

Films in Spanish Health Education: The Case of Child Health (1928–1936)

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Introduction

From the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century the fledgling Spanish public health services¹ were keen to cope with collective health issues by means of educating the general public. Therefore, in addition to the more traditional methods such as conferences and educational talks, the services also began to use the mass media. The earliest medium was the poster² and then in the 1920s, the decade which produced the consolidation of public health services³, there also arose the possibility of using new media such as the radio and the cinema, which were considered as powerful tools for the

1 On the development of the Spanish Public Health Services see: Esteban Rodríguez-Ocaña, “The Making of the Spanish Public health administration during the first third of the Twentieth Century”, *Quaderni Internazionale di Storia della Medicina e la Sanità*, 3 (1994), 49–65 and Esteban Rodríguez-Ocaña, “Los servicios de salud pública en la España contemporánea”, *Trabajo Social y Salud*, 42 (2002), 91–116.

2 On the uses of poster by the Spanish Public Health Services we have presented several contributions in recent years: Enrique Perdiguero, Rosa Ballester and Ramón Castejón, “Health and the general public. Child health information campaigns in Spain (1920–1950)”, in *Health between the private and the public –shifting approaches. An international conference*, Oslo, Norway, 3–7 September 2003. Enrique Perdiguero, Rosa Ballester and Ramón Castejón, “Mass-media and health informations campaigns in Spain (1920-1936)”, in ITEMS Network, *Medicine, health and society in Europe: trends and prospects: contributions to the Symposium*. (Coimbra, 2005), pp. 216-220.

3 Enrique Perdiguero, “Hacia una organización sanitaria periférica: Brigadas Sanitarias e Institutos Provinciales de Higiene”, in J. Atenza and J. Martínez-Pérez, eds., *El Centro secundario de Higiene rural de Talavera de la Reina y la sanidad española de su tiempo* (Toledo, 2001), pp. 43–73.

spreading of educational messages to wide sectors of the population. In this sense Spain followed a path common to other countries.⁴

In this article we analyse two films on child protection. ‘Valencia, Protectora de la Infancia’ [Valencia, Protector of Children], an almost hour-long, silent film produced in 1928, and the twenty-minute long “Vidas Nuevas” [New Lives], produced in 1936. Together with ‘La Terrible Lección’ [The Terrible Lesson],⁵ also produced in 1928, and dedicated to the fight against venereal disease, these films were among the earliest examples of this type of health education medium that we have managed to retrieve in Spain. Other films on malaria⁶ and tuberculosis⁷, which were produced at an earlier date, have not, as yet, been recovered. The film ‘Malaria’ (1925) was used in the Spanish Malaria campaign⁸ but, as is widely known, this film was produced by the Rockefeller Foundation.⁹ We have recovered another film produced by the Catalan government in 1935 to raise funds for the construction of child-care institutions,¹⁰ but it is not analysed in this contribution. Although recorded production of public health films in Spain is well below the level of other countries¹¹, we need to bear in mind that the Spanish film industry showed signs of

4 For a general account on the uses of media in health education see Susan E. Lederer and Naomi Rogers, “Media”, in R. Cooter and J. Pickstone, eds., *Companion to Medicine in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York, 2003), pp. 487–502.

5 On ‘The Terrible Lesson’ see: Joan M. Minguet, “La terrible lección”, in J. Pérez Perucha, ed., *Antología crítica del cine español, 1906–1995* (Madrid, 1997), pp. 68–70; Ramón Castejón-Bolea, *Moral sexual y enfermedad: la medicina española frente al peligro venéreo (1868–1936)*. (Granada. Alicante, 2001), pp. 188–192 and Alberto Elena, *Ciencia, cine e historia. De Méliès a 2001* (Madrid, 2002), pp. 65–69.

6 The film was made by the pupils of the Health National School before of 1927: Esteban Rodríguez Ocaña, Enrique Perdiguero and Rosa Ballester Añón, “La labor dispensarial: observatorios contra el paludismo”, in Esteban Rodríguez Ocaña et al., *La acción medico-social contra el paludismo en la España metropolitana y colonial del siglo XX* (Madrid, 2003), p. 196.

7 We have news about two films on tuberculosis, one of them produced in 1916, ‘El milagro de las flores’ [The miracle of the flowers] and the other produced in 1926, ‘Corazón de reina’ [The Heart of the Queen]: Nacho Lahoz and Antonio Laguna, ‘Maximiliano Thous’, in *Historia del cine valenciano* (Valencia, 1991), p. 83; Elena (2002), p. 65; Minguet (1997), p. 70.

8 Rodríguez-Ocaña et al. (2003). p. 196.

9 Marianne Fedunki, “Malaria Films: Motion Pictures as a Public Health Tool”, *American Journal of Public Health* 93 (2003), 1046–1054.

10 Enrique Perdiguero and Ramón Castejón, “El Seguell Pro Infància i la propaganda sanitària”, in *Actes de la VIII Trobada d’Història de la Ciència i de la Tècnica*, (Mallorca, 2006), pp. 229-236.

11 We must remember that both in the United Kingdom and in France, dozens of films were made in this same period: Timothy M. Boon, *Films and the contestation of public health in interwar Britain*, unpublished PhD. Dissertation (London, 1999). Elizabeth Lebas, “‘When Every Street Became a Cinema’. The Film Work of Bemdondsey Borough Council’s Public Health Department, 1923–1953”, *History Workshop Journal* 39 (1995), 42–66. Elizabeth Lebas, “Sadness and Gladeness: The Films of Glasgow Corporation, 1922–1938”, *Film Studies* 6 (2005), 27–45. Christel Tallibert, “Jean Benoit-Lévy”, in F. Albera and J.A. Gili, eds., *Dictionnaire du cinéma*

relative weakness and that only 10% of total production is believed to have been saved.¹²

In recent times, it has become apparent that relatively little attention¹³ has been paid so far to public health films in the context of medical history. Not only because the medium has existed for little over one century, and is therefore new in comparison with other more common subjects in historical works, but also because there are various difficulties involved in their analysis. The works of Timothy M. Boon¹⁴, and in particular his doctoral thesis,¹⁵ consider in great depth the difficulties which arise when analysing public health films and insist on the need to pay special attention not only to the form and final content but also to the context in which the film was produced in order to understand the reasons for choosing it as a suitable vehicle of health education. Ludmilla Jordanova had already made a

français des années vingt, 1895. Revue d'histoire du cinéma 33 (2001), 51–53. Christel Tallibert, “Cinema d’éducation”, in Françoise Albera and Jean A. Gili, eds., *Dictionnaire du cinéma français des années vingt, 1895. Revue d'histoire du cinéma* 33 (2001), 108–111. Christophe Gauthier, “1927, Year One of the French Film Heritage”, *Film History* 17 (2005), p. 293. Valérie Vignaux, “Jean Benoit-Lévy, réalisateur prolifique et méconnu de documentaires didactiques dans l’entre-deux-guerres”, in *Colloué International “La fiction éclatée: petits et grands écrans français et francophones”*, 6–7 July 2004, p. 62.

12 Roman Gubern, “Precariedad y originalidad del modelo cinematográfico español”, in R. Gubern et al., *Historia del cine español* (Madrid, 2005), pp. 9–17.

