

## Cinema Parisiense

Sómente HOJE e AMANHÃ

ASTA NIELSEN e WALDEMAR PSILLANDER em um mesmo  
filme, em um mesmo drama de amor!

HORARIO DAS ENTRADAS - 1 h. - 1.30 - 1.55 - 2.20 - 2.45 -  
3.20 - 4 h. - 4.35 - 5h. - 5.30 - 6 h. - 6.25 - 7 h. - 7.30 - 8.15 - 9.20 - 9.45 - 10.30 e 10.45



ASTA NIELSEN



W. PSILLANDER

no grandioso drama de amor da Nordisk, dividido em 3  
— longas partes —

### Amor de Dansarina

Apesar da grandiosidade deste film sedutor, oferecemos  
nos nossos liabilés mais exlcs doze trabalhos

**PREÇO DE UMA VIDA** Bellissíma e tão  
pouco dramático de  
LUTHER

**Inspector de gallinhas** Enredo original, com  
fabrics Viatorris

Na próxima segunda-feira exhibiremos o monumental trabalho de  
fabrics Jata A. CHILIA N. 11

Rielle Navitski

## Asta Nielsen as Import Commodity International Stardom and Local Film Distribution in Brazil, 1911–1915

The study of early global film stars in the Latin American context faces, in addition to the historiographic obstacles posed by the incomplete preservation and limited accessibility of relevant periodicals, a disciplinary stumbling block. In the face of the abysmal survival rate of Latin American silent cinema, previous research on the period conducted in these countries has overwhelmingly focused on recovering the traces left by local film production. In reconstructing national cinema histories, Latin American scholars implicitly contested the historical and economic circumstances that had required citizens of their nations “to assume the position of spectators and become voyeurs of, rather than participants in, modernity”, a dynamic Ana M. López observes in her comments on early film-going practices in the region.<sup>1</sup>

The long-standing dominance of imported (especially Hollywood) cinema in Latin American film markets has been abundantly analyzed by leftist intellectuals as a pernicious form of cultural colonization.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in the mid-1980s, cultural critics began to re-evaluate the economic and symbolic hegemonies exercised by neo-colonial powers in Latin American nations, emphasizing complex processes of cultural “mediation” and “hybridization”.<sup>3</sup> Recent Latin American film histories have begun to more fully consider the ways in which local audiences consumed, appropriated and contested the visions of modernity offered by imported cinema, facilitated by the large-scale digitization of newspapers by national libraries in Latin America and abroad.<sup>4</sup> Such investigations do not merely expand the range of transnational perspectives brought to bear on the uniquely global stars of transitional-era silent cinema. Rather, they also illuminate the economic and cultural forces, both local and global, that shaped the horizon of audience expectations regarding films’ content and format.

Facing page: An advert for a re-exhibition of *BALLETDANSERINDEN* in Rio de Janeiro in 1915 highlighted three audience draws – Nordisk, Nielsen, and Valdemar Psillander, who also enjoyed great popularity with local spectators. *Correio da Manhã* (16 January 1915), 12.

Examining the case of Asta Nielsen's stardom in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in the early teens, it is clear that her popularity with local audiences was not simply a sign of successful domination of the exhibition market by foreign film producers, but rather signals the conflictual process by which this dominance was consolidated locally. Nielsen's star text was articulated in the context of international distribution patterns inflected by local competition between exhibitors. As well-organized film rental and distribution systems emerged in Brazil's two major cities, exhibitors developed marketing strategies that catered to (and cultivated) audiences' desires for cinematic entertainment that was simultaneously associated with cosmopolitan artistic refinement and with a titillatingly modern sensuality. In the case of Asta Nielsen, these apparent opposites would be reconciled by means of abundant references to her dramatic range, a product of training in the legitimate theater that lent a veneer of respectability to the extreme emotions and situations of her erotically charged melodramas.

