emerge.

In the wake of the Civil War, Moussinac's and Piqueras's radical film projects were finally meeting on the ground, so to speak, joining forces in the fight against fascism. Unfortunately, Francoist forces detained Piqueras during the first days of the conflict at a railway station near Valladolid, where he had been compelled to stop due to sudden complications with his healing stomach ulcer. He was found in possession of an authorization by Ciné-Liberté to manage the exchange of newsreels for the Popular Front, and a letter with PCF letterhead that authorized *Nuestro Cinema* to distribute *La vie est à nous* in Spain.<sup>382</sup> In a tragic twist of fate, the

---

<sup>379</sup> "Correspondence from Juan Piqueras to Luis Buñuel," November 13, 1935, Fichero General Político-Social, ES.37274.CDMH/9.8.10, File N° 00056261, Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, Spain.

<sup>380</sup> "Correspondence from Juan Piqueras to Cine Teatro Club," May 20, 1936, Fichero General Político-Social, ES.37274.CDMH/9.8.10, File N° 00056261, Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, Spain.

<sup>381</sup> "Correspondence from Juan Piqueras to Cine Teatro Club."

<sup>382</sup> Gubern, *Luis Buñuel*, 252.

encounter between Moussinac's and Piqueras's projects was fatal for the Spanish film critic, who was executed a few days later, aged thirty-two. As Sadoul would write, reporting his death, the world had lost a "defender of culture" who "could have been, in the midst of the civil war, the organizer of an important and truly Spanish cinema," but had nonetheless laid the groundwork for a future generation of successful revolutionary cinema.<sup>383</sup> Moussinac would travel the following year (1937) to the second Congrès des Écrivains pour la Défense de la Culture in Piqueras's hometown of Valencia. A picture of him in the front line (taken during the days of the congress) illustrates his commitment to the defense of culture against the Fascist aggression, but also becomes an unconscious tribute to the memory of his comrade Piqueras, who had adapted his project of critical spectatorship and cultural emancipation to the Spanish context.



Figure 30. Léon Moussinac visiting the nearby front line during the second International Congress for the Defense of Culture in Valencia (1937).

<sup>383</sup> Georges Sadoul, "La mort de Juan Piqueras, le 'Delluc espagnole' fusillé par les rebelles," *L'Humanité*, March 11, 1937.

The destiny of the Spanish critic followed what Scott Mackenzie terms the “hopelessly doomed” nature of film manifestos, but with a crucial difference: Piqueras’s dramatic interventions in the public sphere may have been “texts of the moment,” but they did not “quickly leave the world of political intervention.”<sup>384</sup> In January 1936, Piqueras received a letter from fellow critic and writer Juan M. Plaza (contributor to *Nueva Cultura*) in which Plaza asked him for advice and help in consolidating Cine Estudio Popular, a worker oriented film club that had organized a few successful sessions presented by important figures like Josep Renau (future minister of fine arts and propaganda for the Republican government during the war and responsible for Spain’s pavilion in the 1937 Paris International Exhibition) and writer Max Aub.<sup>385</sup> As we saw in chapter one, the seed for a radical anti-fascist film culture had been planted, and when the war started the Republican government made use of such networks and initiatives for its propaganda efforts.<sup>386</sup>

As materialist translators of the avant-garde, Juan Piqueras and Léon Moussinac applied its transformative energies towards the creation of concrete organizational initiatives to emancipate the popular classes. For them, this was the only way to effectively continue the ruptures of the previous avant-garde. Juan Piqueras and Léon Moussinac followed this guiding principle to its final conclusion, with—as in the case of the Valencian critic—fatal repercussions. In a similar vein, and following a history of untimely deaths and short life-spans, I now turn my attention to the US film critic and activist Harry Alan Potamkin, whose premature death at thirty-three—from a stomach ulcer—also affected the consolidation of radical film pedagogy in the

---

<sup>384</sup> Scott MacKenzie, *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 9.

<sup>385</sup> “Correspondence from Juan M. Plaza to Juan Piqueras,” January 14, 1936, Fichero General Político-Social, ES.37274.CDMH/9.8.10, File N° 00056261, Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, Spain.

<sup>386</sup> Fibla Gutierrez, “Revolutionizing the ‘National Means of Expression.’”

USA (ultimately becoming an inspiring memory for a generation of film pedagogues and activists). By including Potamkin in the expanded geography of radical film culture and education that this chapter argues for, we can understand better how the winds from the East (mentioned in Alberti's opening quotation) jumped over the Atlantic, materializing in an alternative film exhibition, distribution, and production movement that quickly found local translations in New York, Detroit, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago.

### **Avoiding the “dance in a cul-de-sac”: Potamkin and leftist film culture in the USA**

If scholars have paid little attention to Moussinac and Piqueras, despite their pivotal roles within the leftist cinematic front (and film culture in general) in interwar Europe, the neglect of Potamkin in the USA is even more surprising, given his influence in film criticism, education, and proletarian film production. His position in the geography triangulated by this chapter reveals a much closer, and more complex, relationship between North American and European interwar film culture than previously acknowledged. He was deeply affected by a 1926 trip to Europe—where he engaged with film critics Ricciotto Canudo, Louis Delluc, and Germaine Dulac, and saw avant-garde films in the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, the Studio des Ursulines, and Studio 28<sup>387</sup>—and it was on his return to the USA that he decided to become a film critic. He became a key figure in what has been called the missing chapter of American film history, the socially-oriented and politicized film culture of the 1930s.<sup>388</sup> The influence of both North American and European film criticism and activism shaped his distinct perspective on the

---

<sup>387</sup> Sonia García López, “Harry Alan Potamkin: palabra cinematográfica para los tiempos de crisis,” *Archivos de la filmoteca: Revista de estudios históricos sobre la imagen*, no. 67 (2010): 138.

<sup>388</sup> Chris Robé, *Left of Hollywood: Cinema, Modernism, and the Emergence of U.S. Radical Film Culture* (Austin, Tex: University of Texas Press, 2010); Anne Morey, *Hollywood Outsiders: The Adaptation of the Film Industry, 1913-1934* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Steven Joseph Ross, *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1998).

medium, preoccupied with aesthetic, industrial, and social considerations.

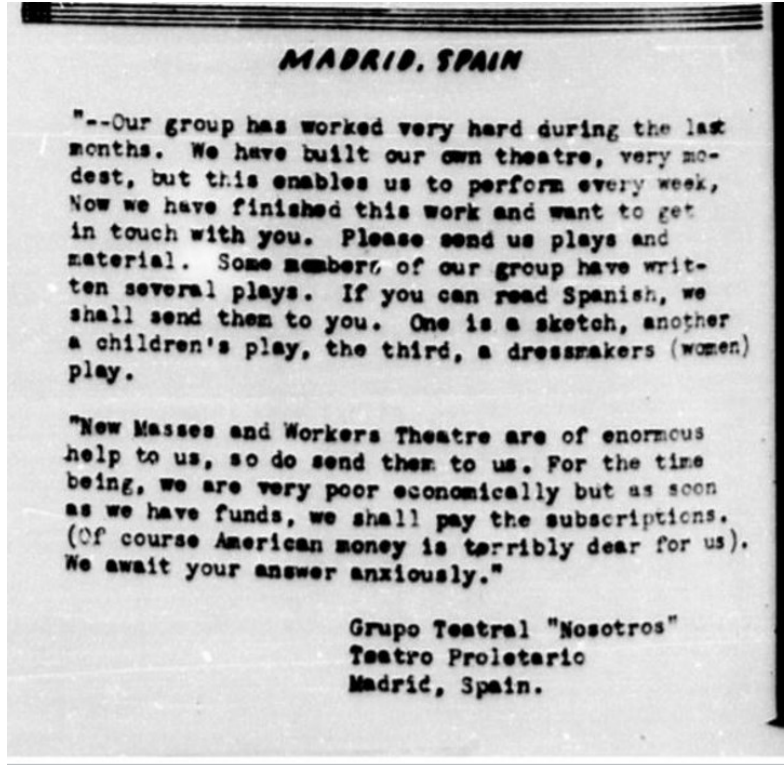


Figure 31. Nosotros theater group from Madrid asking for plays to their US comrades in the journal *Workers Theatre* (1933).<sup>389</sup>

Contrary to Piqueras and Moussinac, Potamkin was working from within the belly of the beast, so to speak, in the country that had colonized commercial film screens around the world, especially since the advent of sound cinema. But the consequences of the Great Depression had also allowed for radical leftist ideas to spread throughout the country, inspiring proletarian cultural projects akin to those taking place in France, Spain, Germany, and the USSR. By 1933, the CPUSA-aligned cultural initiatives and journals had become a reference for worker collectives in Spain, who were sending requests to publications such as *Workers Theatre* for play scripts (Figure 31). Although Piqueras and Moussinac didn't travel to the USA or engage directly (that we know of so far) with these initiatives (their attention was fixed more on Moscow

<sup>389</sup> Grupo Teatral Nosotros, "Madrid, Spain," *Workers Theatre* 5, no. 5 (June 1933): 13.

and their own local contexts), they were connected in their common objectives and points of reference regarding proletarian film culture. The inclusion of news from leftist film culture developments around the world in journals like *Experimental Cinema*, *Close-Up*, *Nuestro Cinema*, *Regards* or *Monde* put critics and activists on a similar radical wavelength, to which they could tune in if they had access to these publications (or others) and their respective film clubs, associations, etc. This tacit network put critics and intellectuals in contact through the appropriation, reinterpretation, and translation of ideas, projects, and institutions.

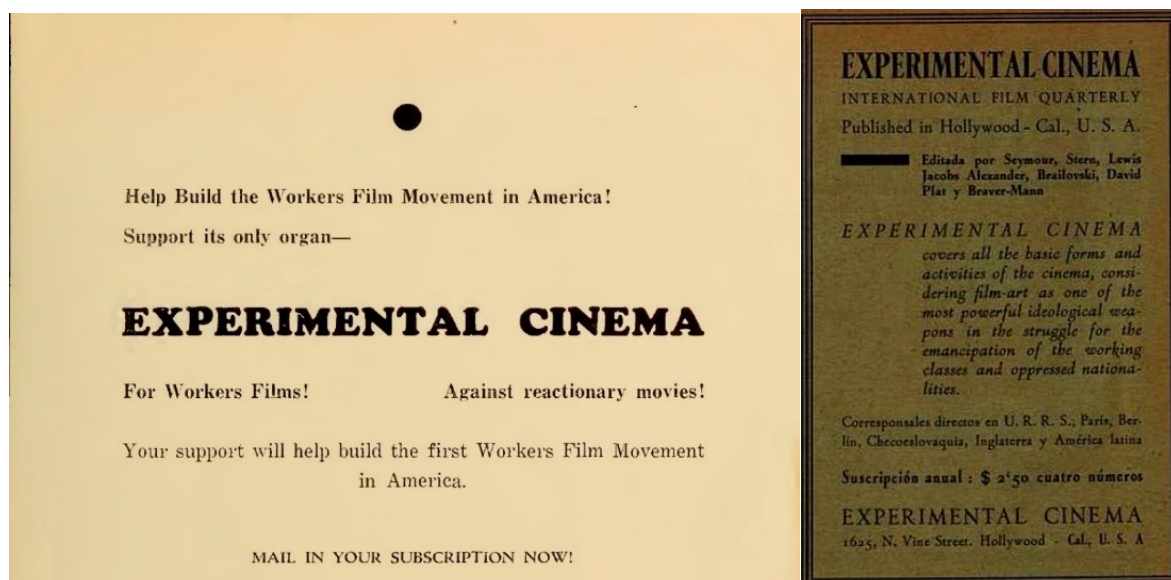


Figure 32. *Experimental Cinema* subscription advertisement (Issue 3, February 1931) and similar advertisement translated in *Nuestro Cinema* (Issue 10, March 1932).

Potamkin was, in fact, one of the cofounders of the USA Workers Film and Photo League (WFPL), which was in contact with similar organizations in Europe. He was also a regular contributor to the most important English-language modernist film journals of the time, *Experimental Cinema* and *Close Up*. The former described itself as the only organ of the workers' film movement in America (Figure 32), while the latter advertised itself as the only magazine devoted to film as an art, but also had a marked social tendency. As we can see in figure 32, *Experimental Cinema* was advertised in Piqueras's *Nuestro Cinema*, and some original

articles were translated into Spanish. In issue 12, Piqueras echoed the international campaign run by Seymour Stern (director and Hollywood correspondent of *Experimental Cinema*) against Upton Sinclair's mutilation of Sergei Eisenstein's *¡Que Viva México!* (1932).<sup>390</sup> Stern's lengthy protest letter was translated, and readers of *Nuestro Cinema* were encouraged to "send letters of protest to Upton Sinclair, Beverly Hills, California, US. Or to Juan Piqueras, director of *Nuestro Cinema*, who will send them out himself."<sup>391</sup> Moussinac was an associate editor of and contributor to *Experimental Cinema*.

In issue 3 (February 1931) of the US-based journal, Potamkin and Moussinac were the subjects of an editorial note, part of a long-standing conflict with *Close Up*. The editorial harshly criticized Potamkin, who had attacked the French critic's "social understanding of the cinema,"<sup>392</sup> and lamented Potamkin's inability to grasp Moussinac's importance to the creation of "a theoretical and practical basis for a workers' film movement in America."<sup>393</sup> The text ended with a rhetorical question, "Harry Alan Potamkin, where do you stand?"—a call we can extend to all three critics analyzed here, who were negotiating their own position vis-à-vis the avant-garde, commercial cinema, and the organization of a worker's cinema. The move from aesthetics to social consciousness was certainly not a one-way street, placing these critics on constantly shifting ground and in danger of mistranslating the work of their peers.

Beyond *Close Up* and *Experimental Cinema*, Potamkin published in a wide variety of outlets, including the popular culture and fashion magazine *Vanity Fair*. He also wrote for the *National Board of Review Magazine*, the outlet of the National Board of Review, an organization

---

<sup>390</sup> Seymour Stern, "El caso de ¡Viva México!. El film de Eisenstein bárbaramente mutilado," *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 12 (July 1933): 182–90.

<sup>391</sup> Stern, 190.

<sup>392</sup> "Editor's Note," *Experimental Cinema*, no. 3 (February 1931): 34.

<sup>393</sup> "Editor's Note."



created in 1909 to influence content in Hollywood productions. In line with other educational reformer movements, the National Board of Review created standards for endorsing or rejecting films, but also attempted to “establish the viewer, rather than the film text, as the site of a struggle for control.”<sup>394</sup> Lastly, we can cite *Movie Makers*, the publication of the American amateur film movement. This journal became a forum for the quickly expanding movement of amateur film in North America.<sup>395</sup> Such breadth not only demonstrates Potamkin’s open mind as a critic, but is also a testament to the richness of interwar film culture, which encompassed modernist, avant-garde, proletarian, popular culture, educational, industrial, commercial, and amateur cinema realms.

As the effects of the Great Depression worsened and the networks of the materialist avant-garde expanded, Potamkin became more openly politicized. By 1930 he was mentioning the need to “liberate the genuine social energies” to create films that would speak to local realities.<sup>396</sup> But the problem remained the same: how to create politically conscious spectators capable of demanding such films? What could the film critics do beyond the pages of their journals to mobilize a different film culture? In 1931, Potamkin addressed these issues in “A movie call to action!,” the programmatic manifesto, written for the WFPL, in which he explicitly discussed the responsibility of film critics—specifically those with an avowed social conscience—for “creating a basis for understanding and action” towards a critical spectatorship.<sup>397</sup> For Potamkin, the pedagogical role of the critic went well beyond anti-Hollywood rhetoric, superficial praise of Soviet films, and egocentric quarrels. Instead he

---

<sup>394</sup> Morey, *Hollywood Outsiders*, 31.

<sup>395</sup> See Jan-Christopher Horak, ed., *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919 - 1945* (Madison, Wis.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1995); Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema*.

<sup>396</sup> Harry Alan Potamkin, “Tendencies in the cinema,” *American Cinematographer*, June 1930. Reprinted in Potamkin, *The Compound Cinema*, 43–46.

<sup>397</sup> Potamkin, 584.

suggested organizing with the workers to view, criticize, and ultimately make films, with the hope of also affecting what he called non-worker groups such as the National Board of Review. This educational effort was to be structured by a “Broad League for Film Action” that united the efforts of different organizations (such as the John Reed Club)<sup>398</sup> in a federation that would, amongst other concrete objectives, “*educate* the workers and others in the part the movie plays as a *weapon of reaction*.”<sup>399</sup>

Potamkin’s federation proposal had striking overlaps in objectives, structure, and organizational bodies with Moussinac’s previously quoted plan for the FOCP.<sup>400</sup> But beyond concrete correspondences, such as the creation of a bulletin, the production of proletarian-oriented films, the circulation of censored films, and modes of direct action—such as Moussinac’s call to jeer or cheer films—there is a shared pedagogical spirit contained within both initiatives. That is, the ultimate objective of both proposals was to create a new film culture deeply imbricated in society, especially in the life of the working class. My emphasis, above, on the explicit reference to film pedagogy as a *weapon of reaction*, is to show how the movie’s call to action was very much thought of as a way to translate educational theory into facts, following Potamkin’s previously quoted stance that “action without theory is aimless. Theory without action is sterile.”<sup>401</sup> It is not surprising that the word *militant* was included in this vocabulary of film-action only a few months later by Piqueras in his introduction of Moussinac to Spanish

---

<sup>398</sup> The John Reed Club was a proletarian organization created in 1929, with the objective of promoting cultural works from young proletarian talents. It was associated with the CPUSA. See López, “Harry Alan Potamkin,” 134–45.

<sup>399</sup> Potamkin, *The Compound Cinema*, 585. Emphasis added.

<sup>400</sup> At the end of the manifesto, however, Potamkin attacks Moussinac for not having a unified point of view in relation to social criticism, accusing him of insufficient contact with “the social stratum most concerned with the implications of his criticism [...] namely the class-conscious worker.” Potamkin, 586. Given all the projects Moussinac was involved in—such as the Cine club Spartacus, the FOCP or the later Critique des Spectateurs—this criticism is quite unfounded, though may be explained by the difficulties, in the 1930s, of keeping up with the writings and initiatives in a different language and across the Atlantic Ocean.

<sup>401</sup> Potamkin, 586.

readers.

This position was also reflected in Potamkin's film criticism. See, for instance, his review of the prison films *The Big House* (George W. Hill, 1930) and *Numbered Men* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1930) for *New Masses*, the leading journal of the Left in the USA. Potamkin criticized these films for not showing the real conditions of imprisonment or questioning the society behind such a repressive system. For him, this reflected how "the society that is callow in its cinema is callous in its attitude towards imprisoned men."<sup>402</sup> This coupling of film criticism with social commentary was the new task of the critic, since "there is one criticism that is ever present, the film itself. It is the business of the critic to present in full this evidence of which the movie speaks."<sup>403</sup>

As with Moussinac's role as organizer of "La Critique des Spectateurs" column in *L'Humanité* and Piqueras's editorial work in *Nuestro Cinema*, Potamkin had realized the importance of the critic in providing readers with the tools to decode and, hopefully, deactivate the ideological power of cinema. The critic had to instruct viewers to become critical spectators on their own. A few months later, in October 1930, Potamkin would attack *New York Post* critic Creighton Peet, who had defended American fiction films against Soviet instructional tendencies. Peet contended that the American public wanted fiction, to which Potamkin replied, "this is not only the synonym for 'entertainment'. 'Fiction' is what the American public gets: fake experiences!"<sup>404</sup> The public would learn how to dismiss these "fake experiences" with the pedagogical aid of the WFPL, which would "instruct the film audience in the detection of Hollywood treachery."<sup>405</sup> This was to become one of the central functions of the WFPL,

---

<sup>402</sup> Harry Alan Potamkin, "Movies," *New Masses* 6, no. 3 (August 1930): 13.

<sup>403</sup> Potamkin.

<sup>404</sup> Harry Alan Potamkin, "The Bourgeois Critics," *New Masses* 6, no. 5 (October 1930): 21.

<sup>405</sup> Harry Alan Potamkin, "Shanghai Express," *New Masses* 7, no. 11 (May 1932): 28.

alongside the fostering of a truly proletarian film production that would counter dominant Hollywood cinema.<sup>406</sup> Despite being 6000 km away, writing in different languages, and working within different socio-political contexts, Potamkin, Piqueras, and Moussinac intuitively spoke the same vocabulary of critical spectatorship and radical film culture organization.

One of Potamkin's important actions was to promote the creation of film clubs throughout the USA, cast in the mold of those he had attended on his trips to Europe in the 1920s, though with a crucial difference. Instead of using them to create an autonomous space for an appreciation of film as an art, "the film club has its ultimate justification only when it recognizes itself as an educational forum [...] I want to oppose in this discussion the cult idea of the film club, where gentlemen and ladies in high hats and evening gowns are shown Mickey Mouse to satisfy their sense of the exquisite."<sup>407</sup> These words are transcribed from a speech he gave at the annual conference of the National Board of Review, of which he was a member. It may initially seem paradoxical that the proletarian-oriented film critic belonged to such an organization, but it is yet another example of the porousness of film culture in the effervescent interwar years. In Potamkin's view the National Board of Review's ties to the industry were not an obstacle but an opportunity to influence commercial films through the different Motion Picture Study Clubs and Better Film Councils, and their ties to ample and active spectator communities. As Chris Robé argues, US radical film criticism was expansive in nature, going beyond the boundaries and narrow definitions of the Left.<sup>408</sup> In this it departed from Moussinac

---

<sup>406</sup> Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1996); Thomas Waugh, ed., *"Show Us Life": Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary* (Metuchen, N.J: Scarecrow Press, 1984); Russell Campbell, *Cinema Strikes Back: Radical Filmmaking in the United States, 1930-1942* (Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, 1982); Richard Meran Barsam, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

<sup>407/407</sup> Harry Alan Potamkin, "The ritual of the movies," *National Board of Review Magazine*, May 1933. Reprinted in Potamkin, *The Compound Cinema*, 216–221.

<sup>408</sup> Robé, *Left of Hollywood*, 23.

and Piqueras's more dogmatic and sweeping rejection of commercial cinema, which Potamkin still contemplated as a useful pedagogical instrument to be incorporated into critical analysis.

In a second part of the speech to the National Board of Review, Potamkin discussed educational plans to involve children as active cinema audiences, suggesting "it is pretty well agreed that the motion picture is a pedagogical instrument," and "you cannot solve the problem of the child in relation to the film unless you solve his problem in relation to society."<sup>409</sup> By gradually introducing children to socially engaged cinema—via mainstream films—a moment would arrive in which they would not only be able to determine the false and truthful elements of the film, but of society itself, "encouraging [children] to make [their] own deductions."<sup>410</sup> Such initiative would be structured in an educational pattern that would include "movies in the manual arts and movies in the social subjects."<sup>411</sup>

Potamkin also proposed the creation of a university-level film school to mirror similar developments in the Soviet Union, which had established the VGIK film school in 1919.<sup>412</sup> An actual proposal was published posthumously in the literary magazine *Hound and Horn* in October 1933, three months after his death. It had been drafted for an unspecified large university (most likely the New School of Social Research) and included a comprehensive four-year program, with details of courses, plans for a film library, and a staff including figures such as Iris Barry, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Walt Disney, G.W. Pabst, and Robert Flaherty. The proposal showed that, as with his colleagues in the materialist turn of the avant-garde, Potamkin was not

---

<sup>409</sup> Potamkin, *The Compound Cinema*, 224.

<sup>410</sup> Harry Alan Potamkin, "The cinematized child," *Films*, November 1939. Reprinted in Potamkin and Jacobs, *The Compound Cinema*, p. 215. Potamkin, 215.

<sup>411</sup> These ideas should be contextualized in the overlooked history of educational film in the USA during the first half of the twentieth century. As the edited collections *Learning with the Lights Off* and *Inventing Film Studies* argue, the sheer amount of publications and initiatives on the subject at the time suggests its relevance not only to film but also to cultural history in general. See Orgeron, Orgeron, and Streible, *Learning with the Lights Off*; Grieveson and Wasson, *Inventing Film Studies*.

<sup>412</sup> See Salazkina, "(V)GIK and the History of Film Education in the Soviet Union, 1920s-1930s."

shy about embracing institutionalization or collaboration across ideological lines.

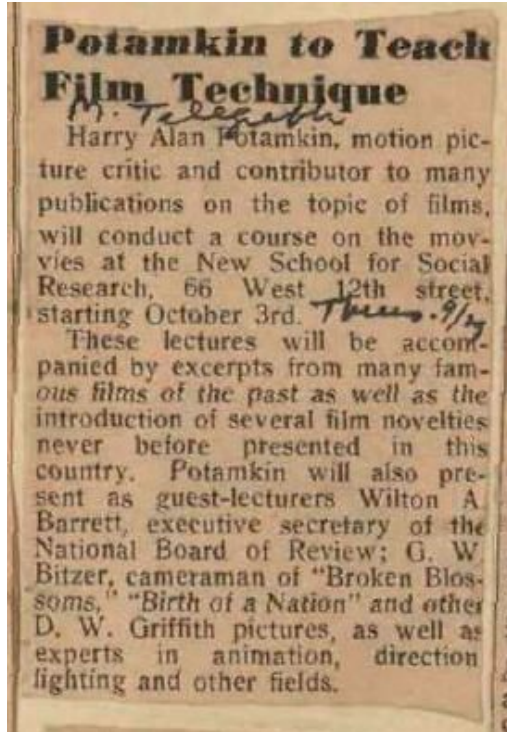


Figure 33. Newspaper clipping with news from Potamkin's course at the New School (1932). Courtesy of the New School.

Potamkin's sudden death interrupted these plans, and many others, but his proposal greatly influenced the next generation of US film pedagogues. As Dana Polan notes, in the 1940s Jay Leyda lamented the lack of comprehensive plans for film education in the USA, recalling Potamkin's "inspiring memory."<sup>413</sup> Potamkin had in fact taught a course on the "Critical history of film" at the New School for Social Research in 1932, with invited guests and projection of film excerpts (Figure 33). His role as a teacher was so influential that his colleagues at the WFPL established the Harry Alan Potamkin Film School in 1933 to teach filmmaking to workers, although the initiative lasted only one year. The significance of Potamkin for both the institutionalization of film education in private universities and more grassroots leftist

<sup>413</sup> Dana B. Polan, *Scenes of Instruction: The Beginnings of the U.S. Study of Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 237.

educational initiatives speaks to the scope of his pedagogical project, which attempted to unify efforts and avoid unnecessary sectarianism in both workers and critics. By the mid-1930s, the leftist film culture that Potamkin had helped to develop in New York was being invoked as an inspiration by European peers.



Figure 34. From top left: Logo of Mezhrabpom film studio, International Red Aid in Germany, Cover of August 1930 *New Masses* issue, and USA Workers Film, and Photo League Logo.

In January 1935, the “News from Hollywood” section of *L’Humanité* mentioned that the New York Film and Photo League had successfully presented their film *Sheriffed* (Nancy

Naumburg and James Guy, 1934–35),<sup>414</sup> which depicted the struggle of US farmers and their strikes for better working conditions. The article also mentioned four other films in progress and finished with a rhetorical question: “When will we have a ‘French Society of Proletarian Films’?”<sup>415</sup> Despite these lamentations (which are partially explained by the PCF’s own mistaken policy of initially discouraging agitprop smallgauge filmmaking, and their emphasis on favoring radical film distribution and exhibition over production), by this time (1935) an international network of proletarian film exhibition, distribution, and production was in place in cities like Valencia, Madrid, Barcelona, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, London, Amsterdam, San Francisco, Detroit, and New York. As an example of the successful circulation of this internationalist imaginary, we can look at the multiple reinterpretations of the Mezhrabpom film studio logo across Europe and the Atlantic (Figure 34), carried along by the winds of the East that had spread throughout the world as Alberti’s poem predicted in 1933.

Potamkin, and the different initiatives he was part of, had managed to avoid the “dance in the cul-de-sac” of bourgeois cinema, but without assuming a marginal space for socially engaged film culture instead. The purpose, however, remained crystal clear: “there can be no propagating art without criticism [...] for a cinema permanently great, strong, and productive there must be criticism. The conversion of this criticism, the *social theme*, into its form is art, cinema.”<sup>416</sup> This combination of critical thought, art, and politics applied to cinema was one of the most important legacies of the materialist avant-garde, ultimately becoming an inspiring memory and organizational model to which we still turn for guidance in the present.<sup>417</sup>

---

<sup>414</sup> As identified by Russell Campbell, who states that the film is unfortunately lost. See Russell Campbell, “Radical documentary in the United States: 1930–1942,” in Waugh, *Show Us Life*, 79.

<sup>415</sup> A.C., “Nouvelles d’Hollywood,” *L’Humanité*, January 11, 1935.

<sup>416</sup> Harry Alan Potamkin, ‘Tendencies of the cinema’, *American Cinematographer*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1930), p. 14. Emphasis added.

<sup>417</sup> See for example the recurrent exhibitions on the period in the last years; “Poéticas de desposesión. Documental proletario” (Reina Sofía Museum May 11-19, 2011); “Una luz dura, sin compasión El movimiento de la fotografía



Piqueras, Moussinac, and Potamkin belonged to an expanding international front of radical film culture that imagined a different function for the medium of film, and thereby redirected the avant-garde's defense of cinema as an autonomous art form towards an educational imperative deeply embedded within society. They created institutions, devised plans for film schools, and consolidated networks of international film culture circulation. In other words, they thought about film in expansive terms, well beyond the limits of the commercial screen or national boundaries and into the realm of social and political struggle. This allowed film culture to become a useful resource in places where film production was either impossible or very difficult, and had to find new paths, formats, and spaces to develop. As the concluding section of the chapter shows, the extent to which cinema became ingrained in everyday structures of education, politics, and culture in the following years owes very much to this process.

### Cinema, night school

We can trace the influence of the internationale of film pedagogy in later formations and networks of participatory film culture and education in Spain, France, and the USA. As we saw in chapter one, Piqueras's networks of radical film culture were a source of inspiration and material support for the circulation and production of films during the Civil War. In a poignant article devoted to the memory of the murdered Valencian critic published in *L'Hora* on February 19, 1937, Piqueras is described as the most important defender and disseminator of a proletarian and socially committed cinema. The task of the Valencian critic, as well as the film culture he

---

obrero, 1926-1939" (Reina Sofia Museum April 6-August 22, 2011); "Encounters with the 1930s" (Reina Sofia Museum, October 2012-January 2013); "The Left Front: Radical Art in the 1930s 'Red Decade'" (New York University's Grey Art Gallery, January 13-April 4, 2015); "America after the Fall: Painting in the 1930s" (Art Institute of Chicago, June 5, 2016-September 18, 2016); "Red star over Russia a revolution in visual culture 1905-55" (Tate Museum, November 8, 2017-February 18, 2018).

helped create in Spain, are metaphorically equated with that of a revolutionary “night school” where everyday citizens can fight against the “bourgeois propaganda” of commercial cinema and capitalism.<sup>418</sup> I close this chapter with a reflection on the influence of the three critics for later developments in film culture and education, building on this evocative image of cinema as an emancipatory space for the working class, located beyond the time of work and productivity, and in any space where a portable projector could be installed.

For Piqueras (who himself had attended an actual night school in his hometown Requena and tirelessly promoted new spaces of cultural and social participation for the working class), Moussinac (who promoted educational spaces of critical spectatorship in both theater and cinema realms), and Potamkin (who co-founded the John Reed Club and gave the first film course at the New School), cinema could become a radically open pedagogical space for those who couldn’t afford to go to a regular school; to those oppressed by capitalism and who had never recognized themselves in the commercial screen; to those whose access to bourgeois culture was barred; to those, ultimately, that had nowhere else to go and took refuge in the *night school*. Unfortunately, the internationale of film pedagogy was mostly put aside during the Civil War and World War Two to concentrate on the fight against fascism. But its inspiring memory was later recovered and put into practice in numerous initiatives and contexts throughout the world. Piqueras’s projects for a federation of proletarian film clubs and amateur worker cinema were, for instance, a specific source of inspiration for 1970s militant film culture in Spain.<sup>419</sup> Proletarian amateur film collectives and Marxist film theorists put his ideas, silenced by decades of dictatorship, into

---

<sup>418</sup> Sarro, “Cinema, escola de nit,” *L’Hora* 1, no. 5 (February 19, 1937).

<sup>419</sup> Pérez Merinero and Pérez Merinero, *Del cinema como arma de clase*; Fibla-Gutiérrez and La Parra-Pérez, “Turning the Camera into a Weapon: Juan Piqueras’s Radical Noncommercial Film Projects and Their Afterlives (1930s-1970s);” Pablo La Parra-Pérez, “Displaced Cinema. Militant Film Culture and Political Dissidence in Spain (1966-1982)” (New York University, 2018).

practice, both in concrete collective and smallgauge filmmaking initiatives and in radical film criticism discourse. For two decades, until politics got in the way, the main screening room at the Filmoteca de Valencia (Valencian Film Archive) was named after Piqueras, and a portrait of the critic painted by artist Josep Renau presided over the director's office.<sup>420</sup> In France, Moussinac became director of the Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques (Institute for advanced cinematographic studies, or IDHEC) in Paris after World War II; he was now operating from within the system.<sup>421</sup> The extent to which film is engrained in French education, from schools to university, owes much to this fact. I have already mentioned Potamkin's impact on film pedagogues in the USA, but his influence went beyond North America. The course he taught at the New School greatly influenced Cuban critic José Manuel Valdés-Rodríguez, who later introduced film education in Cuba.<sup>422</sup>

Given such developments, should we address the projects of Piqueras, Moussinac and Potamkin as failures? Perhaps, if we apply a short-sighted temporal perspective that only accounts for the impact of cultural initiatives in their immediate historical present. But not if we consider their lasting impact, across uneven temporalities, on the consolidation of film culture in the next decades in their respective contexts and beyond. As we have seen, their ideas resonated in a series of film and media projects—including educational institutions, political movements, and ultimately all kinds of useful cinema initiatives<sup>423</sup>—that further institutionalized their

---

<sup>420</sup> "Cultura ofreció la videoteca a los Piqueras y la familia reclama el cuadro que pintó Renau," *Levante-EMV*, September 26, 2008, <http://www.levante-emv.com/cultura/2008/09/26/cultura-ofrecio-videoteca-piqueras-familia-reclama-cuadro-pinto-renau/499635.html>. Accessed July 6, 2018.

<sup>421</sup> Laurent Le Forestier and Guillaume Vernet, "Moussinac et l'IDHEC: Une Direction 'à Coups d'actes et de Pensées,'" in *Un Intellectuel Communiste, Léon Moussinac Critique et Théoricien Des Arts*, vol. Volume d'études, 2 vols. (Paris: Association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma, 2014), 373–98.

<sup>422</sup> Irene Rozsa, "Film Culture and Education in Republican Cuba: The Legacy of José Manuel Valdés-Rodríguez," in *Cosmopolitan Visions: The Transnational Horizons of Latin American Film Culture, 1896–1960*, ed. Rielle Navitski and Nicolas Poppe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 298–323.

<sup>423</sup> Haidee Wasson and Charles Acland define useful cinema as 'a body of films and technologies that perform tasks and serve as instruments in an ongoing struggle for aesthetic, social, and political capital'. See Acland and Wasson, *Useful Cinema*, 3.

cultural activism. Although the inspiring memory of these critics is not always self-evident, it provided a model from which to develop an organizing function for film pedagogy. The afterlives of the internationale of film pedagogy for which this chapter argues, then, testify to the generative consequences of calling film to action in the interwar years. A more comprehensive history of such transnational practices and formations lies ahead. In this chapter I focused on Juan Piqueras, Léon Moussinac, and Harry Alan Potamkin in order to indicate the amount of film initiatives that remain in the shadows of accepted film scholarship geographies, but many other similar initiatives are still to be connected. They reveal not only how film's intervention in society was imagined, but also how it was put into practice in everyday cultural, political, and social realms.

In the next chapter I move back to the Spanish context to focus on another example of a noncommercial film culture which has been largely overlooked in the narratives of the country's film history: the amateur film movement created by the Catalan industrial bourgeoisie. I depart from the leftist film culture that has been the subject of the first two chapters of the dissertation to focus on how this movement also attempted, in its own way, to challenge the "circuits in charge" of commercial cinema. It participated in an international network of smallgauge film culture that included journals, contests, and congresses, to the point of influencing the official film policy of the Catalan government. It was also the only sustained film production of the interwar period (only partially interrupted by the Civil War due to the shortage of materials and censorship bans), becoming, in its own way, an inspiring memory for the post-war generation of filmmakers and critics that looked to rebuild Catalan cinema out of this remarkable vernacular national cinema.

### Chapter 3. A Vernacular National Cinema: Amateur Filmmaking in Catalonia (1932–1936)

To realize the importance of the *amateur* cinema movement it is advisable to examine it from the point of view of its reach and the quality of its manifestations, highlighting its contribution to the main problems of film in general.<sup>424</sup>

Giovanni de Feo, 1935.<sup>425</sup>

[...] we can't discuss the organization of an official educational cinema in Catalonia without considering the work initiated by our amateur filmmakers. The technical and artistic preparation they have acquired in this process, together with their love for our things make them truly useful for such purposes.

Domènec Giménez Botey, 1933.<sup>426</sup>

They [amateurs] are to be found off to one side of any official version, occupying a space external to the factory, the film production studio, the great artist's studio and the office; they exist in spaces that are thresholds such as hallways, cloakrooms, corridors and closets and often find themselves to be lacking visibility.

Janet Harbord, 2016.<sup>427</sup>

---

<sup>424</sup> G.d.F., "Cine-Amateurs," *Intercine* 7, no. 1 (January 1935): 47.

<sup>425</sup> G.d.F., "Cine-Amateurs." Emphasis in original.

<sup>426</sup> Domènec Giménez i Botey, "What Should the Role of Official Institutions Be in Relation to the Use of Cinema as an Instrument of Culture?," trans. Masha Salazkina and Enrique Fibla-Gutierrez, *Film History* 30, no. 1 (2018): 170, <https://doi.org/10.2979/filmhistory.30.1.08>. Translation from original document.

<sup>427</sup> Janet Harbord, *Ex-Centric Cinema: Giorgio Agamben and Film Archaeology* (New York London Oxford New Delhi Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, Inc, 2016), 170.

With films entered from England, Australia, Japan, Holland, Korea, Catalonia, South Africa, Alaska, Italy, Belgium, France, and all parts of the United States, the Contest proved an International affair in more ways than one—for it required all of the linguistic ability of the members of the A.S.C. to translate the titles of the various entries, many of which were in the language of the land of their origin. We hereby single out one of the entries, Senor Delmir de Caralt, and ask him to take a bow for his forethought in sending a synopsis of his entry, *Montserrat*, and a complete list of its subtitles (which were in Catalan), together with a translation into Spanish and English. Viva El Senor de Caralt!<sup>428</sup>

In 1932, the journal *American Cinematographer* organized—with the sponsorship of the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC)—an amateur movie-making contest in which over three hundred films were screened. The contest was open to amateurs anywhere in the world, providing they subscribed to the journal or paid for a yearly subscription when sending their films. Although the exact number of foreign films was not specified, we know that at least eleven countries participated (listed above), and that Japan had the largest representation with twelve films. Catalan filmmaker Delmir de Caralt, whose translation of subtitles was enthusiastically singled out by the journal, won second prize in the Scenic category for his film *Montserrat* (1932).<sup>429</sup> Jury member Clarence Brown, who had by this point been nominated for two Oscars for best director, was struck by the “impressive scenery of Catalonia” and described Caralt as a “lucky devil—think how far we’d have to travel to find locations like that!”<sup>430</sup> Caralt was one of only three international contestants to be awarded a prize (the others were Aral Wagoroa [Japan] and Compte de Janze [France], although honorable mentions were also given to

---

<sup>428</sup> William Stull, “Highlights of Amateur Contest,” *American Cinematographer* 13, no. 8 (December 1932): 20.

<sup>429</sup> “Winners of Certificate Awards,” *American Cinematographer* 13, no. 9 (January 1933): 26.

<sup>430</sup> Stull, “Highlights of Amateur Contest,” 48.