13 Films dealing with venereal disease have so far attracted most attention, in the case of both educational and features. See, as examples, Annette Kuhn, “A moral subject: The VD propaganda feature”, in *The Power of the Image. Essays on Representation and Sexuality* (London and New York, 1985), pp. 96–132. Suzanne White, “‘Mom and Dad’ (1944): Venereal Disease ‘Exploitation’”, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 62 (1988), 252–270. John Parascandola, “VD at the Movies: PHS Films of the 1930s and 1940s”, *Public Health Reports* 3 (1996), 173–175. Susan E. Lederer and John Parascandola, “Screening Syphilis: ‘Dr. Ehrlich’s Magic Bullet Meets the Public Health Service’”, *Journal of the History of Medicine* 53 (1998), 345–370. Thierry Lefebvre, “Représentations cinématographiques de la Syphilis entre les deux guerres: séropositivité, traitement et charlatanisme”, *Revue d’histoire de la pharmacie* XLII (1995), 267–278. Thierry Lefebvre, “Le cinéma contre la syphilis. Des débuts prometteurs”, *La Revue du praticien* 54 (2004), 459–462. Moreover there were many feature films dealing with alcoholism, tuberculosis (Elena, 2002), p. 66–67, and eugenics: Martin S. Pernick, *The Black Stork: Eugenics and the Death of “Defective” Babies in American Medicine and Motion Pictures since 1915* (New York, 1996).

14 Timothy Boon, “‘Lighting the understanding and kindling the heart?’: social hygiene and propaganda film in the 1930s”, *Social History of Medicine* 3 (1990), 140–141. Timothy Boon, “‘The smoke menace’: Cinema, sponsorship and the social relations of science in 1937”, in M. Shortland, ed., *Science and Nature. Essays in the History of Environmental Sciences* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 60–61. For the importance of the context of production see also: Timothy Boon, “‘The shell of a prosperous age’: History, Landscape and the Modern in Paul Rotha’s ‘The Face of Britain’ (1935)”, *Clio Medica* 60 (2000), 107–148.

15 Boon (1999), pp. 7–51.

call for the need to consider the construction process of the images.¹⁶ Marianne Fedunski,¹⁷ who has made a detailed study of Rockefeller Foundation's film 'Malaria', also insists on the same point, as well as on the difficulties which often arise in analysing the production process of the films, and other aspects of their use as an educational medium. Often documents are missing which would help to answer questions such as: who produced the script and who filmed it? What filmic language was chosen and to what end? How much did it cost to produce and distribute? Where was the film shown? How many people saw it? Was the film accompanied by a conference or educational talk? Was the film effective from a public health point of view? When and why did the authorities stop using the film? Boon is more sceptical on the questions dealing with audiences and believes that, in general, it is very difficult to obtain enough information which would enable us to assess the impact of the films on the public.¹⁸ He has only very scarce information about audiences of public health films in the case of Britain, and prefers to consider the problem analysing the 'modes of address' of the films, as we have considered. Obviously, another difficulty arises from the fact that, with the passing of time, only some of those films that were made and used as health intervention technology have survived.

The films that we have chosen only allow us to give partial answers to some of the questions related to the production context. As so often happens, there are few documents, or at least we have been unable to uncover many documents, which would have enabled us to understand better the contexts in which the production of the films we have studied took place. As Boon proposes¹⁹, we have had to resort, above all in the case of 'New Lives', to deduce from the film itself the reasons for its production and content. However we believe the two films under consideration, not yet studied from the point of view of the history of public health,²⁰ are of historical interest and enable us to study not only the workings of a specific health campaign carried out in Spain within the framework of social medicine, but also,

16 Ludmilla Jordanova, "Medicine and Visual Culture", *Social History of Medicine*, 3 (1990), p. 96.

17 Fedunski (2003), p. 1046.

18 Boon (1999), pp. 13–20. Timothy M. Boon, "Health education films in Britain, 1919–39", in G. Harper and A. Moor, eds. *Signs of Life. Medicine & Cinema* (London and New York, 2005), pp. 52–54.

19 The films used different modes of address to their viewers, and from this we can deduce the relationship established between producers and audiences, and the kind of authority they wished to exert or maintain: Boon (1993), p. 61. Boon (2005), pp. 54–55.

20 'Valencia, Protector of Children' has received attention recently after its restoration by the 'Institut Valencia de Cinematografía': Nacho Lahoz, *Valencia, Protectora de la Infancia* (Valencia, 2002). 'New Lives' is cited in the biographical accounts of its director (see below), and in the *Catálogo de documentales cinematográficos producidos o adquiridos por organismos oficiales del Estado Español [Catalogue of cinematographic documentaries produced or acquired by official bodies of the Spanish State]* (Madrid, 1964), card 46, wrongly dated in 1940.

once again, the close relationship between this campaign and certain moral values which are presented as part of the health message which the campaign seeks to transmit. The consideration of childhood as a vulnerable age appears clearly in both films in images which allow us a close-up of the means of the visual representation of infancy. There are also images of women, who obviously are responsible for childcare. The two films were produced within a short time of each other, but under very different political circumstances. ‘Valencia, Protector of Children’ was filmed towards the end of General Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship, set up with the consent of the Monarchy. ‘New Lives’, filmed just before the outbreak of the Civil War, although sponsored by a pharmaceutical company, can be seen as part of the impetus which the authorities of the II Republic sought to give the public health services, and in particular to infant hygiene. This allows us to consider the discussion about the ‘mode of address’ which Boon²¹ included in his work, as we are faced with two different policies concerning the positions to be taken on the problems of childhood.

Valencia, Protector of Children

This film was commissioned by the Protection of Childhood Board of Valencia, set up, like all such provincial organisations, as a result of the child protection legislation passed at the beginning of the twentieth century in Spain.²² It was recently retrieved (2002) by the Valencian Film Archives.²³

A production team (P.A.C.E.),²⁴ set up in 1924 to produce feature films and documentaries by the man who was also the director of the film, Maximiliano Thous, was commissioned to make the film. Thous was a unique figure: a journalist, politician, who in his youth belonged to the Liberal Party and then later in life joined the conservative nationalist movement, author of the words of the Valencian regional anthem and, chronologically speaking, one of the first Spanish film direc-

21 Boon (1999), pp. 20–25. Boon takes the concept from Bill Nichols, “Documentary, Theory and Practice”, *Screen* 17 (1976/7), 34–48. We have used the Spanish translation of a later work: Bill Nichols, *La representación de la realidad. Cuestiones y conceptos sobre el documental*, (Barcelona, 1997).

22 Cándido Ruiz-Rodrigo, *Protección a la infancia en España. Reforma Social y Educación* (Valencia, 2004), pp. 49–60. Josep Lluís Barona, “El Consejo Superior de Protección a la Infancia y Represión de la Mendicidad. Su ideología social y sanitaria”, in Enrique Perdigüero-Gil, ed., *Salvad al niño. Estudios sobre la protección a la infancia en la Europa mediterránea a comienzos del siglo XX* (Valencia, 2004), pp. 121–153.