In the early teens, the Danish actress's popularity with local audiences was leveraged in disputes between rival film importers/exhibitors, following the attempt of Spanish impresario Francisco Serrador to consolidate a distribution and exhibition monopoly, the Companhia Cinematographica Brasileira, in 1912. Serrador's most powerful rival at the time, the Italian Jacomo Rosário Staffa, had two powerful bargaining chips: Nordisk and Nielsen (for local audiences, these categories of films were often conflated, as I will explore below). The circulation and reception of Asta Nielsen films in Brazil thus highlights the local conflicts that accompanied the consolidation of a foreign-oriented system of film distribution and exhibition. This system, in turn, would soon be disrupted by global shifts in the production and distribution of films. French, Italian and Danish films would quickly be superseded by American cinema, which flooded local markets during the First World War. In retrospective accounts of film culture in early twentieth-century Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, including both histories and memoirs, the figure of Nielsen is almost invariably invoked as a signifier of a prelapsarian age when European cinema reigned supreme on local screens.<sup>5</sup>

Before proceeding to my analysis of the exhibition and reception of Asta Nielsen films in Brazil's major metropolises, it is important to once again note the structural limits facing the study of film culture of early twentieth-century Latin America. In nations with low literacy rates, where large sections of the population had limited buying power, newspaper columns and magazines dedicated to the cinema were far slower to develop than in the United States and Europe. Rio de Janeiro's first magazine exclusively dedicated to local entertainment culture, *Palcos e Telas* (Stages and screens), would not appear until early 1918; illustrated film magazines on the American model debuted in 1921 with the publication of *A Cena Muda* (The Silent Scene).

Similarly, while the Lumière cinematograph appeared quickly in most of Latin America's largest cities, with exhibitions in Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro,

CINEMA PARISIENSE

**A QUEDA DA MULHER (O ABYSSO)**

Esta importante produção da casa de Asta Nielsen, a mais grande artista do teatro de São Paulo, é apresentada em 12 atos, com o título de "A queda da mulher" (O abismo). A história é baseada no romance de Alphonse Daudet.

Este advert for AFRUNDEN (exhibited in Rio de Janeiro as A WOMAN'S FALL) includes a detailed summary of the melodramatic plot and warns that children are not allowed in the audience.

Correio da Manhã (11 August 1911), 12.

Buenos Aires and Santiago de Chile in 1896,<sup>6</sup> permanent cinemas were comparatively much slower to emerge; the first dedicated venues for film exhibition in Brazil's then-capital, Rio de Janeiro, did not open until August 1907.<sup>7</sup> After the establishment of permanent cinemas in the capital, a number of exhibitors would make successful ventures into film production, exhibiting the products in their own establishments. This precarious form of vertical integration produced great box office successes, such as the 1908 film *OS ESTRANGULADORES* (THE STRANGLERS, photographed by Antonio Leal), based on a real-life criminal case and exhibited more than 830 times,<sup>8</sup> and the "talking and singing film" *PAZ E AMOR* (PEACE AND LOVE, photographed by Alberto Botelho), a political satire in the form of a musical revue (with performers providing dialogue and song from behind the screen) that reached more than 900 exhibitions in 1910.<sup>9</sup> Some scholars consider these successful productions to constitute a 'belle époque' of Brazilian cinema whose promise was crushed by the consolidation of distribution and exhibition circuits aligned with foreign film producers after 1911, although this notion has been critiqued in recent years.<sup>10</sup> José Inácio de Melo Souza, for example, highlights the role of imported Pathé films in consolidating a local exhibition market; additionally, he notes the role played by melodramas starring Nielsen in the shift from variety programs to those organized around feature-length films.<sup>11</sup> Examining Nielsen's stardom allows us to chart the complexities of the consolidation of film exhibition and distribution circuits in Brazil in the early teens.

In Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Asta Nielsen's films by Urban Gad were initially received in the context of the Danish erotic melodramas that helped catalyze the transition to feature-length film worldwide. Despite the variety of production companies with which Nielsen worked, local exhibitors tended to falsely market them as Nordisk films, which had developed strong connotations of sensuality among local spectators. In August 1912, a scandalous public display of affection by a couple on Botafogo Beach (a favorite spot for wealthy locals to promenade) was described as "a long kiss (...) in the style of Nordisk."<sup>12</sup> Later that same year, a Rio de Janeiro society lady was questioned by a journalist regarding her favorite type of films. Expressing a preference for Nordisk productions, she "excited herself by commenting, 'With what violence the people love in the small, enchanting country that Denmark must be

And what kisses!” Apparently flustered by this implicitly sexual “excitement”, the journalist comments, “I refused to listen any further, as I was seriously muddled”.<sup>13</sup> In Rio de Janeiro, children were forbidden to attend the screenings of Asta Nielsen’s first international success, *AFGRUNDEN* (exhibited both with the literal title *O ABISMO*, and the alternate title *A QUEDA DA MULHER*, or *A WOMAN’S FALL*), which was erroneously advertised as a Nordisk film.<sup>14</sup> Upon *O ABISMO*’s first exhibition in São Paulo a month later, it was held over for three consecutive days, due to its allegedly “sensational and never-before seen success”, unusual at a moment when film programs often changed daily.<sup>15</sup> Advertisements for the film also emphasized its exceptional length (announced as 1200 meters), as well as the actress’s connection to the Royal Danish Theater.<sup>16</sup>

The (mostly spurious) connection between Nordisk and Nielsen was also cultivated by J.R. Staffa in his campaign against Francisco Serrador’s *Companhia Cinematographica Brasileira* (CCB), waged on the strength of his exclusive distribution rights to both groups of films. Proprietor of one of Rio’s oldest cinemas, the *Parisiense*, Staffa had initially aligned himself with Serrador and the CCB. However, he broke his contract with the company in late May of 1912 in order to open a distribution outlet in São Paulo, which the agreement forbid.<sup>17</sup> In an open letter published in the *Estado de São Paulo* in September 1912, Staffa scoffed at the conglomerate’s “pretended monopolization of cinema in Brazil”. He specifically protested the CCB’s infringement on his exclusive rights by showing *A DANÇA DA MORTE* (*DER TOTENTANZ*, *THE DANCE TO DEATH*), a film “from the series by Asta Nielsen, for whose works I am the only distribution agent in Brazil”.<sup>18</sup> He eventually won a court case brought against the CCB for the breach of exclusivity.<sup>19</sup>

Advertisements for Staffa’s company, the *Grande Empresa Cinematographica*, strove to demonstrate that he could reliably supply box-office successes by regularly screening films from the ‘Asta Nielsen series’. While the star’s films were not shown on a strict schedule, between October 1912 and June 1913, one of her productions premiered in Staffa’s exhibition chain approximately once a month.<sup>20</sup> Staffa’s advertisements constructed Asta Nielsen films, made for a variety of companies in Germany and Denmark, as a unified brand that delivered audience satisfaction as reliably as companies such as Nordisk and the Italian companies *Ambrosio* and *Itala*, which Staffa also distributed exclusively. This is suggested by the consistent appearance of Asta Nielsen’s name alongside company emblems, a marketing technique not used in connection with any other actor at the time.<sup>21</sup>

Asta Nielsen’s value to Staffa’s distribution company stemmed in part from her association with the prestige of European theatrical training, which was frequently mentioned in advertisements for her films. Publicity for *QUANDO A MÁSCARA CAI* (*WENN DIE MASKE FÄLLT*, *WHEN THE MASK FALLS*) described it as a “grand film from the artistic series of the celebrated Danish tragedian Asta Nielsen”.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, an announcement for *O PODER DO OURO* (*Die*

**Cinematographo Parisiense**

Fundado em 1907 Propriedade de J. R. STAFFA

MATINEE CHIC \* \* \* \* \* HOJE - QUINTA-FEIRA, 2 DE ABRIL DE 1914 - HOJE \* \* \* \* \* SOIRÉE DA MODA

EXHIBIÇÃO MAGESTOSA DE UM SUBLIME PROGRAMA DE ARTE E BELLEZA!

Não é de vez em quando que lançamos um programa de sucesso, não? Tão rico é o nosso stock e tanto é o nosso capêta que julgamos com o distincto publico podemos afirmar: o *Parisiense* é e será sempre o líder da cinematographia! o único que sempre oferece assumptos de profunha arte e beleza!

