

ANNETTE FÖRSTER

**WOMEN IN THE  
SILENT CINEMA**

Histories of Fame and Fate



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University  
Press



EYE FILMMUSEUM

## WOMEN IN THE SILENT CINEMA



**FRAMING FILM** is a book series dedicated to theoretical and analytical studies in restoration, collection, archival, and exhibition practices in line with the existing archive of EYE Filmmuseum. With this series, Amsterdam University Press and EYE aim to support the academic research community, as well as practitioners in archive and restoration.

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Top: Nell Shipman in *BAREE, SON OF KAZAN* (fragment, see page 329)

Middle: Musidora, publicity portrait (fragment, see page 136)

Bottom: Adrienne Solser in an unidentified film (fragment, see page 98)

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# Introduction

This book presents the careers and oeuvres of three women filmmakers from the silent era, and two of them for the first time comprehensively in English language scholarship. Adriëne Solser, a comic actress and a producer of mixed stage and film shows in The Netherlands, is virtually unheard of in international scholarship. Musidora derived her fame in international film history and feminist theory from her roles as the female criminal in French crime series, but the large body of comic films in which she acted or the three dramas and the mixed stage and film production which she directed in France deserve much more consideration than they have so far received. With Nell Shipman, a Canadian born actress and filmmaker who used to work in the United States, the reverse is the case: the films she produced and directed were indeed the subject of historical and feminist research, but her acting career on the American popular stage or in the cinema were not. In this book, I reconstruct the full range of each career, as actresses and filmmakers in the silent cinema and as actresses in early twentieth century stage entertainment. Each career, moreover, is situated in its historical and national context. The oeuvres discussed each include an array of stage performances, a set of leading roles in films directed and produced by others, and a number of feature films and shorts produced and (co-) directed by the woman filmmaker in question. Each woman's work additionally encompasses a variety of writings, including novels, short fiction and scenarios (in the case of Musidora and Shipman), notes for the live accompaniment of films (Solser), self-presentations in the contemporary press as well as memoirs and reminiscences written in retrospect (Musidora and Shipman). The result is an exciting and compelling triple journey through bygone cultural worlds from the vantage point of the women at work in them, including the dramas and the humor, the endurance and the pragmatism, the accomplishments and the hard-

ships; in short: the histories of fame and fate that theatre and film careers during the silent era epitomize.

10 | The careers of the three actresses and women filmmakers bear significant parallels. This was an era in which filmmakers learned their *métier* in practice, so many worked as actresses before they endeavored to produce and direct films. Solser, Musidora and Shipman each had achieved a degree of fame on the stage and on the screen before they took the entrepreneurial and artistic risks involved in establishing their own film companies. Another shared element was that they usually cast themselves in the leading roles in the films they produced. Additionally, at the time, none of the three used to claim the directing credit of these films for herself alone. A final significant parallel follows from the diverse historical cultural contexts of entertainment in which each built her career. The Netherlands had a relatively small and unstable film production in the silent era, but a thriving national popular theatre. France and the United States were leading film producing countries that exchanged their world hegemony during the Great War. Whereas in the US the popular stage suffered from the advent of the cinema, in France it continued to prosper alongside and in interaction with it. The questions opened up by the parallels among these three women broaden the scope of issues to be accounted for in comparison with the questions raised if only one of the three women were considered. The emphasis shifts, for instance, from one woman's filmmaking practices and accomplishments to the significance of their stage and screen acting, and by consequence, to these women's views of the acting *métier* and of the role of a film's director. The parallels also prompt a historical contextualisation of the ambitions and aspirations that motivated the twists and turns of the versatile careers under scrutiny and called attention to the national stage and film genres that proved pivotal to them. The shifting relationships between the stage and the cinema, last but not least, demanded substantial research into the professional models, options and choices these women had in the entertainment business in the first decades of the twentieth century and in which regards their careers epitomized those of other women, or men, in the country in which it occurred.

Through reconstructing the professional itinerary of each actress/filmmaker, histories of the Dutch, French, and American popular stage and film cultures of the first decades of the twentieth century are provided from the vantage point of the women at work in them. These historical contexts are considered in their dynamics of change and interaction as well as in their cultural specificity. Each career move is understood as interacting with shifts within media and among disciplines. The various components of the oeuvres are studied in relation to these shifts, as well as in terms of their internal continuities and discontinuities. The general thesis that this book defends, is

that women's careers and oeuvres make a difference to histories of the silent cinema and of the early twentieth century popular theatre, because they may highlight and exemplify practices and genres in popular cultures of the time that otherwise remain largely obscured.