23 Lahoz (2002), pp. 3–8. We follow the description give by this author related to the preparation of the film.

24 P.A.C.E.: Producciones Artísticas Cinematográficas Españolas (Spanish artistic cinematographic productions).

tors.²⁵ His team, after the failure to premiere his last feature film, ‘Moros y Cristianos’ [Moors and Christians] (1926) produced several documentaries highlighting institutional activities and the beauties of the Region of Valencia in order to present them in the international exhibitions of Seville and Barcelona in 1929.²⁶ The script-writer was Alejandro García-Brustenga, an active Valencian paediatrician, secretary of the Valencia Childcare School of Valencia and author of several articles related on childcare institutions.²⁷

The aim of the film was not educational, although as we will see, it was also used to this end. The intention was to showcase the work done in Valencia in relation to childcare at the International Fortnight of Child Protection and Social Action in Paris in July 1928.²⁸ In the project report, the argument was put forward that the film should be made in order to show the achievements of Valencia in this field and, incidentally, in order not to be overshadowed by the other Spanish cities present at the event, Madrid and Barcelona.

The idea came from García-Brustenga who proposed to the Protection of Childhood Board of Valencia the making of a film that gave an "honourable view of Valencian charity and science". The Board requested and obtained the financial backing of the Provincial Council and the City Council of Valencia, as their measures in relation to childcare would take up a large part of the film. Thus Valencia subscribed to a policy which, encouraged by the imminent staging of the exhibitions of Seville and Barcelona, as well as other international events at the end of the 1920s, led some Spanish public administrations to fund the production of cinema documentaries. The aim was to highlight their work governing cities, provinces or institutions, and praise their urban or artistic values and thereby to improve the poor image of the dictatorship both in Spain and abroad. This proliferation of films sought to use the enormous potential of the cinema as an instrument of political and ideological propaganda – as illustrated by such titles as ‘The resurgence of Spain’, also made in 1928²⁹ – at a time when the Primo de Rivera’s regime was

25 Lahoz and Laguna, (1991), pp. 81–93.

26 Francisco Narbona, “La Exposición Iberoamericana de Sevilla”, *Historia* 16, 10 (1985), 50–56. María Rosa Cal-Martínez, “El mundo de las exposiciones (III): del IV Centenario a Sevilla-Barcelona (1929)”, *Historia* 16, 17 (1992), 86–93.

27 Carmen Barona-Vilar, *Las políticas de la salud. La sanidad valenciana entre 1855 y 1936*. (Valencia, 2002), pp. 178–180, 260–261.

28 On international events related to child protection held in the first third of the XXth Century see Catherine Rollet, “La santé et la protection de l’enfant vues a travers les congrès internationaux (1880–1920)”, *Annales de démographie historique* (2001–1), 97–116.

29 This film had nothing to do with international exhibitions. It was sponsored by the party of the dictator, the ‘Unión Patriótica’, and sought to show the achievements of the government.

already in decline.³⁰ This was even more notable in the case of ‘Valencia, Protector of children’, which when shown abroad projected to the World an image of modernity and social advance in the Spain of this period. Indeed the dictatorship provided indirect funding for the propaganda in an attempt to spread the values it defended via the local authorities.

The starting point was the script by García-Brustenga based on the ‘Notes on a Pro-Childhood National Exhibition Project’³¹, which he himself presented in the City Council of Valencia on 4 April 1924³² and which he had intended to hold, precisely, between May and October 1928. Some of the subjects of the pavilions of the exhibition served as a source for the various scenarios of the film: the child at birth, feeding the child, the sick child, the institutionalised child, the abandoned child, the child at school, the abnormal child, the child in the park.³³ In order to illustrate each of these realities, the images take us through over twenty different institutions: clinics, the milk depot, hospitals, homes, charitable institutions, children’s camps, reformatories and schools. The institutions which appear in the film included both municipal and provincial public services and charitable institutions. Thus the film reflected the way in which childcare and the struggle against infant mortality were organised in Spain, with a mixture of public and private resources and a low-level implication of the central power, in spite of the laws governing infant protection then in force.³⁴ In any case, and as set out in the project for the exhibition, the film sought to highlight the institutional activities and successes of the public authorities. The film, a propaganda documentary, did not require the active involvement of the audience. All that was required was passive viewing of images which illustrated the achievements of institutional activities and private charity in child protection. Although not a work of fiction, we can include it within the vision of the more conservative and paternalistic wing of health education,³⁵ a feature of the other films produced during the Primo de

30 Luis Fernández-Colorado, “Visiones imperiales: documental y propaganda en el cine español (1927–1930)”, in *Actas del VI Congreso de la A.E.H.C.* (Madrid, 1998), pp. 97–110.

31 This work received a mention in the annual contest held by the High Council of the Protection of Children in 1922. The subject for this year was the struggle against infant mortality.

32 Alejandro García-Brustenga, *Notas para un Proyecto de Exposición Nacional Pro-Infancia como medio de disminuir la mortalidad infantil en España* (Valencia, 1924).

33 Excluded from the film were: the child and clothing, the child and furniture, children and music, recreation, theatre and children, the child and toys and children’s sports.

34 Esteban Rodríguez-Ocaña, “La construcción de la salud infantil. Ciencia, medicina y educación en la transición sanitaria en España”, *Historia Contemporánea*, 18 (1999), pp. 19–52.

35 Boon (1999), p. 133–175 considers those health education films produced by voluntary associations which adopt the fictional mode, and which seek the identification of the audience with the fictional characters, who represent a more conservative and hierarchical vision of society. This is certainly the case of “The Terrible Lesson” (1928), a curious fictional documentary, with a conservative vision of the family and family life, while defending the contribution of medicine in

Rivera dictatorship and which dealt, as we mentioned above, with the questions of venereal diseases and tuberculosis.

'Valencia, Protector of Children' has some similarities with one of the films studied by Lebas in the context of the task developed by the Public Health Department of the Bermondsey Borough Council:³⁶ a newsreel-style film made from a compilation of previously made footage to summarize the Council's various services and activities. Both of them sought to illustrate the achievements of the authorities showing for this purpose the main spaces, clinics, institutions and campaigns that had been set up. Both films have children and their health as one of the main goals of the activities of the authorities. However as Lebas reminds us in the last paragraph of her article,³⁷ films are means to different conquests. The political environments of Valencia Council and Bermondsey Borough Council were very different. Valencia, as all the cities in Spain, was under the dictatorship of Primo the Rivera, without political freedom. The film, as we have mentioned, was one of the political propaganda products of the regime. On the contrary the London Metropolitan Borough of Bermondsey had been governed democratically by the Independent Labour Party since 1922 and by the late 1920's had highly comprehensive and unique social welfare. Probably the two films are rather similar in conception, style and content, in the sense they intend to show the role of the authorities in social welfare, but they serve very different political agendas and pursue very disparate ways to the achievement of the welfare of the population.

The production of 'Valencia, Protector of Children' was simply brilliant. The director balanced the requirements of the script and the propaganda assignment with careful stage managing and photography which were extremely rare even in the feature films of the time. From the first sequence, picture postcard scenes of the most famous sights of Valencia, the port and the fruit-growing areas, the film seeks to highlight the privileged nature of the area in which the scenes unfold: hospitals next to the sea, the beauty and functional practicality of the buildings where they are accommodated, the wide open spaces for the enjoyment of many different activities in the Mediterranean sun and light. With the collaboration of the already veteran cameraman, Juan Andreu,³⁸ not only did he transform these places into model institutions, but he also managed to catch the moving authenticity of desti-

coping with venereal disease. Although a documentary "Valencia, Protector of Children" does not show any connection with the British documentary movement: Boon (1999), pp. 205–253.