Kichi Takeuchi [Japan] and Stefano Bricarelli [Italy]). Two years later, the CCGC commissioned a selection of amateur films to represent Catalonia in the I Exposition of Experimental Films in Venice (Italy),<sup>431</sup> organized within the 2<sup>a</sup> Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica—Biennale di Venezia (II Venice International Film Festival).<sup>432</sup> The film *Festa major (Town Festival*, Eusebi Ferrer i Borrell, 1933) won the Education Ministry medal, and *Abelles (Bees*, Joan Prats, 1933), *Jornada al Port (A Day in the port*, Joan Roig and Antonio Sarsanedas, 1934), and *Laie Barcino* (Eusebi Ferré i Borrell, 1934) won honorary mentions.<sup>433</sup>

These examples reflect the presence and visibility of Spanish—and, specifically, Catalan—amateur directors on the international cultural scene in the early 1930s, which is especially striking when compared to the weakness of the Catalan film industry at the time.<sup>434</sup> These filmmakers formed part of the local amateur film movement, mostly organized around an institution called the Centre Excursionista de Catalunya (Catalan Excursionist Center, herein CEC, whose members were mostly from the rich industrial bourgeoisie). The CEC hosted the IV International Amateur Film Contest and I International Amateur Film Congress in Barcelona in 1935.<sup>435</sup> Despite such developments, the work on this movement has remained marginal.<sup>436</sup>

---

<sup>431</sup> The meaning of the term *experimental film* in Italy at the time has little to do with our avant-garde-informed conception, and it referred instead to nonprofessional practices institutionalized by the Italian fascist movement in its Cineguf movement. See Andrea Mariani, “The Cineguf Years: Amateur Cinema and the Shaping of a Film Avant-Garde in Fascist Italy (1934–1943),” *Film History* 30, no. 1 (2018): 30, <https://doi.org/10.2979/filmhistory.30.1.03>.

<sup>432</sup> Joaquim Romaguera i Ramió, “La revista Cinema Amateur (1932-1936),” *Gazeta* 1 (1994): 324. See also “Los films amateurs que representarán a Cataluña en la Exposición de Venecia,” *Arte y Cinematografía* 397–398 (August 1934): 7.

<sup>433</sup> “Una visita a la XIX Bienal de Arte de Venecia,” *Arte y Cinematografía* 412 (August 1936): 85.

<sup>434</sup> The Catalan film industry was almost entirely devoted to producing Spanish-language films in the Orpheus studios in Montjuïc (Barcelona). Only a few isolated attempts were made to produce Catalan-language films, the most important of them being *El Cafè de la Marina* (Domingo Pruna, 1934), which was a financial failure. In a review of the film, the author identifies it as the first Catalan film, beyond the “commendable” production of amateur cinema. See Ventura Plana, “Davant del primer film català,” *Clarisme* 2, no. 20 (March 3, 1933): 1.

<sup>435</sup> Throughout the chapter I use the gentilic Catalan when referring to the amateur film movement. This does not mean that it was an exclusively Catalan phenomenon (although most production was centered in Catalonia), since it was sometimes also referred as Spanish, and it actually represented Spain in international contests.

<sup>436</sup> As have the first decades of Spanish cinema, which are usually reduced to Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí’s film *Un Chien Andalou*.

Scholars tend to mention it in passing, dismissing it as a pastime of the bourgeoisie that failed to achieve professionalization,<sup>437</sup> rather than exploring how amateur filmmaking created a relevant social and cultural space of its own throughout the 1930s. This distinct space included festivals, congresses, dedicated stores, film clubs, journals, international networks and, ultimately, an extensive film culture heritage that blossomed well beyond the realm of home movies.<sup>438</sup>

The only exceptions to this scholarly omission are the few, and extremely useful, local histories of amateur cinema published in the last years in Catalonia, which provide us with methodically collected data on the presence of nonprofessional cinema during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the region.<sup>439</sup> Together with associations like Cinema Rescat (Cinema Rescue), a nonprofit institution mostly devoted to the preservation of nonprofessional cinema,<sup>440</sup> these initiatives have prevented the memory of amateur cinema from sinking into complete oblivion. But it's time to articulate this essential work beyond local micro histories, and account for the multiple social and cultural realms in which amateur cinema intervened throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>441</sup> This is

---

<sup>437</sup> This is the case even with the most important Catalan film historians; Esteve Riambau, *Paisatge abans de la batalla: el cinema a Catalunya (1896-1939)* (Barcelona: Llibres de l'Índex, 1994), 73; Gubern, *El cine sonoro en la II República (1929-1936)*, 29; Joaquim Romaguera i Ramió, *Quan el cinema començà a parlar en català: 1927-1934* (Barcelona: Fundació Institut del Cinema Català, 1992), 48.

<sup>438</sup> In recent years, there has been a surge in scholarship, especially in the US, UK, and France. See for example Nicholson, *Amateur Film*; Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema*; Benoît Turquety and Valérie Vignaux, *L'amateur en cinéma. Un autre paradigme. Histoire, esthétique, marges et institutions*. (Paris: AFRHC, 2017). Dr. Masha Salazkina and I have recently attempted to open up the geographical and conceptual reach of amateur film scholarship in a special issue published in *Film History* ("Towards a global history of amateur film practices and institutions," 30:1, 2018) and an upcoming edited collection in Indiana University Press (in press).

<sup>439</sup> Pedro Nogales Cárdenas, *El cine no profesional a Reus: pioners i amateurs (1987-1989)* (Reus: Fundació Privada Liber, 2006); Jordi Tomàs i Freixa, "El cinema amateur terrassenc," *Quaderns de divulgació cinematogràfica*, no. 6 (n.d.); Jordi Tomàs i Freixa, Albert Beorlegui i Tous, and Joaquim Romaguera i Ramió, *El cinema amateur a Catalunya* (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, Institut Català de les Indústries Culturals, 2009); Margarida Gómez Inglada, El Prat (Llobregat), and Regidoria de Cultura, *El cinema amateur al Prat* (El Prat de Llobregat); Josep Serra-Estruch, "Aquesta cosa dita 'cinema amateur,'" *Pont*, n.d., 51–56; Francesc Espinet i Burunat, "Un film amateur sobre la premsa: Diaris (els germans Salvans i els cineistes terrassencs en temps republicans)," *Anàlisi*, no. 23 (1999): 107–35.

<sup>440</sup> Cinema Rescat publishes a journal, edits publications, organizes congresses, and awards an annual prize to the best research devoted to salvaging forgotten film heritage. See <https://cinemarescat.wordpress.com/>.

<sup>441</sup> Most amateur films from the 1930s have barely been screened, with the exception of a program titled "Amateur Film Under The Influence Of Avant-Garde" curated by Cinema Rescat and presented at the Punto de Vista festival in Pamplona in 2011 which later travelled to the Filmoteca de Valencia). See



especially so in the face of the striking number of smallgauge film projectors and cameras that circulated during the interwar period; for example, in France, Pathé alone sold 250,000 projectors from 1922 to 1934<sup>442</sup>—an impressive number if we remember that in 1934, there was an estimated 29,560 movie theaters in Europe.<sup>443</sup> Following what Eric Smoodin calls the “archival turn” of the discipline—“a new consideration of the materials we might use for writing history and to our sense of institutional relations in that history”<sup>444</sup>—this chapter explores how looking at neglected amateur materials and histories (such as the 1930s amateur film movement in Catalonia) aids our understanding of the emergence of moving-image culture; such studies incorporate an array of practices, institutions, and developments largely ignored by scholarship. I first offer a brief overview of the context in which amateur cinema emerged in the 1920s, accompanied by a definition of the term that encapsulates these specificities. I will then move to the CEC case study to show the importance of amateur cinema for the development of film culture in Catalonia, and how the movement intersected with international networks of film practice and criticism

### **The emergence of amateur cinema and the “love” of filmmaking**

Among the first widely available and relatively affordable consumer cameras that appeared in the early 1920s, were the 9.5mm Pathé-Baby in 1922 (France), and the 16mm Cine-Kodak in 1923

---

[http://www.puntodevistafestival.com/en/ficha\\_película.asp?IdPeli=173&Urtea=2011](http://www.puntodevistafestival.com/en/ficha_película.asp?IdPeli=173&Urtea=2011) and [http://ivac.gva.es/la-filmoteca/programacion/ciclos/ciclo\\_869/amateurismos-bajo-la-influencia](http://ivac.gva.es/la-filmoteca/programacion/ciclos/ciclo_869/amateurismos-bajo-la-influencia). Accessed August 1, 2018.

<sup>442</sup> Valérie Vignaux, “Les animateurs français et le Pathé-Baby ou des usages privés des images cinématographiques dans la France de l’entre-deux-guerres1,” *1895. Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze*, no. 59 (December 1, 2009): 94, <https://doi.org/10.4000/1895.3919>.

<sup>443</sup> “¿Cuántos cinemas hay en el mundo?,” *Intercine* 7, no. 3 (March 1935): 178. The article uses statistics from the USA department of foreign trade, which counts a total of 56967 movie theatres in the USA (10143), Latin America (5002), Europe (29560), USSR (9987), Japan (1600), and India (675).

<sup>444</sup> Eric Smoodin, “As the Archive Turned: Writing Film Histories without Films,” *The Moving Image* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 96.

(USA).<sup>445</sup> This means that amateur production in the 1920s and 1930s, effectively constituted the early period of this film culture, although it certainly incorporated the knowledge and reflection of almost three decades of film history. Most of the filmmakers were avid moviegoers, readers of film journals, critics, and organizers of local film clubs. But amateur cinema also developed its own path, demarcating itself from commercial cinema in search of a creative space and circuit of its own. The possibility of capturing immediate reality in moving images implied a new active and vernacular engagement with actuality, which could now be captured, reproduced, altered, circulated, and shared locally and internationally. Obviously, this only happened when the means of production became available beyond a professional context, and, as a result, such availability was deeply tied to economic and social determinants.

Amateur filmmaking began as a hobby for the wealthy bourgeoisie, but it eventually became related to the emergence of a post-war mass consumer society—especially when the price of equipment was reduced considerably and amateurs grew in number and social diversity.<sup>446</sup> In Catalonia, however, the first relevant nonprofessional movement was—given the characteristics of the country<sup>447</sup>—led by prominent members of the Catalan industrial bourgeoisie who were also largely involved in the defense of the region’s right to national and

---

<sup>445</sup> Raymond Fielding, ed., *A Technological History of Motion Pictures and Television: An Anthology from the Pages of the Journal of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983), 131; G. Marsolais, *L’aventure du cinéma direct revisitée: histoire, esthétique, méthodes, tendances, textes des cinéastes, repères chronologiques, glossaire, index* (Les 400 Coups, 1997).

<sup>446</sup> As with most media technologies made available to the consumer market, nonprofessional cameras were first sold at prohibitive prices for most of the population. But collective modes of organization, such as film clubs, allowed for a more democratic use of the new medium. In the next decades, prices would decrease steadily, and by the 1940s and 1950s amateur filmmaking was considered an overall middle-class product. This depends, again, on the economic and social context we discuss. Amateur cinema was considered a middle-class hobby in the US and UK already in the 1930s. See Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema*; Nicholson, *Amateur Film..* In Spain, however, it was still a privilege of the wealthy. The opening of a dedicated amateur film store in the popular commercial street Pelayo in Barcelona in 1933 indicates that a certain accessibility was rapidly taking place.

<sup>447</sup> In 1930 almost 50 percent of the population still worked in the primary sector. Catalonia was a highly unequal society, with a handful of powerful landowners controlling most the land, an impoverished working class, and a thriving industrial bourgeoisie mainly devoted to the textile business.

cultural autonomy, and was concomitantly tied to a specific dominant class worldview. This is important given that this was the first instance of wide, nonprofessional access to the means of moving-image production. This created new realms of possibilities for the medium—what Jennifer Lyn Peterson calls an “expansion of the sensory horizon” fostered by cinema.<sup>448</sup> Film moved beyond its status as a top-down mass consumable cultural product into the realm of everyday recording for a growing number of (wealthy) citizens.

These histories call for a new conception of amateur cinema as a distinct film culture with its own modes of production, distribution, and exhibition, pointing to the crucial importance of nonprofessional film culture not only in relation to more established cinematic modes (be it avant-garde or documentary),<sup>449</sup> but also in relation to the ways we understand the explicitly political role of cinema and media both historically and in the present day. Far from being a mere hobby performed by lone individuals that filmed their families and vacation trips, amateur filmmaking occupied a wide variety of social and cultural spaces and functions.<sup>450</sup> As we will see throughout the chapter, many of these were linked to state-sponsored media practices, and/or supported through alternative formations such as artistic, civic, and political collectives. More importantly, amateur cinema ends up displacing the traditional conception of the passive spectator as the main consumer of moving images, and discovers instead an active engagement with the medium beyond the control of the industry, censorship, and commercial interests in

---

<sup>448</sup> Jennifer Lyn Peterson uses this expression in her reassessment of early travelogues. See Jennifer Lynn Peterson, *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2013), 269.

<sup>449</sup> We can cite as an example the domestic film *Menjant Garotes* from Luis Buñuel (1930), in which the famous director filmed Salvador Dalí's parents in their house in Cadaqués. Although shot in 35mm, this four-minute film discovered fortuitously in 1988 by historians Román Gubern, Ian Gibson, and Rafael Santos Torroella was conceived as a home movie gift to the parents of Dalí (who were angered with the scandalous nature of their son's career). See Gubern, *Luis Buñuel*, 26; Mendelson, *Documenting Spain*, 55–57. For more information on the intersection between amateur cinema and the avant-garde see Puyal, *Cinema y arte nuevo*, 66–70.

<sup>450</sup> Hence the name of the research and curatorial project on interwar amateur cinema I started at the Filmoteca de Catalunya (Catalan Film Archive) in February 2018; *Out of the home! Amateur film beyond the domestic space*.

general.<sup>451</sup>

Moving beyond the paradigm of industry-dominated national cinematic histories—and taking a broader view of what constituted film culture in the twentieth century—we can see how amateur (similar to industrial, militant or educational) film practices around the world have a distinct historical dimension, according to the technical, social, and economic factors that marked their emergence and development. The threshold position of amateur film culture between private and public realms, which Charles Tepperman describes as its “middleness” in a constantly shifting ideological, aesthetic, and technological terrain,<sup>452</sup> its consequent diffusion in diverse cultural spaces, and the closer relationship it establishes between citizens and media are important points from which to rethink the history of the medium beyond commercial cinema.

The first inexperienced and enthusiastic camera operators working in the years immediately following the invention of cinema were arguably also amateurs; however, this classification depends on the meaning we ascribe to the term *amateur*. Instead of defining the term in relation to the technological means of production or the quality of the result,<sup>453</sup> we should focus on the modes of production, exhibition, and distribution that inform the motivations behind the works themselves. Pioneer filmmakers may have sometimes been dubiously professional in their processes compared to later standards, but their objective was clear: to create a product that

---

<sup>451</sup> Or with the ability to control their interactions with these developments thanks to home-projectors and film libraries, establishing a largely unexplored connection with later media practices such as television zapping, video, DVD and streaming. See in this respect the excellent article from Alexandra Schneider on the Pathé 9’5mm catalogue and its overlooked place in the development of cinephilia as “archives that bear traces of nontheatrical viewing practices.” Alexandra Schneider, “Time Travel with Pathé Baby: The Small-Gauge Film Collection as Historical Archive,” *Film History* 19, no. 4 (2007): 353–360.

<sup>452</sup> Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema*, 9.

<sup>453</sup> We can think here of the common derogatory use of the adjective *amateur* to define an activity or product as something not well or properly done due to a lack of professional knowledge. The English Oxford Dictionary for instance defines amateur as 1) Engaging or engaged in without payment; non-professional and 2) Done in an inept or unskillful way. See *Oxford dictionaries*, “amateur,” accessed July 12, 2018, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/amateur>

would be sold commercially in a professional market.<sup>454</sup> This is not at all the case within the Catalan amateur movement, whose filmmakers were proud to call themselves amateurs, placing themselves outside of a commercial circuit that betrayed what they saw as the artistic essence of the medium.<sup>455</sup> This discourse against cinema as a commodity was articulated by both political film initiatives and artistic avant-gardes throughout the interwar period and provides the historical basis for our current conception of alternative film cultures.<sup>456</sup>



Figure 35. Joan Salvans Piera at the Encantat Gran peak (taken by Albert Oliveras i Folch, July 1927) and photograph of the Maladeta peak where we can see a film camera from Salvans (original title says "Salvans films the Maladeta", taken by Albert Oliveras i Folch, 1927). Arxiu Fotogràfic Centre Excursionista de Catalunya.

With this in mind, I understand amateur film as a mode of cultural production in which a direct relationship between expressive practices and individual or collective experience replaces commercial goals, regardless of the ultimate objective (political, cultural, personal, etc.). That is,

<sup>454</sup> This argument is also put forward by Nicholson, who remembers Richard Lows's study of 1930s British filmmaking and how "early professionals were amateurs in all but how they earned a living when they started." See Nicholson, *Amateur Film*, 3.

<sup>455</sup> Nicholson draws similar conclusions from the UK amateur filmmakers of the 1920s, who proudly defended the possibility to experiment with no commercial pressures. See Heather Norris Nicholson, "Shooting in Paradise: Conflict, Compassion and Amateur Filmmaking During the Spanish Civil War," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 27, no. 3 (August 2006): 313–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256860600779329>.

<sup>456</sup> See Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back*; Jamie Sexton, *Alternative Film Culture in Inter-War Britain* (Exeter: Univ. of Exeter Press, 2008).

an alternative use value for cinema as an everyday expressive tool supplants the production of a commodity and its market exchange value. I don't believe it's important to distinguish what *type* of films count as amateur (domestic, edited or unedited, with an identifiable title, author, or orphan, etc.) or even what technology is used (smallgauge formats or professional equipment) but to focus instead on the status of the work vis a vis the commercial system.<sup>457</sup>



Figure 36. Amateur filmmaker in a trip organized by the CEC to Barèges (France) in 1929. Photograph by Carles Fargas i Bonell. Arxiu Fotogràfic Centre Excursionista de Catalunya.

Using the word *amateur* to define such film developments (instead of nonprofessional, noncommercial) is important since it describes a distinct film culture as well as its intrinsic relation to doing “something for the love of the thing rather than for economic reasons” to use Maya Deren’s words in her article “Amateur versus Professional,” (1965) which Stan Brakhage echoed a few years later in a short essay titled “In defense of amateur” (1971).<sup>458</sup> Needless to

<sup>457</sup> These issues of classification are certainly important for the work of archivists, but they become reductive and rather sterile when attempting to conceptualize the place of amateur cinema in relation to film and cultural history in general.

<sup>458</sup> Maya Deren, “Amateur Versus Professional,” *Film Culture*, no. 39 (Winter 1965): 45–46; Stan Brakhage, *Essential Brakhage: Selected Writings on Filmmaking*, ed. Bruce R. McPherson (Kingston, N.Y: Documentext, 2001), 144. The post-war US avant-garde was the movement that last defended the importance of the amateur in relation to the professional film market. See for example Jonas Mekas’s article “On Film Troubadours” published in *Movie Journal* in 1960: “Films will soon be made as easily as written poems, and almost as cheaply. They will be made everywhere and by everybody. The empires of professionalism and big budgets are crumbling.” Broderick

say, and as this chapter shows, this position did not emerge from the post-war US avant-garde, but was present in the 1930s internationally. See for example the words of Italian critic Umberto Barbaro on the vantage point of the amateur filmmaker (the *amatore*) over the professional given the fact that the production of the former is “fruit of its free will and love; the amateur can be considered free of any influence that doesn’t originate in his own aesthetic and moral convictions.”<sup>459</sup>

In today’s media-pervasive societies, capitalism has normalized and subsumed amateur film production as the consumption of everyday experiences,<sup>460</sup> but the 1920s and 1930s witnessed its first step (certainly influenced by the consolidation of consumer photography and the popularization of leisure travel and excursionist centers for those who could afford it, as we can see in Figure 35 and Figure 36). Vernacular uses of film could have gone either way at this moment, as Raymond Williams states in relation to the unpredictable directions of artistic ruptures: “We have then to recall that the politics of the avant-garde, from the beginning, could go either way. The new art could find its place either in a new social order or in a culturally transformed but otherwise persistent and recuperated old order.”<sup>461</sup> Both the Marxist smallgauge production promoted by Piqueras and the bourgeois movement in Catalonia were certainly attempting to promote new social orders in the mass mediated society of the 1930s, but with radically different views on the role that this so-called mass had to play in the process.

In the previous chapters I have analyzed how leftist noncommercial film networks created an alternative to commercial cinema by promoting radical *film culture in the absence of*

---

Fox, “Rethinking the Amateur,” *Spectator* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 9.

<sup>459</sup> Umberto Barbaro, “Elogio del Dilettantismo,” *Quadrivio* IV, no. 48 (September 27, 1936): 8.

<sup>460</sup> Take for instance the growing obsession to record and share everything that happens in our lives, from, with the mantra of not missing anything (which, if we think about it, still responds to the same idea expressed in a 1924 Pathé-Baby advertisement to buy the camera in order to “defeat time” (Figure 37).

<sup>461</sup> Williams, *Politics of Modernism*, 62.

*commercial film production*. In this chapter I continue this history by looking at a quite different cultural formation, both in its politics and tactics: the visual regime fostered by bourgeois amateur filmmakers in Catalonia and their close relationship with official cultural and political institutions. Despite being on opposite ends of the political spectrum, radical film criticism and bourgeois amateur cinema focused on the same tools to promote these opposed versions of alternative cinema. Journals, film clubs, congresses, and smallgauge production became for both the means to create a space beyond commercial cinema, or what Harbord refers to as “a cinema that has become a sacred, spectacularized religion of commodified bodies and desires whose relationship to materiality is buried.”<sup>462</sup> Against this commodified dimension of moving images based on entertainment and what they perceived as passive spectatorship, both radical film critics and amateur filmmakers promoted an everyday engagement with the production and critical analysis of moving images. But it was the Catalan amateurs who achieved what Juan Piqueras had only timidly attempted to create: the meaningful and sustained production of films beyond the capitalist film industry. They did so by embracing amateur film technology as an expressive tool from the very beginning, as opposed to the delayed attention that Piqueras and Moussinac displayed for smallgauge production as we saw in chapter two.

When, in 1935, Piqueras attempted to launch a proletarian amateur film movement, he explicitly quoted the astonishing relevance of the Catalan amateur movement in the cultural milieu of the time as a point of reference for the project:

The fact that amateur film has made it to Iberia by way of Catalonia and that at present it is Catalonia (a much more economically developed area than the rest of Spain) that holds sway over almost all activity related to amateur cinema is very significant. This means

---

<sup>462</sup> Harbord, *Ex-Centric Cinema*, 171.



that only Catalonia, where all classes have achieved a higher standard of living, has amateur cinema. This is, naturally, a decisive factor in the cultural and social evolution of humanity, and only Catalonia has been able to engage in concerted action and give a certain amplitude and a definite internationalism to its amateur filmmaking movement.<sup>463</sup>

The Marxist critic described the bourgeois movement as an expression of the dominant classes—an apolitical “sport” of the elite—in sharp contrast with the political potential of amateur cinema in the hands of workers.<sup>464</sup> Through this appropriation of the filmic means of production, smallgauge filmmaking became a weapon in the class warfare that was being fought in Spain, and a formidable point of connection with international militant networks, uniting the ideas, aspirations, and dreams of the proletariat worldwide, just as the Catalan amateurs had done with their films, contests, or congresses. In their rejection of commercial cinema, though, the paths of Piqueras and Salvans with which I opened the thesis introduction crossed for a moment, only to diverge in their political objectives and concrete initiatives throughout the convulsive early 1930s and tragically converge again in common graves in Terrassa and Venta de Baños.

It is to the “economically developed” Catalonia that Piqueras describes in the quote that I now turn, to explore the film production and cultural networks of bourgeois filmmakers from the industrial centers of Catalonia (Barcelona, Terrassa, Sabadell) to which figures like Salvans, Delmir de Caralt, Domènec Giménez Botey, Josep María Galcerán, Llorenç Llobet Gracia,<sup>465</sup> and many others belonged. Innumerable histories and institutions could have been included in

---

<sup>463</sup> Juan Piqueras, “Our Amateur Cinema in ‘Nuestro Cinema,’” trans. Lisa Jarvinen, *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 4 (2012): 142.

<sup>464</sup> Juan Piqueras, “Nuestro cine amateur en Nuestro Cinema,” *Nuestro Cinema* 2, no. 17 (1935).

<sup>465</sup> A DVD box with twenty two amateur films from this filmmaker is about to be released by the Filmoteca de Catalunya. Unfortunately I couldn’t access these films before and include them in this chapter since they were undergoing a thorough process of restoration before being digitized.

this chapter, but given my intention of articulating the importance of amateur cinema for film history beyond exhaustive local histories, I have chosen to focus on a concrete case study: the cinema section of the CEC and its position vis a vis the social and political reality of Catalonia in the 1930s.

The importance of this institution in Catalan society is amplified by the fact that it published a journal, organized the first local amateur film contest in 1932, and rapidly inserted itself in international networks of amateur cinema. Moreover, many of its members had high profiles in the economic, social, political, and media reality of the region. The CEC also collaborated directly with the Catalan government in its plan to institutionalize cinema.<sup>466</sup> For all these reasons, this institution offers a perfect window to the imbrication of amateur cinema with the historical developments and mindsets that characterized Spain in the 1930s. The following pages are devoted to how a few hiker enthusiasts became filmmakers, ultimately developing a transnational film movement with lasting effect in the film culture of Catalonia.

### **From hikers to filmmakers: the CEC and amateur cinema in Catalonia**

On January 6, 1924, an advertisement in the newspaper *La Vanguardia* (Barcelona) announced that the first 1,500 9.5mm Pathé Baby projectors available through the company's representatives in Barcelona for the Christmas season had sold out (Figure 37).<sup>467</sup> The same ad informed consumers that in the following days 500 more would arrive, and that in February the new 9.5mm Pathé-Baby camera would also be released. These numbers (a demand of over 2,000 projectors plus an unknown number of cameras) are quite impressive, especially when compared to other expensive consumer items of the time. For instance, in 1924, there were 19,328 cars

---

<sup>466</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Catalan government's institutionalization of film see chapter four.

<sup>467</sup> "Los Reyes Magos," *La Vanguardia*, January 6, 1924, 31.

registered in Catalonia, which means that there was approximately one small-gauge projector for every ten cars.<sup>468</sup> The projector sold for 225 pesetas; each film in Pathé's extensive catalogue of over eight hundred films cost 5.5 pesetas, while the camera had a price of 175 pesetas.<sup>469</sup> Given that the average salary in 1935 was of about 145 pesetas a month (4,82 a day),<sup>470</sup> Pathé-Baby products were a luxury reserved for the wealthy, who were largely concentrated in the industrial centers of Catalonia (Sabadell, Terrassa, and Barcelona).<sup>471</sup>

EX. VANGUARDIA Páginas 11.—Cinco y 6 de enero de 1924



## Los Reyes Magos

Han agotado las existencias, 1.500 aparatos de este maravilloso cine de familia, sin haber podido satisfacer ni la mitad de los encargos recibidos.

## Pathé Baby

**Sociedad Anónima Española**  
esté orgullosa por el éxito sin precedente alcanzado y se complace comunicando a las familias que no han podido tener el honor de recibir de manos de los

### Reyes Magos

esta maravilla del año 1923, que el próximo martes llegará a Barcelona una nueva expedición de

### 500 proyectores "Pathé Baby"

que se pondrán a la venta inmediatamente en los mismos establecimientos autorizados.

A primeros del próximo mes de Febrero se pondrá a la venta la segunda maravilla "Pathé-Baby"

## La Cámara Baby

la que proporcionará el deleite de la fotografía animada, cuando reproduzca las personas que mayormente queremos. Representa la ilusión de vencer al tiempo, significa la posibilidad de volver a desarrollar en la pantalla las fases de nuestra misma vida: es el pasado que revive.

Pedir catálogos e instrucciones a

## PATHE-BABY

Sociedad Anónima Española  
Rambla Cataluña, 8  
BARCELONA



Desde las primeras escenas, así como en aparatos Pathé y similares.

Con la Cámara Pathé Baby, la cinematografía es la más perfectamente adaptada.

La Cámara Baby es un aparato de gran sencillez y de gran utilidad.

**Pathé-Baby**  
SOCIEDAD ANÓNIMA ESPAÑOLA  
RAMBLA CATALUÑA 8.  
BARCELONA

Figure 37. Pathé-Baby advertisement in *La Vanguardia*, January 6, 1924.

<sup>468</sup> "Primeros vehículos matriculados en España" (Dirección General de Tráfico), accessed July 12, 2018, <http://www.dgt.es/images/Primeros-Vehiculos-matriculados-en-Espana-1900-1964-Biblioteca-DGT-1008562.pdf>.

<sup>469</sup> "Qué falta en su casa," *La Vanguardia*, December 7, 1924, 31; "Pathé-Baby," *La Vanguardia*, August 20, 1924, 23.

<sup>470</sup> Oyón, *La quiebra de la ciudad popular*, 182. The average rental of a modest apartment in Barcelona was of 55,2 pesetas a month, so it is difficult to imagine an average Spanish citizen buying a small-gauge camera (and the film stock, projector, films from the catalogue, reparations, etc.)

<sup>471</sup> Nogales Cárdenas, *El cine no profesional a Reus*, 194; Tomàs i Freixa, Beorlegui i Tous, and Romaguera i Ramió, *El cinema amateur a Catalunya*.

It was precisely in those cities where an enthusiast amateur filmmaking movement emerged, first as a pastime of the industrial bourgeoisie, and later as a powerful film movement with a constant presence and influence in the cultural milieu of the time. The ability to “defeat time” and “revive our lives in the screen”—as the Pathé advertisement mentioned—greatly attracted the owners of textile factories who had first travelled to the UK in the late nineteenth century to modernize their productive systems and were now importing from France a new media device with multiple potential applications.

The Catalan amateur filmmakers clustered around the CEC, a cultural organization that stemmed from the regionalist *Renaixença* revivalist movement of the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>472</sup> Originally an alpine excursionist club, the CEC had evolved into a key instrument for the cultural surveying of the traditions, places, and symbols that constituted Catalan nationalist aspirations. It published a monthly bulletin on the geographic, cultural, historical, and archaeological issues of Catalonia. With the popularization of photography among its members since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it soon became the largest and most reliable supply of images of Catalonia, feeding into the regionalist cultural and political circuits that were articulating a Catalan national movement with increasing demands for political autonomy from Spain.<sup>473</sup> Newspapers and journals like *La Vanguardia*, *La Veu de Catalunya*, *L’Opinió*, the *Butlletí del Centre Excursionista de Catalunya*, or *Mirador* increasingly included images in their pages, establishing an intermedial relationship that would be extended to moving images with the arrival of the first amateur cameras to Catalunya in the mid-1920s and the popularization of film clubs among cultural elites.<sup>474</sup> Despite

---

<sup>472</sup> See Angel Smith, *The Origins of Catalan Nationalism, 1770–1898* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 152–81, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137354495>.

<sup>473</sup> The photography archive of the CEC is considered one of the most important visual repositories in the country, with over 750,000 images from 1860 to the present.

<sup>474</sup> Hernández Cano, “Palabras sobre imágenes: autoridad intelectual, ensayo y cultura visual de masas en España (1927-1937),” 55–152.

the initial rejection of cinema by prominent Catalan intellectuals in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>475</sup> the medium was ultimately incorporated as part of what Sebastian Balfour and Alejandro Quiroga call the “affirmation of modernity,” which regionalists strived for as a way to detach themselves from what they perceived as the “failure of the failure of the Spanish state to bring about political and cultural modernization.”<sup>476</sup>



Figure 38. Proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic in Barcelona (April 14, 1931). Images taken by anonymous amateur filmmakers. Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya.

As Lisa Gitelman states in relation to the emergence of new media, “It is not just that each new medium represents its predecessors, as Marshall McLuhan noted long ago, but rather, as Rick Altman elaborates, that media represent and delimit representing, so that new media provide new sites for the ongoing and vernacular experience of representation as such.”<sup>477</sup> In the interwar period in Catalonia, amateur cinema became, for the wealthy elite who could afford it, one such site of social and political representation through vernacular media. Many CEC filmmakers were members of the Lliga Regionalista (later renamed Lliga Catalana), a

<sup>475</sup> See Minguet Batllori, *Cinema, modernitat i avantguarda (1920-1936)*, 100.

<sup>476</sup> Balfour and Quiroga, *The Reinvention of Spain*, 9.

<sup>477</sup> Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006), 4.

conservative party aligned with the defense of Catalan political and cultural autonomy and the interests of the wealthy bourgeoisie. In 1935, the Lliga Catalana inaugurated its own amateur film section, recognizing the political usefulness of the medium.<sup>478</sup>

This was certainly not the intended purpose of Pathé or Kodak when launching these devices to the consumer market, but as Gitelman also reminds us, “When media are new, when their protocols are still emerging and the social, economic, and material relationships they will eventually express are still in formation, consumption and production can be notably indistinct.”<sup>479</sup> In the case of amateur cinema in Catalonia, the original selling point of manufacturers (based on recording one’s private sphere as stated in the advertisement of Figure 37) was surpassed by the drive to capture and intervene in the public sphere, as the above images of the proclamation of the Second Republic (taken on April 14<sup>th</sup> by amateur filmmaker Delmir de Caralt) reflect (Figure 38). As I show in the next paragraphs, this impulse to point the camera to what was happening on the street was complemented with the creation of new cultural and social spaces conceived precisely as a reaction against the social changes and growing participation of citizens in the public sphere taking place in Catalonia.

### **A “difficult art”: the distinguished space of the amateur**

In 1932, following the success of its photography section and the growing number of members with access to Pathé-Baby, Cine-Kodak, and other consumer cameras, amateur filmmakers Delmir de Caralt, Domènec Giménez Botey, and Josep Maria Galcerán began the amateur cinema section of the CEC (Secció Cinema). As previously mentioned, it is necessary to recognize the importance of photography in familiarizing these filmmakers with emerging forms

---

<sup>478</sup> Francesc Espinet i Burunat, “El cinema amateur catala en temps de la Generalitat, la seva inserció a Terrassa i el lideratge de la família Salvans,” *Cinematògraf* 2, no. 3 (2001): 161.

<sup>479</sup> Gitelman, *Always Already New*, 15.

of consumer visual media production and circulation. By 1930, a dedicated amateur cinema shop could be found in Barcelona (Cinematografia Amateur), where clients could buy or rent equipment and films.<sup>480</sup> In 1935, the store moved to a much larger establishment, which included a small theater (Sala Kino's) where regular amateur film screenings were held (Figure 39). In this sense, amateur film transcended consumer culture, consolidating a distinct space of cultural production that in Catalonia surpassed the importance of the local professional film industry.

FilmoTeca

**LA CASA ESPECIALITZADA**

VENDA DE TOTA MENA D'APARELLS DE CINEMA :: LLOGUER DE FILMS DE 9'5 I 16 m/m. :: LABORATORI AMB REVELAT AUTOMÀTIC I CORRECCIÓ PER CEL·LULA FOTOELECTRICA (8, 9'5, 16 m/m.)

CINEMATOGRAFIA AMATEUR

EN CINEMA D'AFIÇIONATS

BOLEX -  
PAILLARD  
FILMO  
EUMIG  
KINOCROME  
KODAK  
PATHE  
GEVAERT  
VICTOR  
CORONET  
AGFA  
PERUTZ  
PHILIPS



TIRATGE DE RETOLS : COPIES SOBRE IMPRESSIONS ETC., ETC.

•  
IMPRESSIÓ DE FILMS PER ENCARREC

•  
PROJECCIONS A DOMICILI

Sala KINO'S, a la disposició dels cineastes i clubs de cinema amateur. Cabina de projecció amb dispositius per a la sonorització. Taules de muntatge a la disposició dels clients

**RONDA UNIVERSITAT, 24**

Figure 39. Advertisement for amateur film store with its own theatre (Sala Kino's) in Barcelona. In issue 11 of *Cinema Amateur* (Spring 1936). Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya.

<sup>480</sup> "Alquiler de Películas Pathé-Baby," *La Vanguardia*, November 16, 1930.

The CEC filmmakers organized film contests, workshops, screenings, and even created a journal—*Cinema Amateur*—that published eleven issues in Catalan from 1932 to 1936. They also vocally rejected commercial film as banal entertainment, defending amateur cinema as the best guarantor of artistic beauty for the minority. With the subtitle “The Journal of Art and Technique for the Amateur,” the purpose of *Cinema Amateur* was to establish amateur cinema as an art form of its own, while also providing practical knowledge for its subscribers, including filmmaking and equipment tips. It shared the romanticized spirit of the excursionist center, posing “nature as freedom” against “civilization as a prison; rebellion against social pressures and the small miseries of daily life in the city.”<sup>481</sup>

Most importantly, the amateurs wanted to create an exclusive community in which they could “find that which you have often looked for elsewhere with no luck; filmmakers like you, with the same faith and concerns. And, also, just friends.”<sup>482</sup> In this sense, *Cinema Amateur* also included information on other amateur cinema clubs around the world, regional and international contests, new technical developments, and a question-and-answer section.<sup>483</sup> Moreover, it published translated articles on montage and sound experimentation in the USSR, as well as other noticeable transnational engagements with journals such as *Movie Makers* from the US and *Ciné-Amateur* from France. Finally, the journal reviewed foreign films and included news from abroad in every issue.

Beyond such institutional developments, the Catalan amateurs expanded their creative references by incorporating different types of techniques and uses of film (both commercial and noncommercial). These included avant-garde films, ethnographic documentaries, and Sergei

---

<sup>481</sup> “Bibliografia,” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 1 (October 1932): 22.

<sup>482</sup> “Editorial,” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 1 (October 1932): 1.

<sup>483</sup> *Cinema Amateur* was so successful that its first issues sold out, and the publishers had to increase the print run considerably for future journals, as well as offer reprints of old issues on request.



Eisenstein's ideological montage theory. In the politically convulsive and utopia-ridden context of the 1930s, the politics of moving images could certainly go either way—as Raymond Williams's words above suggests. A striking variety of political ideologies were posing similar ideas about the epistemological and ontological potential of film, but with very different social orders in mind. The vibrant film culture analyzed in chapter one—and the transnational networks of revolutionary cinema promoted in great part by Juan Piqueras as detailed in chapter two—offered all of them a vast array of films, theoretical approaches, organizational ideas, and different functions for cinema.



Figure 40. Cover of *Cinema Amateur* issue 10 and reference to Soviet montage in that same issue.

Thus, it is hardly surprising to find the Catalan amateur filmmakers incorporating Soviet revolutionary montage techniques, which they had encountered in screenings organized by film clubs like Mirador or Studio Cinaes and in articles in the numerous film journals of the time as

explained in chapter one.<sup>484</sup> For instance, *Cinema Amateur* published a translated article by Karl Freund—via the American Society of Filmmakers—in which Eisenstein’s montage was explained and praised (Figure 40).<sup>485</sup> The article pointed to two reasons for the potential utility of Soviet montage techniques to the amateurs: the need to create a purely visual language and the scarcity of film material, which demanded an intelligent rationalization of shooting time. Given their inability to introduce sound at that time and the expenses associated with their activities (even for wealthy bourgeois), Catalan amateurs paradoxically faced the same technical challenges as Soviet filmmakers. The circulation of references and models for imitation extended to different film styles, including classic avant-garde films such as *H2O* (Ralph Steiner, 1929), in which Joan Salvans found a clear inspiration for his film *Aigua* (*Water*, 1932), presented at the first Amateur Film Festival organized by the CEC in 1932 (Figure 41).<sup>486</sup>

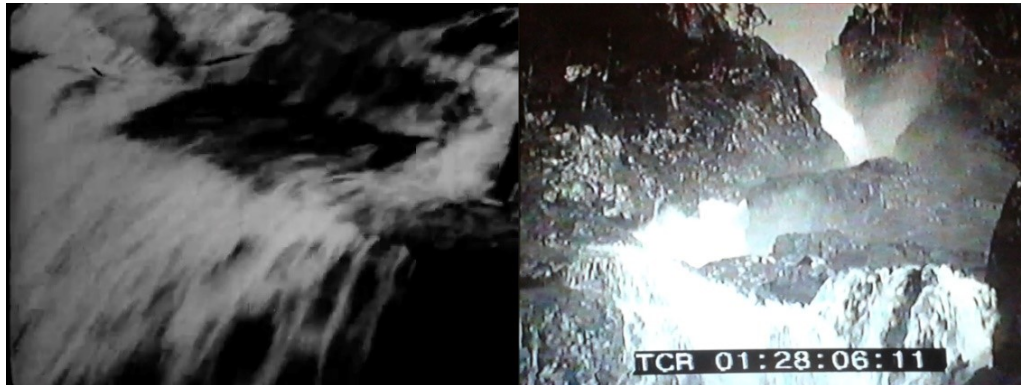


Figure 41. Stills from *H2O* and *Aigua*. Filmoteca de Catalunya.

<sup>484</sup> These film clubs were organized by the modernist journal *Mirador* and the exhibition company Cineaes, becoming the most important exhibition venues for avant-garde and experimental films in Catalonia. They were attended by the cinephile and intellectual community of Catalonia, who were the only spectators of Soviet films—given that their public exhibition was otherwise banned by the government (a ban that wouldn’t be officially lifted until 1936). *Mirador*, for instance, showed *Potomok Chingis-Khana* in November 1929, while Cineaes organized the first screening of *Bronenosets Potyomkin* a year later, in November 1930.

<sup>485</sup> Freund Karl, “I qué es muntatge?,” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 10 (January 1936): 8.