## The Method of Writing Careerographies

What is provided in the process, I propose to call "careerographies": reconstructions of careers that have occurred in a given time and a given place and that have materialized in oeuvres, which comprise a number of roles on stage and on screen, of films and of writings. In each "careerography", the professional itinerary and components of the oeuvre of an actress/filmmaker is historicized and contextualized. For that aim, the research has focused on the material, intertextual and interdisciplinary conditions of each career and oeuvre separately. "Careerographies" are multilayered and interdisciplinary, as well as affirmative and non-hierarchical; they do not necessarily privilege cinema over other disciplines and media and they reflect the spirit of the times in professionalism, entrepreneurial practices and shifts within and among a range of disciplines and media.

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Because Solser was relegated to the margins of film history and of feminist research, and Shipman's and Musidora's presences were confined to one aspect of their oeuvres, it was my concern to develop an alternative for the hierarchies that underpin such perspectives. Instead of presupposing that the films directed by these women were more prone to historical and feminist scrutiny than the roles they had acted, or vice versa, and instead of assuming that the stage acting was not related to their work in the cinema, or vice versa, I investigated the three components of each career from a non-hierarchical perspective. This research strategy opened up the possibility to approach each career and oeuvre analogous to how early cinema is considered in modern day film history, that is to say as "a site of shifts and struggles, of roads not taken and paths unexpectedly crossing,"<sup>1</sup> to cite Thomas Elsaesser's summarizing words about this broad and innovative field of investigation. It implies that I consider both continuous and discontinuous relations and developments within and around each career and oeuvre.

Two further strategies advocated by Elsaesser have guided my general approach. One concerns the application in early film history of "a demotion of intrinsic filmic evidence."<sup>2</sup> Although film analysis has been an indispensable tool, it was by no means the only one. It could not be, especially for the stage acting components of the careers, because to stage performances films obviously were less relevant than stage texts and reviews. For their screen careers,

moreover, film viewing was only an option insofar as prints were extant or accessible and a substantial number were not. This awareness invited the inclusion of a wide variety of sources in the investigation, for establishing what Elsaesser has called “the media-intertext”<sup>3</sup> of the careers and oeuvres. Another strategy concerns the approach to this non-filmic material, both primary and secondary. In the research, I have taken literal the call by Robert Allen to “suspect every biography and check every monograph.”<sup>4</sup> I have understood this suspicion and need for checking as applying to the establishment of facts and what can count as evidence, as well as to the relation of a particular text with the discourse of which it was, or now is, part. Both strategies have prompted extensive archival research for contemporary documents and for textual sources pertinent to the careers and oeuvres under scrutiny.

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The importance of examining cultural specificity in popular cultures in relation to the marginalization of the work of women derives from Giuliana Bruno’s momentous study on the Neapolitan woman filmmaker Elvira Notari.<sup>5</sup> Bruno connects the historic eclipse of the films of Notari not only to the long scholarly neglect of Italian silent cinema, but also to “the disregard within this period of the regional, local, and differential Neapolitan production, grounded in a popular culture.”<sup>6</sup> Bruno’s micro-history of Notari draws attention to the fact that popular cultures are at once historically and culturally—that is to say, nationally, regionally or locally—specific. This insight became an important tool to understand the distinct choices for genres and aesthetics made by Solser, Musidora and Shipman individually.

During the research in France and the Netherlands, it became apparent that for Musidora and Solser not only the screen acting, but also the stage acting, was an important component of their careers, if only because neither had abandoned live performing once they had begun acting for the camera. That both of them continued acting live on-stage gave me the inkling that this was not an idiosyncrasy but rather a symptom of something significant. The inkling turned into a conjecture when I came across Eric de Kuyper’s passionate call for more research into the relation between silent film and the popular stage instead of re-invoking time and again the struggle of cinema to set itself free from its theatrical heritage.<sup>7</sup> De Kuyper argues that the nineteenth century popular stage had much more in common with the cinema of the 1910s than the focus on film specificity and differentiation allows for and that concepts such as “realism,” “spectacle,” and “mise-en-scène” constitute continuities between the two rather than that they can be claimed for film in particular. The emphasis on the competition between film and theatre emanates, according to De Kuyper, from a shortage of knowledge of the *popular* theatre of the late nineteenth century in film scholarship. This plea for an affirmative approach to the theatrical heritage in the cinema of the 1910s has