36 Lebas (1995), pp. 61–62. See also the webpage <http://www.planum.net/archive/main/m-mov-bermondsey.htm>. The title of the film was 'Some Activities of Bermondsey Borough Council' (1931).

37 Lebas (1995), p. 62.

38 José Ginés, "Tras la huella de Andreu y el prestigio de Thous", in *Historia del cine valenciano* (Valencia, 1991), pp. 62–73.

tute children. In these scenes he is able to create a remarkable dramatic effect enwrapped in an idyllic atmosphere of gentle and efficient care.³⁹

The aim of the film, pursued faithfully by Thous, means that unlike 'New Lives' there are no explicit educational messages. Nonetheless the film transmits the idea that successful childcare requires medical and technical supervision. The illustrations of lessons about bathing, clothing, sterilised bottles, health professionals supervising child growth, of laboratories, of cleanliness in the institutions, and psychiatric care are important elements of the discourse of the film. However, there are no explicit messages blaming parents for failing to bring up their children properly. The film did not seek to involve the audience directly. Its objective was different; to show the vigorous work of the institutions and charities, and to serve as a propaganda medium of the Primo the Rivera regime. Local and provincial institutions, the financial backers of the film, sought to legitimise their activities and provide a glowing report of their successes to the international arena.

Together with the medical discourse, the importance of the Catholic Church is another essential element of the film. The overwhelming presence of religious orders within the institutions, in health care, the upbringing of children and care for the handicapped, represents an assumption of the dominant moral code, that of the Catholic Church. This, in turn, is a feature of the work of García-Brustenga, and the Spain of this period,⁴⁰ and underlines once more the conservative character of the film.

Gender-defined roles are also obvious in some charitable institutions. This illustrates how children were raised to be men or women, with a clear division of roles. Washing, ironing and sewing are activities which often appear when the film turns to the training offered to young girls. Boys were trained in other skills such as shoe repairs or tool-making.

Also noteworthy and demonstrating the political context, in which the film unfolds, is the amount of time given to the physical exercise of the boys and girls in the different institutions. The Primo de Rivera dictatorship defended a nationalist and patriotic idea of Spain which led it to set up a series of institutions to promote physical education among the general public.⁴¹ The number of scenes showing keep-fit exercises and military style training in 'Valencia, Protector of children' can be interpreted as support for this ideology, although physical education in Spain, in

39 Lahoz (2002), p. 5.

40 Vicente Faubell, "Educación y órdenes y congregaciones religiosas en la España del siglo XX", *Revista de Educación*, nº extra (2000), 137–200.

41 Alejandro Quiroga-Fernández de Soto, "«Los apóstoles de la patria». El ejército como instrumento de nacionalización de masas durante la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera", *Melangés de la Casa Velázquez*, 34 (2004), 243–272.

spite of organisational weakness, was used for party political ends by groups across the whole political spectrum.⁴²

The film was well received in its Paris adventure and instead of the three days scheduled originally, the film was shown throughout the fortnight. Indeed the press in Valencia went so far as to claim the film had won the film competition, although the 1928 report of the Valencian Provincial Council makes no reference to this. In spite of this success, in Valencia the film came up against the usual difficulty confronting Spanish films of the time of gaining access to screens. Its premiere in Valencia was delayed until May 1929, though it was used again at the exhibitions of Barcelona and Seville.⁴³

The film was also used in health education campaigns. Of the child hygiene educational campaigns carried out by the Childcare School of Valencia, set up in 1927, one of the most original was the creation of a 'Roving Department of Childcare' which started work at the end of 1929. This involved public events held in theatres, cinemas or large commercial premises for audiences, essentially, of mothers and mothers-to-be. The act had two parts. In the first session doctors and teachers gave talks about the raising and education of children. In the second, the audience was shown Valencia, Protector of Children. During the break the 'Childhood Hygiene Booklet' and other leaflets were handed out. The occasion was also used to vaccinate children of between one and three against diphtheria. Between the end of 1929 and the beginning of 1934 a total of 35 events were held in over thirty towns, usually in cinemas and theatres, which suggest that the film reached a wide audience, at least in the province of Valencia.⁴⁴

New Lives

As is well known, it was in the early part of the 1930s, when Spain underwent the change from monarchy to republic that the reinforcement of the public health services⁴⁵ really led to an increase in health propaganda campaigns.

42 Lucio Martínez-Álvarez, "A vueltas con la historia: una mirada a la educación física escolar del siglo XX", *Revista de Educación*, nº extra (2000), 83–112.

43 Lahoz (2002), p. 8.

44 Carmen Barona-Vilar and Manuel Martínez-Pons, "La lotta contra la mortalità infantile nella provincia di Valencia nel quadro della Seconda Repubblica (1931–1936)", in L. Pozzi and E. Tognotti, *Salute e Malattia Fra '800 e '900 in Sardegna e nei paesi dell'Europa Mediterranea*, (Sassari, 2000), pp. 293–307. Barona (2006), pp. 182–187.

45 There is abundant bibliography on public health in the Spanish Second Republic. See as examples: Josep Bernabeu-Mestre, "La utopía reformadora de la Segunda República: la labor de Marcelino Pascua al frente de la Dirección General de Sanidad, 1931–1933", *Revista Española de Salud Pública*, 74 (2000), 1–13 and Juan Atenza and José Martínez-Pérez, eds., *El Centro*

Figure 1. Poster published by the General Health Board during the Spanish Second Republic, probably in 1932–1933. Unknown author.



One of the priorities for the General Health Department of the Republic was child health. Just as the previous film showed, in the case of Valencia, the fight against childhood mortality, through the education of mothers and the monitoring of young babies, was an urban issue, carried out by local authorities and charitable associations. The founding in October 1931 of the Child Hygiene Service was intended to carry the struggle against infant mortality to the rural areas, through state health services.⁴⁶ The Provincial Hygiene Institutes were gradually staffed with personnel who specialised in childcare and the next step involved recruiting similarly specialised staff for the Secondary Centres of Rural Hygiene. By the time the civil war broke out, a total of 46 had already been opened. As shown by the poster (Figure 1), published within the framework of this new service, the aim of the Child Hygiene Service was to ensure that the infant population had access to preventive services in order to reduce infant mortality. Collaboration by the public, in this case the mothers, was a fundamental element in this and in each of the health education campaigns.

secundario de Higiene rural de Talavera de la Reina y la sanidad española de su tiempo (Toledo, 2001).

⁴⁶ Rodríguez-Ocaña (1999), p. 30.