<sup>486</sup> This cross pollination between avant-garde and amateur realms was constant during the interwar period. For a detailed case study focused on the USA see Horak, *Lovers of Cinema*. The influence of city symphonies is another clear example. See for example a 1935 article in *Intercine* where Francesco Pasinetti discusses the influence of *Rien que les heures* (Alberto Cavalcanti, 1926) and *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (Walter Ruttmann, 1927) in the winner of *Movie Makers* best 1934 film contest; Leslie Thatcher’s *Another Day* (1934). F.P., “Les amateurs,” *Intercine* 7, no. 4 (April 1935): 237.



Figure 42. Stills from *Memmortigo?* (Delmir de Caralt, 1933). Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya.

Soviet montage and avant-garde aesthetics were not only a technical matter for the amateurs, but also an effective and expressive tool to communicate their (bourgeois) worldview, even if this was antithetical to the revolutionary political aims of Soviet montage. As I explained in chapter two, the contact zones of film culture enabled by the translation and appropriation of international models and ideas of cinema into the Spanish context allowed for specific organizational and expressive practices. Although CEC members publicly defended their activities as an apolitical form of cinema, some of their films clearly conveyed ideological messages, criticizing worker movements and elevating the figure of the wealthy individual over the masses. For instance, in *Memmortigo?*, one of his most celebrated fiction films, the

filmmaker creates a montage scene in the purest Soviet tradition, comparing proletarian militant movements with running pigs. The film tells the story of a mysterious man who wants to commit suicide. It was shot around the general elections campaign in November 1933, which saw the return of the right to power after the period of the progressive biennial (1931–33).

The protagonist initially attempts being hit by a car but is caught in a fight between two drivers who come from opposite directions—most likely an allegory of the absolute polarization of Catalan society in those years. Disappointed, he decides to jump from a bridge. On his way, he sees a pedestrian reading a Russian paper—a reference to the growing presence of communism among workers—and looks defiantly at him (Figure 42). In the next shot, the pedestrian is dialectically compared to a donkey—showing the political disdain of factory owners toward revolutionary politics. In a scene of bourgeois redemption, the man decides not to jump after meeting a woman with a baby who invites him for a walk. During their stroll alongside a river, they see a series of leaflets floating in the water that have been dropped by a plane. One of the leaflets strikes our protagonist in the face, so he grabs it and begins to read it. The film suddenly cuts to a shot of running piglets and a rapid succession of different electoral posters on a wall from parties such as the Partido Republicano Radical (Radical Republican Party), *Coalició d'Esquerras Catalana* (Left-Wing Catalan Coalition), *Partit Comunista de Catalunya* (Catalan Communist Party), and the *Alianza Obrera* (Worker Alliance). We then see the piglets once more, this time running toward their mother to nurse themselves. Next, we have a shot of an electrical plug and someone plugging in an electrical device, followed by yet another shot of the piglets nursing. The scene finishes with a shot of the man, who dismissively tears the pamphlet in two, visibly upset with such a display of leftist politics.

This direct comment on the radicalization of Catalan politics, from a ruling class

perspective, was certainly not an isolated instance.<sup>487</sup> It also extended to the elite's reactionary discourse toward mass mediums of communication and participation of the working class in democratic elections. On the one hand, cinema, radio, and print media were signs of the modernity certain segments of the Catalan bourgeoisie had long desired. Their own involvement with amateur cinema is an example. But on the other hand, the relative democratization of mass media also worried them, especially in relation to the political influence of film and newspapers on the radicalization of the workers' struggle and the effect this could have on the bourgeoisie's position as the dominant class.

A good example of this complex dynamic is the film *Diaris* (Joan Salvans Piera, 1934). Salvans belonged to a family that owned one of the most important textile factories in Catalonia (SAPHIL, located in Terrassa).<sup>488</sup> The film highlights the importance of print media—an interesting gesture given the devotion of amateurs to moving images—and its importance in society (Figure 43). We are shown how a newspaper is manufactured, from the editors' room to the printing system and distribution network of newspaper boys. But *Diaris* is a more sophisticated film. It not only documents a production process but also highlights the ubiquity of newspapers in modern society. Most importantly, the film emphasizes the influence of information on both individual and collective thought. At one point in the film, an intertitle warns spectators to “choose well their newspaper,” since “everyone has their own newspaper,

---

<sup>487</sup> The political element of some of these films is strikingly absent from the only monographic publications devoted to the Catalan amateur cinema movement; Tomàs i Freixa, Beorlegui i Tous, and Romaguera i Ramió, *El cinema amateur a Catalunya*; Josep Torrella, *Crónica y análisis del cine amateur español*. (Madrid: Rialp., 1965). This can be explained either by the hagiographic nature of such publications, the superficial analysis of the objects of study (given the little importance given by scholars to nonprofessional film beyond the local appeal), or an interested omission of politics by scholars fearful of the cultural capital of the Catalan bourgeoisie (for example, most holdings from the Filmoteca de Catalunya Library come from Delmir de Caralt's own library, incorporated in 1988 to the public institution).

<sup>488</sup> Espinet i Burunat, “Un film amateur sobre la premsa: Diaris (els germans Salvans i els cineistes terrassencs en temps republicans),” 115.

which he ends up identifying with, giving us an idea of how this person is and what he thinks.”



Figure 43. Stills from *Diaris*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya.

The purpose of this message is made clear in the following shots. First, we see a shoe cleaner with a copy of the *Adelante* newspaper, published by the Socialist Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, PSOE) of the time. The next shot is of a factory where some workers are reading *Solidaridad Obrera* (the publication of the anarcho-syndicalist union CNT) during their break. They are interrupted by the back-to-work signal. Next, we see a series of shots that depict industrial processes (machines, furnaces, etc.), which are accompanied by another shot of a socialist newspaper—in this case *La Libertad*. The sequence takes us beyond the factory space

to the agrarian context, where a group of peasants—*rabassaires* in Catalan<sup>489</sup>—are eating lunch and reading an editorial from an unidentified newspaper addressed to the Germà Rabassaire (Peasant Brother). This is an explicit reference to the agrarian conflict in Catalonia, where the anti-landowner Union of Rabassaires, via the party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Catalan Republican Left) was pushing for a new law that guaranteed peasants the ownership of the land. The conservative and regionalist Lliga Catalana (to which many of the amateur filmmakers belonged) fiercely opposed this law to the point of appealing to the Spanish Constitutional court to try and stop it.



Figure 44. Last shot of *Diaris*. Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya.

Finally, the sequence ends with a comment on how the educated worker secretly reads the left-wing independent newspaper *L'Opinió* instead of *La Veu de Catalunya*, the hegemonic publication of the Lliga Catalana. Salvans had an executive position in the SAPHIL factory, which employed a third of the textile workers in Tarrasa and constantly had to deal with strikes

---

<sup>489</sup> Rabassaires were peasants who cultivated vineyards and had the right to a piece of land until two-thirds of the vines were dead.

given the convulsive political turmoil and poor conditions for workers at the time. With his film *Diaris*, Salvans was clearly commenting on what he perceived as the dangers of widespread proletarian or leftist newspapers and their political influence on workers. This suspicion of mass print media contrasts with the celebratory attitude toward small-gauge film that characterized the amateur movement. Indeed, the last sequence of *Diaris* makes a derogatory comment on the usefulness of print media in the age of the amateur, with a shot of newspaper pieces being used as toilet paper (Figure 43). The alternative offered was the new medium of amateur filmmaking, which was—at the time—embraced as a privileged visual regime for a wealthy minority.

In line with avant-garde expressive practices, both *Diaris* and *Memmortigo?* made ideological use of montage, in opposition to using film technique as a straightforward narrative tool. Indeed, I argue that if both films were highly praised in amateur circles, it was not only because of their technical achievements but because of how they portrayed the desires and anxieties of a bourgeois class caught between their obligations as businessmen, their aversion to the masses, and the success of their artistic practices. Amateur cinema provided these Catalan industrialists with a cultural and social space that they could claim for their own, separated from what they saw as the masses, who were gaining a presence in the public sphere, including democratic elections as explicitly criticized in *Memmortigo?*. Despite such obvious ideological commentaries, the film was praised in *Cinema Amateur* for its “pure, poetic vision of the world and things, encapsulated in the constant smile of the female protagonist.”<sup>490</sup> Statements like this speak to the attraction that a “pure” and “poetic” vision of the world—devoid of any of the serious political and social events that were spiraling the country into a civil war and centered on individual enjoyment—had for a bourgeoisie more interested in naturalizing their political

---

<sup>490</sup> “Noves de tot arreu,” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 6 (Fall 1934): 207.



worldview under the aegis of art than in facing the realities of an increasingly radicalizing society.

This conception of art as a distinguished and autonomous realm of creation and beauty incomprehensible to the masses was very much influenced by one of the most consequential texts of the time in Spain: José Ortega y Gasset's *La rebelión de las masas* (The rebellion of the masses), which was published in 1927. The book analyzed how society was being affected by the growing participation of working classes—identified by Gasset as “the masses” in the title of the book itself. It expressed the anxiety of a dominant class faced with the reality that public life suddenly had to be shared since “the masses have decided to advance themselves to the foreground of the social plane, occupying the spaces, using the tools and enjoying the pleasures previously reserved for the minority.”<sup>491</sup> Ortega y Gasset describes how the spaces that used to house the artistic pursuits of this elite—theaters, salons, concert venues, and so on—are now overcrowded by the masses. In this sense, amateur cinema meant the creation of a new artistic bourgeois space, distanced from the masses that “crush everything that is different, distinguished, individual, qualified, and select.”<sup>492</sup> This idea was enormously influential in the cultural elite of Catalonia, as the following article from Domènec Guansé published in 1934, in the journal *La Rambla* reflects:

The masses that arrive today to Catalanism is malleable [...] While the danger of an aristocratic society is that it limits the expansion of culture, making it into a fragile greenhouse flower killed by asphyxiation, the danger of democracy is that it dilutes culture, watering it down and making it lose its tone. We must be vigilant of this in

---

<sup>491</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *La rebelión de las masas* (Madrid: Espasa, 2010), 82.

<sup>492</sup> Ortega y Gasset, 87.

Catalonia; a lot of tact is needed to overcome this peril.<sup>493</sup>

The amateur film movement defined cinema precisely as “a difficult art, only fully achievable for those with enough artistic culture to resolve with knowledge the multiple aspects that constitute a film. This is the task of *Cinema Amateur*: to help in the formation of this complex culture, essential to create conscious filmmakers. ... We will not hesitate to ask for the help of individuals who stand out in the artistic, technical, and literary aspects judged as indispensable for the education of the true filmmaker.”<sup>494</sup>

The explicit reference to a complex know-how, individual qualifications, and true artistic production seemed to be designed to control access to this emerging film culture (in line with Guansé’s idea expressed above of approaching new forms of culture with “tact”). Moreover, as we saw before cameras were still a very expensive product for the majority of citizens, and consequently most amateurs came from quite wealthy backgrounds. Filmmaking became a way to distinguish themselves from the masses, and they thus devoted a lot of time and energy to building a community of their own, including festivals, exhibition venues, a journal, and even an international congress—to which I will turn shortly. They weren’t interested in popularity and fame—hence their rejection of commercial cinema and the star system—but in cultivating an exclusive artistic space that reduced the masses to passive subjects captured by their films.

This idea is perhaps best expressed in an untitled home movie from Delmir de Caralt (circa 1934–35), where he films typical family vacations, weekends in the countryside, and life in Barcelona (Figure 45). We can see a clear example of the social distribution projected by the Catalan bourgeoisie in their films. The filmmaker first shows us the countryside as a space of

---

<sup>493</sup> Domènec Guansé, “Política i cultura. L’entrada de la massa al catalanisme,” *La Rambla* V, no. 228 (April 30, 1934): 4.

<sup>494</sup> “Editorial,” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1933): 33.

hard labor—a recurrent theme in bourgeois recordings in which they paradoxically coincided with leftist critics and filmmakers as we saw in chapter one. However, in the next shot we see that same space as a place of leisure for the wealthy, who rejoice in the aesthetic exercise of landscape painting. Later, a peasant boy approaches the family picnic offering some vegetables, and Delmir captures his respectful and submissive bow—a testimony to the archaic class relations that were fueling the radicalization of the Catalan sociopolitical realm.



Figure 45. Delmir de Caralt *Untitled Home Movie* (circa 1935). Courtesy of the Filmoteca de Catalunya.

Beyond the countryside, massive urban events also became recurrent themes in Catalan amateur movies. The progressive conquest of public space by citizens and the increasing importance of the street as a locus for social, political and cultural participation was another of

the favorite themes of amateur filmmakers.<sup>495</sup> These included, for instance, the Barcelona Universal Exposition in 1929, famous boxing matches, other sporting events, the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic (Figure 38), and folkloric celebrations. The amateurs had found a way to share the social space with the masses by establishing a filming subject/filmed object relationship. If the elites had lost some of the cultural spaces they claimed as their own only a few years ago, and the commercial film industry was solely in the business of producing what Caralt termed “lame novelties,”<sup>496</sup> they could at least claim political control over this new universe of moving images of the everyday. In this sense, what began as a hobby rapidly evolved into a film movement that—despite initial aspirations to romantically separate art from politics—clearly reflected the social tensions that exploded in the following years in Spain (despite attempts to conceal this, as we saw before with the review of *Memmortigo?*).

Moreover, amateur film culture would be rapidly internationalized by a series of networks and events that brought together similar movements and visual regimes from across the world. Films like *Memmortigo?* and *Diaris*—and many others as previously mentioned—circulated well beyond the borders of Catalonia and were highly appreciated by amateurs across the globe. For instance, in 1934, the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers (herein IAC) in London purchased *Memmortigo?* and the documentary *Pallars i Ribagorça: Impressions d'un Camping* (Joan Salvans, also 1934).<sup>497</sup> This last film can be seen as a nature symphony, in which images of cities, technology, and modernization are replaced with beautiful shots of mountains, lakes, trees, animals, and so on.<sup>498</sup> The former was awarded an honorable mention in the same

---

<sup>495</sup> González Calleja, *La Segunda República española*, 998–99.

<sup>496</sup> Delmir de Caralt, “Mor El Cinema?,” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 4 (Winter 1934-1933): 142–43.

<sup>497</sup> Espinet i Burunat, “El cinema amateur catala en temps de la Generalitat, la seva inserció a Terrassa i el lideratge de la familia Salvans,” 168. *Memmortigo?* can be found in the East Anglian Film Archive, which houses part of the IAC’s film collection; see <http://www.eafa.org.uk/catalogue/3610>.

<sup>498</sup> The whole film can be seen in Salvans Piera Joan, “Pallars i Ribagorça: Impressions d'un Càmping,” 1934, <http://www.purl.org/yoolib/memoirefilmiquedusud/?YID=1397>.

year's American Cinematographer Amateur Movie Makers Contest,<sup>499</sup> and was selected by the IAC as part of their World Tour Films itinerant program that travelled throughout Europe, the Middle East, and finally Japan in 1938, where *Memmortigo?* was especially praised by an audience of three hundred members of the Sakura Kogata Eigo Kyokai (Cherry Amateur Movie Society).<sup>500</sup> It is to the transnational circulation of amateur films that I now turn, highlighting the international endorsement of a new bourgeois visual sphere and the progressive turn towards institutionalization that this process entailed.

### **Friendship bonds and international networks**

One of the most overlooked aspects of amateur film history is its international scope, and the Catalan amateurs provide a great example of such a globalized vision, as the posters for the 1935 contest and congress reflect (Figure 46). As I noted in the first section of the chapter, Catalan amateur filmmakers sent films to international contests and subscribed (either independently, or through the clubs they were a part of) to journals like the French *Ciné Amateur* or the Belgian *L'Écran: Revue Belge des Cinéastes Amateurs*.<sup>501</sup> In 1933, the IAC recognized the ardent international vocation of the CEC filmmakers, naming them honorary members of their institution and subsequently acquiring several films for their archive (among them the two mentioned above). The following year, the CEC participated in the I San Esteban Cup celebrated in Budapest (1934) alongside twelve other nations. Spain won first and second prize in the 16mm

---

<sup>499</sup> "Equipment Prizes Awarded," *American Cinematographer* 14, no. 9 (January 1934): 24.

<sup>500</sup> Fred Ells C., "Notes of the Movie Clubs," *American Cinematographer* 19, no. 3 (March 1938): 121.

<sup>501</sup> For example, Ana Fernández Hernández mentions that filmmaker Agustí Fabra, from Tarrasa, had all the issues of *Ciné Amateur* in his personal collection. See Ana Fernández Hernández, "Cinema civil. Un exemple: Edelweiss films," *Terme* 22 (November 2007): 125. Likewise, Delmir de Caralt had one of the largest collections of film publications in the country (which would later become the backbone of the Catalan Film Library, Filmoteca de Catalunya), including books like Léon Moussinac's *Naissance du Cinéma* (J. Povolozky: Paris, 1925), or more practical manuals on filmmaking such as *Motion Pictures with the Baby Cine* (Harold B. Abbott, 1929). See Romaguera i Ramió Joaquim, *Un mecenatge cinematogràfic vida i obra de Delmiro de Caralt* (Barcelona: Fundació Mediterrànea, 1987), 25.

category and second prize in 8mm and 9.5mm category.<sup>502</sup>



Figure 46. Posters for the 1935 IV International Amateur Film Contest and I Congress (Issues 7 and 8 of *Cinema Amateur*).

These more tacit contacts soon solidified into the organization of a truly global amateur film institution, UNICA, whose constitution was discussed in the IAFC and formalized in the 1937 Paris International Amateur Film Competition (which, incidentally, Catalan amateurs could not attend due to the outbreak of the Civil War).<sup>503</sup> The project outlined in Sitges included an international bulletin, a shared archive, and a documentation center. The Fédération Française des Clubs de Cinéma d’Amateurs (French Federation of Amateur Film Clubs, herein FFCCA) took on such plans, and, in January 1936, an “international office of information and documentation of amateur cinema” was announced in the pages of *Ciné-Amateur*: “It is in this

<sup>502</sup> “Un Nou triomf internacional dels films catalans,” *Cinema Amateur* 2, no. 9 (Summer 1935): 45.

<sup>503</sup> In fact, the Catalan amateur movement ceased its activities with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), and they would not participate in any further international contests until the 1947 Amateur International Film Contest celebrated in Stockholm.

spirit of intimate and productive collaboration that we send all amateur filmmakers around the world a friendly greeting from the French amateurs.”<sup>504</sup> A year before, *Cinema Amateur* had summarized the importance of celebrating a yearly gathering: “we want to highlight that the truly remarkable achievement of the first Congress in Barcelona has been its celebration itself; the birth of a recurring meeting where friends from all over the world will be able to shake hands from an *antibureaucratic and fully amateur perspective*, and express their own ideas—with all amateurs listening—related to our art, or better said, our obsession.”<sup>505</sup>

The competition and congress organized by the CEC in 1935, can be described, then, as the watershed moment in the internationalization of amateur filmmaking—when the organization that would later support amateur filmmaking globally—albeit from a clearly Eurocentric perspective—was imagined. The international dimension of the festival was certainly impressive, given the practical issues that organizing such an event in the 1930s entailed. Films from France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, United States, Hungary, England, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and Yugoslavia competed in three different categories: films with plot, documentaries or travelogues, and free form—in which avant-garde type films were included. The different formats accepted were 8mm, 9.5mm, and 16mm. After six sessions and long deliberations, the films shown in Table 1 were awarded first prize in the different categories and formats.

Delegates from all these countries were invited to the congress, but for practical reasons—such as travel expenses and distance—American and Japanese members were unable

---

<sup>504</sup> “Editorial,” *Ciné-Amateur: Bulletin International* 1 (January 1936). The countries included in the initiative were Germany, Austria, Holland, Spain, Belgium, France, Canada, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Czech Republic, and Yugoslavia. Three more bulletins were published before the urgency of the rapidly approaching Second World War precluded the activities of UNICA until 1946.

<sup>505</sup> “I Congrès International,” *Cinema Amateur* 2, no. 9 (Winter 1935): 30. Emphasis added.

to attend.<sup>506</sup> In fact, the three Japanese films in the competition arrived after the contest had been held due to problems in customs; however, these were later shown in the Maryland theater in Barcelona and in different excursionist centers throughout Catalonia.<sup>507</sup> The awards ceremony—with film projections included—was held in a sold-out Femina Theater in Barcelona (extending the theater’s capacity of 1,500). The event was presided over by Catalan culture minister Alexandre Galí, who also supervised the institutional Catalan Cinema Committee.

	16mm	9.5mm	8mm
Films with Plot	<i>L'Home Important: Prejuicios</i> (Domènec Giménez i Botey, Spain).	<i>Hadrova Ancka</i> (Lengsfeld i Tichy Burda, Czech Republic)	<i>Lisetotte Feiert Geburtstag</i> (W. Kuhlmann, Germany).
Documentaries	<i>Sur un Marché Normand</i> (M. Lehérissey, France).	<i>A l'ombre de la butte</i> (G. Acher, France)	
Free form	<i>Eine Kleine Konigstragodie</i> (R. Grosschopp, Germany).	<i>Ainsi Souffla le vent</i> (R. Foucault, France).	<i>Atmosphere</i> (Louis Cuny, France).

Table 1. First prizes for the IV International Amateur Film Competition.

The success of the Barcelona events also definitively put the Catalan amateur film

<sup>506</sup> Delegates were usually members of local amateur film clubs in each participant country, such as the Nederlandsche Smalfilmliga, the Fédération Française des Clubs de Cinéma d'Amateurs, the ICA in London, the Bund Deutscher Film Amateur from Germany, or the Amateur Cinema League from the US.

<sup>507</sup> “Tot arreu,” *Cinema Amateur* 2, no. 9 (Winter 1935): 42.



movement in the international map of film culture. The journal *Intercine* (published by the League of Nation's IECI)<sup>508</sup> had already mentioned Spain amongst the most important emergent contexts for amateur cinema,<sup>509</sup> and in its June 1935 issue it published a lengthily overview of the Barcelona Congress and its most important resolutions.<sup>510</sup> In the previous issue (May 1935) Italian critic and filmmaker Francesco Pasinetti had commented on a polemic that had erupted in the pages of the Barcelona-based journal *Mirador* between Catalan critics Sebastià Guasch and M. Àngel Ferran on the realities and possibilities of amateur cinema.<sup>511</sup> While the former harshly dismissed the movement as a boring and poorly shot compendium of films,<sup>512</sup> the latter defended the potential of smallgauge filmmaking as a disinterested and ubiquitous media. In an even-handed conclusion, Pasinetti summarized the polemic as the clash between someone who judged amateur cinema for what it had done until the present moment (or what Guasch had seen), and another person focused on what the medium could become.

As these examples demonstrate, a vibrant international amateur film culture (with its own critical apparatus) was rapidly emerging in the early 1930s, and the Catalan amateurs played a very relevant role in it.<sup>513</sup> The 1935 congress was a culmination of all these efforts, and local organizers couldn't hide their enthusiasm when summarizing the experience. For them, the

---

<sup>508</sup> As the *Review of Educational Cinematograph* (1929-1934) had renamed itself in 1935. It had its headquarters in Rome and was published in five languages; English, French, Italian, Spanish and German. It had a column specifically devoted to amateur cinema.

<sup>509</sup> G.d.F., "Cine-Amateurs," 47. The other contexts mentioned were France, Belgium, USA, Germany, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Hungary.

<sup>510</sup> "Les amateurs," *Intercine* 7, no. 7 (July 1935): 413–15.

<sup>511</sup> F.P., "Les amateurs," *Intercine* 7, no. 5 (May 1935): 295–97.

<sup>512</sup> *Popular Film* critics like Tonny Ballester also harshly criticized the amateur movement because they recognized that "amateur film directors have ideas, but no technical notions of cinema" (referring to script and narrative development), but also identified amateur cinema as a relevant and autonomous film culture: "We appreciate cinema, both amateur and professional. Each of them for their own artistic and economic mission. Tonny Ballester, "Hacia las sesiones de cine amateur?," *Popular Film* 448 (March 21, 1935): 22.

<sup>513</sup> It is important to highlight that this international dimension went hand in hand with highly nationalistic structures that promoted state-driven agendas. Contest participants were organized into nations, just as in film festivals, Olympic games, world fairs, and so on.

celebration of such international events was a unique opportunity to “establish among amateurs from all nations friendship bonds that, both for their honesty and altruistic nature, will create a great and unique spiritual union, fostering great and noble things.”<sup>514</sup> This celebratory and affective language was a constant in the amateurs’ writings, which were full of references to the happy, festive, and generally speaking *joie-de-vivre* lifestyle that these bourgeois filmmakers enjoyed. It is especially paradoxical given that the Spanish Civil War was only months away, geopolitical tensions in Europe were starting to build up, and worker movements were rapidly growing in importance—often organizing strikes in the factories owned by the amateurs themselves.<sup>515</sup>

It’s likely that the success of amateur film activities offered the perfect refuge from political agitation: a way out of the complex present into a seemingly harmonious creative space. But even if amateur filmmakers wanted to naively separate art and politics in their writings and films, their ambiguous position as both capitalist promoters and cultural innovators created tensions that are present in both their films and texts—sometimes reflecting the geopolitical struggles that would soon burst onto European soil.

Take, for instance, the comments on the absence of Italian delegates and films at the IV International Contest in a *Cinema Amateur* editorial. It openly suggests that the absorption of the Italian Amateur League by the fascist Italian University Association had made a visit impossible, although no precise explanation is given. The text ends with an enigmatic unfinished sentence:

---

<sup>514</sup> “I Congr s Internacional,” 5.

<sup>515</sup> As an example, amateur filmmaker Joan Salvans Piera and his father Francesc Salvans Armengol, who were preparing for the V International Film Contest that was supposed to take place in Berlin, refused to move to safe ground and would be assassinated by anarchists in the first days of the war as explained in the prologue. Filmmaker P ter Forg cs has made a very interesting archival film (*El Perro Negro*, 2005) that uses amateur films (mostly from CEC filmmakers but also from Madrid based Ernesto Noriega) to excavate the tensions and opposed political standpoints that would violently class in the Civil War.

“The filmmaker suggests ... .”<sup>516</sup> Were the editors criticizing the exclusion of those filmmakers for political reasons? If so, were they implying that their artistic activities were not at all political? Certainly, the strong presence of Japanese and German films or delegates—whose countries were, by now, unmistakably fascist—and the affective language used to talk about them, raises questions.

Moreover, in 1940, right after the victory of Francoist troops in the Spanish Civil War, Josep María Galcerán, cofounder of the CEC film section, wrote a memorandum to the new director of the Spanish Cinematography Committee, Manuel García Viñolas. The objective was to discuss the status of amateur filmmaking in Spain and obtain official permission to buy film stock, thus hopefully rekindling the amateur film circuit. Galcerán celebrated the victory of Francisco Franco’s “Glorioso Alzamiento” (glorious or national uprising, the expression used by the nationals to justify their rebellion against the democratically elected republic) and reminded García Viñolas that the “red government” had unsuccessfully attempted to enroll amateur filmmakers for their propaganda efforts in the Paris exposition of 1937.<sup>517</sup> To convince Viñolas of the importance of amateur film for the brave new dictatorial regime, Galcerán also mentioned the possibility of recovering the relationship with fellow amateurs in Japan, Germany, and Italy—in a sort of axis of amateur cinema with obvious political implications.

Either way, the Catalan amateurs were probably mostly troubled by how easily the Italian amateur movement had been subsumed into the authoritative fascist structure. Seeing how a political apparatus could engulf their precious bourgeois sphere made the Catalan amateurs uneasy because it pointed to the possibility of a similar process in Spain given the tense political

---

<sup>516</sup> “I Congrés Internacional,” 21.

<sup>517</sup> Josep María Galcerán, “El Cine amateur en España y España y el cine amateur internacional,” April 1940, R 23(075) Gal, Filmoteca de Catalunya.

situation. This doesn't mean, though, that the amateurs were not keen on collaborating with state institutions, providing the arrangement benefited both parties and didn't threaten their esteemed independence. In this spirit they worked with the Catalan Cinema Committee in curating a selection of films for the I Exposition of Experimental Films in Venice (Italy) and had an official representative—Joan Sàbat—on the advisory council that devised the framework for the Cinema Committee itself. The title of Sàbat's report for this commission, "Influence of the Amateur Filmmaker on the Development of a National Cinema,"<sup>518</sup> is indicative of the role that amateur film played in the multiple efforts to create a vernacular Catalan cinema. It is to this relationship that I will now turn, exploring the attempts by both Catalan amateurs and state institutions to utilize small-gauge filmmaking as a national vernacular cultural expression.

### **Filling the eyes of the young: amateur filmmaking as national cinema**

In an article published in *Cinema Amateur* in its winter 1934–35 issue, Manuel Amat explains how the three main figures of the CEC film section—Delmir de Caralt, Jose María Galcerán, and Domènec Giménez i Botey—used to pack “a few projectors, film reels, and music records” in a car and organize screenings throughout Catalonia.<sup>519</sup> In an earlier issue of the journal (1933), critic Guillem Díaz-Plaja—organizer of the first university cinema course in Barcelona in 1932—had theorized the role of the amateur in educational cinema, calling for a small-gauge film movement that “creates the vision of Catalonia: filling the eyes of our young with images from which they can learn every corner of our land. This will be a meaningful function for the amateur in the shelter of an autonomous Catalonia.”<sup>520</sup> Both initiatives show the importance that

---

<sup>518</sup> Romaguera i Ramió, “La revista Cinema Amateur (1932-1936),” 318.

<sup>519</sup> Manuel Amat, “L'encant i El Pintoresc Dels Bolos Cineístics,” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 7 (Winter -1934 1933): 232.

<sup>520</sup> Guillem Díaz-Plaja, “Funció de l'amateur en el cinema educatiu,” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1933): 36.

amateur cinema had acquired for the creation of a whole new visual regime, in line with the modernizing energies brought by the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic in April 1931, and the political context of the first Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia—approved by the Spanish parliament in September 1932.

Among the areas now controlled by the Catalan government were, crucially, education and culture. Poet Ventura i Gassol was appointed head of public instruction and culture, and one of the first projects undertaken was the creation of an official Cinema Committee, which was constituted on April 1933. I will analyze this institution in detail in chapter four, but here I want to highlight the specific importance that amateur cinema had for the initiative. The committee was created following recommendations from an advisory council formed by representatives of the university, *amateur cinema*, culture department, the film industry, film criticism, and tourism realms.<sup>521</sup> As the few documents on the institution that have survived reflect, the organization gave equal importance to amateur and commercial film production. For instance, the Cinema Committee included both realms in the same section of the plan of action devoted to film production, titled “Professional and Amateur Cinematographic Production.”<sup>522</sup> The section was also in charge of “preparing artistic and technical personnel for the film industry, either through the creation of a film school or through other initiatives presented to the Generalitat de Catalunya.”<sup>523</sup>

The next step was to find a secretary for the Cinema Committee. An open competition was announced on April 1933, to which sixteen people applied.<sup>524</sup> Candidates had to prove

---

<sup>521</sup> Ana Durán i Padròs, “La política cinematográfica de la Generalitat republicana: el Comité de Cinema de la Generalitat de Catalunya,” *Cinematògraf* 2, no. 3 (2001): 13. Emphasis added.

<sup>522</sup> “Butlletí oficial de la Generalitat 26,” April 15, 1933, 317–18.

<sup>523</sup> “Butlletí oficial de la Generalitat 26,” 318.

<sup>524</sup> “Butlletí oficial de la Generalitat 26,” 317. Applicants came from different realms of cinema, including cinematographers, technicians, directors, critics, and businessmen. See Durán i Padròs, “La política cinematográfica

cinematographic knowledge and present a memoir that answered the question; “What should the role of official institutions be in relation to the use of cinema as an instrument of culture?”

Domènec Giménez i Botey, one of the most relevant figures in the amateur film movement, was one of the candidates who sent a memoir, which included a theoretical reflection on the social and pedagogical importance of cinema and a specific section on the impact of amateur cinema as a form of cultural expression.<sup>525</sup> Although his proposal was not selected, it did provide the basis for many of the sections found in the institution’s bylaws. It is also interesting that someone with no previous institutional experience who was entirely devoted to the amateur realm provided such a comprehensive proposal. It reflects the level of engagement of amateur filmmakers within the emergence of film culture and their awareness of the important role it could play in society. For Durán i Padròs, “the amateur movement had a relevant role in Catalan cinema, since it was the only one that produced films on a regular basis and beyond the commercial circuit.”<sup>526</sup> Botey’s document—and the general involvement of the amateur in the institutional plans for cinema in Catalonia—shows that the movement was not only important in terms of production but also for the *organization* of a future Catalan cinema.

Indeed, in his “Immediate Plan for Action,” Botey comments on the need to create a specialized film library, purchase and produce films, supply educational centers with sound cinema equipment, devise a new legal framework for cinema, and create a film school modeled after VGIK. The mention of production is especially relevant to my argument regarding the autonomy of amateur cinema as a cultural practice. The plan included the production of films

---

de la Generalitat republicana: el Comitè de Cinema de la Generalitat de Catalunya,” 21.

<sup>525</sup> Domènec Giménez i Botey, “Quina hauria d’ésser la funció dels organismes oficials per utilitzar l’acció del cinema com a instrument de cultura,” May 6, 1933, R 205(460.23) Gim, Filmoteca de Catalunya. See Giménez i Botey, “What Should the Role of Official Institutions Be in Relation to the Use of Cinema as an Instrument of Culture?”

<sup>526</sup> Durán i Padròs, “La política cinematogràfica de la Generalitat republicana: el Comitè de Cinema de la Generalitat de Catalunya,” 27.

“that develop our themes, either through professional and amateur contests or any other form considered adequate. Beyond such themes, it would be convenient to begin recording our own lives, our cities and towns with their markets, traffic, communication media, work, new construction and urbanization, historical events, fashions, habits, that is, everything that fleetingly happens and is lost with every hour that passes.”<sup>527</sup> Such desire to capture both the general modernization of society, their local reality, and Catalan folklore on film also speaks to the complex relation between modernity, nationalism, and tradition enabled by moving images that this dissertation analyzes. It is yet another example of the disorganized modernity that characterized the relationship between media, culture, and politics during the 1930s in Spain.

In this sense, cinema has been described as the cultural instrument par excellence of modernity,<sup>528</sup> but its simultaneous appeal to nationalist movements focused on capturing pre-modern traditions and folklore remains less explored. Botey’s own description of the things to be shot by a future public film service (“cities and towns with their markets, traffic, communication media, work, new constructions and urbanizations”) certainly accords with the aforementioned literature on film and modernity; however, throughout the document he also makes repeated reference to the proposal’s relationship with a Catalan “home” or “land,” specifically mentioning the importance of buying or producing “any documentary that makes reference to the life and traditions of our people,” thus binding the medium of film with the plan to consolidate a national culture.<sup>529</sup> Film was seen as an expression of modern times (speed, cities, technology, progress, industry) as well as a powerful tool to consolidate a national cultural tradition.

Consequently, it is not surprising that, in 1933, an article in the newspaper *La Libertad*,

---

<sup>527</sup> Giménez i Botey, “What Should the Role of Official Institutions Be in Relation to the Use of Cinema as an Instrument of Culture?,” 171.

<sup>528</sup> See Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*; Marcus, *The Tenth Muse*.

<sup>529</sup> Giménez i Botey, *Quina hauria d’èsser*, 5, 13, 27, 40.

titled “The Cultural Reach of Amateur Cinema” highlighted the industrial freedom of amateur filmmakers to “take over the cultural production of cinema,” producing educational films on—among other topics—“the beauty of Catalonia and its undeniable touristic appeal, Catalan traditions, our folklore, etc. In short, all aspects with an educational interest.”<sup>530</sup> The author implored the Cinema Committee to “take into consideration the amateur film movement over professional cinema, since the former is more of a reality than the latter, which is, for the moment, only a project that perhaps will never be carried out.”<sup>531</sup> Critics in widely circulated journals such as *Popular Film* called amateur cinema a “formidable practical school,”<sup>532</sup> given the pedagogical spirit of dedicated journals like *Cinema Amateur*, amateur-film sections and clubs throughout Catalonia, and the general self-taught dynamic of small-gauge filmmakers. Amateur cinema can be seen, then, as a feasible vernacular national cinema—even before the development of a commercial film industry in Catalonia (which didn’t happen until the 1980s).

In 1947, an article titled “Our Cinema,” written for the art journal *Ariel*, critic and historian Enric Jardí lamented the “aborted birth of Catalan cinema.” For him, beyond scarce commercial attempts “there existed an ensemble of filmmakers who have cultivated what is known as amateur cinema, and who are worthy of being studied.”<sup>533</sup> Given the “desolate outlook of today’s commercial production,” Jardí suggested looking back at the accomplishments of a movement that had won international awards since the 1930s—producing travel and landscape films, folklore documentaries, avant-garde experiments, and fiction films.<sup>534</sup> The title of the article, “Our Cinema,” not only establishes another suggestive link with Piqueras and his journal

---

<sup>530</sup> Manuel Moragues, “Abast Cultural Del Cinema Amateur,” *La Publicitat*, November 3, 1933, 8.

<sup>531</sup> Moragues, “Abast Cultural Del Cinema Amateur.”

<sup>532</sup> Pepe Comino, “La Antesala del profesionalismo,” *Popular Film* 428 (November 1, 1934): 5.

<sup>533</sup> Enric Jardí, “El Nostre cinema,” *Ariel* 2, no. 12 (1947): 86.

<sup>534</sup> Jardí, 86–87.



*Nuestro Cinema*, but especially makes reference to the long-held desire for a Catalan national cinema during a period of harsh repression by Francoist authorities of any public manifestation of non-Castilian culture.<sup>535</sup> Due to this paralyzing situation, they could only revisit a series of past institutional policies from the CCGC (1932–1939) and its project for a vernacular national cinema, which emerged, in great part, out of the Catalan amateur cinema movement of the time.

Indeed, only a few years after the inauguration of the CEC’s amateur film section, created by a series of bourgeois enthusiasts, the movement had evolved into a serious alternative to the commercial film industry in the eyes of state institutions, film critics, and postwar intellectuals. This chapter has demonstrated how Catalan amateurs intervened in some of the most important developments in the emergence of Catalan film culture in the interwar period. They established a respected documentary tradition, collaborated in the institutionalization of film by the Catalan government, published a film journal, were a constant presence in the cultural milieu of the time, and, finally, participated in the creation of national and international networks of alternative film circulation. We can read these developments through Malte Hagener’s seminal account of the role that the avant-garde played in the emergence of film culture in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: “The avant-garde could be held responsible for the naturalization of the documentary as a genre and for the foundation of film archives in different countries, for large-scale government support for cinema in virtually all European countries, for the establishment of film theory as a field of its own, and for the emergence of art house cinemas.”<sup>536</sup> The Catalan amateur-film movement played an important role in all the realms listed by Hagener.

---

<sup>535</sup> For instance, it would not be until 1964, twenty-five years after the end of the war, that the dictatorship allowed the first shooting and exhibition of Catalan-language films. See Josep Benet, *L’Intent franquista de genocidi cultural contra Catalunya* (Barcelona: Publicacions de l’Abadia de Montserrat, 1995), 380; Conxita Mir i Curcó, “The Francoist Repression in the Catalan Countries,” *Catalan Historical Review*, no. 1 (2008): 133–147, <https://doi.org/10.2436/20.1000.01.9>.

<sup>536</sup> Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back*, 36.

First, with access to lightweight equipment, it fostered an urge to document traditions, places, industrial processes, and political events.<sup>537</sup> This documentary tradition was recognized in both amateur and professional festivals with numerous awards. Second, some of its members collaborated in the first institutional framework for film in Catalonia, with plans to establish a national film library, create a film school, and produce educational films and an official newsreel. Third, amateur filmmakers were actively involved in the fight to implement film in education, touring small towns with portable Pathé-Baby projectors and offering their services to the Catalan Government Cinema Committee. By February 1936, they had created a University Cinema Committee.<sup>538</sup> Last, they created successful alternative exhibition spaces such as festivals, film clubs, and small theaters; wrote dedicated columns in the most important film magazines of the time; and published *Cinema Amateur*, in which filmmaking tips, theory, aesthetics, and transnational exchanges were included. Ultimately, amateur film can be described as a yet another forgotten avant-garde that spearheaded the emergence of film culture beyond the commercial screen and the star system. As with the materialist avant-garde analyzed in chapter two, the Catalan amateurs didn't neglect cinema's "relationship to materiality,"<sup>539</sup> but took this relationship to heart and made films, created circuits of exhibitions, participated in international networks of circulation, and translated the objective of artistic autonomy of the avant-garde into their own bourgeois creative space.