1º Film - O UMBRACAMENTO DA ESPERANÇA

**O GRITO DA CRIANÇA**

Um advert for *O GRITO DA CRIANÇA* (*THE CHILD'S CRY*, *DAS KIND RUFT*, 1914) praises “the inimitable work of the eminent Danish tragedian Asta Nielsen,” affirming the position of J.R. Staffa’s *Cinema Parisiense* as the “leader in cinematography.” *Correio da Manhã* (2 April 1914): 12.

*MACHT DES GOLDES*, *THE BETTER WAY*), noted that she was “supported by the most reputable artists of Berlin’s Imperial Theatre.”<sup>23</sup> In evoking Nielsen’s training in the legitimate theater, advertisements attempted to legitimate the actress’s rendering of the range of extreme emotions demanded by the melodramatic plots of her films, including passionate eroticism and open violence. For example, the aforementioned advertisement for *O PODER DO OURO* declares it is both “sensational and majestic” (two adjectives which respectively evoke the extremes of low and high culture) in part thanks to the “rigorous and magisterial performance of the famous and notable tragic actress *Asta Nielsen*”.<sup>24</sup> The thrilling, moving, shocking qualities of her films could be recuperated by the virtuosity of her acting, at once praised as spontaneous and artful. Highlighting her ability to play comic as well as tragic roles, an advertisement for *O BANDO DOS ZAPATAS* (*ZAPATAS BANDE*, *ZAPATA’S GANG*) describes her as “a consummate artist, having dedicated her whole life to the stage”, affirming a few lines later that “her grace is spontaneous”.<sup>25</sup>

The contradictory characteristics of Asta Nielsen’s acting style were highlighted in a presentation given by Dr. García Redondo in the High-Life Cinema on 26 May 1913, and published the following day in the *Estado de São Paulo*. The critic discusses the range of extreme emotions embodied by the actress, consistent with his characterization of cinema as “the synthesis of life with its tempests and bonanzas, with its love and hate”. He writes:

That Asta Nielsen, all nerves, light and elegant as a bird, whom we have seen so often in this cinema in her sympathetic ugliness, vibrating with emotion and throbbing with reality, laughing and crying, loving and betraying, caressing and killing, full of hate, of love, of tenderness, of abnegation and caring, thanks to the cinematograph, fifty or a hundred years from now, when she no longer exists, she will still be seen, performing her art consciously; passionately, like the great artist she is. And, through the film, her name and her image will come down to posterity in a halo of glory.<sup>26</sup>

Nielsen’s “passion” was thus mediated by “consciousness”, the “sensational” emotions of her films could thus be aligned with the category of “art”. In addition to associating the range of Nielsen’s performances with the immortality merited by “true” art and assured by cinematic technology, the text also subtly emphasizes the repeated exhibitions of Asta Nielsen films in the cinema where the conference was delivered, Staffa’s High-Life.

Between July 1911 and May 1915, there were 27 Asta Nielsen titles advertised in Rio de Janeiro, with AMOR DE DANSARINA (BALLETDANSERINDEN, THE BALLET DANCER) revived with great success,<sup>27</sup> and seventeen in São Paulo, including reprises of BANDO DOS ZAPATOS, A PRIMA DONNA (DIE FILMPRI-MADONNA, THE PRIMA DONNA), and MORTE EM SEVILHA (DER TOD IN SEVILLA, SPANISH BLOOD).<sup>28</sup> In a 1915 contest, 9,325 readers of the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *Correio da Manhã* voted to name her their favorite female star; Asta Nielsen lost narrowly to Francesca Bertini, with 9,371 votes.<sup>29</sup> However, the 'golden age' of European cinema in urban Brazilian cinemas was quickly coming to an end. In May 1915, Universal became the first American studio to establish a local branch office, followed by Fox and Paramount in 1916.<sup>30</sup> A craze for serial films swept Brazil's capital, catalyzed by the enormous success of the Pathé Exchange serial OS MISTÉRIOS DE NOVA YORK.<sup>31</sup> Physically dynamic actresses like Ruth Roland and Pearl White, considered "the synonym of the happiness, health, sportiveness and courage of the American girl",<sup>32</sup> now captured the imaginations of local film fans. The lyrical gestures and sentimental, often pessimistic plots of European cinema were felt to be distinctly outdated, as suggested by the unfavorable comparison made between Sarah Bernhardt (on whom Asta Nielsen arguably modeled aspects of her performance in HAMLET) and Pearl White in the modernist manifesto *Klaxon*: "Sarah is tragedy, sentimental and technical romanticism. Pearl is ratiocination, instruction, sport, rapidity, joy, life".<sup>33</sup> Associations with the legitimate theater no longer signified prestige, but rather obsolescence.