Therefore, the Social Hygiene and Propaganda Department⁴⁷ was set up –also in October 1931– to bring together the propaganda of different health campaigns. The decree which established the Department stated the need for “[...] an appropriate consultative and executive organisation for questions affecting both public health (such as those covered by so-called social hygiene: alcoholism, venereal disease, cancer etc) and the scientific and administrative advantages of making the Department responsible for personal and public hygiene propaganda, a neglected, almost non-existent element of utmost importance today in the development of a technical-medical programme [...]”. Julio Bravo-Sanfelíu, who had already performed an important role in health propaganda within the framework of the anti-venereal disease campaign⁴⁸, was awarded the post of Chief Medical Officer of the service.⁴⁹ He had written a passionate article in 1932 in praise of the cinema⁵⁰ as a means of official health propaganda,⁵¹ and became a key figure in health education through posters and film. In his opinion the cinema offered the advantage of wide public support and also meant that mobile units could deliver health propaganda to any village. He made calls therefore for the production of sound films for health education both before and after the Civil War and maintained his involvement after the Nationalist victory⁵².

Indeed the figure of Julio Bravo⁵³ stands out in the Spanish context given the dearth of health education materials.⁵⁴ Having studied medicine in Zaragoza, where

47 *Gaceta de Madrid*, 14 October 1931.

48 Castejón-Bolea (2001), pp. 176–188. Julio Bravo, “Algunas consideraciones sobre propaganda sanitaria”, *Ecós Españoles de Dermatología y Sifilografía* 7 (1928), 487–496.

49 Order, 27 April 1933 (*Gaceta de Madrid*, 2 May 1933).

50 On documentary in Spain during the Second Republic see Roman Gubern, “El cortometraje republicano”, in P. Medina, L.M. González and J. Martín-Velázquez, eds., *Historia del cortometraje español*, (Alcalá de Henares, 1996), pp. 35–55. “Tierra sin pan” [Land without bread] (1932) of Luis Buñuel is considered the starting point. For the use of cinema with pedagogic aims during this period see Gonzalo Sáenz-de-Buruaga, *Val de Omar y las Misiones Pedagógicas* (Murcia, 2003). For other outstanding documentary-makers of the period see Miguel Anxo Fernández, *Carlos Velo mestre do documental* (A Coruña, 2001).

51 Julio Bravo, “Algunas consideración acerca del porvenir del ‘cine’ sonoro en propaganda sanitaria”, *Revista de Sanidad e Higiene Pública* 7 (1932), 475–478.

52 His publications on health education after the Civil War were: Julio Bravo, *Algunas consideraciones sobre propaganda en general y propaganda sanitaria en particular* (Madrid, 1951). Julio Bravo-Sanfelíu, *La técnica moderna en la didáctica y la difusión de los progresos médicos* (Zaragoza, 1953).

53 On Julio Bravo see Juan Domínguez-Lasierra, “Acerca de la vida y obra de Julio Bravo Sanfelíu”, in Julio Bravo, *El contemplanubes y otros filósofos menores* (Zaragoza, 1999), pp. 9–34. Juan Domínguez-Lasierra, “María de Montblanc”, in Julio Bravo, *María Bellesguard* (Zaragoza, 2002), pp. 9–31.

54 We only have some local examples as the production of the Provincial School of Childcare of Gijón. Carmen Chamizo, *La Gota de Leche y la Escuela de Enfermeras. Instituto de Puericultura de Gijón* (Gijón, 1999).

he was born in 1894, and in Madrid, he began his career in dermatology. He trained in several European capitals and on his return to Spain dedicated his work to the struggle against venereal diseases. In order to learn more about how the struggle was organised abroad, he travelled to Belgium and England in 1924 and to the U.S.A and Canada in 1926. He had a special interest in literature and wrote prose, drama and poetry and won critical acclaim for some of his novels. His passion for the cinema first took shape in ‘Todos a una’ [All for One] (1932) a publicity film on the lottery of the Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid. In addition to ‘New Lives’ he made an 18-minute educational documentary ‘La tuberculosis pulmonar’ [Tuberculosis] (1941) and another 14-minute documentary, ‘El Tren’ [The Train], on rail transport in Spain. He continued his work as dermatologist and health educationalist until his retirement. He died in 1987.

The importance given to propaganda, even before the republican triumph, can be seen in the work of the National Health School⁵⁵, reopened in 1930, for the training of Medical Officers. One of the compulsory subjects for students had the highly expressive title of: ‘Museum, iconography, propaganda and extension of the health culture’.⁵⁶ The task of connecting with the population at large and transmitting appropriate health messages was considered part to the work of public health officers.

In the following years, leading up to the outbreak of Civil War, the Social Hygiene and Propaganda Department promoted poster competitions and the compulsory showing of health propaganda films in cinemas, as established in rules published over the period.⁵⁷ Naturally, special attention was given to the struggle against infant mortality. A whole series of materials on the subject was produced and distributed (stamps, post cards, posters, pamphlets, instruction sheets) aimed at encouraging mother-child health.

The health propaganda initiated by this state service was well received by the medical press,⁵⁸ which judged as positive the effect produced on the population of the capital. Nevertheless, according to the data we have available so far, there is no indication whether the activity increased in the following years or whether, as a result of the political pendulum, it was indeed reduced. The same observer, who warmly welcomed the appearance in the streets of Madrid of the posters against infant mortality, also complained of the shortage of health propaganda films. Only

55 Josep Bernabeu-Mestre, “El papel de la Escuela Nacional de Sanidad en el desarrollo de la Salud Pública en España”, *Revista de Sanidad e Higiene Pública*, 68 (1994), 65–89.

56 Julio Bravo himself taught this subject: Domínguez-Lasierra (1999), p. 12.

57 Order 4 April 1933 (*Gaceta de Madrid*, 7 April 1933). Order, 3 October 1933 (*Gaceta de Madrid*, 8 October 1933).

58 J. Morales-Díaz, “Propaganda sanitaria”, *La Medicina Íbera*, 26–1(1932), cxvii–cxix. J. L. Pando-Baura, “Educación sanitaria”, *La Medicina Íbera*, 26–1 (1932), clxxxiii.

two were available and as a result of over-exposure people no longer paid them any attention.⁵⁹

Partly within this framework, another film devoted to childcare⁶⁰ was produced by the Bayer Laboratory⁶¹ in 1936, in this case, with sound. 'New Lives' was an instructional film⁶² with an explicit educational aim. The script was written by Julio Bravo himself, with the support of the paediatrician Miguel Echegaray, who worked at the Childcare School of Barcelona. The sound track included some original music and some adaptations of popular children's songs. Photography was by Andrés Pérez and Arturo Porchet, a Swiss film-maker who spent several years in Spain before the Civil War, and whose sons were closely linked to the anarchist movement.⁶³

The film is in three parts; an introduction, a section on pregnancy and then the final and longest part concerning the care of the newly-born, breast-feeding and the weaning period. 'New Lives' was conceived as a documentary designed to involve the audience actively in the content. Although we know little of the context of its production, and although at the end of the Civil War the man behind the film, Julio Bravo, was on the side of the victors, the film was made in a more progressive context than that offered by the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. The narrator reels off the messages using an impersonal third person and in a tone designed to be neutral, with relatively few concessions to sentimentality and, above all in the second and third parts, an attempt to secure a certain level of rationality. The cinematic techniques used are designed to achieve the pedagogic aim. The camera is static, using frontal angles. In the same vein the interior backgrounds are very plain.