By describing the Catalan amateur filmmaking movement as avant-garde, I do not mean to suggest that it should be included alongside canonical figures such as Walter Ruttmann, Dziga Vertov, René Clair, and the like. On the contrary, I argue that the scholarly canonization of the

---

<sup>537</sup> As an example, the most relevant recordings of the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931 in Barcelona were made by amateurs like Delmir de Caralt i Puig. See Figure 38

<sup>538</sup> "Cinema universitari," *Cinema Amateur* 2, no. 11 (Spring 1936): 107.

<sup>539</sup> Harbord, *Ex-Centric Cinema*, 171.

avant-garde as a group of well-known auteurs has obscured other developments in film that have greatly advanced film culture in certain contexts. These were often collective in nature and, therefore, did not produce famous directors with recognizable names. They were thus ignored by most historians, too much attached to the mythomania of creative geniuses, stars, or the glittering allure of commercial cinema. The author-centered canon has resulted in a scholarly alignment of the avant-garde with the geographical contexts where renowned filmmakers originated or worked (mainly Germany, France, USSR, and the United States), creating centers of academic attention but leaving us blind to more vernacular experiences that were equally transformative in countries like Spain, the UK, or Italy.<sup>540</sup>

The scholarly neglect of this forgotten avant-garde is yet another example of the pressing need to reexamine film history through noncommercial film cultures, helping to fully understand the role of moving images in the cultural, social, and political fabric of the twentieth century. This history has only emerged through a conception of amateur cinema that focuses on the distinct modes of production, distribution, and exhibition that inform its motivations. This model can prove useful in attempts to unearth many more developments dismissed as marginal or curious others to commercial film but that were instrumental in the institutionalization of film by public and private organizations, the popularization of cinema as an everyday educational and expressive device, or the creation of alternative international circuits of film culture circulation and exhibition. These developments constitute an important historical precedent to the subsequent rise, and instrumentalization, of informal media, democratization of filmmaking culture, and the continuing importance of amateur production within the contemporary media

---

<sup>540</sup> See, for instance, the role of amateur cinema in Italy described by Andrea Mariani (Andrea Mariani, “The Cineguf Years.”), or the work done on the use of small-gauge filmmaking in Great Britain: Hogenkamp, *Deadly Parallels: Film and the Left in Britain, 1929-1939*; Sexton, *Alternative Film Culture in Inter-War Britain*.

environments.<sup>541</sup>

In this regard, the histories and initiatives explored in the first three chapters have been devoted, so to speak, to a film culture from *below*, developed outside of the centers of power (mainly the state and the industry) that regulated and controlled moving image production, distribution, and circulation in 1930s Spain (regardless of the ideological inclinations and objectives of their instigators). But as we saw with the bourgeois amateurs and their collaboration with the Catalan government or the instrumentalization of radical film networks for propaganda efforts by the Republican government during the Civil War analyzed in chapter one, official institutions attempted to incorporate these efforts into their cultural policy. Sometimes they were even approached by these same alternative film cultures, which were interested in recruiting the help of the state to facilitate the import of smallgauge technology and promote the creation of national industries to overcome Pathé and Kodak's monopoly. This was the subject of the talk delivered by the CEC representative in the CHC.<sup>542</sup> It was also the case with the international amateur film movement; see, for example, the following resolution, approved by the Barcelona Congress in 1935:

“The first Congress of International Amateur Filmmakers celebrated in Barcelona in 1935 has decided to offer the International Educational Cinematographic Institute [IECI] from the Society of Nations its complete and altruistic collaboration. However the assembly wishes to clarify that this offer, made with as much enthusiasm as honesty, has a condition: that the freedom that characterizes the amateur movement will be respected and that the

---

<sup>541</sup> See in this respect the introduction to the Special Issue I co-edited with Dr. Salazkina for *Film History*: Masha Salazkina and Enrique Fibla-Gutierrez, “Introduction: Toward a Global History of Amateur Film Practices and Institutions,” *Film History* 30, no. 1 (2018): i, <https://doi.org/10.2979/filmhistory.30.1.01>.

<sup>542</sup> “Ecos del Congreso,” *La Vanguardia*, November 3, 1931.

activities of the IECI will not replace the existing amateur film institutions.”<sup>543</sup>

The naive shaking hands from an “antibureaucratic and fully amateur perspective” that *Cinema Amateur* defended after the celebration of the 1935 congress ultimately caught up with the realities of the instrumentalization of media in the interwar period. Despite the emphasis on respecting the creative and organizational freedom of the movement, it is clear by this resolution adopted under no political pressures that the institutionalization of noncommercial cinema into state organizations (national or transnational) was identified by these figures as a desirable way of expanding the reach of their activities. As we saw in chapter two, Piqueras and Moussinac had also realized the importance of having a state supported film policy (as in the USSR) that could help organize a meaningful proletarian film culture in France and Spain.

In the next chapter, I look at how this interest in film institutionalization intersected with issues of diplomacy, geopolitics, neo-imperialism, state education, and nation-building, creating a film culture from *above* that had lasting impacts on the institutional space that film would later occupy in Spanish and Catalan society. I analyze two largely unknown initiatives: the 1931 Hispanic American Film Congress (organized with the explicit support of the Republican government and its ministry of Public Instruction with the aim of originating a Spanish-speaking front against Hollywood); and the Cinema Committee of the Catalan Government (which attempted to emulate the success of amateur cinema and the CEC through an ambitious smallgauge state project). Both developments made use of the spaces and networks (film journals, clubs, congresses, international institutions, mobile film technology, etc.) through which film culture developed to astonishing levels in the absence of a strong film industry in the interwar period in Spain.

---

<sup>543</sup> “Les amateurs,” 414. My translation from French.

#### Chapter 4. “A Formidable and Decisive Medium”: Institutionalizing Cinema in Interwar Spain (1929-1936)

The future will belong to the country that controls cinema. Having understood this, North America and the USSR use the new celluloid weapons to conquer a humanity made of masses and collectivities that need collective instruments. There has never been such a formidable and decisive medium of dissemination as that represented by cinematographic screens; catechism of new morals and psychology that easily penetrates crowds, instilling in them beliefs and habits different from those specific of each people.

CHC preparatory documents, April 1930.<sup>544</sup>

One of the most influential factors in today’s collective life is, without a doubt, cinema. It’s not just a mere spectacle. It has many possibilities for cultural action, and its potential and interest for the life of a country is so considerable that there is no governmental institution that can afford to not intervene and collaborate in its expansion, making sure to influence the implementation of directives in benefit of the community.

CCGC decree, April 1933.<sup>545</sup>

There is, then, a political interest of the first order for a State to have as many ambassadors without credentials as are editors, directors and their collaborators, accustomed to working for the public and capable of convincing it.

*Le Role Social Du Cinéma*, 1934.<sup>546</sup>

---

<sup>544</sup> *Boletín de información del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía* (Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión, 1931), 14. Also included in Juan Piqueras, “Hacia un Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía,” *Popular Film*, no. 195 (Abril 1930): 2.

<sup>545</sup> “Butlletí Oficial de La Generalitat 26,” (April 15, 1933): 316.

<sup>546</sup> André Braun-Larrieu, *Le Role social du cinéma* (Paris: Éditions du Cinéopse, 1938), 120. Book published by the League of Nation’s Institut International de Cooopération Intellectuelle (International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, herein IICI).

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1933, the official Spanish state bulletin announced the creation of a Consejo de Cinematografía (Council of Cinema), which would attempt to regulate and defend the interests of Spanish cinema.<sup>547</sup> Only a month after, on April 15<sup>th</sup> 1933, the CCGC was officially announced in Catalonia's own official bulletin.<sup>548</sup> The former had emerged after the celebration of the CHC in 1931, which had attempted to create a Spanish speaking front—controlled from the ministry of labor in Madrid and with clear imperialist overtones—against Hollywood. The latter was an attempt to instrumentalize cinema at the service of Catalan national aspirations, especially through the use of film as an educational resource. These initiatives reflect the geopolitical importance that film culture had acquired in the interwar period, and the varied interests that state institutions had in the medium. From transnational alliances aimed at reviving the centrality of Spain in the global cultural front to the consolidation of rising national cultures through educational films, cinema appears in this final chapter as a key element in the institutional negotiation of Spanish identity, culture, and politics during the 1930s.

Official institutions recognized that film was “not just a mere spectacle” (per the opening quote), and identified the medium's potential for “cultural action” in the service of national and international state initiatives. As this chapter will show, Spain was an active participant in the international networks of film institutionalization that developed during the interwar period. Public organizations, intellectuals, critics, and filmmakers were aware of developments in film education and institutions all over the world, and consequently made films, read journals, published books, drafted policies, organized congresses, and wrote articles about the topic. For example, in 1926, the film *¿Qué es España?* (discussed in the introduction to the thesis), directed and produced by intellectuals Luis Araquistáin (Spain) and Cayetano Coll y Cuchí (Puerto Rico),

---

<sup>547</sup> “Orden creando el Consejo de Cinematografía,” *Gaceta de Madrid*, no. 74 (March 15, 1933): 2006–7.

<sup>548</sup> “Butlletí oficial de la Generalitat 26.”

showcased Spain's modernizing impulse beyond its borders, and was part of a conference tour through Mexico, Central America, and Antilles. Similarly, the books mentioned in chapter one on educational cinema and its uses around the world—*El cinema educativo y Gracián pedagogo* (1933), *España en el Mundo sin Fronteras del Cinema Educativo* (1935) and *Cinematografía Pedagógica y Educativa* (1936)—evidence this desire as well (in fact, the latter book was written after the author, Manuel Alvar, was awarded a scholarship from the JAE to study educational cinema in Europe).

These initiatives didn't go unnoticed by leading film critics of the time. As Juan Piqueras acknowledged in *Nuestro Cinema*, Republican authorities showed a great interest in “doing something for Spanish cinema. They have proved it by supporting the Hispanic American congress planned during the Berenguer rule, purchasing via the Ministry of Public Instruction, a few thousand meters of educational and cultural films and a few small-gauge projection devices, establishing new customs tariffs for foreign films, creating scholarships and stipends for the study of foreign cinema, and creating a Council of Cinematography.”<sup>549</sup> Although later in the article he harshly criticizes those same initiatives with the argument that they just served the purpose of protecting and encouraging bad commercial film directors (described as “pseudo filmmakers”), Piqueras's words still show how institutional initiatives regarding film were an important element in the cultural debates of the time.

The different state cinema initiatives sponsored by the USSR (film industry), France (educational cinema), or Italy (newsreels and amateur cinema) that I analyze in the next section were frequently cited by policy makers, directors, artists, critics and cultural activists from quite varied ideological standpoints as a source of inspiration for the institutionalization of cinema in

---

<sup>549</sup> Juan Piqueras, “En torno al consejo de cinematografía,” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 11 (March 1933): 173.



Spain. I have already described the appeal of the Soviet state film industry model for radical film critics in chapters one and two. In this chapter, I expand these international referents to the educational film initiatives sponsored by the French government and the newsreels and amateur cinema promoted by the Italian Fascist regime (as well as Mussolini's decision to house and fund the IECI).

As the two quotes above reflect, the medium was seen as a “formidable”, “decisive,” and “influential” instrument to “instill beliefs” and “implement directives” for the benefit of an imagined community.<sup>550</sup> For the Catalan Cinema Committee this meant using cinema to consolidate and document a Catalan national culture and geography through documentary and smallgauge films, while for the Spanish government it offered a chance to rekindle its past imperial glory through film policy and create its own shared identity based on eminently Castilian cultural and historical traits. As we saw in chapters one and three, these developments speak to Spain and Catalonia's own model of disorganized modernity—by embracing film as a sophisticated modern means of communication aimed, paradoxically, at incorporating traditional elements of society and culture into the new society to come.

The different histories of film institutionalization analyzed in this chapter exemplify how, as Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ali Mohammadi state, “the relation between communications and politics is symbiotic, and it is impossible to separate the issue of participation in the political process from participation in the communications process.”<sup>551</sup> Take

---

<sup>550</sup> Certainly, other mediums such as print media, radio, telephone or photography were of paramount importance at the time, but for lack of space I will focus only on cinema in this chapter. I do want to include a very telling example of the relationship between politics, national identity, and non-visual means of communication during the 1930s. In January 1933 the *Institut-Escola* journal informed of a “pleasant surprise”; students of the Instituto-Escuela in Madrid had telephoned their Catalan counterparts and maintained a “warm-hearted conversation [...] in which both our students and those in Madrid realized right away the brotherhood of ideals and mutual sympathy that unite both institutions.” See “Conversa amb Madrid,” *Institut Escola: Revista de l'Institut Escola de la Generalitat*, no. 9 (January 1933): 11.

<sup>551</sup> Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ali Mohammadi, *Small Media, Big Revolution Communication, Culture*,

for instance how the city council of Barcelona decided to commemorate the first anniversary of the Second Republic; a series of film sessions were offered to students of all public and national schools, in a clear attempt to associate the modernity of cinema with the Republic's political project.<sup>552</sup> This “symbiotic” relationship was the cornerstone of educational film policies during the interwar years, which were mainly directed towards governing citizens and mediating the hopes and fears created by the transformative impulses of the Second Republic. The interest of governments in using and regulating the medium lead to studies, inquiry commissions, congresses, and publications that greatly influenced the later establishment of film archives, educational programs, and state support policies for film.

I begin the chapter with an overview of international, educational, and institutional film developments that deeply influenced the initiatives of the Spanish and Catalan governments. I then show how the geopolitical aim of these initiatives and their emphasis on culture as a political instrument was also heavily influenced by the organization of two world fairs in 1929: the Barcelona International Exposition (*Exposició Internacional de Barcelona de 1929*, devoted to industrial and technological novelties) and the Seville Ibero-American Exposition (*Exposició Iberoamericana de 1929*, dedicated to rekindling Spain's grip over its former colonies through commerce and exaltation of the Spanish race). Finally, two concrete initiatives from the Spanish and Catalan governments—the 1931 CHC and the educational screenings of the CCGC—will be posed as examples of the close relationship between film institutions, society, and politics during the Second Republic in Spain.

---

*and the Iranian Revolution* (Minneapolis ; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 31.

<sup>552</sup> “Sessió de cinema,” *Institut Escola: Revista de l’Institut Escola de la Generalitat*, no. 2 (April 1932): 9.

### Film, education, and the state in the interwar period

As we have seen in previous chapters, multiple nationalisms competed in Spain for cultural and political hegemony. The dominant discourse corresponded to Castilian nationalism, which controlled the Spanish state and its cultural institutions. Catalan nationalism looked to challenge this hegemony, establishing institutions of its own to consolidate and expand Catalan political autonomy and culture. Film played a crucial role in both contexts, as it did in the global geopolitical board via institutions such as the IECI. Cinema was instrumental in promoting a liberal economic world-order, but also in the cultural management of populations in a geopolitical map made up of totalitarian regimes, former empires, emerging global powers, aspiring nation-states, and rising anticolonial movements.

The institutionalization of film education and policy was certainly not circumscribed only to the Spanish context, and was a process shared across the world since the first decades of the medium's invention.<sup>553</sup> Transnational initiatives and projects emerged from institutions such as the IECI, created by the League of Nations in 1928, and funded in large part by the Italian Fascist regime.<sup>554</sup> The permanent executive committee had representatives from Italy, France, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The institution published a journal, *The International Review of Educational Cinematography*, in the five official languages of the institution (Italian,

---

<sup>553</sup> And it is important to contextualize the ideas and discourse on the use of moving images for educational purposes in the previous use of magic lanterns, photography, and other visual technologies that had already been introduced in classrooms, civic centers, conferences, or political rallies since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. See Analia Álvarez, Daniela Colleoni, and Luis Horta, "El Cine En El Aula: El Instituto de Cinematografía Educativa de La Universidad de Chile (1929 - 1948)," *Cuadernos Chilenos de Historia de La Educación* 1, no. 2 (January 2014): 22; Charles Musser, *Politicking and Emergent Media: US Presidential Elections of the 1890s* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016); Bonifazio, *Schooling in Modernity*; Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer, eds., *The Silent Cinema Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004); Rick Altman, "From Lecturer's Prop to Industrial Product: The Early History of Travel Films," in *The Time Machine: Cinema and Travel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 61-76.

<sup>554</sup> See Zoë Druick, "The international educational cinematograph institute, reactionary modernism, and the formation of film studies," *Revue Canadienne d'Études Cinématographiques / Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 80-97.

German, French, Spanish and English).<sup>555</sup> In its years of existence (1928-1937), the IECI greatly influenced the instrumentalization of film for governmental purposes, especially in relation to what they called the “scientific” management of labor:

The Committee of Experts, noting with satisfaction the important steps taken in various countries to employ the cinema as a means of instruction and of spreading scientific knowledge in connection with occupational training, and with a view to vocational guidance and the scientific organization of labor, recommends that questions relating to safety should constitute an essential part of all subjects dealt with in such films, and requests the International Labor Office to take all the necessary steps to inform Governments of this recommendation.<sup>556</sup>

The IECI had an overt interest in internationalism, exemplified in its efforts to enhance cultural cooperation amongst national and global institutions and its plans to remove custom barriers for educational films. It also commissioned comparative studies on film censorship in different countries and attempted to organize an international convention on educational film, to which it invited nonmember countries such as Brazil, Costa Rica, Egypt, Ecuador, Mexico, Monaco, Turkey, the USSR, and the USA to participate. The congress finally took place in Rome in 1934, with over 45 countries present and 400 participants.<sup>557</sup> These events shared a belief in the importance of cinema as a social and political tool. Mussolini claimed that cinema was “one of

---

<sup>555</sup> As stated in the draft statute of the IECI. See League of Nations, International Educational Cinematographic Institute, “Draft Statute for the Institute” (C. 6 3 . 1928. XII.: League of Nations Archives, Geneva., February 28, 1928).

<sup>556</sup> League of Nations, International Educational Cinematographic Institute, “Report to the Council on the Third Session of the Governing Body of the Institute,” January 2, 1931, 10, C.694 M.291, League of Nations Archives, Geneva. Original spelling in British English.

<sup>557</sup> “El Congreso Internacional de Cinematografía Educativa y de Enseñanza,” *Revista Internacional del Cinema Educativo* 6, no. 5 (May 1934): 367.

the most important aspects in the current human progress,”<sup>558</sup> a statement that we can’t help but associate with Lenin’s alleged description of cinema as “the most important of all arts.”<sup>559</sup> As Richard Taylor argues, it is not important if Lenin did or did not utter those exact words, but the fact that they came to define the political importance of film for the Soviet regime as an effective means of communication with the masses.<sup>560</sup>

Similar statements can be found everywhere during the interwar period, when cinema overcame the initial disdain and suspicion of intellectuals, politicians, and public officials, who ultimately embraced the medium’s potential to include (and discipline) the masses into the project of modernity. For this to happen, cinema had to become much more than an entertainment industry, expanding its realm of action into state policies and projects for social emancipation and control.<sup>561</sup> See for example the words of French Prime Minister Édouard Herriot on the educational potential of the medium: “Cinema provides new resources that are almost infinite. We must introduce the medium in our educational system.”<sup>562</sup> Or those of André Honnorat, senator and member of the French national education committee in the interwar years: “The future of educational cinema is extraordinary. A new era begins for the instruction of young generations.”<sup>563</sup> These statements were included in a book on the social role of cinema across the world, published by the Institut International de Cooopération Intellectuelle (International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, herein IICI), an institution promoted by the League of

---

<sup>558</sup> “El Congreso Internacional de Cinematografía Educativa y de Enseñanza,” 367.

<sup>559</sup> Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, eds., *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994), 57.

<sup>560</sup> Richard Taylor, “Soviet Cinema as Popular Culture: Or the Extraordinary Adventures of Mr Nepman in the Land of the Silver Screen,” *Revolutionary Russia* 1, no. 1 (June 1988): 36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546548808575508>.

<sup>561</sup> This process is inextricably linked with the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century use of scientific discourse and methods in the disciplining of people (especially in urban contexts). For an excellent case study focused on Barcelona see Oliver Hochadel and Agustí Nieto-Galan, eds., *Barcelona: An Urban History of Science and Modernity, 1888-1929* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 23–112.

<sup>562</sup> Braun-Larrieu, *Le Role social du cinéma*, 177.

<sup>563</sup> Braun-Larrieu, 177.

Nations to encourage international exchanges and projects between scientists, teachers, intellectuals, researchers, and artists (it is the direct predecessor of the UNESCO).<sup>564</sup>

Despite these efforts to create a shared global policy for film, national and ideological interests prevailed over dreams of internationalism and intellectual cooperation. The IECI served more the purposes of old and emerging powers than the interests of world peace and “the mutual understanding of peoples,” as it had set out to do in its inception.<sup>565</sup> The liberal internationalism promoted by the institution was mostly predicated on supporting the cooperation between nation-states, enhancing commerce and removing trade barriers. Its idea of the social function of cinema was directly tied to the “scientific management” of populations instead of their emancipation.<sup>566</sup> This, of course, meant very different things depending on the ideology that informed each government. The usefulness of cinema was seen from very different angles according to the political landscape in which it developed.

In the USSR the state-sponsored film industry was, in the words of Taylor, a key player in the “cultural revolution as a medium for broad educational work and communist propaganda, for the organization and education of the masses around the slogans and tasks of the Party, their artistic education and their wholesome relaxation and entertainment. Cinema, like every art, cannot be apolitical. Cinema must be a weapon of the proletariat in its struggle for hegemony, leadership and influence in relation to the other classes.”<sup>567</sup> This “broad” approach to the instructional possibilities of cinema was slightly, but importantly, nuanced by the IECI in its review of the Rome congress in 1934. For the institution, film programs “should be proportioned

---

<sup>564</sup> Among its founding members we can mention Henri Bergson, Marie Skłodowska Curie, or Albert Einstein.

<sup>565</sup> League of Nations, International Educational Cinematographic Institute, “Report to the Council on the Third Session of the Governing Body of the Institute,” 14.

<sup>566</sup> I am deeply indebted (and grateful of the timely appearance of the book) in this chapter to the recent work of Lee Grieveson on the League of Nations, media, and governance. See Lee Grieveson, “The League of Corporations,” in *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations* (Oakland, California: Univ. of California Press, 2018), 195–213.

<sup>567</sup> Taylor, “Soviet Cinema as Popular Culture,” 44.

to the needs of different educational degrees. In other words, they should only include what corresponds to the mindset and prospects of future students. The most elevated and difficult disciplines, those worthy of more open spirits, must be reserved for those who want to advance in their studies. While general culture as a complement to sufficient elementary education must be enhanced for the sons of workers, peasants, and other children who most likely won't continue their studies."<sup>568</sup> This asymmetrical and targeted use of cinema as an instrument for biopolitical management was also applied to other non "elevated" mentalities and "different peoples" such as the colonized populations in Africa and elsewhere.<sup>569</sup>

Italy's educational film policy was not only focused on the work of the IECI and included an ambitious network of noncommercial film developments in the service of the Fascist regime, with special emphasis on newsreels, amateur cinema, and film schools.<sup>570</sup> Mussolini promoted the Istituto Luce in 1924 (also known as the L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa, i.e. The Educational Film Union), which produced a newsreel called *Giornale Luce* (1927-1945). As we saw in chapter three, the emerging Italian amateur film movement was also institutionalized into a powerful movement dependent on Fascist youth clubs called Cinegufs, which spread throughout the whole country and produced hundreds of films.<sup>571</sup> These efforts extended directly to film education, with the establishment of the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in 1935, an institution greatly influenced by Soviet educational film structures.<sup>572</sup>

In between the competing projects for a film education directed towards emancipating the proletarian masses (USSR) and consolidating the spiritual allure of totalitarian rule and racial

---

<sup>568</sup> "El Congreso Internacional de Cinematografía Educativa y de Enseñanza," 368.

<sup>569</sup> Grieveson, "The League of Corporations," 205.

<sup>570</sup> See Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley, Calif London: University of California Press, 2004); Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

<sup>571</sup> Andrea Mariani, "The Cineguf Years."

<sup>572</sup> Salazkina, "Soviet-Italian Cinematic Exchanges: Transnational Film Education in the 1930s."

superiority (Fascist Italy) there were many countries that institutionalized film in different ways, usually tied to progressive education programs in liberal democracies. The driving force of these initiatives stemmed from the same type of anticlerical and modernizing pedagogical institutions that were promoting the renovation of the educational system in Spain (such as the ILE, Institut Escola, Residencia de Estudiantes, etc.).<sup>573</sup> Following the precepts of the Escuela Nueva (New School) movement and other progressive pedagogy initiatives in Europe and North America, these institutions attempted to transform the conservative and authoritarian model of education of the old regime into a more democratic and participatory process. The politics of these approaches to a different educational model varied greatly: from the libertarian projects of Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia and his Escuela Moderna (Modern School),<sup>574</sup> to the Communist experiences of Anton Makarenko in the Gorki colony, the radical democracy ethos of John Dewey or the modern nation-state perspective of Fernando Giner de los Ríos and his project for a new Spanish identity rooted in liberal Europeanism.<sup>575</sup>

In France a Cinémathèque Centrale de l'Enseignement Public had been created in 1920 (following similar developments in Belgium thanks to the pioneering work of Alexander Sluys for the Belgian Educational League and its Educational Film Service, created in 1919),<sup>576</sup> as well

---

<sup>573</sup> The Catholic Church reacted by creating its own Comité Catholique du Cinématographe in 1927 and a journal titled *Dossiers du Cinéma*. In an Encyclical in 1930 Pope Pius XI praised those who used cinema to educate in the “truth.” Pascal Laborderie, “Les offices du cinéma éducateur et l’émergence du parlant : l’exemple de l’Office de Nancy,” *1895. Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze*, no. 64 (September 1, 2011): 35, <https://doi.org/10.4000/1895.4373>.

<sup>574</sup> Which is the subject of an exhibit at the Montjuïc castle in Barcelona, where Ferrer i Guàrdia was executed in 1909 by the Spanish government. See “La Revolución pedagógica de Ferrer i Guàrdia” (Castell de Montjuïc, April 12-September 2, 2018). <http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/castelldemontjuic/es/activitats/exposicions/la-revolucion-pedagogica-de-ferrer-i-guardia>. Accessed July 25, 2018.

<sup>575</sup> Dolores Marín Silvestre, *La Semana Trágica: Barcelona en llamas, la revuelta popular y la Escuela Moderna* (Madrid: Esfera de los Libros, 2009); Buenaventura Delgado Criado, *La escuela moderna de Ferrer i Guàrdia* (Barcelona: Ceac, 1979); Anton Semenovic Makarenko, *Poema pedagógico* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1986); John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 2012; Francisco Giner de los Ríos, *Educación y enseñanza* (Barcelona; Leganés, Madrid: Planeta DeAgostini ; distribuye, Logista, 2011).

<sup>576</sup> See Sluys, *La cinematografía escolar y post-escolar*.



as a system of regional educational film offices which were later federated into a National Federation of Educational Cinema Offices (Fédération Nationale des Offices du Cinéma Éducateur, FNOCE) in 1929.<sup>577</sup> Public cinémathèques for specialized areas were also created, such as the Cinémathèque du Ministère de l'Agriculture (1923). These institutions had fluid relations with both the Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts (Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts) as well as the Ministère de l'Agriculture (Ministry of Agriculture) or the l'Office National d'Hygiène Sociale (National office of Social Hygiene), which were interested in promoting the use of film in classrooms for different purposes—to enhance the educational process in a context of rising student populations and still relatively high illiteracy (especially in rural areas), to solidify a liberal national and civic identity shared across the country, and to prevent basic health and sanitary problems. It is estimated that, by 1927, there were as many projectors devoted to educational purposes than commercial exhibition in France, and that the network of educational film offices was more extensive than the latter—given its presence in rural areas where commercial theaters were deemed economically unfeasible.<sup>578</sup> To give an idea of the extent to which such educational film initiatives were related with the project of a modernized France, Albert Lebrun, president of the Republic from 1932 to 1940, had been the president of the Nancy educational film office until 1932.<sup>579</sup>

In Chile, an Educational Film Institute (Instituto de Cinematografía Educativa, ICE) was also created in 1929, at the University of Chile at Santiago—only one year after the more well-known IECI institute in Rome was inaugurated. The Institute organized workshops for teachers

---

<sup>577</sup> Nathalie Sevilla, “La ligue de l’enseignement et le cinéma éducatif dans l’entre-deux-guerres : à la croisée de l’associatif et du politique,” *1895. Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze*, no. 75 (March 1, 2015): 64–83, <https://doi.org/10.4000/1895.4958>; R. Guillemoteau, *Du Musée pédagogique à l’Institut pédagogique national: 1879-1956* (Centre national de documentation pédagogique, 1979), <https://books.google.es/books?id=IIBvmwEACAAJ>.

<sup>578</sup> Laborderie, “Les Offices du cinéma éducateur et l’émergence du parlant,” 34.

<sup>579</sup> Laborderie, 35.

to learn how to use projectors and cameras, produced films, and organized screenings in schools around the country with its 80 portable De Vry projectors.<sup>580</sup> In 1933, the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Barcelona contacted the ICE to provide details for the first university course that Guillem Díaz-Plaja had organized there in 1932 (we will discuss this initiative in detail in a later section of the chapter), and to enquire about the activities of their Chilean colleagues, most likely interested in implementing an educational film department of their own in Barcelona.<sup>581</sup> As with similar developments in Belgium, France, and Spain, the ICE project stemmed from the efforts of public and private educational institutions to enhance and direct the pedagogic experience of the growing student population. The direction given to these initiatives varied according to the context, but it was basically informed by similar top-down coordinates of liberal education, nation-building, or the consolidation of the capitalist world order. Take for instance the project to introduce visual media in classrooms in Chile in 1913; the three main objectives of the initiative were to “encourage the appreciation of fine arts, to make known the natural resources of the country, and to reproduce portraits of the notable men that have contributed with their talent and bravery to consolidate the greatness of our homeland and elevate it to the ranks of sovereign and cultivated nations.”<sup>582</sup>

It is worth noticing the similarities between this project of portraits of “notable men” and the exact same strategy followed by the 1926 film *¿Qué es Espanya?* mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, where scenes of prominent Spanish scientists, intellectuals, and

---

<sup>580</sup> “Boletín nº 3 del Instituto de Cinematografía Educativa de la Universidad de Chile,” 1933, Santiago, Universidad de Chile.

<sup>581</sup> “Boletín nº 3 del Instituto de Cinematografía Educativa de la Universidad de Chile,” 15. Such plans to create a Bachelor in film studies were mentioned by Díaz-Plaja as the third stage in his project to bring educational cinema in primary, secondary and higher education. See “Cinema educatiu,” *Butlletí dels Mestres* 4, no. 61 (February 1, 1932): 48.

<sup>582</sup> Álvarez, Colleoni, and Horta, “El cine en el aula: el Instituto de Cinematografía Educativa de la Universidad de Chile (1929-1948),” 23.

educators are used to compose an image of a new, modern, and cultivated country that looked forward to liberal capitalism with an eye on their imperial history. Cinema was seen as the best medium to attune citizens with the rhetoric of uninterrupted scientific and social progress brought about by liberal capitalism. Colonialism, inequality, exploitative labor conditions, racism and oppression of minorities weren't, needless to say, included in this harmonious portrait of the modern nation.

As this chapter shows, in Spain the educational potential of cinema was imbued both with the hopes for a democratic renovation of the country brought about by the Second Republic (exemplified in the Misiones Pedagógicas and the educational cinema initiatives of the Catalan government I analyze later), and the potential use of the medium as a powerful nation-building tool (both for Spanish and Catalan governments). News of the international, educational, and institutional film initiatives discussed in the previous pages arrived at Spain via international journals, congresses, and conferences. Influential politicians, intellectuals and educators from all over the world were invited to explain their own experiences with film education and institutionalization, which their local counterparts took good note of and actively attempted to emulate throughout the 1930s.

For example, Luciano de Feo, founder of the Instituto Luce and director of the IECI, visited Spain in 1930, during the last days of the Barcelona International Exposition. He delivered a talk on “cinema and culture” to a large audience at the Instituto de Servicios Sociales (Social Services Institute) located in the Barcelona Bank Savings and Pensions pavilion.<sup>583</sup> He was introduced to the audience by Pedro Sangro y Ros de Olano, main promoter of the CHC (alongside Fernando Viola) and at the time Minister of Work in the Berenguer regime that had

---

<sup>583</sup> F.C., “El señor De Feo en el Instituto de Servicios Sociales,” *La Vanguardia*, February 11, 1930.

followed the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. After stating that Italy and Spain were two “sister nations united by many ties,” De Feo compared cinema with the car and electric industry as emblems of modernity. It is worth transcribing a large section of the conference’s report:

In Germany a machine capable of showing 14,000 images per second has been tested. The process of decomposition of organic tissue that takes eight days can be shown in the screen in just one minute. It is an example of the ability of cinema to reflect its immediate reality and, accordingly, to become a propaganda tool. We can’t ask of every educator and propagandist the public speaking abilities of a Demosthenes or a Cicero (even him would find today a formidable rival in cinema) [...] Cinema can’t falsify *the soul or the life of a nation* when showing it to others because it shows things as they are, not how one wants them to be.

Mr. De Feo proceeds to tackle the theme of educational cinema by describing its importance in Russia, India or Japan. He detailed the work towards the education of the proletariat made by the Russia, whose government has found at last in cinema the only medium for communicating their Communist propaganda (other nations will certainly use it under different orientations). The movement of educational propaganda in India is developed in relation to religion and freedom. It is a very interesting phenomenon if we consider it as a rebirth of *public consciousness*, and that due to the widespread levels of illiteracy in the country *cinema is the only way to rapidly educate the population*. In terms of the film industry in Japan, it has a didactic, religious and commercial nature, and it performs the role of a *defense of their race* against the constant attacks of the cinema of

white people.<sup>584</sup>

In these two paragraphs one can trace the main coordinates of educational cinema that attracted Spanish and Catalan governments and intellectuals so much in the next years. We don't know how many of them attended the talk, but given the rhetoric and shape of future institutional film initiatives it is safe to assume that De Feo's discourse was a definitive source of inspiration.<sup>585</sup> The potential of cinema as a propagandistic and educational tool in the service of the nation (even as a defensive mechanism in geopolitical struggles and regardless of the political inclinations of the country), its role in mediating (and controlling) "public consciousness" and incorporating illiterate populations into the political arena, and its overall ability to connect local realities with the modern globalized world was something very present in the CHC and CCGC activities.

The fact that De Feo was invited by the promoter of the CHC and that he delivered the talk in the city which hosted the CCGC is certainly not a coincidence. It is an example of how film culture circulated in the interwar period through a network of institutions and initiatives that adapted international developments to local realities through film culture, production, and policy. Italy remained a source of inspiration for Catalan and Spanish intellectuals when it came to organizing and institutionalizing film. It is important to note how the international influence of Mussolini's regime film policy has been barely acknowledged by scholars, most likely due to its Fascist nature and the historical conventions that locate France, the USA, and the USSR as the dominant points of reference for developments in other contexts.<sup>586</sup>

---

<sup>584</sup> F.C. Emphasis added.

<sup>585</sup> De Feo also gave two talks in Madrid; one in the Cine Club Español where he was also introduced by Ros de Olano (invited by Ernesto Giménez Caballero who had excellent relations with Fascist Italy and the international avant-garde) and another for the microphones of Union Radio. See Alted Vigil and Sel, *Cine educativo y científico en España, Argentina y Uruguay*, 24.

<sup>586</sup> The work of Masha Salazkina is a key exception, especially since she articulates this importance within an alternative genealogy of film culture circulation. Salazkina, "Moscow-Rome-Havana: A Film-Theory Road Map."

For example, Guillem Díaz-Plaja quoted Italian film censorship policies (concretely article 157 of the April 15, 1926 official decree) as an example of good governance. He singled out the necessary separation of teenagers by sexes when attending screenings of “passional” nature that could “corrupt the youthful soul”, while praising the encouragement of educational films in Italy that reproduced “national traditions [...] experiences that contribute to elevate civic or religious virtue, the sacred nature of the home, familial ties, motherly love, spirit of sacrifice, heroic acts, or those whose view translates into a spirit of kindness, energy, courage, and glory.”<sup>587</sup> This double nature of educational film initiatives (at once progressive in terms of educational methods and usually conservative in its politics) is a constant in the process of film institutionalization in Spain. In the CHC, the representative of the Spanish Confederation of Charity Saving Banks posed Italian mobile cinemas and their educational efforts in remote areas of the country as an example to follow if these areas were to develop, create wealth, and promote savings in opposition to the “moral corruption” of gambling and alcoholism.<sup>588</sup> Going back to De Feo’s visit to Barcelona, the day after publishing the cited summary of the talk, *La Vanguardia* newspaper brought up again the subject in its Actualidad Gráfica de Barcelona section. A picture of the Italian critic was curiously accompanied by two photographs of the Romanian Pavilion for the International Exposition, where only three years later the CCGC would locate its main offices (Figure 47).

---

<sup>587</sup> José María Caparrós Lera, “Guillem Díaz-Plaja, el primer curs universitari de cinema i l’ensenyament secundari,” in *Doctor Buenaventura Delgado Criado: Pedagogo e Historiador* (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 2009), 710. The quote is reproduced from an article that Díaz Plaja wrote for the journal of the *Institut-Escola* (number 5, 1932, pp 6-7). It seems as if he is translating directly from the Italian decree.

<sup>588</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 4 de octubre de 1931” (Madrid: Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía, October 4, 1931), 7. The Savings Bank confederation also informed the congress that they were producing a film on the topic of savings in collaboration with the National Savings Instituto (Instituto Nacional del Ahorro) in order to promote good money practices (another example of the close relationship between cinema and capitalist governance).



Figure 47. Picture of Luciano De Feo and the Romania Pavilion in *La Vanguardia* newspaper.<sup>589</sup>

Chance photomontages aside, Figure 47 can be seen as a roadmap for the institutional visual culture developed during the Second Republic—with the backdrop of the International

<sup>589</sup> “Actualidad Gráfica de Barcelona,” *La Vanguardia*, February 12, 1930.

Expositions and their display of multiple national cultures and contributions to global capitalism and progress. In the top left corner, a picture of tunas (a tradition in Spanish universities where students dress with a cape and play folkloric serenades) from Galicia who arrive at the Barcelona Exposition, in an example of the center-periphery cultural exchanges that institutional film initiatives were so keen in encouraging. In the middle is the building (made in traditional Romanian architecture) that the CCGC would appropriate from the Barcelona International Exposition (an event that was supposed to become the climax of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship and its colonial revival) for its own project of Catalan moving image culture. Finally, in the bottom a picture from a talk by one of the key figures in interwar film institutionalization (from Fascist Italy) that would become hugely influential for both Spanish and Catalan policymakers. The photograph is flanked by two advertisements of perfume and stockings, in an important reminder of the close connection between film and consumer culture.

The different elements found in this page—folklore, tradition, national cultures, education, film policy, and commerce—go on to define the battleground for local and global moving image culture and identity in the following years in Spain. Of great importance and influence for this process were international institutions such as the IECCI, as well as the organization of two world fairs in Barcelona and Seville that put Spain on the geopolitical map of cultural policy and global capitalism.<sup>590</sup> In the next section I analyze how both events proved to Spanish and Catalan politicians that culture could become a powerful tool to advance political and social agendas and resituate the country in the international geopolitical sphere; it could also

---

<sup>590</sup> Curiously enough, those same two cities were chosen to host the two 1992 events that presented a modern “post dictatorship” Spain to the world: the Barcelona Olympics and the Seville Universal Exposition. See M. C. Grandas, *L'Exposició Internacional de Barcelona de 1929* (Sant Cugat del Vallès Barcelona: Romero, 1988); Ignasi de Solà-Morales and Fera de Barcelona, *L'Exposició Internacional de Barcelona, 1914-1929: arquitectura i ciutat* (Barcelona: Fira, 1985).



replace the military strength that the country had lost in the *desastre del 98* and subsequent failed colonial campaigns in Morocco. In this context, visual media became an especially important tool in the construction of a new national image and narrative attuned with both modernization and capitalist development and the defense of the countries historical legacies.

### **World fairs, visual culture, and global capitalism**

The year 1929 was to be a glorious one for the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. The Barcelona International Exposition and the Seville Ibero-American Exposition were supposed to consolidate the regime's rule, improve its foreign relations, and launch an ambitious pan-Hispanic project based on a blend of conservative modernity and tradition. But by January 1930, the dictator had been forced to resign faced with mounting inflation and lack of support of the army. In July of the same year, a journalist covering the closing of the Barcelona International Exposition sardonically commented, "It is curious that this exposition, which was supposed to be a sort of armistice for the dictatorship, allowing it to have a calm year, has lasted half a year more than the regime."<sup>591</sup> Such observation becomes very important when rethinking the boundary between Dictatorship/ Republic, usually conceived as a strict division. Although the initial spirit and intentions of the Second Spanish Republic were diametrically opposed to the social and cultural conservatism and repressive nature of the Primo de Rivera and Berenguer regimes, many of the cultural initiatives of the republic also incorporated their traditionalist attitudes and ideologies.<sup>592</sup>

---

<sup>591</sup> Mendelson, *Documentar España*, 39.