In the 1920s, a moment when Hollywood cinema almost entirely dominated the national exhibition market, Brazilian journalists recalled Nielsen, and the erotic melodramas in which she specialized, with nostalgia. When a film starring Asta Nielsen debuted on Rio de Janeiro's screens in 1920, more than five years after her last film appearance, a journalist recalled her as "the first star to awaken our curiosity about the stars of the cinematograph", evoking "the successes of Asta Nielsen and the brilliant moment initiated by her films in the Parisienne, when the entire cinema continuously filled up [with spectators] to see her". According to the journalist, only when "the European conflagration prevented us from admiring Asta Nielsen" did stars like "Theda Bara, Virginia Pearson, Geraldine Farrar, Gladys Brockwell [and] Elsie Ferguson" begin to gain the public's admiration.<sup>34</sup>

Author Álvaro Moreyra wrote in 1924: "Today, wandering from cinema to cinema on the Avenue, suddenly, reading a program, the fifth I read, I had an unexpected revelation: I'm getting old". Reflecting on his bygone fascination with the Russian dancer and film star Stacia Napierkowska, he exclaims, "How all that evokes *our time*, the time of those American films in which, suddenly, the people reversed themselves to run after each other (...) the time of Asta Nielsen, of Polaire, of Mistinguett (...) of the fatal Psilander (...). Today, the actresses and actors are almost all from the United States, and have difficult

names".<sup>35</sup> The offerings of the elegant movie palaces of the central avenue evoked, through contrast, the vanished film culture of the early teens.

Two years later, a journalist in the northeastern city of Recife noted, "For a long time I was an inveterate frequenter of cinemas"; more specifically "[i]n the victorious era of Danish films, of Valdemar Psilander, Ebba Thompson and the great Asta Nielsen". The writer's passion for the cinema, however, was destroyed when "war broke out and the United States took advantage to invade the cinematographic world", flooding the market with "those so-called detective films with an infinity of episodes".<sup>36</sup> The physical dynamism and compulsory happy endings of Hollywood films had superseded the tragic plots and lyrical acting styles of Italian, French, and Danish melodramas. In a similar vein, memoirist Afonso Schmidt noted decades later: "After the conflagration of 1914, North America dominated the film market. But I still remember the antics of Cretinetti, the suffering of Asta Nielsen, the languorous gestures of 'Chica' Bertini."<sup>37</sup> A key figure in the contested process of consolidating local distribution and exhibition circuits supplied by imported films, Asta Nielsen's tarnished stardom became a potent symbol of the battle lost to Hollywood cinema.