The thread of the film begins with the scene of a peasant worker sowing seeds, a metaphor illustrating the conditions necessary for the birth of a healthy child: good seed and good soil, in other words healthy parents. It is as well an easy metaphor for the public to understand: in the Spain of the thirties almost 85% of families were working class or peasant. Health is seen as the engine of happiness and welfare: "the

59 J. L. Pando-Baura, 'Pro-Sanidad', *La Medicina Íbera*, 28 (1934), xxix-xxxi. We have no information about the two films cited in this article.

60 Gubern in his study of short movies during the Spanish Second Republic includes this film in the category of 'social and political documentaries': Gubern (1996), p. 41

61 We have as yet been unable to recover information which would enable us to understand better the management process of the production of the film and the sponsorship of the Bayer Company. Among the credits at the beginning of the film, the sponsors stated the following aim: "The Bayer Company, in the interest of public health, has made this film and has the honour of dedicating it to Spanish mothers. If the film contributes to a decline in infant mortality, the Bayer Company will have accomplished its goal. We hope that "New Lives" helps to save as many lives as possible."

62 On instructional films see Boon (1999), pp. 176–204.

63 Ramón Sala-Noguer, *El cine en la España republicana durante la Guerra Civil* (Bilbao, 1993), p. 26.

best gift, the best investment, the best legacy that parents can offer their children”. There is a note of optimism, with scenes of a new stronger generation, of young men and women enjoying outdoor activities. In short, a vision based on eugenics, omnipresent, as is well known, in the thirties, but in this case from a perspective which might be considered ‘progressive’.⁶⁴

There are four central elements in the cinematic analysis of ‘New Lives’ which we will summarise as: the ideological component, the perspective of gender, the perspective of social class and the appearance in the film of medical technologies.

Our interest was focussed on how the film contextualised the problem of infancy socially. Of course, the images are not a reflection of the problem, they are instead a construction of the problem. Social reality is shown as a scenario which does not create the problems and the film is based on trust in the possibility of changing the behaviour of the individual. Julio Bravo seeks to deal with infant mortality from an essentially medical perspective, just as he had stated was necessary in the case of venereal disease⁶⁵, ignoring other circumstances. In spite of his post in the republican health service, the film was produced privately and did not have an explicit ‘republican’ ideological expression. Nor is there any reference to religion which is so much a part of ‘Valencia Protector of Children’. Since the end of the nineteenth century, the field of education and social work in the protection of childhood had been one of the central issues in the controversy between clericals and anticlericals which Republican Spain was unable to resolve and which, as we all know, ended in violence.⁶⁶ ‘New Lives’ is set within the apparently neutral context, in which only the aseptic rationality introduced by medical science, appears to be the guide.

How are women portrayed? It is important to underline this aspect because the II Republic, at least on paper, improved the situation of women with the proclamation of their right to vote, the law of civil marriage and divorce and the abolition of laws regulating prostitution. Nonetheless, life was hard: the illiteracy rate was over 50%, and salaries were, of course, below those of men, even in the same jobs.⁶⁷

64 On eugenics in Spain see the works of Raquel Álvarez-Peláez: “Origen y desarrollo de la eugenesia en España”, in J.M. Sánchez Ron, ed., *Ciencia y Sociedad en España: De la Ilustración a la Guerra Civil* (Madrid, 1988), pp. 178–205; “Eugenesia y fascismo en la España de los años treinta”, in R. Huertas and C. Ortiz, eds., *Ciencia y fascismo*. (Aranjuez, 1998), pp. 76–95; and “Características y desarrollo de la eugenesia española”, in T. F. Glick, R. Ruiz and M.A. Puig-Samper, eds., *El darwinismo en España e Iberoamérica*. (Madrid, 1999), pp. 215–229.

65 José Fernández-de-la-Portilla and Julio Bravo-Sanfeliu, *Cómo debe organizarse en España la lucha antivenérea* (Madrid, 1925).

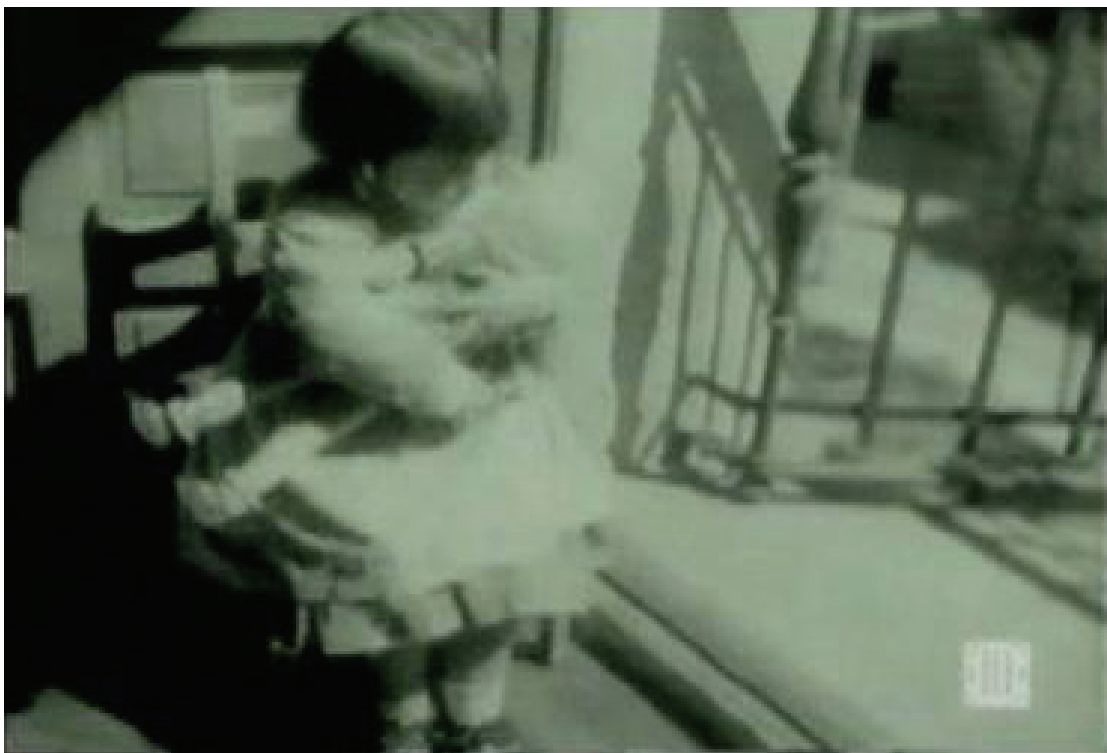
66 Ana Aguado, “El proyecto cultural de la II República. La búsqueda de una sociedad laica”, in A. Aguado and M^a D. Ramos, *La modernización de España (1917–1939)* (Madrid, 2002), pp. 153–162.

67 Mary Nash, “Les dones i la Segona República: la igualtat de drets i la desigualtat de fet”, *Perspectiva Social* 26 (1988), 75–83. Mary Nash, *Rojas. Las mujeres republicanas en la Guerra Civil* (Madrid, 1999), pp. 35–83. María del Rosario Ruiz-Franco, “Transformaciones, pervivencias y estados de opinión en la situación jurídica y social de las mujeres en España”,

Figure 2. Still from “New Lives” (1936): a bride in her tulle veil superimposed on the image of a cot covered with the same veil.



Figure 3. Still from “New Lives” (1936): a young girl rocking her doll.