<sup>592</sup> Not to mention the political continuities between the old regime and the Republic. As Jaume Miravittles remembers in his memoirs on the civil war years, the government was composed of landowners like Alcalá Zamora, the Bank of Spain was managed by an advisory board composed mainly of nobles, who were also present in big public companies such as railways or mines. Large estates of land were still in possession of families with nobiliary titles (the duke of Medinaceli himself had 80,000 hectares), and these same families controlled influential newspapers like *ABC*, *El Debate* or *La Nación*. See Jaume Miravittles, *Veritats sobre la Guerra Civil espanyola* (Barcelona: Editorial Base, 2015), 56–57.



31

EXPOSICION INTERNACIONAL DE BARCELONA 1929

Figure 48. 1929 Barcelona International Exposition and its famous Light Exhibit. Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya.

The Barcelona International Exposition of 1929 was initially developed by the Catalan Bourgeoisie and its political representative, the Lliga Regionalista de Catalunya (also known as the “industrial party” in reference to its inextricable connections with the industrial elites), to promote the surging Catalan nationalist movement. But when the Primo de Rivera dictatorship came to power in 1923, it rapidly highjacked the initiative and turned it into the exact opposite: an exaltation of Spanish nationalism (with the halfhearted support of a deceived and resigned Catalan bourgeoisie). Nonetheless, the exposition proved to Catalan regionalists the power of culture in the consolidation of a national image. Most importantly, it also exemplified how tradition and folklore could merge with avantgarde architecture, electrification, light, radio, cinema, and consumer culture into a conservative modernity of sorts that perfectly matched the worldview of the Catalan industrial elite (based on solidifying tradition and advancing liberal

capitalism at the same time, see Figure 48).<sup>593</sup>

The Exposition also left several infrastructures that the newly created Generalitat de Catalunya could use for its own national project. Such was the case of the Romania Pavilion, which became the headquarters of the CCGC. It was only a few meters away from the Pueblo Español (Spanish Town), the quintessence of a mix of Spanish nationalism, geography, and culture through replicas of famous monuments from all over the country and a place where, quoting Jordana Mendelson, citizens could “perform the rituals of citizenship and nationality.”<sup>594</sup> As we will see later in the chapter, the CCGC became an important part of the Generalitat’s efforts to consolidate its own rituals of Catalan citizenship and geographic imaginary. Rather than creating a miniature replica of famous monuments that people could visit in a physical location in Barcelona, the Committee had amongst its purposes to produce educational films that (ubiquitously) showcased the wonders of Catalonia throughout the region thanks to its mobile projection equipment.

Beyond the competing projects of Spanish and Catalan national culture, world fairs were also exploited as a geopolitical arena for the struggle for global hegemony. In 1929, the same year as the Barcelona International Exposition, the Seville Ibero-American Exposition gathered Spain’s former colonies into a neo-imperialist revival event that included pavilions made in baroque colonial style, an exhibit of Christopher Columbus letters and a manuscript by Hernán

---

<sup>593</sup> The Barcelona International Exposition was a watershed moment in the consolidation of radio communications in Catalonia. Likewise, the most widely praised attraction of the event was the Exposición de la Luz (Light Exhibit), in which the Montjuïc fountains were lit with a spectacular lightning show. As part of this exhibit, a replica street with electrified window shops was built, so that visitors could peep into the consumer world of the future. See Hochadel and Nieto-Galan, *Barcelona*, 200–247. We can say that, in this sense, the Exposition exemplified how the force of a modern Catalan nationalism resided in *tradition plus electrification* (to make a play of words with Lenin’s famous dictum that “Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country.” See Lenin’s *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, Volume 31, pages 408–426.

<sup>594</sup> Mendelson, *Documentar España*, 42.

Cortés, and a real size replica of the Santa María boat in which America had been *discovered*.<sup>595</sup> The idea was to promote Spanish (mainly Castilian) race, language, and culture as the common elements that united the country with its former colonies (and thus erasing any presence of non-Spanish culture from those same contexts), in an attempt to situate Spain at the center of a new pan-Hispanic geopolitical block.<sup>596</sup> The poster of the exposition is quite illustrative of the asymmetric center-periphery relationship that the neo-imperialist initiative had in mind (Figure 49, notice the center staging of a Christian Virgin receiving the offerings of indigenous cultures).



Figure 49. 1929 Seville Ibero-American Exposition Poster by Gustavo Bacarisas.

<sup>595</sup> For more information see Ana Souto, “América En Sevilla: La Materialización Del Espíritu Neoimperial En La Exposición Iberoamericana de 1929,” *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 22, no. 1 (November 1, 2009): 39–68, <https://doi.org/10.1386/ijis.22.1.39/1>; Alfonso Braojos Garrido, *Alfonso XIII Y La Exposición Iberoamericana de Sevilla de 1929* (Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones, Universidad de Sevilla, 1992).

<sup>596</sup> Post-revolutionary Mexico was the only noted exception (although Colombia and Peru’s pavilions also incorporated indigenous motifs). The country’s pavilion (influenced by Jose Vasconcelos ideas on indigenismo and designed by Manuel Amábilis) did include pre-Columbian elements (specifically Mayan) in opposition to the neo-imperialist focus on the Spanish race and culture that prevailed during the exposition.

The Seville fair also hosted the Second Congress of Spanish Overseas Trade, in which filmmaker, lawyer, and journalist Fernando Viola presented his idea to organize a Congress on film with representatives from every Latin American country. The idea, which developed into the 1931 CHC, was supported by Primo de Rivera, the subsequent military regime of General Berenguer and finally taken into fruition during the first months of the Second Spanish Republic. Such was the political currency to promote a Spanish-speaking alternative to Hollywood. A desire for an alternative was not restricted to Spain, but shared among many Latin American countries which now feared the imperialist expansion of the United States and preferred to articulate an ambivalent neocolonial relationship with the Spanish government.<sup>597</sup>

Both the Barcelona and Seville events, then, not only provided the infrastructure and institutional connections for the CHC and CCGC to develop, but also established the importance of culture as a powerful transnational instrument capable of incorporating citizens into a desired national narrative. This appeal carried over from Primo de Rivera's regime and was appropriated by intellectuals and official institutions after the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic. The coincidence of the 1929 exhibitions with the coming of sound (which as we have seen halted the Spanish film industry) and the emergence of amateur cinema in Catalonia should also be considered. The CDH and CCGC happened at this crossroad between modern film technologies, tradition, a convulsive political present, and an imagined future that was either a return or an escape from Spain's failed empire history. The next two sections analyze these initiatives in detail, offering a new perspective on the institutionalization of film culture and education during the interwar period beyond the better known cases of the USSR, France, and Italy.

---

<sup>597</sup> Souto, "América en Sevilla," 43, 47.

### **The return of the empire: the 1931 Congress of Hispanic American Cinematography**

By March 1928, the attacks directed by North American film companies against the history and traditions of Spain and Hispano-American countries have achieved such level of malevolence and bad faith, that this Official Chamber of Spanish Commerce in the United States of Mexico has decided to begin a defensive campaign, since the methods used by such companies surpass the limits of commercial propaganda and take on a frankly imperialist character.<sup>598</sup>

In 1928, the Chamber of Spanish Commerce in Mexico raised a formal complaint against the representation of Hispanic themes in Hollywood movies. The text suggested to create a black list of films and directors that circulated a negative image of Spain and Hispanic American countries, and a mandatory censorship for films considered to contain such affronts. It also considered the public funding of national films, mirroring what was being done in the USSR, Germany, or the United Kingdom. The promoters of the complaint, which reached the Spanish ambassador in Washington, were invited to the most important institutional film event of the interwar period in Spain; the 1931 CHC. The event became the pinnacle of anti-Hollywood sentiment amongst local critics, producers, intellectuals, and politicians (from a marked neo-imperialist perspective). Its main goal was to instigate a transnational Spanish-speaking film industry to counter North American domination of local markets.

The initiative is reminiscent of previous anti-Hollywood actions taken by former or diminishing empires, such as the imperial conference in London in 1926, in which a system of protection for goods (including cinema) against US economic expansion was devised.<sup>599</sup> As

---

<sup>598</sup> “Boletín de Información Del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía” (Madrid, Ministerio de Previsión y Trabajo, August 1931), 151.

<sup>599</sup> Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations*, 6.

Grieverson reminds us, the conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin cautioned against “the danger to which we in this country and our Empire subject ourselves if we allow that method of propaganda to be entirely in the hands of foreign countries.”<sup>600</sup> Just as the result of the London imperial conference was the establishment of the Empire Marketing Board (and as Grieverson reminds us the creation of documentary as a “a form of state-produced pedagogical media”),<sup>601</sup> the CHC greatly informed different initiatives that would place film propaganda back into the Spanish empire’s hand so to speak.

After more than two years of preparatory meetings, diplomatic relations, lobbying of authorities, and numerous articles in film journals and newspapers, the CHC was held in Madrid, from October 2-12, 1931. The inaugural speech was given by the president of the provisional government of the Second Spanish Republic Niceto Alcalá Mora. Delegates from twelve Latin American countries were present (Mexico, Paraguay, Guatemala, Perú, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Cuba, Costa Rica, Brazil and Uruguay),<sup>602</sup> as well as a representative of the Spanish chamber of commerce in New York. Relevant figures in the Spanish film culture of the time also participated (including producers, distributors, exhibitors, filmmakers, critics, and institutional spokespersons). Lastly, it is important to mention the participation of institutions such as commerce chambers, the JAE, the Centro de Estudios Históricos (Centre for Historical Studies), the CEC, or the Unión Ibero-Americana (Ibero-American Union).<sup>603</sup> The meeting’s objective was to organize a common Spanish-speaking front against Hollywood and establish a Hispanic American film market for both commercial and noncommercial (mainly educational)

---

<sup>600</sup> Grieverson, 6.

<sup>601</sup> Grieverson, 7.

<sup>602</sup> It is important to highlight that although they were representing their respective countries, delegates had no official decision powers per se in the context of the congress and could only relay to their governments the resolutions adopted, with the hopes of influencing future film policy and legislation.

<sup>603</sup> García Carrión, *Por un cine patrio*, 238.

films. The congress also became an international forum to discuss and share developments on institutional uses of film, including the creation of film schools, archives, educational cinema, and the promotion of trade exemptions for Spanish-speaking films across the shared market. It was divided into forty-one themes which were grouped in five sections: agreements and protection of cinema among the countries present in the Congress, production and distribution, cultural and educational cinema, the cinematographic language, and general topics.

It is quite telling that this Congress has been barely mentioned by film scholars in Spain until quite recently,<sup>604</sup> given that it was a key moment in the institutionalization of film culture in the country. This gap is especially peculiar if we consider all the events concerning the Congress, from its inception to its aftermath, and not just the dates it took place or its immediate practical application. As I have mentioned in previous chapters, in relation to the projects of Piqueras, it is important to understand film culture and institutional initiatives as generative points of departure for later developments (some directly connected, others tangentially related and thus difficult to trace, and more that have not yet, and may never, materialize). As Pedro Sangro Ros de Olano mentioned to the CHC delegates in relation to the apparent failure of the Spanish Educational Film Committee he had helped create only a year before, the success of the initiative could not be evaluated by its immediate actions, but by the fact that the institution had created the seed for a state organization of educational cinema “to come.”<sup>605</sup>

---

<sup>604</sup> We can mention a few key exceptions such as: Alberto Elena, “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 (Perillo-Oleiros (A Coruña): Vía Láctea, 2005), 332–76; Alted Vigil and Sel, *Cine educativo y científico en España, Argentina y Uruguay*, 22; García Carrión, *Por un cine patrio*, 212–61; Gubern, *El cine sonoro en la II República (1929-1936)*, 45–58; Aberto García Ferrer, “1931: el Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía,” *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, no. 617 (2001): 57–68. My reflections on the Hispanic American congress (and Spanish neo-imperialist nationalism) are greatly indebted to Garcia Carrion’s groundbreaking book. But much more work needs to be done on the CHC, given that it became the most important gathering of film culture and industry representatives of the interwar period. Unfortunately, a detailed analysis of the session diaries is beyond the scope of this chapter.

<sup>605</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 6 de octubre de 1931” (Madrid:



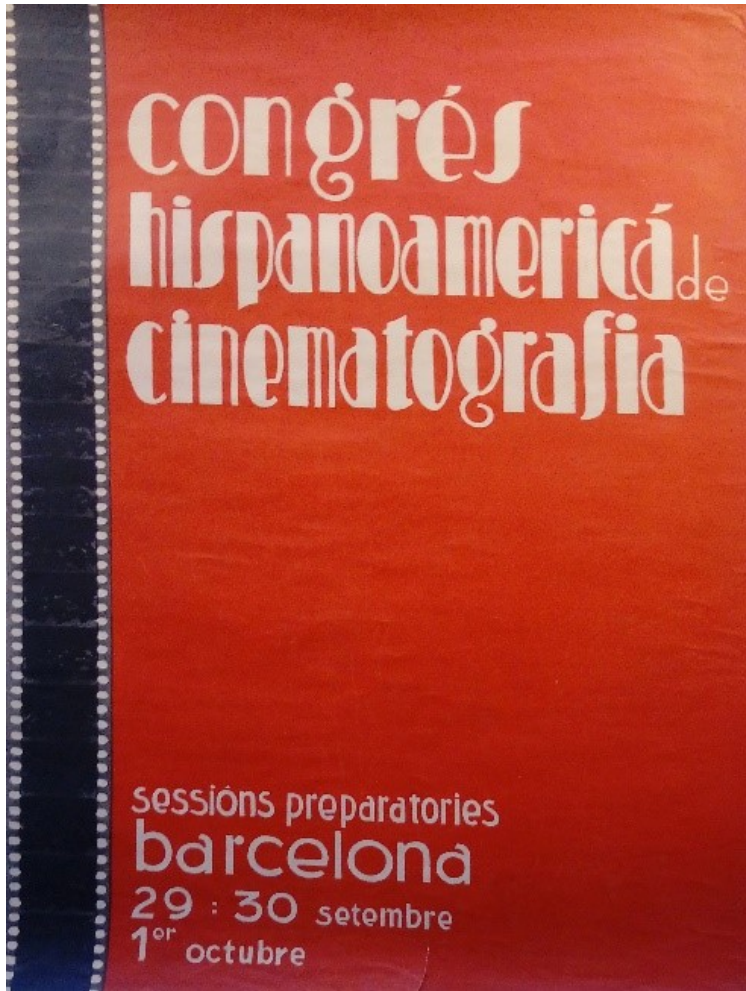


Figure 50. Poster for the CHC preparatory sessions held in Barcelona. Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya

It is true that the CHC triggered the first comprehensive, internationalist, and serious attempt to map out an institutional framework for Spanish and Latin American cinema (including measures of protection for national cinemas such as tariffs and exhibition quotas). Although, as we will see next, the CHC maintained the neo-imperialist rhetoric of the Seville world fair, the congress was mainly focused on exploring the intrinsic possibilities of the medium as an instrument of culture (see the poster for the preparatory meeting in Barcelona—Figure 50—with its minimalist design and use of film stock as the main visual element in comparison with the

---

Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía, October 6, 1931), 10.

aforementioned poster of the Seville world fair).

For Jordana Mendelson, “individuals and state institutions saw photographic and cinematographic documents as the construction of blocs of collective memory,”<sup>606</sup>—a citation of an article from Fernando Viola published in August 1933, in which the promoter of the CHC discussed the importance of creating a Spanish film archive: “Spain, where there are people deeply interested in preserving those films worthy of being included in a national archive, cannot be absent from this international concern.”<sup>607</sup> Citing the work of Austrian and Dutch representatives at the IECI, Viola remembered the cultural, but also economic, importance of preserving copies of “historic documents” that constituted a “precious material legacy to those that come after us, whose exact value we cannot even discern today.”<sup>608</sup> Mendelson identifies the evidentiary potential of images as the reason behind the institutional interest in the medium. This chapter expands such a perspective into the organizational appeal of creating a state supported film culture that would promote a specific Spanish, and Catalan, national identity.

The initiatives discussed during the CHC included:

1. Protection of each national film industry.
2. Exchange between Spain and Central and South American republics of silent and sound newsreels, documentaries, educational, and touristic films.
3. Achieve from each state the mandatory imposition of Hispano-American newsreels to North American distributors.
4. Reach an agreement about sanctions to foreign distribution and production houses whose films are considered detrimental to the interests of Spanish speaking peoples, or that that offends and attacks its beliefs, and falsifies its traditions and history.
5. Stop the increase in Spanish speaking versions produced in foreign studios, especially Hollywood.
6. Create committees in Spain and America devoted to promoting and exhibiting educational and cultural cinema judged necessary for the defense of our interests.
7. Attempt to merge different Hispano-American capitalist initiatives into one

---

<sup>606</sup> Mendelson, *Documentar España*, 11.

<sup>607</sup> Fernando Viola, “Archivos cinematográficos,” *Luz*, August 17, 1933.

<sup>608</sup> Viola.

- big company
8. Create Film Schools in Madrid, Havana, México, and Buenos Aires, sponsored and controlled by their respective governments.
  9. Study the formula to have the state force film companies to include a certain quota of national production every year, preferably newsreels and documentary and touristic films.
  10. Include in the Congress representatives of the Sephardic community
  11. Conduct a thorough study of each countries' customs to unify their criteria and study the possibility of eliminating charges on films produced in other Spanish speaking countries.
  12. Correction of language in film titles.<sup>609</sup>

As explained before, the CHC had been promoted by Fernando Viola and Pedro Sangro y Ros de Olano since the last years of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, but it only came into fruition when the newly elected Republican government gave material and political support to the initiative. Although the actual congress didn't take place until 1931, it was very much present in the cultural and political milieu up to that year. Since its first official mention in the Second Ultramar Congress in Seville in 1929, the meeting was planned in numerous preparatory encounters, broadcasted in radio programs, explained in the press, and discussed amongst some of the most important figures in the Spanish film world. Moreover, the initiative served to establish fluid diplomatic relations between the promoters of the congress, the Latin American countries involved, and their cultural and commerce departments, and different state institutions and ministries during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, Dámaso Berenguer regime, and the Second Republic.

In fact, the official publications attached to the congress can be read as an overlooked history of cultural diplomacy, pierced with neo-imperialist and racial overtones. Take for instance the letter addressed to Fernando Viola from Jose R. Castrillo, a Venezuelan representative who worked in a film company called Nitzsche [sic].<sup>610</sup> Castrillo highlights the

---

<sup>609</sup> Hernández Eguíluz, *Testimonios en Huecograbado*, 81.

<sup>610</sup> Written like this in the original source (see next citation).

commercial potential of Venezuela for the film industry, given the diversity of landscapes in the country and its racial heterogeneity:

“Although most inhabitants of the country carry in their veins the noble Spanish blood, and the name of Spain, in Venezuela, is loved as much as that of the mother country, there are no differences or mistrust towards foreigners, who are welcomed with the affection of a good brother. Certainly, the population is cosmopolitan, and many foreigners are constantly nationalized. They have solid roots in the country and many children of Venezuelan heart. And despite the intensity of racial mixtures, there are numerous beautiful women, of black eyes and lively spirit. It is understandable, then, how easy it will be to discover amongst the jumbled population the necessary elements for the creation of a cinematographic company of Venezuelan artists.”<sup>611</sup>

Castrillo’s “noble Spanish blood,” assimilation of “foreigners,” and self-exoticism, refer to a common discourse at the time regarding the racial and biopolitical relationship between Spain and its former colonies—the description of Latin American nations as the impure “sons” of a Spain that had “exhausted itself in giving life to others.”<sup>612</sup> This discourse of indebtedness to the mother nation was sometimes replaced (especially by the Latin American delegates) with mentions of a new fraternal and friendly relationship amongst “brother republics” (nonetheless framed by the acknowledgement of the “epopee of the discovery of America” and the cultural and racial tributes owed to Spain).<sup>613</sup> The diaries of the congress reveal how

---

<sup>611</sup> “Boletín de Información Del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía,” 100.

<sup>612</sup> Gazel (M. Santos), “La emoción hispana de Ramón Novarro,” *Popular Film*, no. 243 (April 9, 1931).

<sup>613</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 12 de octubre de 1931” (Madrid: Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía, October 12, 1931), 26.

this brotherly spirit was not at odds with attempts to remap the semantic imbalances of the Spanish-centric cultural policy promoted from Madrid. The delegate of Ecuador, for instance, suggested changing the word “Spain” in the title of each talk to “Ibero-American countries” in order to reflect the new political symmetry of the different Spanish-speaking republics (including Spain).<sup>614</sup> His proposal was supported by the Congress president (José L. de Benito) and Secretary (Fernando Viola), conscious of the importance of maintaining a fraternal spirit that would translate into concrete film policies. Throughout the Congress such calls to surpass the word Spanish were alternated with impassioned defenses of Latin American delegates of their countries’ “distinctly Spanish spirit.”<sup>615</sup>

As Marta García Carrión has explained in detail, this ardent Spanish nationalist discourse was promoted by a surprisingly wide ideological range, from right wing and Fascist-leaning figures like Ernesto Giménez Caballero and Luis Gómez Mesa to left wing critics like Juan Piqueras and the anarchist Mateo Santos.<sup>616</sup> Having lost its geopolitical power, it seemed that culture offered a new battleground where Spain could recover its past glory without the need for costly military operations. To achieve such an objective it was necessary, as the intervention of the Cámara Oficial Española de Comercio en Puebla (Mexico) states, that: “In every Ibero-American country, or wherever there is a group of such citizens that feel a patriotic blood running through their veins, and carry in their hearts a pure and respectful cult of the traditions,

---

<sup>614</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 3 de octubre de 1931” (Madrid: Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía, October 3, 1931), 11.

<sup>615</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 3 de octubre de 1931,” 20. In fact, the name chosen for the event had been a polemic issue in the eyes of the conservative press from the beginning. Brazil and Portugal had suggested to use the word Ibero-American to define the cultural collaboration between Spain, Portugal and Latin America, and an *ABC* newspaper journalist wrote about how relieved he was that such initiative had not been considered, since it would have “erased the name of Spain.” See “Comentarios: el I Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía,” *ABC*, October 9, 1931.

<sup>616</sup> García Carrión, *Por un cine patrio*, 113–20; See also Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, *¡Fuera el invasor! Nacionalismo y movilización bélica en la guerra civil española (1936 - 1939)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2006).

successes and greatness of the race, they will necessarily become enthusiastic defenders and voluntary disseminators of our own art, which will certainly shine as radiantly and high as the most beautiful conceptions emerged out of human thought.”<sup>617</sup> Such exaggerated and passionate rhetoric dominated the interventions of delegates during the Congress, mirroring the language used in the most relevant film related publications of the time. Words such as *glory*, *race*, *destiny*, *blood*, and *pure* were constantly used when discussing the possibility of a Spanish and Hispanic American cinema.

Regardless of these discussions on the biopolitical relationship between Spain and its former colonies, there was a shared recognition of the Spanish language as the common weapon in the fight for global cultural hegemony. Given the perceived impossibility of winning a commercial war against the US, and that the conflict over Cuba had already proven the inferiority of the antiquated Spanish military, culture emerged as the only possible battleground in which Spanish speaking countries could win. The idea was borrowed from other countries’ efforts to stop Hollywood’s colonization of local markets. For example, critics and intellectuals like Luis Gómez Mesa saw France as an example of how “reason” (meaning culture) was its main weapon against the expansion of the US and Great Britain, preventing it from becoming “no one’s feudatory.”<sup>618</sup> The exact same expression (feudatory) was used by the CHC organizers to justify its importance against the colonization of Spanish culture by North American films: “The only viable resistance has to be with equal weapons, opposing cinema to cinema.”<sup>619</sup> This discourse was constantly used throughout the event, and it reached its apotheosis in the last day of the Congress, when the closing remarks of

---

<sup>617</sup> *Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía: 1931, 2 al 12 de octubre* (Madrid: El Congreso, 1931), 27.

<sup>618</sup> Luis Gómez Mesa, “Leves y breves notas de Madrid,” *Popular Film*, no. 150 (June 13, 1920). Mesa uses the word “Feudatario”, which is difficult to translate into English.

<sup>619</sup> Piqueras, “Hacia un Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía.”

attendants, organizers, and guests of honor (such as the Minister of Economy Nicolau D'Olwer) concluded that the film industry was really “the industry of the soul, the industry of the spirit, in other words, the industry of culture.”<sup>620</sup> As the Mexican delegate Antonio Castro Leal bluntly underscored, “in the matters discussed in this congress, spiritual and economic purposes follow the same direction [...] this is the structure [economy] over which we will raise the flags of spiritual conquest.”<sup>621</sup> This blend of capitalism and struggle for nationalist cultural hegemony came to define official film policy and culture in interwar Spain.

The Congress and its preparatory sessions also served the purpose of gathering practical information on film in the Hispanic American context, such as the number of films imported every year by each prospective participant country, the origin of those productions, number of theaters, etc. It was an attempt to create a snapshot of cinema in the Spanish-speaking world. A questionnaire was sent to the representatives of the South American countries invited to the congress, who were asked to provide the following details:

1. Number and name of national film production companies in the country
2. Number and name of foreign production companies in the country
3. Number of cameras and theatres
  - a. Characteristics and capacity of these spaces
  - b. Details, if possible, of how often do they operate (daily, specific days, Sundays)
4. Specifics, by year (five years at a time), of the quantity of foreign films introduced in the country (the amount can be in kilograms or meters).<sup>622</sup>

From the replies to the questionnaire by Argentina, México, El Salvador, Peru, Brazil, and Cuba, we can see how the Latin American film market was almost entirely controlled by foreign companies, most of them North American. The only countries that mentioned

---

<sup>620</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 12 de octubre de 1931,” 11.

<sup>621</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 12 de octubre de 1931,” 12.

<sup>622</sup> “Boletín de Información Del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía,” 106.

national production companies were Peru and Cuba, although the former was described to be mostly “amateur enthusiasts who shoot government sponsored films.”<sup>623</sup> In terms of imports, US films were first in all the countries, with a huge difference over the second (usually France, UK, or Germany). The situation was not very different, then, from the Spanish market, which at the time (as we saw in chapter one) barely counted as a film industry and had its exhibition and distribution controlled by Hollywood.

The Congress also pooled ideas on film and education from different countries and perspectives, ultimately putting forward a conception of film culture as a: “Multiple work that develops and consolidates the art of our nations, encourages and coordinates economic interests, disseminates knowledge about our life and our traditions, erecting over the fertile soil of the industry, with all the efforts of an effective solidarity, the building of our race.”<sup>624</sup> It was in these terms that film worked towards the geopolitical cultural front against Hollywood domination of the local film market. The coming of sound offered producers the opportunity to devise a Spanish-speaking front that would compete with Hollywood’s system of foreign language versions. To achieve this, it was imperative to discredit such practices.<sup>625</sup> In an article included in the Congress Information Bulletin Miguel Pereyra attacked the “spirit of unconditional submission to everything foreign, and especially to anything Yankee, which has instilled the belief that everything that comes from abroad has to be necessarily good.”<sup>626</sup> Pereyra contraposed the purely commercial interest of US films (called products) to the more “artistic” inclinations of film production in Europe. He concluded with a quite hypocritical note, given the

---

<sup>623</sup> “Boletín de Información Del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía,” 108.

“Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 12 de octubre de 1931,” 12.

<sup>625</sup> For more on the polemics raised by multilingual versions see Tijana Mamula and Lisa Patti, eds., *The Multilingual Screen: New Reflections on Cinema and Linguistic Difference* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

<sup>626</sup> “Boletín de Información Del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía,” 141.



neo-imperialist nature of the congress itself, stating that “we have to open our eyes and realize that we can’t continue to be a colony of the United States.”<sup>627</sup>

The emergence of sound cinema, though, opened a window of opportunity for the Spanish film industry: the possibility to promote a Spanish-speaking cinema tailored to, as García Carrión argues, “linguistic” rather than “cinematographic” cultures.<sup>628</sup> It is important to highlight that such Hispanic American space was by no means a horizontal and equal exchange between Spain and its former colonies. Non-Spanish speaking cultures were completely excluded from the Congress, and the nature of what was considered *good* Spanish pronunciation and semantics remained an unresolved polemic. The consul of Costa Rica (Mr. Fournier) raised the issue before the specific talks on the subject of language, which were due by the October 7th session.<sup>629</sup> He claimed that “keeping the differences in pronunciation of the Spanish and Portuguese language (or classic and academic) should never be a reason for rejection by any film company.”<sup>630</sup> His intervention was the most divisive among Spanish and Latin American delegates (breaking with the climate of fraternity and calculated diplomacy that had prevailed until then), and the Congress organizers attempted to deal with the issue with a classic move of political guile: they postponed a lengthy discussion of the topic until its scheduled session on October 7th, since certain Latin American delegates were not present.

---

<sup>627</sup> “Boletín de Información Del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía,” 147.

<sup>628</sup> García Carrión, *Por un cine patrio*, 213.

<sup>629</sup> When the discussion was resumed that day two positions emerged; one promoted by the Mexican delegate which defended the use of different pronunciations in all Hispanic American productions, and the other posed by the Colombia delegate which suggested to use standard Spanish for general films and special accents in products destined for local and regional markets. To give a sense of the racist (and supremacist) connotations of such a debate, it was even argued that “Americans have physiological difficulties in adapting their way of talking to a distinctly Castilian manner.” See “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 7 de octubre de 1931” (Madrid: Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía, October 7, 1931), 7. The issue was resolved with a joint intervention from the three delegates that had instigated the discussion (Mexico, Colombia and Spain), in which a multi-tier solution was found (which alternated the use of local “cultivated” Spanish with correct Castilian depending on the type of production, and historical and geographic setting).

<sup>630</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 4 de octubre de 1931,” 19.

But the discussion nonetheless picked up, and after a Spanish delegate (Angel Acem) justified the use of “correct” (aka Castilian) Spanish as the norm in Hispanic American film productions for purely commercial purposes, the delegate from Guatemala, Virgilio Rodríguez Beteta, reminded him that: “In Latin America we are 120 million people who are not Spanish or Castilian, we are indo-Americans or Native Americans. We are a graft from Castilla, the Basque Country, Andalusia, and especially Extremadura in a gigantic and lush tree of Aztecs, Mayan, Incas, etc. We have to be happy that those 120 million people pronounce the Spanish language, which is their official language.”<sup>631</sup> This corrective to the cultural imperialism of Spain was enthusiastically endorsed by the Catalan delegate Mario Calvet, who extended Beteta’s attack on purist conceptions of Hispanic identity into the necessary protection and respect due to regionalist languages and cultures in Spain, which had been described by Acem in his talk as a “relapse to Babel.”<sup>632</sup> Calvet’s proposal was, unsurprisingly, deemed to be beyond the scope of the Congress by Antonio Calvache, another Spanish delegate, and never addressed.

Discussions like these exemplify how the CHC was used to try and strengthen Spain’s past colonial grip on Latin America, using cinema and film policy as an instrument to reframe the historical perception of the brutal Spanish colonization. For Fernando Viola the Congress offered the opportunity to “end once and for all the black legend of our colonization.”<sup>633</sup> The choice of dates—closing on October 12th, the day of the Spanish *Race*, which commemorates the arrival of Columbus to America—certainly points to the neo-imperialist attitude towards South America that characterized many cultural initiatives at the time in Spain. In fact, during the Congress a polemic erupted when Latin American delegates realized that an Ibero-American

---

<sup>631</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 4 de octubre de 1931,” 25.

<sup>632</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 4 de octubre de 1931,” 26.

<sup>633</sup> “Boletín de Información Del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía,” 22.

Film Institute (Instituto Iberoamericano de Cinematografía, IIC) had been created by Viola and other CHC organizers “behind their backs” before the beginning of the event.<sup>634</sup>

The delegate of Costa Rica intervened to try and calm things down, mentioning that he saw no reason for the nervousness of the Spanish delegates and their “eagerness in keeping the peace (he believes that a war will never happen).”<sup>635</sup> The matter was resolved with a collective, and rather theatrical, catharsis in which Viola and Benito were asked to receive a standing ovation from all delegates to restore the fraternal environment.<sup>636</sup> Although Spanish delegates justified themselves saying that they had acted as private citizens and not as official participants in the Congress, it became very clear to Latin American members that this would be the asymmetric power dynamics of any film policy initiative to emerge out from the CHC. Such realization could help explain the failure of most initiatives that emerged from the congress to be implemented in the following years.<sup>637</sup>

Beyond these institutional skirmishes and impassioned defenses of the Spanish race, concrete film policy initiatives were agreed upon during the Congress. Of special importance were the implementation of a special tax on foreign films (that would gradually decrease as the local film industry consolidated itself) and the prohibition for local newsreel and actualities producers of exporting to North America the negatives of their films (as was common practice at

---

<sup>634</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 5 de octubre de 1931” (Madrid: Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía, October 5, 1931), 16.

<sup>635</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 5 de octubre de 1931,” 23.

<sup>636</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 5 de octubre de 1931,” 23.

<sup>637</sup> Delegates finally agreed to create a Hispanic American Film Union, a transnational “organization that will be the axis of all our aspirations”<sup>637</sup> The institution was created a few months later in Madrid to canalize the positive energies of the Congress and vertebrate future film policy initiatives, but it never registered any activity. It would not be until 1996 that the program Ibermedia (whose headquarters are in Madrid) materialized the aspirations and neo-imperialist dreams of Spanish-speaking directors, producers, intellectuals, writers, and politicians that had first articulated a plan of action from October 3-12, 1931. See Tamara Falicov, “Programa Ibermedia Co-Production and the Cultural Politics of Constructing an Ibero-American Audiovisual Space,” *Spectator* 27, no. 2 (2007): 21–30; Libia Villazana, *Transnational Financial Structures in the Cinema of Latin America: Programa Ibermedia in Study* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009).

the time).<sup>638</sup> This initiative was perceived as a key action towards the promotion of national film libraries, in line with Mendelson's previous quote on the importance of moving images as blocks of collective memory for governments and intellectuals. An agreement was also reached for the censorship of any foreign film that attacked or manipulated the "spirit, history, or the traditions of any Ibero-American country."<sup>639</sup> Lastly, the creation of a Consejo Superior de Cinematografía (High Council of Cinematography) that was to produce educational films for military stations, prisons, and schools (the institutional realms of state control and coercion) should be mentioned.

Viola also realized the importance of promoting Spanish and Hispanic American film culture institutions connected with international circuits of production, distribution, and exhibition: "In the IECI bulletin there are five hundred international institutions (from England, United States, France, Germany, etc.), but Spain is only represented by two or three names."<sup>640</sup> The Congress, and its preparatory sessions, attempted to lay the foundations for the development of such educational film initiatives in many of these countries. To this note, the news bulletin of the Congress gathered the most complete overview of educational film initiatives in Spanish-speaking countries to that date, and the interventions of Ernesto Giménez Caballero, Luis Gómez Mesa and other delegates offered a theoretical and practical framework for the development of educational cinema in Spain as a key component of politics: "the art of making civilization and citizens."<sup>641</sup> Of special importance was the aforementioned IEC in Chile, which had been created in 1929.

This institution was a mirror into which Spanish educational film culture looked, especially in terms of documentary cinema production and pedagogical discussions on the use of

---

<sup>638</sup> "Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 3 de octubre de 1931," 27.

<sup>639</sup> "Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 5 de octubre de 1931," 42.

<sup>640</sup> "Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 5 de octubre de 1931," 20.

<sup>641</sup> "Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 6 de octubre de 1931," 6.

cinema in schools. Out of the 198 pages of the CHC bulletin, 18 are dedicated to the ICE, including a description of its activities and testimonies from several teachers that benefited from its services. The Chilean delegate arrived at the congress late due to the political situation in the country (which had suffered a naval mutiny in late August-early September and celebrated emergency elections in October 4<sup>th</sup> 1931). Only two days later, Domingo de Silva was in Madrid explaining the work of the IEC to his international peers.<sup>642</sup> It is yet another example of how film culture initiatives travelled globally, influencing institutions and initiatives across the Atlantic.

Beyond the internationalism of the event (informed by Spain's neo-imperialist agenda), the Congress also attracted the attention of regionalist movements, such as the imminent Catalan Autonomous Government—which sent a Catalan delegation presided by Carles Pi i Sunyer, future mayor of Barcelona and recently elected independent congressman by Esquerra Republicana Catalunya (ERC), the same party that only a year later would propose the creation of the CCGC. This was not well received by critics like Mateo Santos, who as part of his relentless campaign against the event, accused the Catalans of provincialism and localism against the unifying and universal power of the Spanish language and race.<sup>643</sup> Nonetheless, the relationship between the Spanish, Catalan, and Latin American delegations was rather fraternal (besides the few clashes described before), and Barcelona was actually proposed to host the next Hispanic American Film Congress given its preponderance in the Spanish film industry at the time.<sup>644</sup>

Although the CHC had little effect in Spanish film culture in the following years (in great

---

<sup>642</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 6 de octubre de 1931,” 12. As De Silva mentioned, his trip to attend the CHC had been one of the first decisions adopted by the newly elected government of Juan Esteban Montero.

<sup>643</sup> I have no space to delve into Santo's contradictory campaign against the congress, which blended anti-imperialist critique with catalanophobia, and Spanish language and culture superiority. See García Carrión, *Por un cine patrio*, 252–55.

<sup>644</sup> “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 12 de octubre de 1931,” 9.

part due to the constant political instability and the impossibility of generating sustained cultural policies), we can trace its concrete influence in the final institutional initiative I analyze in this chapter: the CCGC. Its efforts to consolidate a mobile educational film service were part of an ambitious plan to mirror the Soviet, French, Chilean or Italian blend of industry, film, education, and the state that had greatly informed the sessions and discussions of the CHC.<sup>645</sup> As a Chilean teacher interviewed by the ICE for their annual report stated, educational cinema was “a precious fountain for the child, where he can satisfy in great measure his urge to learn, to ask questions, *too see everything through his own eyes* [...]”<sup>646</sup> These words resonate with the later statement, mentioned in chapter three, from Guillem Díaz-Plaja on the importance of creating a state-supported Catalan small-gauge film movement that “creates the vision of Catalonia: *filling the eyes of our young* with images from which they can learn every corner of our land.”<sup>647</sup> Moving images were seen as the perfect medium for children to grasp the modern world as active spectators, inserting them in a double narrative of capitalist progress and nationalist discourse. As the following section shows, it was through educational and mobile film initiatives in Catalonia that institutional cinema found its most concrete materialization in the Spanish context (together with the Misiones Pedagógicas as mentioned in the introduction to the thesis). The initiative put into practice as much of the foreign developments and initiatives discussed in the CHC as the convoluted economic, social, and political context of 1930s allowed for.

### **Catching up with modernity: the Cinema Committee of the Generalitat de Catalunya**

---

<sup>645</sup> The Catalan delegation had actually proposed to organize a visit to the Soviet Union to gather information for the future Confederation of Hispanic American Cinematography. See “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 5 de octubre de 1931,” 5.

<sup>646</sup> “Boletín de Información Del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía,” 133. Emphasis in original.

<sup>647</sup> Guillem Díaz-Plaja, “Funció de L’amateur En El Cinema Educatiu,” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1933): 36. Emphasis added.

In 1932, poet Ventura i Gassol was appointed head of the Public Instruction and Culture Department of the newly created Generalitat de Catalunya. Cultural policy had been identified by politicians and intellectuals as the most important action to be developed by the government. Domènec Guansé, for instance, stated that “while in other ministries urgent matters are certainly resolved [...] it is the Culture Ministry that resolves problems of lasting interest [...] Eventually, it is from the Culture Ministry that the future greatness of the nation depends.”<sup>648</sup> Among the first projects undertaken by this ministry was the creation of a Cinema Committee, which was officially constituted on April 15<sup>th</sup> following recommendations from an inquiry commission formed by representatives of the university, amateur cinema, culture department, the film industry, film criticism, and tourism realms.<sup>649</sup>

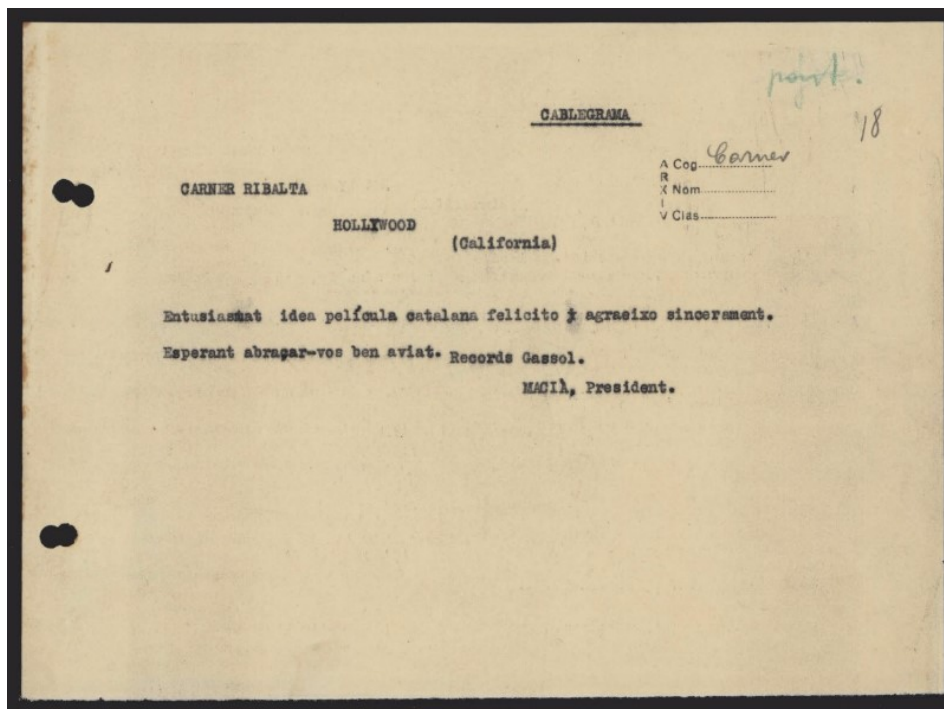


Figure 51. Telegram from Francesc Macià to Josep Carner i Ribalta in which the president of Catalonia receives with enthusiasm the idea of making a "Catalan film" and looks forward to seeing him in person soon (1933). ANC1-818-T-345.