## Notes

1. Ana M. López. "Early Cinema and Modernity in Latin America", *Cinema Journal* 40:1 (Fall 2000): 53.
2. See especially Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes, "Cinema: A Trajectory Within Underdevelopment", in Michael T. Martin, *New Latin American Cinema*, vol. 2 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 263–271, and Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in Michael T. Martin, *New Latin American Cinema*, vol. 1 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 33–58.
3. See Jesús Martín Barbero, *Communication, Culture, Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations*, trans. Elizabeth Fox and Robert A. White (London: Sage Publications, 1993) and Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
4. Works that address film exhibition in Latin America before 1920 include José Inácio de Melo Souza, *Imagens do passado: São Paulo e Rio de Janeiro nos primórdios do cinema* (São Paulo: Editora Senac, 2003); Aurelio de los Reyes, *Los orígenes del cine en México: 1896–1900* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1984); María Luisa Amador and Jorge Ayala Blanco, *Catelera cinematográfica 1912–1919* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2009); Manuel González Casanova, *Por la pantalla: Genesis de la crítica cinematográfica en México* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México, 2000) and Ángel Miquel, *Por las pantallas de la ciudad de México: periodistas del cine mudo* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1995).
5. See Melo Souza, *Imagens do passado*, 19–66, for an examination of memoirs dealing with the early years of cinema in the two cities.
6. Paulo Antonio Paranaguá, *Cinema na América Latina: Longe de Deus e Perto de Hollywood* (Porto Alegre: L&PM Editores, 1984), 10.
7. Melo Souza, *Imagens do passado*, 119.
8. *Correio da Manhã* (12 November 1908), 5.
9. Vicente Paula de Araújo, *A bela época do cinema brasileiro* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1976), 347.
10. See Jean-Claude Bernadet, *Historiografia clássica do cinema brasileiro* (São Paulo: Annablume, 1995), 15–34; Melo Souza, *Imagens do passado*, 87–101.
11. Melo Souza, *Imagens do passado*, 41, 77, 163–190.

12. "Trepador," "Trepações", *Fou-Fou*, no. 31 (3 August 1912), n/p. All translations from the Portuguese are mine.
13. "M.," "Pequenas Enquetes", *Fou-Fou*, no. 43 (26 October 1912): n/p.
14. Advert, *Correio da Manhã* (11 August 1911): 12.
15. Adverts, *O Estado de São Paulo* (4 October 1911): 8; (5 October 1911), 11; (6 October 1911): 10.
16. Adverts, *O Estado de São Paulo* (2 October 1911): 10; (5 October 1911): 11
17. Melo Souza, *Imagens do passado*, 308.
18. J.R. Staffa, "O 'Cinema Parisiense' ao Público", *O Estado de São Paulo* (28 September 1912): 9.
19. Melo Souza, *Imagens do passado*, 310.
20. The exhibitions, based on advertisements in *O Estado de São Paulo*, include O FILHO DO GENERAL (DIE KINDER DES GENERALS, FALSELY ACCUSED) (28 October 1912): 8; QUANDO A MÁSCARA CAI (WENN DIE MASKE FÄLLT, WHEN THE MASK FALLS) (3 December 1912): 12; A RAPARIGA SEM PATRIA (DAS MÄDCHEN OHNE VATERLAND, A GIRL WITHOUT A COUNTRY) (19 January 1913): 15; MOCIDADE E LOUCURA (JUGEND UND TOLLHEIT, IN A FIX), (8 February 1913): 11; COMEDIANTES (KOMÖDIANTEN, THE HEART OF A PIERROT), (13 March 1913): 12; A MORTE EM SEVILHA (DER TOD IN SEVILLA, SPANISH BLOOD), (11 May 1913): 17.
21. Adverts for Staffa's company later used the name of the Australian dancer and actress Saharet in a similar manner.
22. Advert, *O Estado de São Paulo* (3 December 1912): 12.
23. *O Estado de São Paulo* (17 June 1912): 11.
24. Ibid. [emphasis in original].
25. *O Estado de São Paulo* (6 May 1914): 14.
26. Dr. Garcia Redondo, "O Cinematographo", *O Estado de São Paulo* (27 May 1913): 3.
27. In addition to the Asta Nielsen films also shown in São Paulo, those exhibited in Rio which I have been able to identify include O MOMENTO SUPREMO / A MATERNIDADE (IN DEM GROSSEN AUGENBLICK, THE GREAT MOMENT), (27 October 1911); A PHALENA (NACHTFALTER, RETRIBUTION), (4 December 1911); A TRAIORA (DIE VERRÄTERIN, THE TRAITRESS), (2 April 1912): 12; SONHO NEGRO (DENSORTE DRÖM, THE CIRCUS GIRL), (12 May 1912): 11; O GRITO DA CRIANÇA (DAS KIND RUFT, THE CRY OF A CHILD) and O FOGO E A PALHA (DAS FEUER, VENGEANCE IS MINE), (4 June 1914): 14. AMOR DE DANSARINA was shown from 23 to 25 December 1911 and 14 to 17 January 1915.
28. In addition to those mentioned above, advertisements in the *Estado de São Paulo* refer to the following films: OS ACASOS DA SORTE NA VIDA (The Happenstance of Fortune in Life, not identified), (30 June 1912): 9; A SUFRAGISTA (DIE SUFRAGETTE, THE SUFRAGETTE), (27 November 1913): 14; SANGUE DE BOHEMIA (ZIEGEUNERBLUT, GIPSY BLOOD), (19 July 1914): 16; O DIRIGIVEL S1 (S1, A GIRL'S SACRIFICE), (11 January 1914): 18; O VERDADEIRO OU PRIMEIRO AMOR (ENGELEIN, UP TO HER TRICKS), (1 May 1915): 13; A PRIMA DONNA was shown on 9 and 12 February 1914, and on 1 June 1915, while BANDO DE ZAPATAS was exhibited on 6 May 1914 and 24 May 1915.
29. *Correio da Manhã* (18 October 1915), 5.
30. Melo Souza, *Imagens do Passado*, 328.
31. THE MYSTERIES OF NEW YORK was the local exhibition title of the edited-down version of THE EXPLOITS OF ELAINE, THE ROMANCE OF ELAINE and THE NEW EXPLOITS OF ELAINE.
32. Pedro Nava, *Balão cativo: Memórias* (Cotia, SP: Ateliê, 2000), 215.
33. *Klaxon* 1 (May 1922): 3.
34. "Opérador n. 3", "Os Filmes da Semana", *Para Todos* (17 April 1920): n/p.
35. Alvaro Moreyra, "Do Passado...", *Para Todos* (19 April 1924): n/p [emphasis in original].
36. Samuelo Campello, "Fitas de Cinema", *Diário de Pernambuco* (22 March 1924): 4.
37. In Portuguese, "Chica" is a nickname for Francesca. Quoted in Melo Souza, *Imagens do passado*, 36.