Historia y Comunicación Social 5 (2000), 229–254. Ana Aguado, “Relaciones de género en el contexto republicano”, in A. Aguado and M^a D. Ramos, *La modernización de España (1917–1939)* (Madrid, 2002), pp. 203–221.

Figure 4. Poster published by the Ministry of Education and Health during the Civil War showing a woman throwing a javeline. The author was a woman, Juana Francisco.



Three types of women are portrayed in the film. The first is the mother or mother-to-be with traditional features highlighting the importance of the ‘natural’ maternal instinct, and devoted towards the future child. The film uses two very powerful images: the first, almost ghostly, of a bride in her tulle veil superimposed on the image of a cot covered with the same veil (Figure 2), showing that the purpose of women is maternity. The second, a young girl rocking her doll (Figure 3). As a counter-balance, but still compatible with the first, the modern woman, very typical of the inter-war period, seen here enjoying sports, with an athletic figure, frequently seen in posters of the period (Figure 4). Finally, we see the professional woman, as a qualified nurse, one of the few job opportunities of this kind for women in the

Spain of this period. There is no time for affection in these images; the nurse is at work with the child.

The principles behind the socio-political programme of the republican government sought to eliminate the profound historical social inequalities in Spain. As such they had substantial support among the popular classes and the intellectual minorities. However, the creative capacity in discourse and image of the middle classes remained much more powerful. In the film that we are analysing, it is interesting that the educational discourse is not aimed at the poorer mothers, undoubtedly those who needed it the most, but rather at the middle and upper-middle classes. From his own social origins and upbringing Julio Bravo constructed an audience not of the working mother, but rather of the woman devoted to her home and family care, the most visible among social representations of women at the time. In the second and third parts of the film, where we see practical advice for pregnant women and mothers during breast-feeding, the scenes take place in middle-class surroundings: the pregnant woman who dreams of her future child lives in a house where the details, the lamp, the type of cot, her clothes, suggest a middle-class background. On the other hand, we assume that these are the only women who could look after themselves and visit the doctor, as in the case of working-class women, missing a day's work meant losing a day's wage⁶⁸. In the childcare scenes, this idea is reinforced: not all families could afford baby clothes, suitable for the new-born child, or a push-chair (in one scene, the narrator optimistically claims "there is a wide price range") or even to feed the child properly. Women appear in the film in their most traditional version, a generic reality in republican Spain, even when at war and in spite of the iconic rhetoric of the 'miliciana'.⁶⁹ The reality of working women, of working outside the home, of the difficulties that this caused in motherhood and child-feeding were ignored in 'New Lives'. The emphasis was placed not on social problems which might lead to infant mortality, but, as so often, on the necessity of indoctrinating women in their responsibility of maternal duties under the supervision of medical science.

68 Although the implementation by the Republic of the Maternity Insurance did relieve the situation. See Esteban Rodríguez-Ocaña, "Medicina y acción social en la España del primer tercio del siglo XX", in *De la beneficencia al bienestar social. Cuatro siglos de acción social* (Madrid, 1985), pp. 257–262, and Esteban Rodríguez-Ocaña, "La asistencia médica colectiva en España hasta 1936", in *Historia de la acción social pública en España. Beneficencia y previsión* (Madrid, 1990), pp. 336–346.

69. Mary Nash, "Women in War: 'Milicianas' and Armed Combat in Revolutionary Spain, 1936–1939", *The International History Review* XV (1993), 269–282. Nash, (1999), pp. 85–108. See also our contribution Enrique Perdiguero, Rosa Ballester and Ramón Castejón, "Health Propaganda and Motherhood in the II Spanish Republic (1931–1936)", in *Meeting PhoenixTN "The creation of the public health systems and the answers of social agents: the Church, the public administration impulse and the family behaviour"*, Palma de Mallorca, 6–8 October 2005.

A fundamental element in the film is the specific weight given to the use of medical technology. Indeed the central theme of 'New Lives' is health education through means implemented by medical science for the healthcare of children and mothers-to-be. The message is transmitted through a series of icons. In the scenes showing prenatal care, considerable footage is dedicated to the presentation of obstetric instruments, medical records, and laboratory and blood pressure tests. In the case of those scenes related to the care of the very young, the technology is not seen only from the angle of physical and chemical artefacts (use of silver nitrate to prevent the ophthalmia of the new-born child, the use of natural vitamins, vaccination against tuberculosis, smallpox or diphtheria), but also, and above all, of procedures. The film shows a complete protocol perfectly organised in basic steps for the care of the new-born baby and the very young child: not a single detail escapes the careful watching eye of the expert doctor and the nurse who is carrying out the procedure (feeding, clothing, and monitoring of growth through anthropometric measures).

Infancy:⁷⁰ Images of Vulnerability

Some years ago, E. Seidler⁷¹ concerned himself with a historical analysis of the essential weakness of infancy, a cliché of significance both polyvalent and omnipresent in the political, social and medical discourse of the first half of the twentieth century. Frailty, lack of energy, lack of vigour, weakness, impotence, all indicated differentiated aspects of the same reality. Infancy is the age of dangers. The novelty of the twentieth century consisted mainly of overcoming the traditional fatalism when faced with this situation of biological inferiority, which conditioned social vulnerability, and of using the weapons of science to cope with the challenge.

⁷⁰ There is an extensive bibliography on the history of infant health in contemporary times, featuring the ever more marked integration of plural perspectives (anthropological, sociological, demographical, pedagogical, and from the history of science). The link with the history of public health has raised great interest and in this context we should include such event as the 'V Conference of the European Association for the History of Medicine and Health' held in Geneva in 2001 ("Health and the Child: Care and Culture in History"). Esteban Rodríguez-Ocaña has provided a recent analysis of how historiography has dealt with the issue of infant health and illnesses: "La salud infantil, asunto ejemplar en la historiografía contemporánea", *Dynamis* 23 (2003), 27–36 offers a select and updated bibliography. In Spain, where the films under consideration were produced, the most recent monographic work on the subject is by Enrique Perdiguero, ed., *Salvad al niño. Estudios sobre protección a la infancia en la Europa Mediterránea a comienzos del siglo XX* (Valencia, 2004). See the "Introducción" of this volume (pp. 15–25) for more bibliography on the history of child health, especially, pp. 15–17.

⁷¹ Edward Seidler, "Über die Lebensschwäche", *Episteme*, 1 (1967), 45–60.

The 'figurations' of the child's body- a term used by C. Castañeda⁷² as a tool for describing the child's appearances in discourses as well as across them include both material and symbolic elements of this state of fragility.

In the case of the two films that we analysed, there are several types of material elements. First, we see the protagonists, the 'actual children', the focus of attention of the institutions in those situations where their lives are at risk, in other words in almost all situations. Then, the other main actors: the 'doctors', social agents who, armed with science and technology, present themselves as figures able to transform weakness into strength. The 'nurses' play a secondary but nonetheless important role in giving form, through the routine work of care and prevention (vaccinations, weighing and measuring, general care of the baby), to the new paediatric theories which are able to save the child. The 'mothers' are the final link in the chain and ensure that the culture of the active struggle against biological weakness is carried into each home in defence of each child. Finally we have the protective 'spaces', the institutions, with an architecture, facilities and regulations to consolidate the manifesto statements of doctors and politicians. These spaces will provide complete, considered, systematic and carefully planned protection and supervision.