inspired my discussion of both Solser's and Musidora's oeuvres and, eventually, of Shipman's too. This affirmative approach permitted substantial forms of obscured popular culture to surface, most notably of Dutch and French popular stage genres and of an American popular theatre and literary genre. It also allowed for establishing the pertinence of each genre to the oeuvres to which it gave shape, and to examine the role each actress/filmmaker played in the migration of the genres from one discipline or medium to another.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, stage and film production in the three countries constituted an open and dynamic field of entertainment business. This openness and dynamism stimulated a "get up and go attitude," as Marsha McCreadie encapsulated it in the introduction to her study on American women screen writers.<sup>8</sup> One of these screen writers, Anita Loos, whose career began in the 1910s, articulated the pragmatism behind this attitude:

during those early years we had little respect for a *métier* that we looked down on as a mere passing fad. [...] Those of us whom the movies were making rich, were bent only on cashing in before the craze died out.<sup>9</sup>

The "get up and go attitude" can be found in the many loose affiliations and switches between companies and collaborators in the careers of the actresses/filmmakers under scrutiny. Some "fads" did pass quickly in the swiftly changing fields of stage and film entertainment of the time, and each of the three women experienced the fading of styles and genres that their acting careers had been thriving on. On the other hand, none of them was a "first" in her profession, certainly not as popular stage and screen actresses, but not even as women filmmakers; each had female predecessors and colleagues. Nonetheless, all three were self-taught professionals in a range of *métiers* that constantly changed and demanded new or extra skills. In addition, acting and directing are rarely autonomously executed crafts and usually require collaboration with others. The collective nature of both the work and the profession demanded research into models and teams. The professional dynamism required investigation into the historically and culturally specific conditions of the subsequent *métiers* that each of the women chose.

The interest in screen acting likewise borrows from Heide Schlüpmann's research on the silent film actress Asta Nielsen. Schlüpmann analyses how Nielsen in her early films distinguished her physical acting before the camera from her acting within the diegesis. In so doing, Nielsen created a specific relation to spectators, in that she made them aware of their presence in the auditorium and that she addressed them as female narrators.<sup>10</sup> The distinction made by Schlüpmann between diegetic and extra-diegetic acting and the

agency ascribed to the actress proved to be a useful tool for analysing the relations with the camera and with spectators created by the actresses in question and the forms of address they developed.

14 | The non-hierarchical treatment of the three components of each career, the study of obscured popular genres, the non-oppositional relation of the actresses/filmmakers with the popular cultures in which they worked and the investigation of historically and culturally specific conditions of stage acting, screen acting, and film making invited an intertextual pragmatic of examining preceding and concurrent texts. Also in this regard, Bruno's study on Notari has been inspirational, particularly in its insistence that the nature of a research subject determines its approach.<sup>11</sup> While Bruno was faced with a largely lost body of films, I dealt with a mixture of available and missing material. Among the missing material, then, are the stage roles, various screen roles and several films belonging to the oeuvres of each actress and filmmaker. Like Bruno, who draws from Gérard Genette's theory of intertextuality,<sup>12</sup> I have retraced these missing elements with the help of paratextual material: reviews, autobiographical statements by the actresses/filmmakers, synopses, scenarios, novelizations, and preceding texts such as novels and stories from which the works were adapted.

My curiosity, however, was for something different than the women's "fictional 'scene of writing'," as Bruno articulates her understanding of Notari's unclaimed authorship.<sup>13</sup> Driven by the awareness that Musidora and Shipman had been established authors, producers and directors at the time, I searched for knowledge of the choices each actress/filmmaker made as a craftswoman on the stage and in the cinema: how they adopted, adapted and reworked crafts, genres, styles, and subject matter. I have not only done so in related texts, but in the films and the roles as well. This required a more pragmatic method than theoretically reconstructed authorship would have permitted. For that reason, I probed the material from a Bakhtinian angle, as explained by Robert Stam:

Dialogism refers to the relation between the text and its others not only in the relatively crude and obvious forms of an argument—polemics and parody—but also in much more diffuse and subtle forms that have to do with overtones, pauses, implied attitude, what is left unsaid or is to be inferred.<sup>14</sup>