## Dafna Ruppin

### Asta Nielsen, Cinema-going and Film Censorship in the Netherlands Indies, 1912–1918

The earliest screening of an Asta Nielsen film in Batavia, the capital of the Netherlands Indies (present-day Indonesia) found in this research took place in May 1912, when HEISSES BLUT (BURNING BLOOD) was featured on the programme of the Globe Bioscope in Batavia (now Jakarta).<sup>1</sup> Probably the most successful of the five cinema houses offering shows to residents of the multicultural city that evening, the Globe Bioscope had been around since 1910, first as a make-shift cinema constructed of zinc plates and a few months later, as an impressive purpose-built, spacious and well-lit cinema theatre.<sup>2</sup> Located at Pasar Baru in the Chinese quarter, which was traditionally home to plenty of entertainment, it was one of several Batavian cinemas owned by Loa Soen Yang. One month later, on 15 June 1912, AGRUNDEN (THE ABYSS) was offered on the programme of the West-Java Bioscope at Flora Theatre.<sup>3</sup> This recently opened cinema house, established just a month earlier, at the nearby Pasar Senen, was expected to appeal to local residents of the neighbourhood who up until then would have usually traveled to Pasar Baru to watch films.<sup>4</sup> Drawing much attention by lighting up the exterior of the cinema with giant arc lamps, the inside was deemed to be spacious, airy, comfortable and capable of accommodating many viewers. It also featured a well-stocked buffet and pleasant seating area for spectators to enjoy before the picture.<sup>5</sup> Both of these venues would have been attended by viewers from all ranks of colonial society.

People in the Netherlands would have been surprised to learn of cinema's popularity and well-developed infrastructure in the Indies at the time, as a 1913 report in the Amsterdam-based trade weekly *De Kinematograaf* claimed.<sup>6</sup> In fact, film-going back in the mother country never really took off on a large scale before the First World War, compared to other European countries.<sup>7</sup> However, the report in *De Kinematograaf* continued:

To the connoisseur of conditions in the Indies, this fact may seem less strange, since the path of the cinema there was already fully paved in advance. The yonder living Europeans and also the natives had hitherto had...