<sup>648</sup> Guansé, “Política i cultura. L’entrada de la massa al catalanisme.”

<sup>649</sup> “Butlletí oficial de la Generalitat 26,” 316; Durán i Padròs, “La política cinematogràfica de la Generalitat republicana: el Comitè de Cinema de la Generalitat de Catalunya,” 13.

Gassol asked the renowned pedagogue Alexandre Galí to head an institution that would “reflect our status and organize the destiny and policy of the film culture of our people.”<sup>650</sup> Galí gathered an experienced group of technicians, coordinated by Miquel Joseph i Mayol (distributor of cultural and educational films in Spain, especially Soviet and German). With the help of president Francesc Macià, Galí also convinced novelist, publicist and screenwriter Josep Carner i Ribalta (who at the time was working for Paramount Studios) to return to Catalonia and collaborate with the institution’s ambitious plan to develop a Catalan national cinema (Figure 51).<sup>651</sup>

The CCGC was established in the former Romania pavilion of the 1929 International Exhibition (Figure 52), where it produced films and organized hundreds of projections in schools throughout Catalonia. It was also instrumental in the creation of the Orphea sound film studios,<sup>652</sup> devised as a state film school inspired in Moscow’s VGIK that should have opened in the fall of 1936, but once the war erupted it became the Propaganda Services of the Catalan Government (headed by Jaume Miravittles and responsible for the production of numerous documentaries and shorts during the conflict as well as the Laya newsreel mentioned in chapter one). In this final section of the chapter, I focus on how the educational film initiatives of the Cinema Committee capitalized on the growing interest of progressive teachers, intellectuals, and politicians in using cinema to *catch up with modernity* while at the same time promoting Catalan identity and culture.<sup>653</sup>

---

<sup>650</sup> Caparrós Lera, Biadiu Cuadrench, and Porter i Moix, *Petita història del cinema de la Generalitat: 1932-1939*, 14.

<sup>651</sup> He also published an influential manual on how to make a film. See Carner-Ribalta, *Com es fa un film*.

<sup>652</sup> Located in the Chemistry Pavilion from the 1929 International Exhibition and inaugurated by the president of Catalonia Francesc Macià in 1932. It became a key factor in the rekindling of the Spanish film industry, which by 1936 was showing strong signs of recovery.

<sup>653</sup> The only mention of the Cinema Committee in general histories of Spanish cinema can be found in Gubern’s mention to the “almost inexistent fruits” of its activities “save for its pedagogical dissemination.”Gubern, *Historia*





Figure 52. Photograph by Gabriel Casas of the Cinema Services headquarters located at the 1929 International Exhibition Romania Pavilion. Circa 1937. ANC1-5-N-3445.

The *Butlletí dels Mestres* (the most influential pedagogy journal of the time in Catalonia) reflected these developments in numerous articles on the topic.<sup>654</sup> Educational cinema and documentary film culture also became an important element of the overall Catalan cultural environment. For example, in a book of interviews from Robert Saladrigas with educator Pere Vergés, founder and first director of L'Escola del Mar,<sup>655</sup> Vergés recalls attending a screening

---

*del cine español*, 130.

<sup>654</sup> "El cinematògraf a l'escola primària," *Butlletí dels Mestres*, no. 80 (January 15, 1933): 1–3. Also Num 81 (February 1, 1933), p. 33–34. Num 83 (March 1, 1933), p. 73, Num 87 (May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1933), p. 143. This relationship extended beyond the space of the school to movie palaces in the city. For instance, in December 1932, it was announced that a distribution house had agreed to organize a special screening of the antiwar film *Broken Lullaby* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1932) for public schools in Barcelona in one of the best theaters in town. See "Comissió de Cultura," *Butlletí dels mestres* 78, December. 15, 1932, p. 318.

<sup>655</sup> A public school devoted to progressive education inaugurated in 1922 in Barcelona and destroyed by Italian

with his ten-year-old son Robert where a film on the school itself and its students was shown. When asked by his father if he was willing to go to the screening in the Publi-Cinema, Robert enthusiastically replied “I already know what they are showing! Will we see the Escola del Mar? Will you see *yourself and all of us* in the screen?”<sup>656</sup> Vergés details how they both greatly enjoyed a program of actualities in which a documentary on the local school showed the facilities, the students using the library, classes, and a group of children going for a swim. The film was accompanied by a newsreel with images of a horse race in Rome, the procession of the Holy Blood in Brussels, a race in Berlin, and another documentary about Sun Yat-Sen (founder of the Republic of China). Immediately after exiting the theater, Robert asked his father when he would take him again to the cinema.<sup>657</sup>

We can imagine Vergés’s son as the young boy peeping through the window of a bookstore in Gabriel Casas’s photograph analyzed in the introduction to the thesis (Figure 53). Only here we can picture him entering the hall of the Publi Cinema theatre, which had been inaugurated on April 1931, and was devoted exclusively to actualities. Acting as a sort of proto television, these type of theaters (such as the Savoy theatre just across the street, inaugurated in September 1935)<sup>658</sup> offered audiences a view of both the world (via newsreels from Paramount, Fox UFA, LUCE, France Actualités, Éclair, and Interfilm) and local realities.<sup>659</sup> We can also imagine him as one of the children in Figure 53, which captures the awe and fascination that the educational film sessions of the Cinema Committee created in children.

---

bombers during the civil war in 1938.

<sup>656</sup> Robert Saladrigas, *L'Escola del Mar i la renovació pedagògica a Catalunya: converses amb Pere Vergés* (Barcelona: Edic. 62, 1988), 276. Emphasis added.

<sup>657</sup> Saladrigas, 276.

<sup>658</sup> “Un Nuevo Cinema,” *La Vanguardia*, September 25, 1934.

<sup>659</sup> Schools were also regularly invited by other institutions such as the Barcelona School Commission to screenings of films (not only actualities). Sessions were organized in commercial theatres such as the Teatro Coliseum, who on December 5<sup>th</sup> 1932 welcomed a group of children to a screening of Ernst Lubitsch’s *Broken Lullaby* (1932). See “Un film,” *Institut Escola: Revista de l’Institut Escola de la Generalitat*, no. 8 (n.d.): 9.



Figure 53. Photograph by Gabriel Casas of an educational film screening organized by the CCGC. Circa 1934. ANC1-5-N-3458.

Vergés's story and the above photograph not only exemplify the popularity of cinema in interwar Spain, but also point to the fascination that moving images exerted in children and the emergence of a local documentary and newsreel movement devoted to educational films and supported by official institutions. As he explains later, the film he saw with his son had been commissioned by the Catalan government's culture department (the Cinema Committee) as a way to both "introduce film into schools and show the realities of the educational system through cinema."<sup>660</sup> Films on different educational initiatives were shot by this state institution (Vergés mentions a few titles that are unfortunately lost), and hundreds of educational screenings were

---

<sup>660</sup> Saladrigas, *L'Escola del Mar i la renovació pedagògica a Catalunya: converses amb Pere Vergés*, 277.

organized in the Committee's facilities in the Romania pavilion, different theatres in Barcelona, and in many other towns throughout Catalonia (such as Reus, Igualada, Masnou, Premià de Mar and smaller and more remote villages)—either in local theatres or through the use of the government's mobile projection system (their mobile van can be seen in Figure 52).<sup>661</sup>

Schools also progressively increased their own film libraries with films shot by the government, amateur productions, and other foreign films they received from the United States, France, England, Italy or Germany. We know, for instance, that houses like Kodak sent representatives to the public schools of the Generalitat to make ad hoc films and then project them to these same amazed students.<sup>662</sup> The ability of recognizing oneself and his immediate local reality amongst such global imaginary added an exciting new function for cinema, which the film industry and state institutions were keen on capitalizing on.

The efforts of the Catalan government to institutionalize film should be contextualized in the growing importance of moving images for the widespread pedagogical impulse that characterized the Second Spanish Republic years. As we saw in the introduction to the thesis, both the Republican government and the Generalitat wanted to secularize education and create an extensive network of public schools throughout the country. But cinema was not only promoted in primary and secondary education as an effective pedagogical tool. It also began to be studied in higher education as a relevant cultural expression. For instance, the first university course on cinema in Spain was organized from February 27 to April 9, 1932, at the University of

---

<sup>661</sup> These histories of screenings beyond movie palaces and filmmaking initiatives not devoted to commercial film exhibition constitute an increasingly important addition to our understanding of how cinema arrived and consolidated itself in small villages and rural places. See for example the key role of civic associations and cafes as organizers of films screenings in the province of Tarragona in Nogales Cárdenas and Suárez, *El nostre Cinema Paradís*, 231–43. As the authors mention, in non-urban settings cinema had more of a *cultural* than *industrial* importance.

<sup>662</sup> “Un film de l’I-E,” *Institut Escola: Revista de l’Institut Escola de la Generalitat*, no. 5 (Summer 1932): 11.

Barcelona.<sup>663</sup> Carner Ribalta collaborated in the organization, and amongst the attendants we can find filmmakers Ramon Biadiu (the most prolific filmmaker for the Cinema Committee and Propaganda Commissariat and author of *La Ruta de Don Quijote* analyzed in chapter one) and Delmir de Caralt (key figure in the Catalan amateur film movement whose work I analyze in chapter three and whose film library constituted the origins of the current Catalan Film Archive).<sup>664</sup>

The organizer of the course, Guillem Díaz-Plaja, was also a close advisor of the CCGC, and was greatly interested in promoting the use of film in schools. He published essays on the topic for the journal of the *Institut-Escola* (a progressive education center created by the Generalitat in 1932) and was responsible for the institution's educational film screenings program.<sup>665</sup> From the lecture halls of the Barcelona University to the bustling classrooms of L'Escola del Mar, from the Publi-Cinema theater to an improvised screening in a village square, educational cinema was mobilized as an "instrument of instruction for our people" whose social and political shape could be controlled by public and private institutions.<sup>666</sup> As Mayol mentioned when summarizing the state of educational cinema in 1935, "obviously the most interesting method is to adequate the actions of the student to the film's vision."<sup>667</sup> This process of social and cultural mimicry was of special importance for the incorporation of rural areas of the country into the new Spanish and Catalan national projects. Small towns and villages in turn saw cinema as a means to overcome the physical distance from the urban centers of modernity. As I analyze next, technological advancements allowed for a series of mobile cinema projects to spread

---

<sup>663</sup> Which at the time was directed by Jaume Serra Hunter, author of the "Imperative of Culture" article that opens the introduction of the dissertation. He authorized and supported the organization of the course.

<sup>664</sup> Caparrós Lera, "Guillem Díaz-Plaja, el primer curs universitari de cinema i l'ensenyament secundari," 705.

<sup>665</sup> Caparrós Lera, 706.

<sup>666</sup> "El cinematògraf a l'escola primària."

<sup>667</sup> Miquel Mayol Joseph, "El cinema a l'escola," *Butlletí dels Mestres*, no. 130–131 (July 15, 1935).

throughout the country and meet these demands, opening a new and little explored realm of action for moving images.

### Cinema on the move

The film industry was at this point already a highly mobile phenomenon in terms of shooting locations, markets, distribution, and transnational circulation of genres, star system, etc. But it was so within an eminently urban context, especially in semi-industrialized countries like Spain. Cinema was a relatively rare phenomenon in remote rural areas (particularly in towns and villages with poor communications). Mobile film technology (16mm or 9.5mm nonflammable acetate film and projectors, electric generators, portable screens like the one in Figure 8, specially adapted vans, etc.) and the improvement of roads and infrastructure allowed the medium to arrive to places where it had never set foot before.<sup>668</sup> This was done majorly by educational film institutions and government-sponsored programs, since the financial uncertainty of such initiatives scared off more commercially oriented businesses.

As Haidee Wasson explains, the inclusion of portability and mobility into film histories poses a key addendum to the question “Where and how have people seen movies?,” which historians have answered incompletely with an overwhelming focus on the theatrical screen, leaving aside “a range of technologies and venues [that] provide an expanded scenario for the presentation and performance of film.”<sup>669</sup> This “expanded scenario” includes classrooms, village

---

<sup>668</sup> In the *International Review of Educational Cinematography* we can find multiple mentions to the arrival of portable film technologies and their use in educational initiatives. See as an example the review of T. O Connor’s book *Motion Picture Projection* (1931), where the reviewer singles out the book’s information on “the different kinds of screen and of the principles which their inventors have followed and it ends by touching upon the problem of portable cinemas and the sources of light required for projection where electric current is lacking. This last is a problem of especial importance to propagandists of educational cinematography.” “Bibliography,” *International Review of Educational Cinematography* 3, no. 1 (January 1931): 100.

<sup>669</sup> Haidee Wasson, “Moving Images: Portable Histories of Film Exhibition,” in *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*, by Angharad N. Valdivia (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012), 2, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems017>.

squares, civic centers, department stores, educational movie vans, libraries, and virtually any space where a small portable projector and an improvised screen could be set up (even without power lines, see Figure 8). In this sense, the basic conditions for mobile film exhibition (projector-screen-audience) in the 1930s do not differ much from our current expanded media ecosystems. Pixels and microprocessors have replaced chemistry and cellulose, but organizing an educational screening still follows more or less the same organizational principles and purpose. Both today and in the late 1920s and early 1930s, cinema (and media in general) made itself “useful to a variety of cultural, industrial, and civic authorities” around the world.<sup>670</sup>

As an example, we can take the section titled “Educational Film Around the World” from an ICE bulletin in 1933. The report included news from the Spanish Republic’s initiative to purchase projectors for rural schools following the success of the Misiones Pedagógicas, Great Britain’s initiative to create an “Imperial Film Institute” (presumably the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit) to promote educational film throughout its colonies, and Japan’s creation of a film section in its Public Instruction ministry equipped with 213 portable projectors.<sup>671</sup> The section also included a brief report from a public officer in Madagascar who had “devoted itself to educational films,” touring an area of 900 x 250 kilometers with a portable projector and a manually operated generator and showing programs with hygiene films, documentaries on the war (“highly appreciated”), and a few slapsticks.<sup>672</sup>

These types of initiatives were not only promoted by public institutions. For instance, in the II Feria del Libro Español (Spanish Book Fair) celebrated in Madrid in 1934, the Association

---

<sup>670</sup> Wasson, 14.

<sup>671</sup> “Boletín nº 3 del Instituto de Cinematografía Educativa de la Universidad de Chile,” 13.

<sup>672</sup> Most importantly, the officer mentions how sessions were explained and discussed “in the language of the country,” underscoring the significance of taking local appropriations of foreign content into account when analyzing the impact of mobile cinema in mediating local and global imaginaries.

of Spanish Editors (Agrupación de Editores Españoles) presented a “travelling stand”; a truck designed to tour throughout Spain, and especially in “the rural regions away from urban centers and places where cultural knowledge is high.”<sup>673</sup> It housed twenty-six different editorial stands, and a projection screen could be mounted on its top, accompanied by a potent system of speakers and a gramophone. The objective was to screen “educational films and other carefully curated movies”, thanks to a dynamo electric generator that powered a portable projector. The initiative had been developed with “no public funding at all”,<sup>674</sup> showing how the impulse to mobilize culture was not only a matter of state institutions. An encounter between modern centers and rural peripheries was actively sought out by both public authorities and private cultural institutions. This point of encounter was enhanced by the paradoxes of a country that, as explained in chapter one, equally embraced modernization with a desire to preserve and reclaim tradition as the base for the new society.

All these efforts to mobilize cinema were enthusiastically followed by the Catalan Cinema Committee’s own blend of tradition and progressive cultural actions. We can see the dynamics between urban centers and rural peripheries in one of the few official documents that have survived from the pre-Civil War period of the institution: a correspondence between a representative of the Generalitat in the town of Lleida and the CCGC. The Committee was approached by institutions or villages interested in organizing educational film screenings. They would offer to send their own mobile sound equipment free of charge save for lodging and food, which was covered by the local host. In the correspondence, the government delegate in Lleida asked for help with a series of educational screenings organized in the town’s social services

---

<sup>673</sup> “Noticario: stand ambulante de libros,” *La Gaceta de las Artes Gráficas* 12, no. 11 (November 1934): 14–16.

<sup>674</sup> “Noticario: stand ambulante de libros,” 16.



center.<sup>675</sup> The CCGC replied that they could gladly send their mobile sound equipment with technicians and films for a few days, so several screenings could be organized in schools and other cultural institutions of the area.



Figure 54. Photograph of the CCGC exhibit that probably took place in their headquarters in the former Romania Pavilion of the 1929 International Exhibition (Gabriel Casas, ANC1-5-N-3446, circa 1934-36)

The Cinema Committee's busy schedule of screenings prevented the mobile cinema van to be sent to Lleida on the agreed dates, and the event had to be postponed until further availability (not surprising, since, in 1933, more than 75 screenings had been organized in schools throughout Catalonia).<sup>676</sup> According to Carner i Ribalta, by 1937, the unit had organized

<sup>675</sup> "Correspondència Amb El Secretari Del Comitè de Cinema de La Generalitat de Catalunya," 1935, AHL260-151-T2-16, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya.

<sup>676</sup> "Comitè de Cinema de la Generalitat de Catalunya" (Barcelona: Edicions del Comitè de Cinema, 1934), Dipòsit General, Biblioteca Nacional Catalunya. No page numbers are included in the original document.

more than 300 projections throughout Catalonia in schools, cultural institutions, popular athenaeums, factories, barracks, hospitals, refugee centers and remote village squares.<sup>677</sup> Pedro Nogales and José Carlos Suárez Fernández have been able to identify a letter that the CCGC sent to different small towns in the Montsià county in southern Catalonia announcing an imminent series of mobile film projections.<sup>678</sup> The impact of the Cinema Committee's screenings was recognized in an exhibit titled "The Work Done," inserting state sponsored educational cinema into the public cultural imaginary (Figure 54).<sup>679</sup>

The Cinema Committee not only consolidated its presence in the local context, but also shared their initiatives with international peers from the IECI and other institutions, contributing to the "very modern principles presented at the First International Congress of Educational Cinema in Rome in 1934, where Catalonia had its voice heard."<sup>680</sup> From its inception in 1933, the Committee had established relationships with companies like Visual Education Ltd from London, Beyfuss Institute in Berlin, the French Ministry of Agriculture, the Benoit Levy Institute in France, and the Motion Picture Division of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce of the United States, as well as commercial production companies like Fox, Hispano-Fox Film, Paramount, Cinnamond Films, Art Films and Ufilms.<sup>681</sup> These contacts were later expanded to include the British Film Institute, the LUCE Institute in Rome, the ENAPI film school in Milan (presumably the Scuola Nazionale di Cinematografia), the Zurich Film Institute, and the Swiss

---

<sup>677</sup> Josep Carner-Ribalta, "El cinema escolar a Catalunya," *Nova Ibèria*, no. 3-4 (March 1937): 27.

<sup>678</sup> Nogales Cárdenas and Suárez, *La nostra gran il·lusió*, 102-3.

<sup>679</sup> The details of the event are not known besides this photograph from Gabriel Casas, although the building in which it happened is almost certainly a pavilion from the 1929 Exposition. A search in newspapers of the time points to 1934 Tourism Fair as a likely match, since the Committee participated with a series of projections and its own stand. See "El Comité de Cinema," *La Vanguardia*, May 18, 1934.

<sup>680</sup> Carner-Ribalta, "El cinema escolar a Catalunya," 28.

<sup>681</sup> "Del Departamento de Cultura," *La Vanguardia*, July 2, 1933. Some of these production houses were specialized in educational cinema and more research is needed to find information about them.

Chamber of Educational Films among others.<sup>682</sup> Ultimately, the Catalan Cinema Committee became a node in the international network of educational cinema that laid the foundations of today's institutional film cultures.

Mirroring similar developments and initiatives across the world, Catalan and Spanish institutions used film as an instrument of governance and management of collective life. The Spanish government had limited activity in terms of concrete educational film initiatives (save for the Misiones Pedagógicas); instead, the focus was on film policy and geopolitics in an ill-fated attempt to alter Hollywood's hegemony over the film industry, and revive the lost cultural predominance of the Spanish empire. For the newly created Catalan autonomous government film offered an opportunity to consolidate its national identity through cultural action, using small-gauge and portable technologies to reach every corner of the region's geography. Their project was the closest to becoming an actionable state cinema in Spain if the Civil War hadn't diverted their efforts into the necessary defense of the Republic.

The solid structures put in place by the Cinema Committee allowed for a rapid, and effective, assimilation into the Propaganda Commissariat of the Catalan government (directed by Josep Carner i Ribalta).<sup>683</sup> The professional and organizational structure inherited from the Cinema Committee allowed the Commissariat to produce around 135 films—between documentaries and newsreels—from 1936 to 1938, and become a key player in the cultural frontlines of the war.<sup>684</sup> The institution renamed the Committee as Cinema Service (Servei de Cinema), and was headed by Joan Castanyer, a cinematographer who had worked with Jean

---

<sup>682</sup> “Comitè de Cinema de la Generalitat de Catalunya.”

<sup>683</sup> “Butlletí oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya 222,” Agost 1936, 989.

<sup>684</sup> José María Caparrós Lera, *El Cinema Educatiu I La Seva Incidència a Catalunya (Dels Orígens a 1939)*, 1a ed, Col·lecció Mitjans Audio-Visuals, no. 2 (Barcelona: Institut de Ciències de l'Educació, Universitat de Barcelona: PPU, 1988), 79.

Renoir and Jacques Prévert in France, and counted with a small but very professional crew of technicians and a production studio.<sup>685</sup> In the following months it created the production company Laya Films, and shot the weekly newsreel *Espanya al dia* (*Spain Today*), which was released in Catalan, Spanish, English, and French; they also collaborated with other leftist production initiatives such as Film Popular (from the PCE), the International Red Cross, Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals, and even the production of Andre Malraux's *L'Espoir* (*Sierra de Teruel*, 1945) during 1937, which was partially funded by the Spanish Republican government's own propaganda section.<sup>686</sup>

The international contacts and experience of the CCGC and its Spanish counterparts (enhanced by the CHC and IECI congresses) greatly informed the extensive use of moving images during the Civil War. The initiatives they developed (and those that remained unfulfilled projects) speak of the importance that film had in Spain during the 1930s, as an instrument of governance, propaganda, and education for public and private institutions. They offer an excellent point from which to analyze and contextualize the intricate relations between mass politics, institutions, and means of communication that still inform our daily lives. The “formidable and decisive” medium (together with print news, radio, and television) was a key element in the assimilation of citizens into liberal capitalism and democracy, as well as fascist and communist regimes. The interwar period stands as a key moment in which these processes of institutionalization were carried out in a massive scale, demonstrating to governments, political movements, educators, local institutions, and individuals the potential that media had in shaping

---

<sup>685</sup> Caparrós Lera, 75; Carner-Ribalta, “El cinema escolar a Catalunya.”

<sup>686</sup> Josetxo Cerdán and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca, “Newsreels, Documentary, Experimental Film, Shorts, and Animation,” in *A Companion to Spanish Cinema*, ed. Jo Labanyi and Tatjana Pavlović (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012), 524–25, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118322765.ch18>; Caparrós Lera, *El cinema educatiu i la seva incidència a Catalunya (dels orígens a 1939)*, 77.

societies in desired directions.

In post-civil war Spain, the Fascist dictator Francisco Franco understood very well this potential of cinema for nation-building and instruction, and, in 1943, inaugurated a State-controlled newsreel called No-Do—it mirrored what Benito Mussolini had done in Italy with the *Giornale Luce*. It was produced weekly and, until 1976, was of mandatory projection before every film in the theaters; later it aired on television every day until 1981.<sup>687</sup> The aim was to indoctrinate the Spanish population with the regime’s interpretation of both national and international socio-political events. Franco’s thirty-six-year dictatorship didn’t allow for any alternative official film culture to develop during his regime, with the exception of the Spanish militant cinema of the long sixties that emerged despite brutal repression.<sup>688</sup> But when democracy was reestablished and political autonomy returned to Catalonia in 1981, one of the first decisions of the Catalan Government (which according to the new statute had regained control over culture and education) was to officially establish the Filmoteca de Catalunya that same year.<sup>689</sup> As with the protagonists of this chapter from the 1930s, they all understood that the future would “belong” to those that controlled media and its institutions.

The later (and ongoing) struggle for hegemony over broadcasting infrastructure, frequency allocation, entertainment conglomerates, satellite communications, fiber optics oceanic cables, and big data has proven this mantra of media control and geopolitics to be transversal and transhistorical. But it was in the interwar period when the bases for a state control and instrumentalization of film culture were established, first in the USSR, then moving towards

---

<sup>687</sup> Rafael R. Tranche and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca, *NO-DO: el tiempo y la memoria* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2006).

<sup>688</sup> La Parra-Pérez, “Workers Interrupting the Factory. Helena Lumbreras’s Militant Factory Films between Italy and Spain (1968-78)”;

Fibla-Gutiérrez and La Parra-Pérez, “Turning the Camera into a Weapon: Juan Piqueras’s Radical Noncommercial Film Projects and Their Afterlives (1930s-1970s).”

<sup>689</sup> “REIAL DECRET 1010/1981, de 27 de Febrer, Sobre Traspàs de Funcions i Serveis de l’Estat a La Generalitat de Catalunya En Matèria de Cultura” (Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya 132, June 5, 1981).

Italy and Germany, and finally finding a significant role in liberal and emerging democracies like France, UK, and Spain. This film culture from *above* coexisted and, as we have seen, sometimes intersected with the film culture from *below*, which I have analyzed in the previous three chapters. Through local and international networks and institutions both realms ultimately made use of the unofficial “ambassadors” of film culture in order to shape and control the future of their imagined communities, just as today different forms of media are used to direct and influence the “beliefs and habits” of people around the world.

**Conclusion: The Disorganized Transmission of Modernity in Spain and the Afterlives of the Pedagogical Impulse of Noncommercial Cinema**

A few years after the death of the dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, Juan Manuel Llopis, a former priest from Requena who had become a film enthusiast and improvised historian, began to retrace the steps of Juan Piqueras. Llopis interviewed important intellectuals and artists from the 1930s, all of whom had either met the Valencian critic, worked with him, or were irreversibly influenced by the initiatives he organized and the ideas he brought from abroad (the results were gathered in the book *Juan Piqueras, el “Delluc” Español*, which I have cited many times throughout the thesis).<sup>690</sup> Luis Buñuel, Rafael Alberti, Josep Renau, Vicente Escudero, Ernesto Giménez Caballero, Luis Gómez Mesa, Ricardo Muñoz Suay, Antonio del Amo, Rafael Gil, Luis Guarnier, and Antonio Deltoro, among others, provided Llopis with oral testimony to the multiple, and forgotten, lives of Piqueras. Their memories include how their own trajectories intersected with the Valencian critic, as well as their experiences of the vibrant cultural, social and political milieu of the 1930s. They recollect the pedagogical possibilities for not only cinema, but that of Spain and its disorganized modernity. In 1979, for instance, graphic artist and former minister of Fine Arts and Propaganda during the Civil War, Josep Renau, described Piqueras to Llopis with the following words:

“He was one of those fast people...roaaarr...there was no way of [catching him]...He lived in Paris, would visit [Spain] quickly and leave again...He was a man of incredible *dynamism*...And that’s what ultimately killed him [...] He would come loaded with films and bring them somewhere. He was very hard to pin down. He was everywhere and

---

<sup>690</sup> Llopis, *Juan Piqueras, el “Delluc” español*, 1988; Juan Manuel Llopis, *Juan Piqueras, el “Delluc” español*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Valencia: Filmoteca, Generalitat Valenciana, 1988). Both volumes were published after Llopis’s own untimely death in 1986.

nowhere. He was *superheterodyne*. He was enormously influential for us. [...] The films he brought of Pudovkin and Eisenstein, the photomontages...his *action* was a decisive contribution to my work.”<sup>691</sup>

Renau insists over and over again throughout the interview on the energy exhibited by Piqueras and his undetectable movements across Spain and world over. He also uses a concept from electronics (*superheterodyne*), which refers to a system of reception and transmission based on the mix of different electromagnetic signals,<sup>692</sup> to describe the multidisciplinary and unorthodox nature of Piqueras’s actions as a transmitter (that is, a pedagogue) of ideas. The critic’s resistance to being pinned down into a given doctrine or identity, his openness to foreign developments and influences, and constant comings and goings, are exemplary of how many Spaniards attempted to unlearn the “museum of traditions” they had been taught to worship as the real Spain until the proclamation of the Second Republic in April, 1931.<sup>693</sup> Coming out of decades of political and social stagnation, and lamentations for the loss of the empire, and a diminished geopolitical and cultural importance, the many different roads taken by intellectuals, artists, filmmakers, critics, politicians, policymakers, and citizens in the search for a new society blended into a disorganized modernity that was received, adapted, and transmitted by multiple media.

Throughout the last four chapters, I have focused on how cinema became one of the most prominent mediums for transmitting these mixed signals of modernity, culture, tradition, political organization, and governance that characterize the period between April 14, 1931, to the coup of General Franco on July 18, 1936. I hope this project has made clear that *a lot* happened in

---

<sup>691</sup> Llopis, “Los amigos de Juan Piqueras,” 40–41. Emphasis added. Renau does not finish many of the sentences he begins, hence the use of ... to indicate so.

<sup>692</sup> By the mid-1930s it had replaced the old tuned radio frequency receivers system and ultimately became standard in radio and television receivers.

<sup>693</sup> To use John Dos Passos’s words from the quote that opens the introduction to the thesis.



Spanish film culture in that brief but intense period of time, and that much of it had to do with local and international circuits of militant cinema, small gauge production, film policy, and, especially, film pedagogy and educational initiatives. Spain was on the radar of global film history and discourse throughout the 1930s, but not because of its scarce commercial film production or the better known Civil War propaganda efforts.

The impressive reach of film culture in the absence of a strong, or meaningful, film industry caught the attention of the many international networks and institutions that I have discussed in these pages: radical film networks headed by Léon Moussinac and others promoted by the PCF and Comintern; congresses such as the Brussels CICI in 1930, the 1934 IECI in Rome, or the IAFC in Barcelona; journals like *Experimental Cinema*, *American Cinematographer*, *New Masses*, *L'Humanité*, or *Regards*; institutions such as the American Institute of Amateur Cinematographers, the IAC in London, the IICI in Paris, or the IECI; film contests and exhibitions in Venice, New York, Japan, or Budapest; visits to Moscow and the VGIK film school and Soyuzkino film studios; to name just a few. The international presence and relations of Spanish cinema enabled by film culture is certainly one of the most salient discoveries that I have experienced throughout the research process.

At every step of the way and in multiple spaces (congresses, journals, seminars, festivals, correspondences, translations, diplomatic meetings, transnational institutions, film club screenings, world fairs, etc.), the global circulation of initiatives and ideas on film constituted a central element of Spain's cultural life in the 1930s. This international presence of Spain through culture and progressive politics captured the attention of leftist intellectuals and militants throughout the world, as the 60,000 volunteers that gathered in the International Brigades during the Civil War reflect. The "woeful appearance" of the Spanish failed empire and the subsequent

introspective and autocratic national cultural policies that I mentioned in the introduction were, then, on their way out, to be surpassed by the new world order of liberal democracy, internationalist leftist politics, cultural geopolitics, and transnational collaboration from which Spain was cut off by the outcome of the Civil War and ensuing Franco dictatorship.

As we saw in the introduction and in chapter four, the appeal of the lost empire remained to some extent in the minds of policymakers, critics, and filmmakers throughout the early 1930s. The possibility of looking into the future of the country, and not exclusively into the past as had been the dominant trend until then in Spain, ultimately gave cinema a new pedagogical function as transmitter of the mixed signals of tradition and modernity. Epitomized in the figure of Piqueras—whose memory and elusive trajectory haunts and propels this dissertation—critics, educators, filmmakers, and governments took to heart Jaume Serra Hunter's call to follow the *imperative of culture* and develop the pedagogical potential of the medium as an instrument of social and political emancipation and participation in the public sphere (as well as governance and control as chapter four shows). The *pedagogical impulse* that characterized Spanish noncommercial film from 1931 to 1936 was part of the larger efforts to consolidate culture and education as essential components of the new Republican society. In my dissertation I have analyzed in detail only a few of these efforts, although I hope that it is clear by now that many other initiatives, a great number of them involving intermedial practices and transnational collaborations, were part of the pedagogical impulse of moving images in the interwar period.

Indeed, given the limitations of how much one can include in a dissertation and the endless materials held in the archives, a few questions have remained unanswered or only partially addressed, waiting for future projects and other scholars to fully engage with them. One of these issues is certainly the intermedial dimension of culture that helped transmit Spain's

disorganized modernity. In this thesis I have briefly discussed the intersections of cinema with print media, graphic art, photography, and theater, but a more comprehensive study of the intermedial spaces of activism, critical spectatorship, and political organization that these developments (together with radio) created lays ahead. Likewise, the international dimension of film culture in the interwar period and the institutionalization of cinema into state and supranational institutions has emerged in the different chapters as a constitutive element of the later relation between politics, governance, education, and cinema that shaped the medium's instrumentalization throughout the world by both public and private institutions. In this regard, a more global and comparative study of how cinema was used for both governance and social participation purposes in the interwar period by political institutions emerges as a necessary continuation of the histories that I have sketched succinctly in relation to the Spanish context.

The disorganized transmission of modernity enabled by the different moving image initiatives analyzed throughout the dissertation had a lasting impact on the development of film culture in Spain in the following decades. Despite the tragic end met by the transformative energies and progressive pedagogical project of the Republic after the defeat in the Civil War—and here it is important to remember how Renau explicitly says that it was Piqueras's dynamism and frenetic action that killed him—their influence can be traced in many developments both inside and outside of Spain. The harsh route of exile brought countless intellectuals, critics, and filmmakers to France, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Chile, and Uruguay.<sup>694</sup> They were more or less welcomed and incorporated into the film culture and industry of these countries. Their

---

<sup>694</sup> José Luis Abellán, José María Balcells, and José Antonio Pérez Bowie, eds., *El exilio cultural de la Guerra Civil, 1936-1939* (Salamanca, España : [León, Spain]: Ediciones Universidad Salamanca ; Secretariado de Publicaciones, Universidad de León, 2001); Alicia Alted Vigil, *La voz de los vencidos: el exilio republicano de 1939* (Madrid: Aguilar, 2005); Olga Glondys, *La guerra fría cultural y el exilio republicano español: "Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura", (1953-1965)* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2012); Sel, "Cine, pedagogía y exilio. Un recorrido entre España y Argentina en los años 40."

impact has been analyzed by some scholars,<sup>695</sup> but it remains another important history of cultural transmission to analyze further.

Those that stayed in the country and survived the Francoist purges and repression (Spain remains the second country in the world with most disappeared persons after Cambodia) opted for an interior exile that, in a more indirect and concealed way, also maintained the memory of 1930s film culture. Some became assimilated into the official structures of the Francoist regime; such was the case of Antonio del Amo, Rafael Gil, Luis Gómez Mesa, Carlos Serrano de Osma and, later, scientific filmmaker Guillermo Fernández Zúñiga. Some became an important part of the national film industry and, later, of first official film school of Spain (the Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas, IIEC, created in 1947) as well as journals like *Cine Experimental* or *Otro Cine*.<sup>696</sup> Efforts to reactivate the Hispanic American film axis against Hollywood laid out in the 1931 CHC were made with the organization of a Segundo Congreso Cinematográfico Hispanoamericano celebrated in Madrid in 1948, and another in Barcelona in 1966.<sup>697</sup> In Catalonia the bourgeois amateur movement rekindled its activities in the early 1940s, participating in the yearly UNICA film contests. The personal archive of Delmir de Caralt was an unofficial film library for numerous enthusiasts and scholars during the dictatorship years, and ultimately became the founding block of the current Fílmoteca de Catalunya. Critics Sebastià

---

<sup>695</sup> Sel, “Cine, pedagogía y exilio. Un recorrido entre España y Argentina en los años 40”; Román Gubern, *Cine español en el exilio, 1936-1939* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1976); Juan Rodríguez, “Los exiliados republicanos y el cine (una reflexión historiográfica),” *Iberoamericana* XII, no. 47 (2012): 157–68. See also the overall work of the Grupo de Estudios del Exilio Literario (GEXEL) from the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.

<sup>696</sup> See Fernando Ramos Arenas, “El Instituto antes de Salamanca. Los primeros años del Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas (1947-1955),” *Área Abierta* 16, no. 2 (June 29, 2016), [https://doi.org/10.5209/rev\\_ARAB.2016.v16.n2.52170](https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_ARAB.2016.v16.n2.52170).

<sup>697</sup> It would not be until 1996 that the Programa Ibermedia (a Spanish-Hispanic co-production film fund majorly financed by Spain via its Foreign Affairs Ministry and whose headquarters are in Madrid) materialized the aspirations of these events. See Falicov, “Programa Ibermedia Co-Production and the Cultural Politics of Constructing an Ibero-American Audiovisual Space.”

Guasch and Josep Palau also became important critics in *Fotogramas*, one of the most important post war film journals (launched in 1946) and other magazines.

As the years passed and the dictatorship consolidated its power thanks to the support of the USA and, to a lesser extent France, the UK, and Argentina, the memory of the impressive film culture of the 1930s did not fade. In 1961, the influential journal *Nuestro Cine* was created by a group of critics (among them film historian Roman Gubern) as an explicit homage to Piqueras and his journal *Nuestro Cinema*. As we saw in chapter one, beyond official outlets the memory of the critic's radical film culture was also very present in anti-Francoist militant film collectives during the 1970s. Even if these activists did not explicitly refer to Piqueras in their documents and testimonies, in many ways their practices can be seen as the practical response to a series of problems that had been discussed in *Nuestro Cinema* in the 1930s, such as the democratization of film production, the political potential of nonprofessional film technologies, and the articulation of alternative networks for distribution and exhibition.

I would like to conclude with a scene taken from the last pages of John Dos Passos's book *Journeys Between Wars* where, after having spent a few months in the front lines of the Civil War, the writer enters a small room in Antibes (France) in May 1937, where a group of French labor unionists listen to a weak radio signal transmitted from Gijón by their Spanish comrades (at the time surrounded by Francoist troops). As he listens to the impassioned speech constantly interrupted by radio noise, Dos Passos thinks about how the hopes of liberty and a "new life" of the Republic are being defeated by the "old life" represented by the military rebellion, the church, and the powerful: "How can the new world, full of confusion, disagreements, hopes, and dazzled by the mirage of idealist words, defeat the fierce

determination of men used to rule and united by a single idea: clinging to what they have?.”<sup>698</sup>

The pedagogical impulse of 1930s noncommercial film culture in Spain, with its organizational fervor, willingness to learn from foreign developments and adapt them to the local context by whatever means possible, and the risks associated with some of these initiatives (as was the case with Piqueras and Salvans), was an important part of the answer to Dos Passos’s afflicted question.

Despite the defeat of the Republic in 1939, the transmission of this film culture legacy—although often concealed and frail as the signal received in that small room in Antibes—survived decades of dictatorship, participating in the struggle for a new Spanish society in the 1970s, and is still mobilized today as an inspiring memory. Indeed, the afterlives of these developments, and the recurrent gesture by contemporary scholars, writers, artists, politicians, curators, and citizens to look back and reflect upon the legacies of the transformative project of the Second Republic testify to the resistance of this memory to be forgotten. Be they the readers of journals and spectators of film clubs and their organizers described in chapter one, the students of the night school of cinema and international critics mentioned in chapter two, the bourgeois amateur enthusiasts of chapter three, or the amazed children targeted by the liberal educational government initiatives of chapter four, the individuals, collectives, and institutions analyzed in this dissertation navigated dangerous times and materials in their search for a new society and culture, and it is worth stopping to unearth their histories, achievements, failures, and unintended consequences.