Implied attitude, what is left unsaid or is to be inferred were often highly pertinent for interpreting a statement. Moreover, Bakhtinian translanguistics allows for an understanding of authorship that deviates from originating or creating authors, as in *auteurism*, or from the textual authorship desired by

spectators as in cultural theory. Bakhtin's authors are "existing in, and even in some measure created by, dialogue."<sup>15</sup> They are permeated and permeable with preceding and concomitant texts, which are consistently taken as "utterances," as discursive rather than as signifying practices.<sup>16</sup> Also, Bakhtin's understanding of textuality is not restricted to spoken words or written texts, but "applies by extension to the relation between languages, literatures, genres, styles and even entire cultures."<sup>17</sup> Notwithstanding, authors are concrete and apparent in history, as, for instance, the writer to whom Bakhtin devoted his book *Rabelais and his world*. "But in order to understand [Rabelais]," Bakhtin argues, "we must read him with the eyes of his contemporaries; we must see him against the thousand-year-old tradition that he represents."<sup>18</sup> Even though the traditions that the actresses and women filmmakers in this book epitomize are not that old, reading their careers and oeuvres with the eyes of their contemporaries became an important tool to understand the options and choices of these women filmmakers within the popular cultures in which their work took shape and which their work helped to shape. This tool allows for acknowledging the historical distance between the modern-day researcher and the just one-century-old traditions and genres relevant to the oeuvres of these women filmmakers that often appear, however, as no less unfamiliar to us than Rabelais' world.

My first and foremost intention is to delineate Adrienne Solser's, Musidora's, and Nell Shipman's aspirations and preferences, their professional options and choices in the swiftly changing fields of entertainment of the first decades of the twentieth century, and how they fared with and in them. My aim is to clarify the skills, views, risks and achievements involved, as well as the obstinacy, the courage, and the faith that brought them now fame, now twists of fate. Above all, I hope that my fondness of Solser, Musidora and Shipman and my delight in their performances shines through on every page.

## ARCHIVAL AND OTHER SOURCES

In search for films, personal documents, autobiographies, trade papers, newspapers, magazines and other relevant material, I consulted film archives and film collectors, a radio archive, film, theatre, and general libraries and municipal archives, as well as family members in the Netherlands, France, and the United States. The silent and archival film festivals Le Giornate del Cinema Muto in Pordenone and Il Cinema Ritrovato in Bologna, moreover, offered key opportunities to watch in projection and with appropriate accompaniment archival prints of films from the contexts of the oeuvres. Over the years, the internet became an increasingly important source of primary documents



such as hard-to-access film magazines and local newspapers. The material retrieved is copious and extremely diverse, and will be discussed in due detail in the main text; however, some specific finds and some details of the investigative work may illuminate its substance and pertinence to the subjects of inquiry.

## Nell Shipman in the Archives

16 | Nell Shipman is the only one of the three women filmmakers whose papers were assembled in a collection, together with eight of her extant feature-length and short films. The Nell Shipman Archive is housed in the Albertsons Library of Boise State University in Boise, Idaho and contains a wealth of material.<sup>19</sup> The host of published and unpublished autobiographic utterances, factional and fictional, as well as the correspondence was pivotal for my research. Shipman's memoirs, moreover, were published posthumously by the head of The Hemingway Western Studies Center, the late Tom Trusky, who established the collection. These memoirs are rare in three respects: first, for my research, Shipman's memoirs were the only one's available for consult—Musidora's were not and Solser's do not exist—; second, Shipman's memoirs were published as she had written them, in her candid, witty and astute style; third, the memoirs attest to a view that brings to mind modern-day approaches to silent cinema history, as Shipman speaks in terms of “[m]any broken threads going, seemingly nowhere; but some running straight, so their ends are traceable to their beginnings.”<sup>20</sup> This view and Shipman's penchant for self-reflection made her memoirs a rich source for my discussion of her career.

Nell Shipman's son Barry was already critically ill when he granted me two brief interviews at his home in San Bernardino, California about a month before he died at age eighty-four. Despite his condition, he was willing to answer my questions and to share his personal impressions of his mother and her work. I have gratefully incorporated them in my discussion of Shipman's treatment of genre.

Shipman's personal papers have been supplemented with documentation gathered by Trusky from contemporary trade papers, fan magazines, and eyewitnesses. Given the scope of the project, additional investigation was nonetheless due, most notably of trade papers such as *Moving Picture World* and *New York Dramatic Mirror*. Further research concerned Shipman's career as a stage actress. Over the course of time, more digitized local newspapers became available for download; additionally, complete transcriptions of novels—in which Shipman had acted in adaptations thereof—also became available. This permitted to reassess historically a sub-genre of popular literature,

theatre and cinema that appeared more than pertinent to Nell Shipman's career and oeuvre.