The camera accurately captures the fragility of the child protagonists. In the case of "New Lives", there are two powerful images: firstly, in comparison with other animal species (the birds or lambs which appear at the beginning of the third part) we are made aware of how long it takes human beings before they are able to fend for themselves and, in the second place, we see a still with ghost-like silhouettes of deceased children designed to show the advantages of maternal breast-feeding.

Medical science comes to the assistance of children, banishing popular beliefs (a baby's head should not be covered all day, the dummy is inadvisable, babies should not wear tight dressings) and regulates each and every one of the aspects of their life. In very clear terms the child is shown as an object of knowledge and scientific practices. The scenes showing the childcare measures carried out by the nurse, do not in truth look like rooms in normal homes, but instead the conditions appear aseptic, cold, and almost hospital-like. The rules of hygiene which the mother must follow in the preparation of bottles are similar "to those of the surgeon in the operating theatre", says the narrator. This is a means of persuasion which puts women on a par with surgeons, if they are capable of emulating them in their own small family and domestic environment.

The biological weakness is also illustrated in the film by Thous, but by showing us different institutions much more attention is focussed on the various social problems. In this case the camera searches out that infancy in which the biological weakness is exacerbated by social hardship. The children who appear in 'Valencia, Protector of Children' come from the disadvantaged social classes. Abandoned chil-

72 Claudia Castañeda, *Figurations. Child, Bodies, Worlds* (Durham and London, 2002).

dren, accommodated in homes like the 'House of Mercy', are the most obvious expression, but in addition there are those who attend the Milk Depot or the Breast-feeding Home. They are poor children, humbly dressed, their hair badly cut and on occasions with signs of malnutrition. They are the children of poor mothers, with espadrilles and aprons, untidy hair and no jewellery. In this case they do appear more like the working woman that we see in 'New Lives'. There is an exception, the scenes within the premises of the Provincial Childcare School, we see some women who are well dressed, with lace collars and fashionable hair styles. These are the women who devote their time to the home and family and are able to fulfil their duties under the guidance of medical science.

The stills in the film by Thous show the changes which take place in closed institutions. The abandoned boy or girl, dirty and untidy, is transformed into another child, clean, tidy and dressed in the uniform of the home, which identifies all the children as guests of the institution. These are the typical 'before' and 'after' pictures which have been described by other authors.⁷³ The children housed in reformatories, dangerous children but still children in danger, have an added feature: their hair is cropped short, an unmistakeable sign of their status as inmate.

The weakest children are exposed to a thousand dangers. Illness and death are real possibilities. The propaganda message of the Valencian film is achieved by means of panoramic views of the health institutions, and above all, by the appearance of sick children in the Maritime Hospital or the Tuberculosis Clinic. The film seeks to avoid any drama. In the stills, everything appears to be under control: perfect rows of beds with clean linen, children undergoing tests and receiving heliotherapy. The pictures are aseptic and removed from the immediate life of these deprived children. No concessions are made, no appeals designed to arouse feelings of compassion. There are very few close-ups of children's faces and yet the pictures are tremendously dramatic.

From the symbolic point of view, in both films the institutions seek to demonstrate their protective actions as a sign of civilisation, in a new humanitarian culture, the legacy of the Enlightenment. Science is the highest rung in this civilised state and uses all the means at its disposal; from the controlled natural elements, sun and climate, to the most sophisticated technical resources, both in closed institutions and with out-patients.

⁷³ Janet Golden, "The Iconography of Child Public Health: Between Medicine and Reform", *Caduceus* 12: 3 (1996), 55–72.

Conclusion

The use of cinema in the 1920s and 1930s in Spain as an instrument of health propaganda was restricted to rather isolated, sporadic ad hoc projects, and was always at the mercy of changing political circumstances – both frequent and dramatic in those times. However these isolated productions have a special cinematic and documentary interest.

The two films considered here, produced in very different political contexts, have different aims and characteristics. ‘Valencia, Protector of Children’, is a political propaganda film designed to show foreign audiences what could be achieved with the resources allocated to childcare. There is no educational message, though it was used in the Valencian rural context to raise awareness of proper childcare. On the other hand, ‘New Lives’ had a clearly educational message aimed at women.

In order to achieve their purposes, the two films chose different approaches. Unlike the documentary ‘Valencia, Protector of Children’, with its series of picture postcard scenes, ‘New Lives’ has a narrative and didactic component which seeks to involve the audience.

However, as we have pointed out, prominent in both cases is the role given to medical technology as a powerful instrument able to solve health problems. Medical science takes on a fundamental role in seeking changes in the behaviour of the general public. The different images associated with childcare and children’s health problems have a very clear message in both films: the way to solve them is an upbringing based on the criteria of medical science which teaches how to wash, dress and feed the child.

Both films also emphasise specific moral values which are linked to health, but while in the first film these are supported by the moral discourse of the Catholic Church and its huge role in childcare, the second illustrates a code of civic and secular values without any explicit reference to religious ones. Although the two films show a particular view of the woman in which she is assigned roles related always to the home and the care of their children, there are nuances. In the 1936 film, we see the image of women playing sports, either alone, or with men, and a more professional image of nurses. This reflects the changes sought in the Spain of that time.

Did the films achieve the ends we have considered? There is probably no answer to this question which does not simply lead us into the realms of speculation. The event in Paris, for which the Valencian documentary was designed, received it warmly, and later it was shown at other exhibitions and was probably seen by thousands of Valencian mothers or mothers-to-be. We have no information about the projection figures of the second film made during the republic, though the fact that the year of production coincided with the outbreak of the Civil War, suggests that

in spite of the good reviews it received at its first showing⁷⁴, it probably had little or no impact, at least before the conflict.

But regardless of the audience figures of both films: did they bring about the desired changes in behaviour? There is no way of knowing. During the Civil War and under the Francoist regime, health experts retained their faith in health education, especially through cinema. For instance, Julio Bravo, who continued to be involved in health propaganda, produced a film on tuberculosis,⁷⁵ which as yet we have been unable to retrieve. Therefore those in charge of health education continued to trust in this medium as a way to transmit specific messages to the general public, although in a radically changed context.⁷⁶ Public health retained more or less the same organisational format⁷⁷ after the end of the Civil War, until the setting-up in 1942 of the Compulsory Health Insurance and the greater emphasis on health-care relegated it in the medium term to a secondary role.

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74 Domínguez-Lasierra (1999), p. 13–14.

75 Domínguez-Lasierra (1999), p. 14. Domínguez-Lasierra (2002), p. 17.

76 On the health education projects of the Francoist regime concerning mother and child see Enrique de Yturriaga, “Plan de propaganda sanitaria maternal e infantil”, in *Estudios oficiales de la Primera reunión anual de Médicos Puericultores del Estado*, (Madrid, 1943), pp. 83–98.

77 Esteban Rodríguez-Ocaña, “The Politics of Public health in the State-Managed Scheme of Healthcare in Spain”, in I. Löwy and J. Krige, eds., *The images of Disease. Science, Public Policy and Health in Post-war Europe* (Luxembourg, 2001), pp. 187–210.

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