---

<sup>698</sup> John Dos Passos, *Viajes de entreguerras* (Barcelona: Península, 2005), 348–49.

## References

### Works cited

- Abel, Richard. *French Film Theory and Criticism*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993.
- Abellán, José Luis, José María Balcells, and José Antonio Pérez Bowie, eds. *El exilio cultural de la Guerra Civil, 1936-1939*. Salamanca, España : [León, Spain]: Ediciones Universidad Salamanca ; Secretariado de Publicaciones, Universidad de León, 2001.
- A.C. “Nouvelles d’Hollywood.” *L’Humanité*, January 11, 1935.
- Acland, Charles R., and Haidee Wasson, eds. *Useful Cinema*. Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2011.
- “Actualidad Gráfica de Barcelona.” *La Vanguardia*, February 12, 1930.
- Albera, François. *L’ avant-garde au cinéma*. Paris: Colin, 2005.
- . “Moussinac et Son Double : Décor, Décoration, Arts Décoratifs.” In *Léon Moussinac, Un Intellectuel Communiste*, edited by Valérie Vignaux and François Albera, 2:37–81. Paris: Afrhc, 2014.
- Alberti, Rafael. *Cal y canto, 1926-1927*. Madrid: Alianza, 1981.
- . *La Amante*. Madrid: Plutarco, 1929.
- . *Sobre los ángeles: yo era un tonto y lo que he visto me ha hecho dos tontos*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1981.
- Alberti, Rafael, and María Asunción Mateo. *90 poemas*. Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre, 1992.
- “Alquiler de Películas Pathé-Baby.” *La Vanguardia*, November 16, 1930.
- Alted Vigil, Alicia. *La voz de los vencidos: el exilio republicano de 1939*. Madrid: Aguilar, 2005.
- Alted Vigil, Alicia, and Susana Sel, eds. *Cine educativo y científico en España, Argentina y Uruguay*. Madrid: Editorial Universitaria Ramón Areces, 2016.
- Altman, Rick. “From Lecturer’s Prop to Industrial Product: The Early History of Travel Films.” In *The Time Machine: Cinema and Travel*, 61-76. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Alvar, M.F. *Cinematografía pedagógica y educativa*. Madrid: J. M. Yagües, 1936.

- Álvarez, Analia, Daniela Colleoni, and Luis Horta. "El cine en el aula: el Instituto de Cinematografía Educativa de la Universidad de Chile (1929-1948)." *Cuadernos Chilenos de Historia de la Educación* 1, no. 2 (January 2014): 20–46.
- Álvarez del Vayo, Julio. *La nueva Rusia*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1926.
- Amat, Manuel. "L'Encant i el pintoresc dels bolos cineístics." *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 7 (Winter -1934 1933).
- Anderson, Perry. *Considerations on Western Marxism*. London: Verso, 1987.
- Andrea Mariani. "The Cineguf Years: Amateur Cinema and the Shaping of a Film Avant-Garde in Fascist Italy (1934–1943)." *Film History* 30, no. 1 (2018): 30. <https://doi.org/10.2979/filmhistory.30.1.03>.
- Andrew, Dudley. *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- "Announcement." *Experimental Cinema*, no. 1 (February 1930): 1.
- Aranzúbia Cob, Asier. "Julián Antonio Ramírez: inventario de actividades filmicas." *Ikusgaiak* 6 (2003): 135–57.
- Araquistáin, Luis. "Comentarios: la nueva dialéctica histórica." *El Sol*, May 18, 1925.
- Arconada, César M. "Hacia un cinema proletario." *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 8–9 (February 1933): 92–94.
- Arconada, César M. *La turbina: (1930)*. Edited by Gonzalo Santonja. Palencia: Cálamo, 2003.
- . *Los pobres contra los ricos*. Madrid: Publicaciones Izquierda, 1933.
- Arconada, César M. "Luis Buñuel y las Hurdes; el film." *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 15 (February 1935): 9.
- Ares, Oscar Miguel. "Sert, Le Corbusier y el pla Macià: heterodoxia y contradicciones formales." *DC Papers*, no. 19–20 (2010): 175–82.
- "Art i Cinema." *L'Hora* 2, no. 39 (October 2, 1931): 7.
- Artal, Francesc. *Economía crítica, una perspectiva catalana*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1973.
- "Ateneo de Madrid. Resumen del curso de conferencias 1830-1931." *La Libertad*, August 1, 1931.
- Aub, Max. *Luis Buñuel, novela*. Granada: Cuadernos del Vigía, 2013.
- Aubenas, Jacqueline. *Hommage à Henri Storck / Films 1928-1985, Catalogue Analytique*. Bruxelles, 1995.
- Ayala, Francisco. *Cazador en el alba*. Madrid: Ediciones Ulises, 1930.



- . *Indagación del cinema*. Madrid: Mundo Latino, 1929.
- Báez y Pérez de Tudela, José María. *Fútbol, cine y democracia: ocio de masas en Madrid, 1923-1936*. Madrid: Alianza, 2012.
- Balfour, Sebastian. *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- . *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898-1923*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Balfour, Sebastian, and Paul Preston, eds. *Spain and the Great Powers in the Twentieth Century*. London: New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Balfour, Sebastian, and Alejandro Quiroga. *The Reinvention of Spain: Nation and Identity since Democracy*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Ballester, Tonny. “Hacia las sesiones de cine amateur?” *Popular Film* 448 (March 21, 1935).
- Barbaro, Umberto. “Elogio del Dilettantismo.” *Quadrivio* IV, no. 48 (September 27, 1936): 8.
- Barel, Victor. “Comment attirer des assistants à nos causeries pour sympathisants.” In *Cahiers du Bolchevisme 1928*, 2:672–74. Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1977.
- Barnard, Timothy. “From Impressionism to Communism: Léon Moussinac’s Technics of the Cinema, 1921-1933.” *Framework* 42 (2000).
- Barsam, Richard Meran. *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- Basilio, Miriam. *Visual Propaganda, Exhibitions, and the Spanish Civil War*. Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Intimations of Postmodernity*, 2003.
- Bayou, R. “Le cinéma éducateur.” *L’Educateur Proletarien*, no. 1 (October 1932): 39–42.
- Benet, Josep. *L’Intent franquista de genocidi cultural contra Catalunya*. Barcelona: Publicacions de l’Abadia de Montserrat, 1995.
- Benet, Vicente J. *El cine español: una historia cultural*. Barcelona: Ediciones Paidós, 2012.
- Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945*. Berkeley, Calif London: University of California Press, 2004.
- . *Italian Fascism’s Empire Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. New York: Schocken, 1969.
- . *Understanding Brecht*. London: Verso, 2003.
- Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Viking Penguin, 1988.

- Bhaumik, Kaushik. "Cinematograph to Cinema: Bombay 1896-1928." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 41–67.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/097492761000200105>.
- Biadiu Ester, Mercè, and José María Caparrós Lera. *Ramon Biadiu (1906-1984): cineasta d'avantguarda*. Súria; Manresa: Ajuntament de Súria; Centre d'Estudis del Bages, 2007.
- "Bibliografía." *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 1 (October 1932).
- "Bibliography." *International Review of Educational Cinematography* 3, no. 1 (January 1931): 100.
- Biltreyst, Daniël, ed. *Cinema Audiences and Modernity: An Introduction*. Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2012.
- Bistagne, Francisco-Mario. "Aguila Caudal." *Arte y Cinematografía* 22, no. 360 (April 1931): 5–6.
- Bjerström, Carl-Henrik. *Josep Renau and the Politics of Culture in Republican Spain, 1931-1939: Re-Imagining the Nation*, 2017.
- Blom, Philipp. *Fracture: Life and Culture in the West, 1918-1938*. New York: Basic Books, 2015.
- "Boletín de Información Del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía." Madrid, Ministerio de Previsión y Trabajo, August 1931.
- Boletín de información del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía*. Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión, 1931.
- "Boletín nº 3 del Instituto de Cinematografía Educativa de la Universidad de Chile," 1933. Santiago, Universidad de Chile.
- Bolufer, Mónica. "Orientalizing Southern Europe?: Spain Through the Eyes of Foreign Travelers." *The Eighteenth Century* 57, no. 4 (2016): 451–67.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/ecy.2016.0031>.
- Bond, Ralph. "Cinema in the Thirties: Documentary Film and the Labor Movement." In *Culture And Crisis In Britain In The Thirties*, edited by Jon Clark, Margot Heinemann, and Carole Snee, 241–56. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979.
- Bonifazio, Paola. *Schooling in Modernity: The Politics of Sponsored Films in Postwar Italy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.
- Borg, Carmel, Joseph A. Buttigieg, and Peter Mayo, eds. *Gramsci and Education*. Lanham, Md. ; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.
- Bovier, François. "L'avant-garde dans les études filmiques." 1895. *Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze [En ligne]* 55 (2008). <http://journals.openedition.org/1895/4120>.

- Brakhage, Stan. *Essential Brakhage: Selected Writings on Filmmaking*. Edited by Bruce R. McPherson. Kingston, N.Y: Documentext, 2001.
- Braojos Garrido, Alfonso. *Alfonso XIII y la Exposición Iberoamericana de Sevilla de 1929*. Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones, Universidad de Sevilla, 1992.
- Braun-Larrieu, André. *Le Role social du cinéma*. Paris: Éditions du Cinéopse, 1938.
- Brenan, Gerald. *The Spanish Labyrinth: An Account of the Social and Political Background of the Civil War*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- . *The Spanish Labyrinth an Account of the Social and Political Background of the Spanish Civil War*, 2014.
- Brendon, Piers. *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s*. London: Pimlico, 2001.
- Breu, Ramón. *La Catalunya soviètica: el somni que venia de Moscou*. Badalona: Ara Llibres, 2011.
- Bürger, Peter, Bettina Brandt, and Daniel Purdy. “Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde: An Attempt to Answer Certain Critics of ‘Theory of the Avant-Garde.’” *New Literary History* 41, no. 4 (2010): 695–715. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2010.0034>.
- “Butlletí oficial de la Generalitat 26,” April 15, 1933.
- “Butlletí oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya 222,” Agost 1936.
- Camarero Rioja, Fernando. “Teoría y práctica del cine educativo en España (1895-1923).” *Cahiers de civilisation espagnole contemporaine. De 1808 au temps présent*, no. 11 (September 26, 2013). <https://doi.org/10.4000/ccec.4843>.
- Campbell, Russell. *Cinema Strikes Back: Radical Filmmaking in the United States, 1930-1942*. Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, 1982.
- Candau, Antonio. “El arte mudo de ‘Cinematógrafo’ de Carranque de Rios.” *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 47, no. 1 (June 1994): 86–95.
- Caparrós Lera, José María. *Arte y Política En El Cine de La República (1931-1939)*. Barcelona: Edit. 7 1/2: Edic. Universidad, 1981.
- . *El cinema educatiu i la seva incidència a Catalunya (dels orígens a 1939)*. Barcelona: Institut de Ciències de l’Educació, Universitat de Barcelona : PPU, 1988.
- . “Guillem Díaz-Plaja, el primer curs universitari de cinema i l’ensenyament secundari.” In *Doctor Buenaventura Delgado Criado: Pedagogo e Historiador*, 703–11. Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 2009.
- Caparrós Lera, José María, Ramon Biadiu Cuadrench, and Miquel Porter i Moix. *Petita història del cinema de la Generalitat: 1932-1939*. Mataró: Robrenyo, 1978.

- Caparrós Lera, José María, and Rafael de España. *Historia del cine español*. Madrid, España: T&B Editores, 2007.
- Caralt, Delmir de. “Mor el cinema?” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 4 (Winter -1934 1933).
- Carner-Ribalta, Josep. *Com es fa un film*. Barcelona: Barcino, 1934.
- . *De Balaguer a Nova-York passant per Moscou i Prats de Mollo. Memories*. Edicions Catalanes de Paris, 1972.
- . “El cinema escolar a Catalunya.” *Nova Ibèria*, no. 3–4 (March 1937).
- Carranque de Ríos, Andrés. *Cinematógrafo: novela*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1936.
- Casanova, Julián. *The Spanish Republic and Civil War*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Castoriadis, Cornelius. *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Castro de Paz, José Luis, and Julio Pérez Perucha. “Militancia y posibilismo.” In *Juan Antonio Bardem. El cine a codazos*, 21–31. Ourense: Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente de Ourense, 2004.
- Castro de Paz, José Luis, Julio Pérez Perucha, Santos Zunzunegui, and Carmen Arozena, eds. *La nueva memoria: historia(s) del cine español (1939-2000)*. Perillo-Oleiros (A Coruña): Vía Láctea, 2005.
- Caudet, Francisco. *Las cenizas del fénix: la cultura española en los años 30*. Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre, 1993.
- “Censo de población de 1930.” *Census*, 1930.
- Cerdán, Josetxo. “Buñuel, Urgoiti: Las sesiones sonoras del ‘cineclub español.’” *Vertigo. Revista de cine*, no. 11 (1995): 12–17.
- Cerdán, Josetxo, and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca. “Newsreels, Documentary, Experimental Film, Shorts, and Animation.” In *A Companion to Spanish Cinema*, edited by Jo Labanyi and Tatjana Pavlović, 521–42. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118322765.ch18>.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. “Provincializing Europe: Postcoloniality and the Critique of History.” *Cultural Studies* 6, no. 3 (October 1992): 337–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502389200490221>.
- Charney, Leo, and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds. *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Christie, Ian. “The Avant-Gardes and European Cinema before 1930.” In *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson, 449–54. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

- “Cine Madrid ¡Por fin! Ivan el Terrible.” *Crisol*, April 23, 1931.
- “Cinema educatiu.” *Butlletí dels Mestres* 4, no. 61 (February 1, 1932): 48.
- “Cinema universitari.” *Cinema Amateur* 2, no. 11 (Spring 1936).
- Clark, Katerina. *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Coloquio sobre Historia Contemporánea de España. *Los orígenes culturales de la II República*. Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1993.
- “Comentarios: el I Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía.” *ABC*, October 9, 1931.
- Comino, Pepe. “La Antesala del profesionalismo.” *Popular Film* 428 (November 1, 1934).
- “Comitè de Cinema de la Generalitat de Catalunya.” Barcelona: Edicions del Comitè de Cinema, 1934. Dipòsit General. Biblioteca Nacional Catalunya.
- Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía: 1931, 2 al 12 de octubre*. Madrid: El Congreso, 1931.
- “Consejos a los directores españoles.” *Cinegramas*, no. 1 (1934): 1.
- “Constitución de la República Española,” December 9, 1931.
- “Conversa amb Madrid.” *Institut Escola: Revista de l’Institut Escola de la Generalitat*, no. 9 (January 1933): 11.
- “Correspondence from José Becerril Madueño to Juan Piqueras,” September 6, 1935. Fichero General Político-Social ES.37274.CDMH/9.8.10, File N° 00056261. Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, Spain.
- “Correspondence from Juan M. Plaza to Juan Piqueras,” January 14, 1936. Fichero General Político-Social, ES.37274.CDMH/9.8.10, File N° 00056261. Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, Spain.
- “Correspondence from Juan Piqueras to Cine Teatro Club,” May 20, 1936. Fichero General Político-Social, ES.37274.CDMH/9.8.10, File N° 00056261. Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, Spain.
- “Correspondence from Juan Piqueras to Luis Buñuel,” November 13, 1935. Fichero General Político-Social, ES.37274.CDMH/9.8.10, File N° 00056261. Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, Spain.
- “Correspondència Amb El Secretari Del Comitè de Cinema de La Generalitat de Catalunya,” 1935. AHL260-151-T2-16. Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya.
- Cosandey, Roland, and Thomas Tode. *Le 1er Congrès international du cinéma indépendant: La Sarraz, septembre 1929 : quand l’avant-garde projetait son avenir*. Perpignan: Institut Jean Vigo, 2000.

- “¿Cuántos cinemas hay en el mundo?” *Intercine* 7, no. 3 (March 1935): 178.
- Cué E., Carlos. “El Congreso conmemora la II República con la oposición del PP.” *El País*, April 28, 2006. [https://elpais.com/diario/2006/04/28/espana/1146175216\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/2006/04/28/espana/1146175216_850215.html).
- “Cultura ofreció la videoteca a los Piqueras y la familia reclama el cuadro que pintó Renau.” *Levante-EMV*, September 26, 2008. <http://www.levante-emv.com/cultura/2008/09/26/cultura-ofrecio-videoteca-piqueras-familia-reclama-cuadro-pinto-renau/499635.html>.
- Curtis, David. *Experimental Cinema*. New York: Universe Books, 1971.
- Del Amo Algara, Antonio. “Apertura de Studio Nuestro Cinema.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 14 (January 1935).
- “Del Departamento de Cultura.” *La Vanguardia*, July 2, 1933.
- Delanty, Gerard. *Formations of European Modernity: A Historical and Political Sociology of Europe*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Delgado Criado, Buenaventura. *La escuela moderna de Ferrer i Guàrdia*. Barcelona: Ceac, 1979.
- Denning, Michael. *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. London: Verso, 1996.
- Deren, Maya. “Amateur Versus Professional.” *Film Culture*, no. 39 (Winter 1965): 45–46.
- “Deuxième Congrès International du Cinema Independant.” *La Revue du Cinéma* 3, no. 18 (January 1931): 69–70.
- Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*, 2012.
- Díaz Fernández, José. “Los libros nuevos.” *El Sol*, December 7, 1930.
- Díaz, José. *Tres años de lucha*. Paris: Editions de la Librairie du Globe, 1970.
- Díaz-Plaja, Guillem. “Funció de l’amateur en el cinema educatiu.” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1933).
- . *Una cultura del cinema: introducció a una estètica del film*. Barcelona: Publicacions de La Revista, 1930.
- Díez Puertas, Emeterio. *Historia social del cine en España*. Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 2003.
- Djagalov, Rossen, and Masha Salazkina. “Tashkent ‘68: A Cinematic Contact Zone.” *Slavic Review* 75, no. 02 (2016): 279–98. <https://doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.75.2.279>.
- Donald, James, Anne Friedberg, and Laura Marcus, eds. *Close up: 1927-1933 ; Cinema and Modernism*. London: Cassell, 1998.

- Dos Passos, John. *Rocinante Vuelve al Camino*. Madrid: Cenit, 1930.
- . *Viajes de entreguerras*. Barcelona: Península, 2005.
- Druick, Zoë. “The International Educational Cinematograph Institute, Reactionary Modernism and the Formation of Film Studies.” *Revue Canadienne d’Études Cinématographiques / Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 80–97.
- Durán i Padròs, Ana. “La política cinematográfica de la Generalitat republicana: el Comité de Cinema de la Generalitat de Catalunya.” *Cinematógrafo* 2, no. 3 (2001).
- Eburne, Jonathan P., and Rita Felski. “Introduction.” *New Literary History* 41, no. 4 (2010): v–xv. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2010.0031>.
- “Ecos del Congreso.” *La Vanguardia*, November 3, 1931.
- “Editorial.” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 1 (October 1932).
- “Editorial.” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1933).
- “Editorial.” *Ciné-Amateur: Bulletin International* 1 (January 1936).
- “Editoriales: las fuerzas nuevas.” *Nueva España* 1, no. 6 (April 15, 1930): 2.
- “Editor’s Note.” *Experimental Cinema*, no. 3 (February 1931): 34.
- Egido, Ángeles, and Ángel Viñas, eds. *La Segunda República y su proyección internacional: la mirada del otro*. Madrid: Catarata, 2017.
- Ehrenburg, Il’iã Grigorevich. *España, república de trabajadores*. Barcelona: Melusina, 2008.
- “El cinematògraf a l’escola primària.” *Butlletí dels Mestres*, no. 80 (January 15, 1933): 1, 30.
- “El Comité de Cinema.” *La Vanguardia*, May 18, 1934.
- “El Congreso Internacional de Cinematografía Educativa y de Enseñanza.” *Revista Internacional del Cinema Educativo* 6, no. 5 (May 1934): 367–401.
- “El primer film sonoro de la URSS.” *AC Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea*, no. 4 (1931): 29.
- Elena, Alberto. “Cruce de destinos: intercambios cinematográficos entre España y América Latina.” In *La nueva memoria: historia(s) del cine español (1939-2000)*, edited by José Luis Castro de Paz, Julio Pérez Perucha, and Santos Zunzunegui, 332–76. Perillo-Oleiros (A Coruña): Vía Láctea, 2005.
- Ells C., Fred. “Notes of the Movie Clubs.” *American Cinematographer* 19, no. 3 (March 1938): 121.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. “Archives and Archaeologies: The Place of Non-Fiction Film in Contemporary Media.” In *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media*, 19–34. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009.

- “Equipment Prizes Awarded.” *American Cinematographer* 14, no. 9 (January 1934).
- Espinet i Burunat, Francesc. “El cinema amateur catala en temps de la Generalitat, la seva inserció a Terrassa i el lideratge de la família Salvans.” *Cinematògraf* 2, no. 3 (2001): 157–71.
- . “Un film amateur sobre la premsa: Diaris (els germans Salvans i els cineistes terrassencs en temps republicans).” *Anàlisi*, no. 23 (1999): 107–35.
- F. Blanco, Castilla. *El cinema educativo y gracián, pedagogo*. Madrid: Imprenta Beltrán, 1933.
- Falicov, Tamara. “Programa Ibermedia Co-Production and the Cultural Politics of Constructing an Ibero-American Audiovisual Space.” *Spectator* 27, no. 2 (2007): 21–30.
- F.C. “El señor De Feo en el Instituto de Servicios Sociales.” *La Vanguardia*, February 11, 1930.
- Fernández Colorado, Luis, and Josexto Cerdán. *Ricardo Urgoiti los trabajos y los días*. Madrid: Filmoteca Española, 2007.
- Fernández Cuenca, Carlos. *Historia anecdótica del cinema*. Madrid: CIAP, 1930.
- . *Panorama del cinema en Rusia*. Madrid: Compañía iberoamericana de publicaciones, 1930.
- Fernández Hernández, Ana. “Cinema civil. Un exemple: Edelweiss films.” *Terme* 22 (November 2007).
- Fernández, Miguel Anxo. *Las imágenes de Carlos Velo*. México, D.F: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2007.
- Ferrés Prats, Joan. “Cine y educación social: ¿desconocidos, rivales o aliados?” *Educación social: Revista de intervención socioeducativa*, no. 39 (2008): 13–29.
- Fibla Gutierrez, Enrique. “Revolutionizing the ‘National Means of Expression’: The Influence of Soviet Film Culture in Pre-Civil War Spain.” *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies* 8, no. 1 (April 1, 2016): 95–111. [https://doi.org/10.1386/cjcs.8.1.95\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/cjcs.8.1.95_1).
- Fibla-Gutiérrez, Enrique, and Pablo La Parra-Pérez. “Turning the Camera into a Weapon: Juan Piqueras’s Radical Noncommercial Film Projects and Their Afterlives (1930s-1970s).” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 18, no. 4 (2017): 341-362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14636204.2017.1380148>.
- Fielding, Raymond, ed. *A Technological History of Motion Pictures and Television: An Anthology from the Pages of the Journal of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983.
- Fiss, Karen. “El cine de 1930. Flores azules en un paisaje catastrófico.” Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2012.
- Fox, Broderick. “Rethinking the Amateur.” *Spectator* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 5–16.



- F.P. "Les amateurs." *Intercine* 7, no. 4 (April 1935): 235–37.
- . "Les amateurs." *Intercine* 7, no. 5 (May 1935): 295–97.
- Galcerán, Josep María. "El Cine amateur en España y España y el cine amateur internacional," April 1940. R 23(075) Gal. Filmoteca de Catalunya.
- García Alonso, María. "Intuiciones visuales para pueblos olvidados. La utilización del cine en las Misiones Pedagógicas de la Segunda República Española." *Cahiers de civilisation espagnole contemporaine. De 1808 au temps présent*, no. 11 (September 26, 2013). <https://doi.org/10.4000/ccec.4861>.
- García Canclini, Néstor. *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- García Carrión, Marta. *Cine, modernidad y cultura popular en los años treinta: ciclo de cine*. València: Museu Valencià de la Il·lustració i de la Modernitat, 2017.
- . "Historia(s) de nuestro cine. Nacionalisme en la primera historiografia cinematogràfica." *Afers: fulls de recerca i pensament* 32, no. 86 (2017): 75–96.
- . *Por un cine patrio: cultura cinematográfica y nacionalismo español (1926-1936)*. Valencia, Spain: Universitat de Valencia, 2013.
- García Fernández, Emilio C. *El cine español entre 1896 y 1939: historia, industria, filmografía y documentos*. Barcelona: Ariel, 2002.
- García Ferrer, Aberto. "1931: el Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía." *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, no. 617 (2001): 57–68.
- García López, Sonia. *Spain is us: la Guerra Civil española en el cine del Popular Front, 1936-1939*. València: Universitat de València, 2013.
- Garrido Caballero, M. "Las relaciones entre España y la Unión Soviética a través de las Asociaciones de Amistad en el siglo XX." Universidad de Murcia, 2006.
- Gazel (M. Santos). "La emoción hispana de Ramón Novarro." *Popular Film*, no. 243 (April 9, 1931).
- G.d.F. "Cine-Amateurs." *Intercine* 7, no. 1 (January 1935): 47–49.
- Gibson, Ian. *Vida, pasión y muerte de Federico García Lorca (1898-1936)*. Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1998.
- Gil Pecharromás, Julio. *Segunda República española (1931-1936)*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2006.
- Gilroy, Paul. *Postcolonial Melancholia*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

- Giménez i Botey, Domènec. “Quina hauria d’èsser la funció dels organismes oficials per utilitzar l’acció del cinema com a instrument de cultura,” May 6, 1933. R 205(460.23) Gim. Filmoteca de Catalunya.
- . “What Should the Role of Official Institutions Be in Relation to the Use of Cinema as an Instrument of Culture?” Translated by Masha Salazkina and Enrique Fibla-Gutierrez. *Film History* 30, no. 1 (2018): 168. <https://doi.org/10.2979/filmhistory.30.1.08>.
- Giner de los Ríos, Francisco. *Educación y enseñanza*. Barcelona; Leganés, Madrid: Planeta DeAgostini ; distribuye, Logista, 2011.
- Gitelman, Lisa. *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006.
- Glondys, Olga. *La guerra fría cultural y el exilio republicano español: “Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura”, (1953-1965)*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2012.
- Gómez de la Serna, Ramón. *Cinelandia*. Madrid: Nostromo, 1974.
- Gómez Inglada, Margarida, El Prat (Llobregat), and Regidoria de Cultura. *El cinema amateur al Prat*. ElPrat de Llobregat.
- Gómez Mesa, Luis. *Cinema educativo y cultural: aportaciones informativas*. Madrid: Instituto Cinematográfico Ibero Americano, 1931.
- . *España en el mundo sin fronteras del cinema educativo*. Madrid: Publicaciones de la Revista de las Españas, 1935.
- . “Leves y breves notas de Madrid.” *Popular Film*, no. 150 (June 13, 1920).
- . *Los films de dibujos animados*. Barcelona: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930.
- . *Variiedad de la pantalla cómica: una gran clase de cinema*. Madrid: Biblioteca Atlantico, 1932.
- González Calleja, Eduardo. *La Segunda República española*. Barcelona: Pasado & Presente, 2015.
- González Vázquez, Julio. “Cineclubs en España.” *Nuestro Cinema* 2, no. 15 (1935): 11.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Edited by Quintin Hoare. New York: International Publ, 1985.
- Grandas, M. C. *L’Exposició Internacional de Barcelona de 1929*. Sant Cugat del Vallès Barcelona: Romero, 1988.
- Grieverson, Lee. *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations: Media, Capital, and the Liberal World System*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017.

- . “The League of Corporations.” In *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations*, 195–213. Oakland, California: Univ. of California Press, 2018.
- Grievesson, Lee, and Peter Krämer, eds. *The Silent Cinema Reader*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Grievesson, Lee, Colin MacCabe, and British Film Institute, eds. *Empire and Film*. London: Palgrave Macmillan on behalf of the British Film Institute, 2011.
- Grievesson, Lee, and Haidee Wasson. *Inventing Film Studies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Gross, Babette. *Willi Münzenberg: A Political Biography*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1974.
- Grupo Teatral Nosotros. “Madrid, Spain.” *Workers Theatre* 5, no. 5 (June 1933): 13.
- Guansé, Domènec. “Política i cultura. L’entrada de la massa al catalanisme.” *La Rambla* V, no. 228 (April 30, 1934): 4.
- Gubern, Román. *Cine español en el exilio, 1936-1939*. Barcelona: Lumen, 1976.
- . *El cine sonoro en la II República (1929-1936)*. Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 1977.
- . “Exhibiciones cinematográficas en el Pabellón Español.” In *Pabellón Español 1937 : Exposición Internacional de París : Madrid, 25 junio-15 septiembre 1987, Centro de Arte Reina Sofía*, 173–80. Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura. Dirección General de Bellas Artes y Archivos, 1987.
- . *Historia del cine*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Barcelona: Lumen, 1971.
- . *Historia del cine*. Anagrama, 2014.
- , ed. *Historia del cine español*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2009.
- . *Los años rojos de Luis Buñuel*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2009.
- . *Luis Buñuel: The Red Years, 1929-1939*. The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012.
- . *Proyector de luna: la generación del 27 y el cine*. Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1999.
- Guillemoteau, R. *Du Musée pédagogique à l’Institut pédagogique national: 1879-1956*. Centre national de documentation pédagogique, 1979.  
<https://books.google.es/books?id=IIBvmwEACAAJ>.
- Gunning, Tom. “Encounters in Darkened Rooms: Alternative Programming of the Dutch Film, 1927-1931.” In *The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building and the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Europe, 1919-1945*, edited by Malte Hagener, 72–117. New York: Berghahn, 2014.
- Hagener, Malte. *Moving Forward, Looking Back: The European Avant-Garde and the Invention of Film Culture, 1919-1939*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007.

- , ed. *The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building and the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Europe, 1919-1945*. New York: Berghahn, 2014.
- , ed. *The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building and the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Europe, 1919-1945*. New York: Berghahn, 2014.
- Hake, Sabine. *The Cinema's Third Machine: Writing on Film in Germany, 1907-1933*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993.
- Hall, Stuart, ed. *Formations of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.
- Hansen, Miriam. "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism." *Modernism/Modernity* 6, no. 2 (1999): 59–77. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.1999.0018>.
- Harbord, Janet. *Ex-Centric Cinema: Giorgio Agamben and Film Archaeology*. New York London Oxford New Delhi Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, Inc, 2016.
- . *Film Cultures*. London; Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002.
- Hediger, Vinzenz, and Patrick Vonderau, eds. *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009.
- Hernández Cano, Eduardo. "Palabras sobre imágenes: autoridad intelectual, ensayo y cultura visual de masas en España (1927-1937)." New York University, 2015.
- Hernández Eguíluz, Aitor. *Testimonios en huecograbado: el cine en la 2ª República y su prensa especializada 1930-1939*. Valencia: Instituto Valenciano del Audiovisual y Cinematografía, 2010.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914 - 1991*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996.
- Hochadel, Oliver, and Agustí Nieto-Galan, eds. *Barcelona: An Urban History of Science and Modernity, 1888-1929*. London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016.
- Hodgson, Geoffrey M. "What Are Institutions?" *Journal of Economic Issues* 40, no. 1 (2006): 1–25.
- Hogenkamp, Bert. *Deadly Parallels: Film and the Left in Britain, 1929-1939*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986.
- . "Léon Moussinac and The Spectators' Criticism in France (1931-34)." *Film International* 1, no. 2 (February 2003): 4–13. <https://doi.org/10.1386/fiin.1.2.4>.
- . "Workers' Film in Europe." *Jump Cut*, no. 19 (December 1978). <https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC19folder/WorkersFilmDialog.html>.
- Horak, Jan-Christopher, ed. *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919 - 1945*. Madison, Wis.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1995.

- “I Congrés Internacional.” *Cinema Amateur* 2, no. 9 (Winter 1935).
- Jardí, Enric. “El Nostre cinema.” *Ariel* 2, no. 12 (1947): 86–88.
- Jarnés, Benjamín. *Cita de ensueños*. Madrid: GECEI, 1936.
- Jarvinen, Lisa. “Juan Piqueras Biography.” *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 4 (2012): 139–41.
- Joaquim, Romaguera i Ramió. *Un mecenatge cinematogràfic vida i obra de Delmiro de Caralt*. Barcelona: Fundació Mediterrànea, 1987.
- Karl, Freund. “I qué es muntatge?” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 10 (January 1936).
- Kowalsky, Daniel. *Stalin and the Spanish Civil War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- La Parra-Pérez, Pablo. “Displaced Cinema. Militant Film Culture and Political Dissidence in Spain (1966-1982).” New York University, 2018.
- . “Workers Interrupting the Factory. Helena Lumbreras’s Militant Factory Films between Italy and Spain (1968-78).” In *1968 and Global Cinema*, 363–84. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2018.
- Labanyi, Jo. “Cinematic City: The Spanish Avant-Garde, Modernity and Mass Culture.” *Journal of Romance Studies* 8, no. 2 (June 2008): 21–36. <https://doi.org/10.3828/jrs.8.2.21>.
- Labanyi, Jo, and Tatjana Pavlovic, eds. *A Companion to Spanish Cinema*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
- Laborderie, Pascal. “Les offices du cinéma éducateur et l’émérgence du parlant : l’exemple de l’Office de Nancy.” *1895. Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze*, no. 64 (September 1, 2011): 30–49. <https://doi.org/10.4000/1895.4373>.
- Lahoz Rodrigo, Ignacio. “De ayer a hoy. ¿Qué es España? y la salvaguarda del patrimonio cinematográfico español.” *Archivos de la filmoteca: Revista de estudios históricos sobre la imagen*, no. 70 (2012): 165–78.
- Lane, Jan-Erik, and Svante O. Ersson. *The New Institutional Politics: Performance and Outcomes*. London; New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Lannon, Frances, Paul Preston, and Raymond Carr, eds. *Elites and Power in Twentieth-Century Spain: Essays in Honor of Sir Raymond Carr*. Oxford [England] : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Lash, Scott, and John Urry. *The End of Organized Capitalism*. Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987.
- Law, John. *Organizing Modernity*. Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1994.
- Layerle, Sébastien. *Caméras en lutte en mai 68: par ailleurs le cinéma est une arme*. Paris: Nouveau monde, 2008.

“Le cinéma d’amateurs.” *L’Humanité*, September 9, 1932.

Le Forestier, Laurent, and Guillaume Vernet. “Moussinac et l’IDHEC: Une Direction ‘à Coups d’actes et de Pensées.’” In *Un Intellectuel Communiste, Léon Moussinac Critique et Théoricien Des Arts*, Volume d’études:373–98. Paris: Association française de recherche sur l’histoire du cinéma, 2014.

League of Nations, International Educational Cinematographic Institute. “Draft Statute for the Institute.” C. 6 3 . 1928. XII.: League of Nations Archives, Geneva., February 28, 1928.

———. “Report to the Council on the Third Session of the Governing Body of the Institute,” January 2, 1931. C.694 M.291. League of Nations Archives, Geneva.

Lefebvre, Henri. *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes, September 1959-May 1961*. London; New York: Verso, 1995.

“Les amateurs.” *Intercine* 7, no. 7 (July 1935): 413–15.

Llopis, Juan Manuel. *Juan Piqueras, el “Delluc” español*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Valencia: Filmoteca, Generalitat Valenciana, 1988.

———. *Juan Piqueras, el “Delluc” español*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Valencia: Filmoteca, Generalitat Valenciana, 1988.

———. “Los amigos de Juan Piqueras.” *Oleana: Cuadernos de Cultura Comarcal*, no. 1 (1985).

Llopis, Rodolfo, and Antonio Molero Pintado. *La revolución en la escuela: dos años en la Dirección General de Primera Enseñanza*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2005.

Llorca, A. *Cinematógrafo educativo*. Madrid: Librería y Casa Editorial Hernando S.A., 1933.

López, Sonia García. “Harry Alan Potamkin: palabra cinematográfica para los tiempos de crisis.” *Archivos de la filmoteca: Revista de estudios históricos sobre la imagen*, no. 67 (2010): 134–45.

“Los films amateurs que representarán a Cataluña en la Exposición de Venecia.” *Arte y Cinematografía* 397–398 (August 1934).

“Los Reyes Magos.” *La Vanguardia*, January 6, 1924.

Lunacharsky, A.W. “El cinema soviético: el cinema revolucionario soviético.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 1 (June 1932).

Machado, Antonio. “Sobre la defensa y la difusión de la cultura.” *Hora de España*, no. 8 (August 1937): 11–19.

MacKenzie, Scott. *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

- Mahadevan, Sudhir. "Traveling Showmen, Makeshift Cinemas: The Bioscopewallah and Early Cinema History in India." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 2010): 27–47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097492760900100106>.
- Makarenko, Anton Semenovic. *Poema pedagógico*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1986.
- Malefakis, Edward E. *Agrarian Reform and Peasant Revolution in Spain: Origins of the Civil War*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.
- Malitsky, Joshua. "Ideologies in Fact: Still and Moving-Image Documentary in the Soviet Union, 1927-1932: Ideologies in Fact." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 20, no. 2 (December 2010): 352–71. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1395.2010.01074.x>.
- Maltby, Richard. "How Can Cinema History Matter More?" *Screening the Past*, no. 22 (2006). <http://tlweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/screeningthepast/22/board-richard-maltby.html>.
- Maltby, Richard, Daniël Biltreyst, and Philippe Meers, eds. *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Mamula, Tijana, and Lisa Patti, eds. *The Multilingual Screen: New Reflections on Cinema and Linguistic Difference*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.
- Marchand, René, and Pierre Weinstein. *L'Art dans la russie nouvelle*. Paris: Rieder, 1927.
- Marcus, Laura. *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Marías Aguilera, Julián. "España ante la historia y ante sí misma 1898–1936." edited by Menéndez Pidal. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1994.
- Marichalar, Antonio. "Visto y oído." *Revista de Occidente*, no. 95 (May 1931): 195–97.
- Marín Silvestre, Dolors. *La Semana Trágica: Barcelona en llamas, la revuelta popular y la Escuela Moderna*. Madrid: Esfera de los Libros, 2009.
- Marsolais, G. *L'aventure du cinéma direct revisitée: histoire, esthétique, méthodes, tendances, textes des cinéastes, repères chronologiques, glossaire, index*. Les 400 Coups, 1997.
- Martínez de Pisón, Ignacio. *Enterrar a los muertos*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2005.
- Martínez Muñoz, Pau. "La Cinematografía anarquista en Barcelona durante la Guerra Civil 1936-1936." Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2008.
- . *Mateo Santos: cine y anarquismo: república, guerra y exilio mexicano*. Barcelona: P. Martínez, 2015.
- Martínez-Bretón, Juan Antonio. *Libertad de expresión cinematográfica durante la II República española, 1931-1936*. Madrid: Fragua, 2000.
- Martin-Márquez, Susan. *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

- Marzo, Jorge Luis, and Tere Badia, eds. *El d'efecte barroc: polítiques de la imatge hispana; guia d'interpretació*. Barcelona: Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, 2010.
- Masha Salazkina, and Enrique Fibla-Gutierrez. "Introduction: Toward a Global History of Amateur Film Practices and Institutions." *Film History* 30, no. 1 (2018): i. <https://doi.org/10.2979/filmhistory.30.1.01>.
- Mayol Joseph, Miquel. "El cinema a l'escola." *Butlletí dels Mestres*, no. 130–131 (July 15, 1935).
- McMeekin, S. *The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West, 1917-1940*. Yale University Press, 2003.
- Mendelson, Jordana. *Documentar España: los artistas, la cultura expositiva y la nación moderna, 1929 - 1939*. Madrid: Ediciones de la Central, 2012.
- . *Documenting Spain: Artists, Exhibition Culture, and the Modern Nation, 1929-1939*. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005.
- . *El Pabellón Español: París, 1937*. Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central, 2009.
- . "Episodios, superposiciones y dispersiones: una revisión de historias de los años treinta." In *Encuentros con los años 30'*, 15–29. Madrid: La Fábrica: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2012.
- . "The Misiones Pedagógicas and Other Documentary Excursions." In *Documenting Spain: Artists, Exhibition Culture, and the Modern Nation, 1929-1939*, 93–123. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005.
- Mendelson, Jordana, and Estrella De Diego. "Political Practice and the Arts in Spain, 1927-1936." In *Art and Journals on the Political Front, 1910-1940*, edited by Virginia Carol Hagelstein Marquardt, 183–214. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997.
- Méndez-Leite, Fernando. *Historia del Cine español*. Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1965.
- Mestman, Mariano, and David Oubiña, eds. *Las rupturas del 68 en el cine de América Latina: contracultura, experimentación y política*. CABA, Argentina: Akal, 2016.
- Michelson, Annette, and Kevin O'Brien. *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*. Berkeley [u.a.: Univ. of California Press, 2008.
- Millón, Juan Antonio. *Lluís Guarner: el legado de una pasión literaria*. Valencia: Conselleria de Cultura, Educació i Esport, 2007.
- Minguet Batllori, Joan M. *Cinema, modernitat i avantguarda (1920-1936)*. Valencia: E. Climent, 2000.
- Mir i Curcó, Conxita. "The Francoist Repression in the Catalan Countries." *Catalan Historical Review*, no. 1 (2008): 133–147. <https://doi.org/10.2436/20.1000.01.9>.
- Miravittles, Jaume. *Contra la cultura burguesa*. Barcelona: L'Hora, 1931.