I had several opportunities to watch films from Shipman's oeuvre on video and DVD, but, most significantly, in projection. My first encounter with three of her films was in the invaluable historic program section of the Festival International de Films de Femmes in Créteil, near Paris, in 1989. In 1992, I included *BACK TO GOD'S COUNTRY* in a guest program in the former Netherlands Filmmuseum (now: EYE Filmmuseum). Since then, the film has been provided with a new musical score composed by Lindsay Cooper, with which it has been released on DVD by the Idaho Film Collection. Other preserved Shipman films were projected for me at Boise State University, and are now likewise available on DVD. Especially with silent films, watching them in projection on a big screen is often necessary to fully grasp the atmosphere, pictorial qualities, and narrative logic of these films.

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## Musidora in the Archives

Musidora's career and oeuvre required basic investigation. Two French publications of the 1970s extensively discuss her career, one written by the film historian and Feuillade-connoisseur Francis Lacassin, the other by filmmaker and radio film critic Patrick Cazals.<sup>21</sup> They made me aware of Musidora's career on-stage and on-screen, as well as of a vast body of writings about and by her. I gratefully took these publications as guides, but additionally undertook week-by-week, page-by-page examinations of the most important French film periodicals of the era in film libraries and archives in Paris, Brussels, Ghent and Amsterdam. In addition to reviews on Musidora's films, some periodicals contained self-statements about her experiences in acting and filmmaking, including short stories and semi-fictional accounts, that appeared to be highly pertinent to my search for Musidora's own views. Additional writings by Musidora were published in Cazals, which became a valuable primary source in this regard as well. The Fonds Musidora at the Bibliothèque du Film (BiFi), moreover, contained notes in Musidora's handwriting on one of her films that significantly influenced my impression of it. From the archives of Radio Suisse Romande, tapes were obtained of radio lectures that Musidora had given in the 1940s.

In the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Arts du Spectacle in Paris, I consulted various files relevant to Musidora's career, among which a collection of synopses allowed for a reassessment of the comic films in which Musidora had acted at Gaumont. Most important for the research on Musidora's stage-acting career appeared the daily for the performing arts,

*Comoedia*, as well as the Collection Rondel, which contains programme booklets and reviews of revues in which Musidora had acted. A pivotal source for understanding the Parisian popular stage of the time proved a series of articles by musicologist Louis Laloy in the contemporary magazine of classical and popular music, *La Revue Musicale S.I.M.*

18 | From Musidora's screen-acting career, I had access to the episode films *LES VAMPIRES* (on screen at the Nederlands Filmmuseum and in *Le Giornate del Cinema Muto*, as well as on video) and *JUDEX* (on screen at the Festival International de Films de Femmes in Créteil and on the editing table at the Cinémathèque Royale in Brussels). Over the years, moreover, one Musidora production after the other re-surfaced in French archives, including *SOLEIL ET OMBRE* at the Cinémathèque française in Paris and Fort de Saint-Cyr, as well as *LA TERRE DES TAUREAUX* and *POUR DON CARLOS* at the Centre National de la Cinématographie in Bois d'Arcy. I was also able to view several short subjects with Musidora as an actress at the Cinémathèque Gaumont in Neuilly-sur-Seine. These subjects included the only surviving Feuillade film farce with Musidora in the cast, *LAGOURDETTE GENTLEMAN CAMBRIOLEUR*. Thanks to the restoration of the film by the Cineteca di Bologna and the Gaumont Pathé Archives, I was able to include it in an homage to Musidora in *Il Cinema Ritrovato* at Bologna in 2011. The fragment of *LE RÉVEIL DE L'ARTISTE*, finally, was rediscovered by the Parisian film restoration company *Lobster Film*. As for the latter three films—*POUR DON CARLOS*, *LAGOURDETTE GENTLEMAN CAMBRIOLEUR* and *LE RÉVEIL DE L'ARTISTE*—, this is the first book in which they are discussed in due detail.