- . *Veritats sobre la Guerra Civil espanyola*. Barcelona: Editorial Base, 2015.
- Molero Pintado, Antonio. “El pensament educatiu republicà, utopia o realitat?” *Educació i Història: Revista d’Història de l’Educació*, no. 11 (2008): 12–31.  
<https://doi.org/10.2436/20.3009.01.21>.
- . *La reforma educativa de la Segunda República española: primer bienio*. Madrid: Santillana, 1977.
- . “La Segunda República española y la enseñanza (primer bienio).” *Revista de Educación*, no. 240 (1975): 51–59.
- Montero Díaz, Julio, and José Cabeza San Deogracias, eds. *Por el precio de una entrada: estudios sobre historia social del cine*. Madrid: Ed. Rialp, 2005.
- Montero, Julio. “Para Captar Alemanes. La Propaganda Nazi En La España de La Segunda República Mediante Películas (1933-1936).” *Comunicación y Sociedad XX*, no. 2 (2007): 111–31.
- Moragues, Manuel. “Abast Cultural Del Cinema Amateur.” *La Publicitat*, November 3, 1933.
- Morey, Anne. *Hollywood Outsiders: The Adaptation of the Film Industry, 1913-1934*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
- Moussinac, Léon. “À Propos Du Film d’enseignement. Conclusions.” *L’Humanité*, January 14, 1927.
- . “Cinéma et enseignement.” *L’Humanité*, December 24, 1926.
- . “Des ‘Trente-Deux’ Aux “Amis de Spartacu.” *L’Humanité*, March 10, 1928.
- . “Enfin voici Cine-Liberté, un vrai journal de cinéma.” *L’Humanité*, May 22, 1936.
- . “La voix des spectateurs, les critiques ouvriers.” *La Scène Ouvrière*, January 1, 1932.
- . “L’Age d’Or.” *L’Humanité*, December 7, 1930.
- . *L’Age ingrat du cinéma*. Paris: Editeurs Français Réunis, 1967.
- . “L’Avant-garde.” *L’Humanité*, September 8, 1931.
- . *Le cinéma soviétique*. Paris: Gallimard, 1928.
- . “Le Deuxième Congrès du Cinéma Indépendant.” *L’Humanité*, December 7, 1930.
- . “Muerte de la vanguardia.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 7 (December 1932): 204–5.
- . *Naissance du cinéma*. Paris: J. Povolozky, 1925.
- . “Pour un cinema ouvrier.” *L’Humanité*, February 1, 1931.
- . “Quelques précisions nécessaires.” *L’Humanité*, October 7, 1928.

- . “Responsabilités.” *L’Humanité*, September 9, 1932.
- . “Un succès.” *L’Humanité*, January 1, 1932.
- . “Une Fédération Ouvrière de Ciné-Photo.” *L’Humanité*, March 8, 1931.
- Moussinac, Léon, Valérie Vignaux, and François Albéra. *Léon Moussinac: un intellectuel communiste, critique et théoricien des arts*. Paris: Association française de recherche sur l’histoire du cinéma, 2014.
- Murga Castro, Idoia, José María López Sánchez, and Jorge de Hoyos. *Política cultural de la Segunda República Española*. Madrid: Editorial Pablo Iglesias, 2016.
- Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, ed. *Encuentros con los años ’30*. Barcelona ; La Fabrica: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2012.
- Musser, Charles. “Introduction: Documentary before Verité.” *Film History* 18, no. 4 (2006): 355–60.
- . *Politicking and Emergent Media: US Presidential Elections of the 1890s*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016.
- Nadal, Jordi. *El fracaso de la revolución industrial en España, 1814-1913*. Esplugues de Llobregat: Editorial Ariel, 1975.
- Neruda, Pablo, and César Vallejo. *Neruda and Vallejo: Selected Poems*. Edited by Robert Bly, John Knoepfle, and James Wright. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.
- Nichols, Bill. “Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde.” *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 580–610.
- Nicholson, Heather Norris. *Amateur Film: Meaning and Practice, 1927-77*. Manchester; New York: New York: Manchester University Press ; Pallgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Nogales Cárdenas, Pedro. *El cine no profesional a Reus: pioners i amateurs (1987-1989)*. Reus: Fundació Privada Liber, 2006.
- Nogales Cárdenas, Pedro, and José Carlos Suárez. *El nostre Cinema Paradís: els inicis del cinema als pobles del Tarragonès*. Tarragona [Espanya]: Arola Editors, 2014.
- . *La nostra gran il·lusió: els inicis del cinema als pobles del Montsià*. Tarragona [Espanya]: Publicacions URV, 2018.
- Noguer, R.S. *El cine en la España republicana durante la Guerra Civil (1936-1939)*. Bilbao: Mensajero, 1993.
- Norris Nicholson, Heather. “Shooting in Paradise: Conflict, Compassion and Amateur Filmmaking During the Spanish Civil War.” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 27, no. 3 (August 2006): 313–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256860600779329>.

- “Noticiero: stand ambulante de libros.” *La Gaceta de las Artes Gráficas* 12, no. 11 (November 1934): 14–16.
- “Noves de tot arreu.” *Cinema Amateur* 1, no. 6 (Fall 1934): 207.
- Núñez Pérez, María G. *Trabajadoras en la Segunda República: un estudio sobre la actividad económica extradoméstica (1931 - 1936)*. 16. Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1989.
- Núñez Seixas, Xosé Manoel. *¡Fuera el invasor! Nacionalismo y movilización bélica en la guerra civil española (1936 - 1939)*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2006.
- Offe, Claus, and John Keane. *Disorganized Capitalism: Contemporary Transformations of Work and Politics*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1985.
- “Orden creando el Consejo de Cinematografía.” *Gaceta de Madrid*, no. 74 (March 15, 1933): 2006–7.
- Orgeron, Devin, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible, eds. *Learning with the Lights off: Educational Film in the United States*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Ortega y Gasset, José. *España invertebrada: bosquejo de algunos pensamientos históricos*. Madrid: Calpe, 1921.
- . *La rebelión de las masas*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2009.
- . *La rebelión de las masas*. Madrid: Espasa, 2010.
- Otero, Gerard Pedret. “El cine en la prensa libertaria en Catalunya durante la II República.” *FILMHISTORIA Online* 27, no. 1 (June 26, 2017): 21–38.
- Otero Urtaza, Eugenio. *Las Misiones Pedagógicas: una experiencia de educación popular*. Sada, A Coruña: Ediciós do Castro, 1982.
- Otero Urtaza, Eugenio, and María García Alonso, eds. *Las Misiones Pedagógicas, 1931-1936*. Madrid: Publicaciones de la Residencia de Estudiantes : Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, 2006.
- Ottley, Charles. *The Cine-Amateur Workshop*. London: George Routledge and Sons, 1935.
- Oyón, José Luis. *La quiebra de la ciudad popular: espacio urbano, inmigración y anarquismo en la Barcelona de entreguerras, 1914-1936*. Barcelona: Edicions del Serbal, 2008.
- Oyón, José Luis, José Maldonado, and Eulàlia Griful. “Barcelona 1930 un atlas social.” Barcelona: Edicions UPC, 2001.
- Palau, Josep. *El cinema soviètic*. Barcelona: Catalonia, 1932.

- Papazian, E.A. *Manufacturing Truth: The Documentary Moment in Early Soviet Culture*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2009.  
<https://books.google.es/books?id=engINQAACAAJ>.
- “Pathé-Baby.” *La Vanguardia*, August 20, 1924.
- Patronato de Misiones Pedagógicas*. Madrid, 1934.
- Paz Rebollo, María Antonia, and Jose Cabeza San Deogracias. “La realidad que vieron los españoles. El cine de no-ficción durante la II República española (1931-36).” *Hispania* LXX, no. 236 (2010): 737–64.
- Pedret Otero, Gerard. “La quimera de la gran pantalla: periodisme, grups llibertaris i cinema a Catalunya (1926-1937).” Universitat de Barcelona, 2015.  
<https://www.tesisenred.net/handle/10803/394087>.
- Peirats, Jose. *Lo que podría ser un cinema social*. Madrid: Ediciones de la Revista Blanca, 1934.
- Pérez Andújar, Javier. *Todo lo que se llevó el diablo*. Barcelona: Tusquets, 2013.
- Pérez Galán, Mariano. *La enseñanza en la Segunda República*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2011.
- Pérez Merinero, Carlos, and David Pérez Merinero, eds. *Del cinema como arma de clase: antología de Nuestro cinema 1932-1935*. Valencia: F. Torres, 1975.
- Peterson, Jennifer Lynn. *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film*. Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2013.
- Petrie, Duncan James. “Theory, Practice and the Significance of Film Schools.” *Scandia* 76, no. 2 (2010): 31–46.
- Pina-Cabral De, Pina. “Afterword: What Is an Institution?” *Social Anthropology* 19, no. 4 (2011): 477–94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8676.2011.00173.x>.
- Piqueras, Juan. “Cinema español; callejón sin salida.” *Nuestro Cinema* 2, no. 15 (1935): 3.
- . “Cinema independiente en 1930.” *La Gaceta Literaria*, no. 97 (1931): 14–15.
- . “Colofón a la primera encuesta de Nuestro Cinema.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 7 (December 1932): 198–203.
- . “Con Joris Ivens.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 12 (July 1933): 177–82.
- . “En torno a René Clair.” *Cinegramas*, no. 78 (March 8, 1936).
- . “En torno al consejo de cinematografía.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 11 (March 1933): 173.
- . “Hacia un Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía.” *Popular Film*, no. 195 (Abril 1930): 2.
- . “Hacia una Federación Española de Cineclubs Proletarios.” *Nuestro Cinema* 2, no. 13 (1933): 214–16.

- . “Historiografía del cinema.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 8–9 (February 1933): 3–46.
- . “Itinerario de Nuestro Cinema.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 1 (1932): 1.
- . “Los nuevos films; Montañas de Oro, filme soviético de Youtkewitch.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 4 (September 1932): 119.
- . “Nuestro cine amateur en Nuestro Cinema.” *Nuestro Cinema 2*, no. 17 (1935).
- . “Nuestro itinerario: política y cinema.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 4 (September 1932): 110–11.
- . “Our Amateur Cinema in ‘Nuestro Cinema.’” Translated by Lisa Jarvinen. *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 4 (2012): 142–43.
- . “Panorama del cinema hispánico.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 2 (July 1932): 42–47.
- . “Panorama del cinema hispánico.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 3 (August 1932): 80–87.
- . “Panorama del cinema hispánico. Segunda parte: del cine mudo al film sonoro y parlante.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 5 (October 1932): 145–50.
- . “Panorama del cinema hispánico. Segunda parte: versiones y sincornizaciones en español.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 6 (November 1932): 175–79.
- . “Poorly Timed Campaigns: Versions, Dubbing, Subtitles.” In *The Multilingual Screen: New Reflections on Cinema and Linguistic Difference*, edited by Tijana Mamula and Lisa Patti, translated by Lisa Jarvinen. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.
- . “Sentido educativo y cultural del cine soviético.” *El Sol*, January 1, 1931.
- Pla, Josep, and Xavier Pericay. *La Segunda República española: una crónica, 1931-1936*. Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 2006.
- Plana, Ventura. “Davant del primer film català.” *Clarisme* 2, no. 20 (March 3, 1933).
- Plummer, Thomas G., ed. *Film and Politics in the Weimar Republic*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 2007.
- Polan, Dana B. *Scenes of Instruction: The Beginnings of the U.S. Study of Film*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Potamkin, Harry Alan. “Movies.” *New Masses* 6, no. 3 (August 1930): 13.
- . “Shanghai Express.” *New Masses* 7, no. 11 (May 1932): 28.
- . “The Bourgeois Critics.” *New Masses* 6, no. 5 (October 1930): 21.
- . *The Compound Cinema: The Film Writings of Harry Alan Potamkin*. Edited by Lewis Jacobs. New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1977.

- Pozo Andrés, María del Mar. "El cine como medio de alfabetización y de educación popular. Primeras experiencias." *Sarmiento: Anuario Galego de Historia y Educación*, no. 1 (1997): 59–75.
- Preston, Paul. *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War: Reform, Reaction, and Revolution in the Second Republic, 1931-1936*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1978.
- . *The Last Days of the Spanish Republic*. New York: Harper Collins, 2017.
- "Primera encuesta de Nuestro Cinema." *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 5 (October 1932): 129–30.
- "Primeros vehículos matriculados en España." Dirección General de Tráfico. Accessed July 12, 2018. <http://www.dgt.es/images/Primeros-Vehiculos-matriculados-en-Espana-1900-1964-Biblioteca-DGT-1008562.pdf>.
- "Prohibición de la película 'El Crucero Potemkin,'" May 11, 1931.
- Puigsech Farràs, Josep. *La revolució russa i Catalunya*. Vic: Eumo, 2017.
- Puyal, Alfonso. *Cinema y arte nuevo: la recepción filmica en la vanguardia española (1917-1937)*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2003.
- . "Películas junto a pinturas: cine en el pabellón español de la Exposición Internacional de París 1937." *Hispanic Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (February 2015): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1179/1468273714Z.000000000108>.
- Q. Neets, J. "A Letter from Soviet Russia', *New Masses*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (1930), p. 14." *New Masses* 6, no. 6 (1930): 14.
- "Qué falta en su casa." *La Vanguardia*, December 7, 1924.
- Quintyn, Olivier. *Valences de l'avant-garde: essai sur l'avant-garde, l'art contemporain et l'institution*. Paris: Questions Théoriques, 2015.
- Ramón y Cajal, Santiago. *La fotografía de los colores: fundamentos científicos y reglas prácticas*. Madrid: Nicolás Moya, 1912.
- Ramos Arenas, Fernando. "El Instituto antes de Salamanca. Los primeros años del Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas (1947-1955)." *Área Abierta* 16, no. 2 (June 29, 2016). [https://doi.org/10.5209/rev\\_ARAB.2016.v16.n2.52170](https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_ARAB.2016.v16.n2.52170).
- . "Film Criticism as a Political Weapon: Theory, Ideology and Film Activism in *Nuestro Cinema* (1932–1935)." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 36, no. 2 (April 2, 2016): 214–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2016.1167466>.
- . "Un cine leído. Cultura cinematográfica, censura y especulaciones en la España de la década de los sesenta." *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 18, no. 3 (July 3, 2017): 239–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14636204.2017.1335507>.
- Ray, Larry J., and M. I. Reed, eds. *Organizing Modernity: New Weberian Perspectives on Work, Organization, and Society*. London ; New York: Routledge, 1994.

- Redondo Neira, Fernando. "Aproximación al conocimiento de las primeras realizaciones en el uso didáctico del cine en la universidad española: noticias y testimonios." *Quaderns de Cine*, no. 1 (2007): 7–17. <https://doi.org/10.14198/QdCINE.2007.1.02>.
- . "Carlos Velo. Memoria de las imágenes en su tiempo histórico." *Cine Documental*, no. 4 (2011).
- "REIAL DECRET 1010/1981, de 27 de Febrer, Sobre Traspàs de Funcions i Serveis de l'Estat a La Generalitat de Catalunya En Matèria de Cultura." *Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya* 132, June 5, 1981.
- Riambau, Esteve. *Paisatge abans de la batalla: el cinema a Catalunya (1896-1939)*. Barcelona: Llibres de l'Índex, 1994.
- Ribalta, Jorge, ed. *El movimiento de la fotografía obrera, 1926-1939: ensayos y documentos*. Madrid: TF, 2011.
- Robé, Chris. *Left of Hollywood: Cinema, Modernism, and the Emergence of U.S. Radical Film Culture*. Austin, Tex: University of Texas Press, 2010.
- Robledo, Ricardo. "Los males del latifundismo: la hora de la reforma agraria." In *En el combate por la historia: la República, la guerra civil, el franquismo*, 101–21. Barcelona: Pasado&Presente, 2012.
- Rodríguez, Juan. "Los exiliados republicanos y el cine (una reflexión historiográfica)." *Iberoamericana* XII, no. 47 (2012): 157–68.
- Rodríguez Merchán, Eduardo. "La enseñanza del cine en España: perspectiva histórica y panorama actual." *Comunicar* 15, no. 29 (2007): 13–20.
- Rogers, Gayle. "Restaging the Disaster: Dos Passos and National Literatures after the Spanish-American War." *Journal of Modern Literature* 36, no. 2 (2013): 61–79.
- Romaguera i Ramió, Joaquim. "La revista Cinema Amateur (1932-1936)." *Gazeta* 1 (1994): 315–31.
- . *Quan el cinema començà a parlar en català: 1927-1934*. Barcelona: Fundació Institut del Cinema Català, 1992.
- Ros, Samuel. "Los alegres millones del cine español." *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 3 (August 1932): 71–73.
- Ross, Kristin. "Historicizing Untimeliness." In *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*, edited by Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts, 15–29. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Ross, Steven Joseph. *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Rotellar, Manuel. *Cine Español de la República*. Festival Internacional Del Cine San Sebastián, 1977.

- Rozsa, Irene. "Film Culture and Education in Republican Cuba: The Legacy of José Manuel Valdés-Rodríguez." In *Cosmopolitan Visions: The Transnational Horizons of Latin American Film Culture, 1896–1960*, edited by Rielle Navitski and Nicolas Poppe, 298–323. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017.
- Sadoul, Georges. "La mort de Juan Piqueras, le 'Delluc espagnol' fusillé par les rebelles." *L'Humanité*, March 11, 1937.
- . "Les rebelles ont fusillé le Louis Delluc espagnol Juan Piqueras." *Regards*, January 28, 1937.
- Saladrigas, Robert. *L'Escola del Mar i la renovació pedagògica a Catalunya: converses amb Pere Vergés*. Barcelona: Edic. 62, 1988.
- Salazkina, Masha. *In Excess Sergei Eisenstein's Mexico*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- . "Introduction: Film Theory in the Age of Neoliberal Globalization." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, no. 2 (2015): 325.
- . "Introduction to Juan Piqueras: Amateur Cinema in 'Nuestro Cinema.'" *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 4 (2012): 138–39.
- . "Moscow-Rome-Havana: A Film-Theory Road Map." *October* (January 1, 2012): 97–116. [https://doi.org/10.1162/OCTO\\_a\\_00082](https://doi.org/10.1162/OCTO_a_00082).
- . "Soviet–Italian Cinematic Exchanges: Transnational Film Education in the 1930s." In *The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building and the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Europe, 1919–1945*, edited by Malte Hagener, 180–98. New York: Berghahn, 2014.
- . "Translating the Academe: Conceptualizing the Transnational in Film and Media." In *The Multilingual Screen: New Reflections on Cinema and Linguistic Difference*, 17–35. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.
- . "(V)GIK and the History of Film Education in the Soviet Union, 1920s–1930s." In *A Companion to Russian Cinema*, edited by Birgit Beumers, 45–65. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118424773.ch2>.
- Salvans Piera Joan. "Pallars i Ribagorça: impressions d'un càmping," 1934. <http://www.purl.org/yoolib/memoirefilmiquedusud/?YID=1397>.
- Samaniego Boneu, Mercedes. *La política educativa de la Segunda República durante el bienio azañista*. Madrid: C.S.I.C. Escuela de Historia Moderna, 1977.
- San Deogracias, José Cabeza. "Buscando héroes la historia de Antonio Col como ejemplo del uso de la narrativa como propaganda durante la Guerra Civil española." *Historia y Comunicación Social*, no. 10 (2005): 37–50.



- Sanchez-Biosca, V. "The Cinematic Image of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera: Somewhere between a Leader and a Saint." *Screen* 50, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 318–33. <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjp014>.
- Sangro Ros y de Olano, Pedro. *El cinematógrafo: consideración académica de algunos de sus problemas*. Madrid, 1936.
- Santonja Gómez-Agero, Gonzalo. "Breve perfil de la editorial Cenit (Madrid, 1928-1936)." *1616: Anuario de la Sociedad Española de Literatura General y Comparada*, no. 5 (1983): 129–39.
- Santos, Mateo. "El Cine como instrumento pedagógico." *Popular Film*, no. 234 (February 5, 1931).
- . "El cinema al servicio de las ideas." *Popular Film*, no. 257 (July 16, 1931).
- . "La cruzada de la cultura. Misiones Pedagógicas." *Popular Film*, no. 287 (February 11, 1932).
- . "Una encuesta sobre el cinema español." *Cine Art* 1, no. 12 (December 30, 1933).
- Sarro. "Cinema, escola de nit." *L'Hora* 1, no. 5 (February 19, 1937).
- Schneider, Alexandra. "Time Travel with Pathé Baby: The Small-Gauge Film Collection as Historical Archive." *Film History* 19, no. 4 (2007): 353–360.
- "Segunda encuesta de Nuestro Cinema: convocatoria y cuestionario." *Nuestro Cinema* 2, no. 17 (1935): 66–67.
- Segura y Sáez, Pedro. "Nuevo estado de cosas." *ABC*, May 7, 1931.
- Sel, Susana. "Cine, pedagogía y exilio. Un recorrido entre España y Argentina en los años 40." *Cahiers de civilisation espagnole contemporaine. De 1808 au temps présent*, no. 11 (September 26, 2013). <https://doi.org/10.4000/ceec.4884>.
- Serra Hunter, J. "L'Imperatiu de la cultura." *L'Hora* 1, no. 1 (December 10, 1931): 4.
- Serra-Estruch, Josep. "Aquesta cosa dita 'cinema amateur.'" *Pont*, n.d., 51–56.
- "Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 3 de octubre de 1931." Madrid: Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía, October 3, 1931.
- "Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 4 de octubre de 1931." Madrid: Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía, October 4, 1931.
- "Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 5 de octubre de 1931." Madrid: Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía, October 5, 1931.
- "Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 6 de octubre de 1931." Madrid: Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía, October 6, 1931.

- “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 7 de octubre de 1931.” Madrid: Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía, October 7, 1931.
- “Sesión del Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía celebrada el día 12 de octubre de 1931.” Madrid: Congreso Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía, October 12, 1931.
- “Sessió de cinema.” *Institut Escola: Revista de l’Institut Escola de la Generalitat*, no. 2 (April 1932): 9.
- Sevilla, Nathalie. “La ligue de l’enseignement et le cinéma éducatif dans l’entre-deux-guerres : à la croisée de l’associatif et du politique.” *1895. Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze*, no. 75 (March 1, 2015): 64–83. <https://doi.org/10.4000/1895.4958>.
- Sexton, Jamie. *Alternative Film Culture in Inter-War Britain*. Exeter: Univ. of Exeter Press, 2008.
- S.H. “Films russos als Studios Cinaes.” *L’Hora* 2, no. 8 (February 17, 1931): 19.
- Slang, F. *El Acorazado “Potemkin”: historia de la sublevación de la escuadra rusa a la vista de Odesa en el año 1905: redactada sobre documentos auténticos*. Madrid: Cenit, 1930.
- Sluys, Alexis. *La cinematografía escolar y post-escolar*. Madrid: La Lectura, 1925.
- Smith, Angel. *The Origins of Catalan Nationalism, 1770–1898*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137354495>.
- Smoodin, Eric. “As the Archive Turned: Writing Film Histories without Films.” *The Moving Image* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 96–100.
- Solà-Morales, Ignasi de, and Fera de Barcelona. *L’Exposició Internacional de Barcelona, 1914-1929: arquitectura i ciutat*. Barcelona: Fira, 1985.
- Souto, Ana. “América en Sevilla: la materialización del espíritu neoimperial en la Exposición Iberoamericana de 1929.” *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 22, no. 1 (November 1, 2009): 39–68. <https://doi.org/10.1386/ijis.22.1.39/1>.
- Spiteri, Raymond, and Donald LaCoss, eds. *Surrealism, Politics and Culture*. Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate, 2003.
- Sreberny-Mohammadi, Annabelle, and Ali Mohammadi. *Small Media, Big Revolution Communication, Culture, and the Iranian Revolution*. Minneapolis ; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- Srivastava, Neelam. *Italian Colonialism and Resistances to Empire, 1930-1970*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018.
- Stark, Trevor. “‘Cinema in the Hands of the People’: Chris Marker, the Medvedkin Group, and the Potential of Militant Film.” *October*, no. 139 (2012): 117–50.

- Stein, Eric A. "Colonial Theatres of Proof: Representation and Laughter in 1930s Rockefeller Foundation Hygiene Cinema in Java." *Health and History* 8, no. 2 (2006): 14–44. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40111541>.
- Stern, Seymour. "El caso de ¡Viva México!. El film de Eisenstein bárbaramente mutilado." *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 12 (July 1933): 182–90.
- Stull, William. "Highlights of Amateur Contest." *American Cinematographer* 13, no. 8 (December 1932).
- Taillot, Allison. "El modelo soviético en los años 1930: los viajes de María Teresa León y Rafael Alberti a Moscú." *Cahiers de civilisation espagnole contemporaine*, no. 9 (December 11, 2012). <https://doi.org/10.4000/cccec.4259>.
- Taylor, Richard. "Soviet Cinema as Popular Culture: Or the Extraordinary Adventures of Mr Nepman in the Land of the Silver Screen." *Revolutionary Russia* 1, no. 1 (June 1988): 36–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546548808575508>.
- Taylor, Richard, and Ian Christie, eds. *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*. London ; New York: Routledge, 1994.
- , eds. *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents*. London ; New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Tepperman, Charles. *Amateur Cinema: The Rise of North American Movie Making, 1923-1960*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015.
- Tiana Ferrer, Alejandro. *Las Misiones Pedagógicas: educación popular en la Segunda República*. Madrid: Catarata, 2016.
- Tomàs i Freixa, Jordi. "El cinema amateur terrassenc." *Quaderns de divulgació cinematogràfica*, no. 6 (n.d.).
- Tomàs i Freixa, Jordi, Albert Beorlegui i Tous, and Joaquim Romaguera i Ramió. *El cinema amateur a Catalunya*. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, Institut Català de les Indústries Culturals, 2009.
- Torrella, Josep. *Crónica y análisis del cine amateur español*. Madrid: Rialp., 1965.
- "Tot arreu." *Cinema Amateur* 2, no. 9 (Winter 1935).
- Touboul, Eva. "Entre divertissement et arme: le cinéma selon Nuestro Cinema (1932–1935)." Edited by F. Etienvre et S. Salaün. *Les travaux du Crec en ligne*, 2004, 184–208.
- Tranche, Rafael R., and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca. *NO-DO: el tiempo y la memoria*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2006.
- Tret'iakov, Sergei. "Art in the Revolution and the Revolution in Art (Aesthetic Consumption and Production)." *October* 118 (October 2006): 11–18. <https://doi.org/10.1162/octo.2006.118.1.11>.

- . “Our Cinema.” *October* 118 (October 2006): 27–44.  
<https://doi.org/10.1162/octo.2006.118.1.27>.
- Trotsky, Leon, and Max Eastman. *History of the Russian Revolution*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2008.
- Tsvian, Yuri, ed. *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the Twenties*. Gemona, Udine: Le Giornate del cinema muto, 2004.
- Tuñón de Lara, Manuel. *Medio siglo de cultura española: (1885-1936)*. Madrid: Editorial Tecnos, 1977.
- . *Tres claves de la Segunda República: la cuestión agraria, los aparatos del estado, Frente Popular*. Madrid: Alianza, 1985.
- Turquety, Benoît. “Comprendre le cinéma (amateur): épistémologie et technologie.” In *L’amateur en cinéma. Un autre paradigme. Histoire, esthétique, marges et institutions*, edited by Valérie Vignaux and Benoît Turquety, 17–26. Paris: AFRHC, 2017.
- Turquety, Benoît, and Valérie Vignaux. *L’amateur en cinéma. Un autre paradigme. Histoire, esthétique, marges et institutions*. Paris: AFRHC, 2017.
- Ucelay da Cal, Enric. *La Catalunya populista: imatge, cultura i política en l’etapa republicana (1931-1939)*. Barcelona: La Magrana, 1982.
- “Un film.” *Institut Escola: Revista de l’Institut Escola de la Generalitat*, no. 8 (n.d.): 9.
- “Un film de l’I-E.” *Institut Escola: Revista de l’Institut Escola de la Generalitat*, no. 5 (Summer 1932): 11.
- “Un mes de propaganda.” *La Vanguardia*, April 8, 1937.
- “Un Nou triomf internacional dels films catalans.” *Cinema Amateur* 2, no. 9 (Summer 1935).
- “Una Gran exposició del cinema soviético.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 2 (July 1932): 61–62.
- “Una visita a la XIX Bienal de Arte de Venecia.” *Arte y Cinematografía* 412 (August 1936).
- Urry, John. “Disorganised Capitalism.” *Marxism Today*, October 1988, 30–33.
- Urtaza, Eugenio Manuel Otero. “Els orígens del pensament educatiu de la Segona República.” *Educació i Història: revista d’història de l’educació*, no. 11 (2008): 50–74.  
<https://doi.org/10.2436/20.3009.01.23>.
- Utrera, Rafael. *Modernismo y 98 frente a cinematógrafo*. Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1981.
- Valenzuela Moreno, Juan Ignacio. “Revisión de la obra de un cineasta olvidado Rafael Gil (1913-1986).” Universidad de Córdoba, 2017.
- Vasudevan, Ravi. “In the Centrifuge of History.” *Cinema Journal* 50, no. 1 (2010): 135–40.
- “Vicente Escudero amateur cinematográfico.” *Nuestro Cinema*, no. 5 (October 1932): 156–57.

- Vigil, Alicia Alted. "El cine educativo en España (hasta 1936)." *Historia Social*, no. 76 (2013): 91–106.
- Vignaux, Valérie. "Léon Moussinac and L'Humanité as a Cinematic Force." *Études Photographiques*, May 2011. <https://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/3468>.
- . "Léon Moussinac, critique de cinéma ou intelligence d'un art vivant." In *Léon Moussinac : critique et théoricien des arts*, edited by Valérie Vignaux and François Albera, 1:7–25. Paris: Afrhc, 2014.
- . "Léon Moussinac, intellectuel communiste." In *Léon Moussinac : un intellectuel communiste*, edited by Valérie Vignaux and François Albera, 2:13–36. Paris: Afrhc, 2014.
- . "Léon Moussinac théoricien du cinéma : d'une poétique des arts à une politique de la culture." In *Léon Moussinac : un intellectuel communiste, critique et théoricien des arts*, edited by François Albera and Valérie Vignaux, 111–88. Paris: Association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma, 2014.
- . "Les animateurs français et le Pathé-Baby ou des usages privés des images cinématographiques dans la France de l'entre-deux-guerres I." *1895. Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze*, no. 59 (December 1, 2009): 82–95. <https://doi.org/10.4000/1895.3919>.
- Villazana, Libia. *Transnational Financial Structures in the Cinema of Latin America: Programa Ibermedia in Study*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009.
- Villegas López, Manuel. *Arte de Masas: Ruta de Los Temas Filmicos*. Madrid: GECEI, 1936.
- . *Espectador de sombras*. Madrid, 1935.
- Viñas, Angel, and Julio Aróstegui, eds. *En el combate por la historia: la República, la guerra civil, el franquismo*. Barcelona: Pasado&Presente, 2012.
- Vinyes, Ricard. "El diletantisme intel·lectual dels comunistes catalans. Àngel Estivill." *L'Avenç* 2, no. 29 (August 1980): 46–51.
- . *El soldat de pandora: una biografia del segle XX*. Barcelona: Proa, 1998.
- Viola, Fernando. "Archivos cinematográficos." *Luz*, August 17, 1933.
- W. Moore, James. *Cine Travel Plans*. New York: Amateur Cinema League, 1935.
- Wagner, Peter. *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline*. London; New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Wasson, Haidee. "Moving Images: Portable Histories of Film Exhibition." In *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*, by Angharad N. Valdivia. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems017>.

- . *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Waugh, Thomas, ed. “*Show Us Life*”: *Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*. Metuchen, N.J: Scarecrow Press, 1984.
- . *The Conscience of Cinema: The Works of Joris Ivens 1912-1989*. Amsterdam University Press, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.5117/9789089647535>.
- Weiss, Peter. *The Aesthetics of Resistance*. Edited by Joachim Neugroschel. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Welch, David. “*The Proletarian Cinema and the Weimar Republic*.” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 1, no. 1 (January 1981): 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439688100260011>.
- Welles, Sarah Ann. “Parallel Modernities? The First Reception of Soviet Cinema in Latin America.” In *Cosmopolitan Film Culture in Latin America*, edited by Rielle Edmonds Navitski and Nicolas Poppe, 151–75. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017.
- Williams, Raymond. *Politics of Modernism: [Against the New Conformists]*. Edited by Tony Pinkney. London ; New York: Verso, 2007.
- . *The Long Revolution*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973.
- “Winners of Certificate Awards.” *American Cinematographer* 13, no. 9 (January 1933).
- Wixson, Douglas C. *Worker-Writer in America: Jack Conroy and the Tradition of Midwestern Literary Radicalism, 1898-1990*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.
- Wood, Paul. “Realism and Realities.” In *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art between the Wars*, 254–64. New Haven: Yale University Press, in association with the Open University, 1993.
- “Wreck of the ‘Vizcaya.’” Image. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. Accessed May 15, 2018. <https://www.loc.gov/item/98500519/>.
- Zhang, Zhen. *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Zunzunegui, Santos. *Historias de España: de qué hablamos cuando hablamos de cine español*, 2018.

### Films cited

- Araquistáin, Luis, and Cayetano Coll y Cuchí. *¿Qué es España?* 63 min. IVAC: Filmoteca de Valencia. Spain, 1926. <https://vimeo.com/83834466>.

- Biadiu, Ramón. *La ruta de don Quijote*. 19 min. CIFESA. Spain, 1934.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATmzmbmbvE>.
- Buñuel, Luis. *L'Age d'or*. 63 min. Corinth Film. France, 1930.
- . *Las Hurdes, tierra sin pan*. 27 min. Spain, 1932.
- . *Menjant garotes*. 4 min. Spain, 1930.
- Buñuel, Luis, and Salvador Dalí. *Un chien andalou*. 21 min. Les Grands Films. France, 1929.
- Caralt, Delmir de. *Memmortigo?* 14 min. Spain, 1933.
- . *Montserrat*. 10 min. Spain, 1932.
- . *untitled home movie*. 5 min. Spain, 1935.
- Clair, René. *À nous la liberté*. 104 min. Films Sonores Tobis. France, 1931.
- Conquista de Teruel*. Laya Films. Spain, 1938.
- Dovzhenko, Aleksandr. *Arsenal*. 92 min. VUFKU. USSR, 1929.
- . *Zemlya / Earth*. 76 min. VUKFU, USSR, 1930.
- Dreyfus, Jean-Paul. *Espagne 1936. España leal en armas*. 34 min. Spain, 1937.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeiSXXKfbAgs>
- Dzigan, Efim. *My Iz Kronshtadta / Los Marineros de Kronstadt*. 88 min. Mosfilm. USSR, 1936.
- Eisenstein, Sergei. *Bronenosets Potyomkin*. 75 min. Goskino. USSR, 1925.
- . *Oktyabr': Desyat' Dney Kotorye Potryasli Mir / October: Ten Days That Shook the World*. 104 min. Sovkino. USSR, 1928.
- . *Stachka/ Strike*. 82 min. Goskino. USSR, 1925.
- . *Staroye i Novoye / Old and New*. 121 min. Sovkino. USSR, 1929.
- Ekk, Nikolai. *Putyovka v Zhizn / The Road to Life*. 119 min. Mezhrabpomfilm. USSR, 1931.
- El Despertar Bancario*. Spain, n.d.
- Ferré i Borrell, Eusebi. *Festa major*. Spain, 1933.
- . *Laie Barcino*. Spain, 1934.
- Gil, Rafael, and Antonio Del Amo. *Soldados campesinos*. 10 min. Spain, 1938.
- Giménez Caballero, Ernesto. *Esencia de verbena*. 12 min. Spain, 1930.
- Hill, George W. *The Big House*. 87 min. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. USA, 1930.

- Ivens, Joris. *Komsomol*. 50 min. USSR, 1933.
- . *The Spanish Earth*. 52 min. Contemporary Historians Inc. USA, 1937.
- LeRoy, Mervyn. *Numbered Men*. 70 min. First National Pictures. USA, 1930.
- L'Exèrcit del poble neix*. 11 min. Comité del Ejército Popular. Spain, 1937.  
<https://vimeo.com/194274925>.
- Malraux, André. *L'Espoir / Sierra de Teruel*. 76 min. France, 1945.
- Marsillach, J. *Catalunya màrtir*. 25 min. Laya Films. Spain, 1938.
- Naumburg, Nancy, and James Guy. *Sheriffed*. USA, 1934.
- Nueva Vida en el Campo*. Film Popular. Spain, 1937.
- Prats, Joan. *Abelles*. Spain, 1933.
- Preobrazhenskaya, Olga. *Baby Ryazanskie / Women of Riazan*. 67 min. Sovkino. USSR, 1927.
- Prix et Profits*. France, 1932.
- Protazanov, Iakov. *Belyy Oryol / The White Eagle*. 67 min. Mezhrabpomfilm. USSR, 1928.
- Pruna, Domingo. *El Café de La Marina*. Orpheo Film, Spain, 1934.
- Pudovkin, Vsvevolod. *Konets Sankt-Peterburga / The End of St. Petersburg*. 85min.  
Mezhrabpomfilm. USSR, 1927.
- . *Mat / Mother*. 89 min. Mezhrabpomfilm. USSR, 1926.
- . *Potomok Chingis-Khana / Storm over Asia*. 127 min. Mezhrabpomfilm. USSR, 1930.
- Renoir, Jean. *La vie est à nous*. 66 min. Parti Communiste Français. France, 1936.
- Rey, Florián. *La aldea maldita*. 57 min. Spain, 1930.
- Rifà, Salvador. *El blat*. 10 min. Spain, 1933.
- Roig, Joan, and Antonio Sarsanedas. *Jornada al port*. Spain, 1934.
- Salvans Piera, Joan. *Aigua*. Spain, 1932.
- . *Diaris*. 13 min. Spain, 1934.
- . *L'enemic de Venus*. Spain, 1936.
- . *Pallars i Ribagorça: impressions d'un camping*. 12 min. Spain, 1934.  
<http://www.memoirefilmiquedusud.eu/collection/384-es-pallars-i-ribagorca-impressions-d-un-camping/?lang=es>.



- Santos, Mateo. *Reportaje del movimiento revolucionario en Barcelona*. 22 min. CNT-FAI. Spain, 1936. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOt7pqlyxIU>.
- Schub, Esfir. *Ispaniya / Spain*. 85 min. Mosfilm. USSR, 1939.
- Steiner, Ralph. *H20*. 12 min. USA, 1929. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOkia3\\_zC\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOkia3_zC_k).
- Storck, Henri, and Joris Ivens. *Misère Au Borinage*. 36 min. Belgium, 1934. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1feCFWK\\_wI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1feCFWK_wI).
- The Mass Tribute to Buenaventura Durruti*. 10 min. CNT-FAI. Spain, 1936. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCb8IB2iNIw>.
- Transformació de la indústria al servei de la guerra*. Laya Films. Spain, 1938.
- Trauberg, Ilya. *Goluboy Ekspres / The Blue Express*. 62 min. Sovkino. USSR, 1929.
- Turin, Viktor. *Turksib*. 78 min. Vostokkino. USSR, 1929.
- Vasilyev, Georgi, and Sergey Vasilyev. *Chapaev*. 93 min. Lenfilm Studio. USSR, 1934.
- Velo, Carlos. *Galicia*. 9 min. Film Popular. Spain, 1936. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPyc\\_I-vW2Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPyc_I-vW2Y).
- Velo, Carlos, and Fernando G. Mantilla. *Almadrabas*. 21 min. CIFESA. Spain, 1934.
- Vertov, Dziga. *Chelovek s Kinoapparatom / Man with a Movie Camera*. 68 min. VUFKU. USSR, 1929.
- Villegas López, Manuel. *Madrid*. 29 min. Cinema Español (Subsecretaría de Propaganda). Spain, 1937.
- Votad al Frente Popular*. Spain, 1936.
- Wreck of the Vizcaya*. 1 min. American Mutoscope and Biograph Company. USA, 1903.
- Yutkevich, Sergei. *Zlatye Gory / The Golden Mountains*. USSR, Sovkino, 1931.