When Musidora died unexpectedly in 1957, she had been working for eleven years at the Cinémathèque française, as the head of the Press and Documentation Department and as the documentarian of the Commission des Recherches Historiques, which was an oral history project for documenting early and silent cinema initiated by Henri Langlois. Musidora was assigned to organize the sessions and to transcribe the taped discussions, the minutes of which are being preserved at the BiFi in Paris. They did not contain a session on Musidora's self-produced films, only incidental remarks. She had donated prints of her films to the Cinémathèque, and was busy creating a file on Colette, but had kept most of her personal papers at her home in Bois-Le-Roi.<sup>22</sup> This is where Lacassin at the end of the 1960s, and Cazals a decade later, were able to consult Musidora's scrapbooks and correspondence. Patrick Cazals informed me, moreover, that soon after he had begun writing his book, Musidora's only son Clément Marot had an accident that incapacitated him. Since then, Musidora's collection seems to be inaccessible. By consequence, on Musidora's options and choices quite a bit remained and remains to be inferred.

## Adriënne Solser in the Archives

Adriënne Solser's daughter, the film editor Lien d'Oliveyra, died before I started the research on her mother. The founder of the Nederlands Filmmuseum, the late Jan de Vaal, had himself searched for papers of Solser's and found that none were retrievable, as he assured me when I told him of my plans to include her in this project. In 1992, the Filmmuseum acquired the small collection that now constitutes the "Archief Adriënne Solser en Lien D'Oliveyra 1904-1952". The Solser part of it consists largely of notebooks with handwritten texts of songs, duets, and monologues that Solser used to deliver on stage and with her films. It also contains a scrapbook with press clippings about a tour throughout the Netherlands in the early 1930s that Solser made with two of her films. In all its scantiness, the material eventually appeared of high pertinence to establish Solser's stage and screen persona and her practice of performing live with her films.

This was also how the material was used by the EYE Filmmuseum for the restoration of two of Solser's films. Not only were two surviving prints reconstructed, but also Solser's performances with them. Among a group of musicians commissioned to develop appropriate live accompaniment with silent films were the pianist Stefan Ram and the jazz-singer Jet Pit. From the notebooks and through lip-reading, Jet Pit reconstituted the songs and the spoken text with which Solser used to accompany the films. I have been able to watch more than once the show she makes of it, at the Amsterdam cinema Tuschinski with a local public akin to the one for which it was intended and at the Festival International de Films de Femmes at Créteil with an international women's audience. Each time it was an event, a cross-media show with great appeal to a public appreciative of Amsterdam or farcical humour. To attend these shows fundamentally informed my research on and impression of Solser's style and practice.

In order to retrace Adriënne Solser's career on stage and in cinema, I followed a procedure akin to the one developed for Musidora's, although their film historic reputation differed considerably. If Musidora was time and again adulated as the star of Feuillade's serials, Solser's work in retrospect was estimated not cinematic enough to be taken seriously. To my surprise and delight, however, this was not the case in her times: film periodicals and newspapers reviewed her films and performances with regard for their specific qualities and conditions of reception. On this basis, I began to surmise that, at the time, there had been a more appropriate way of savouring Solser's work than if approached from a perspective of cinematic quality or film *per se*. My focus became to establish the material, interdisciplinary and intertextual conditions on which this work could thrive and survive well into the 1930s, which

led me to inquire into the traditions of popular stage forms and genres from which it drew. However, the history of the genres and forms pertinent to Solser's oeuvre appeared to be largely unwritten, so that on these too, archival research was necessary. Various sources have been of pivotal importance to this research: the files of the Stadsarchief Amsterdam relating to individuals, to theatres, and to stage performances, which included press clippings and handbills; the files on revue writers and popular stage critics in the collection of the TIN (the former Theater Instituut Nederland); the local newspaper *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, of which I did a day-by-day, page-by-page examination of the years 1883-1920 in the Gemeentearchief Rotterdam; the invaluable filmography of Dutch silent fiction *Of Joy and Sorrow* established by the late Geoffrey Donaldson; and a theatre and film paper of the 1910s that hitherto has been rarely consulted by historians of the popular stage and the cinema: *De Theatergids. Geïllustreerd Dagblad voor Tooneel, Muziek en Beeldende Kunsten*.

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### Note on the usage of Dutch and French names for genres and on translations

In the parts on Solser and Musidora, I have chosen to retain the names for genres of entertainment and performances as they were in the Netherlands and in France at the time. This is motivated by the fact that such names are often untranslatable in their cultural and historic specificity and that the same names refer to different phenomena as they were current in different entertainment cultures. For reasons of comprehensibility, moreover, non-English titles of films, plays, and performances have been translated. These translations are mine, unless stated otherwise.