

AGUSTINA DE ARAGÓN IN CAIRO. WOMEN WARRIORS AND NATIONAL HEROES IN GLOBAL HISTORY*

AGUSTINA DE ARAGÓN EN EL CAIRO. MUJERES GUERRERAS Y HÉROES NACIONALES EN LA HISTORIA GLOBAL

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ABSTRACT

This article uses recent findings from studies of women warrior and national heroes as an enduring and complex transnational and global phenomenon to re-examine the figure of the iconic Spanish example of such a figure: Agustina de Aragón. Specifically, it explores how and why she, and not others, was turned into a national hero, how Spaniards managed the subversion of gender roles that a woman warrior represented, the effect of her long outliving the events of 1808 that made her famous, and the extent to and ways in which her figure as a woman warrior circulated beyond Spain.

Keywords: Warriors, heroes, women, gender, global history

RESUMEN

Este texto se construye a partir de estudios recientes centrados en las mujeres guerreras y los héroes y heroínas nacionales como un fenómeno transnacional y global duradero y complejo con el fin de reexaminar la figura del icónico ejemplo español de Agustina de Aragón. De forma concreta se explora cómo y por qué ella, y no otras, se convirtió en una heroína nacional, cómo los españoles lograron la subversión de los roles de género que representaba una mujer guerrera, el impacto de su prolongada supervivencia a los acontecimientos de 1808 que la hicieron famosa y el alcance y las formas en que su figura como mujer guerrera circularía más allá de la propia España.

Palabras clave: Guerreras, heroínas, mujeres, género, historia global

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RESUM

AGUSTINA D'ARAGÓ A EL CAIRE. DONES GUERRERES Y HEROÏNES NACIONALS A LA HISTORIA GLOBAL

Aquest text es planteja a partir dels recents estudis centrats a les dones guerres i els herois i heroïnes nacionals com a un fenomen transnacional i global durador i complex amb la finalitat de reexaminar la figura de l'icònic exemple espanyol d'Agustina d'Aragó. De forma concreta explorem com i per què ella, i no d'altres, va convertir-se en una heroïna nacional, com els espanyols generaren la subversió dels rols de gènere que representava una dona guerrera, l'impacte de la seua prolongada supervivència als esdeveniments de 1808 que la van fer famosa i l'abast i les formes en que la seua figura com a dona guerrera circularà més enllà de la mateixa Espanya.

Paraules clau: Guerreres, heroïnes, dones, gènere, historia global

The eighty prints of Francisco Goya's *Disasters of War* present a panorama of virtually unrelieved horror and barbarism. French and Spaniards, men and women, soldiers and civilians: all are perpetrators and victims of savage violence. There is very little that is redeeming here. One exception is print number seven. A single woman in a white dress, bodies at her feet, stands beside a cannon which she is about to fire. Goya's lapidary caption: "Qué valor!", provides a discordant positive comment.

The woman in the print has her back to us but she is far from anonymous. Unlike the other scenes Goya portrays, either of generic violence or actual events involving nameless – and faceless – people, the protagonist of print number seven has a name, and one which has a distinguished place among Spain's pantheon of national heroes. She is Agustina de Aragón.

The topic of hero cults in modern Europe has attracted considerable attention: Special issues of *European History Quarterly* in October 2007 and July 2009 are but two indications.¹ This literature has repeatedly highlighted the

1 October 2007 on gender war and the nation in the period of the Revolutionary wars, and July 2009 on hero cults and the nation.



Fig. 1. Photo credit: Yale University Art Gallery.

role of gender: in the European context, heroes have been “overwhelmingly male” and that “most national hero cults in modern Europe emphasized male virility and strength while the unheroic ‘other’ against whom the narrative was principally directed was often feminized”.² They have also pointed out that “war, along with revolution unsettled gender norms in ways that could not be undone” and produced the apparently paradoxical trends of the establishment of complementary and separate spheres of male and female activity, alongside the presence of women engaged in a range of public activities during the war”.³ The literature on heroes has gone beyond studies of individual nations to look at the broader European context. As Robert Gerwarth puts it in his introduction to the recent special issue of *European Historical Quarterly* devoted to hero cults and the nation, one of the editors’ objectives was to begin to develop “a more integrated, Europeanized perspective on the politics of the past”.⁴

2 GERWARTH, Robert (2009) “Introduction”, *European Historical Quarterly*, vol. 39, p. 385.

3 HAGEMANN, Karen, AALESTAD, Karen and MILLER, Judith (2007), “Introduction”, *European Historical Quarterly*, volume 37, p. 504, and HAGEMANN, Karen, AALESTAD, Karen and MILLER, Judith A. (2007), “Preface”, *Historical Quarterly*, vol. 37, p. 499.

4 GERWARTH, “Introduction”, p. 383.

The recently-published collective volume *Women Warriors and National Heroes: Global Histories* has taken the question much further, approaching it as an enduring and complex transnational and global phenomenon that contains both “common patterns that have emerged across cultures through the telling and retelling of these stories, and points of divergence that reveal the specificities of each local context”. Its twelve contributors explore cases from Canada, Chile, China, Greece, India, Japan, Mexico, the Ottoman Empire, Peru, Spain, the United States, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe that give rise to a number of questions: how these figures are made and unmade over time; how the “critical disjuncture” of violent women is negotiated; how their subverting of gender roles is managed; and what happens when the women warriors who are turned into heroes outlive the events that made them famous. As well as emerging in separate places around the world, some of these figures were also transnational in that they traveled beyond the borders in which the actual flesh-and-blood women lived. They also cluster in two historical moments: the period of nation building and heightened nationalism in the last third of the 19th century and first third of the 20th and the years of unprecedented warfare, occupation and resistance of World War II and the decades of anti-colonial conflict that followed it.⁵ Agustina de Aragón is not the subject of a comprehensive study in that volume but she is mentioned a number of times.⁶

Agustina de Aragón has been the subject of considerable historical writing recently, but she is almost exclusively considered within a purely Spanish national context.⁷ My 2012 article in the *Journal of World History* that was the seed of the collective volume did analyze her experience in a comparative frame, alongside those of two figures from India’s First War of Independence against the British in 1857: Lakshmbai, the Rani of Jhansi, and Jhalkaribai.⁸ This paper proposes to revisit this classic example of a woman warrior and

5 COTHRAN, Boyd, JUDGE, Joan and SHUBERT, Adrian (eds.) (2020), *Women Warriors and National Heroes: Global Histories*, Bloomsbury, London, pp. 3 and 7-8.

6 COTHRAN, JUDGE and SHUBERT (eds.), *Women Warriors*, pp. 1, 2, 6, 7, 13, 59, 61, 162 and 163.

7 TONE, John Lawrence (2007), “A Dangerous Amazon: Agustina Zaragoza and the Spanish Revolutionary War, 1808-1814”, *European History Quarterly*, vol. 37, pp. 548-61; UCÉLAY DA CAL, Enric (2009), “Agustina, la dama del cañón”, in CASTELLS, Irene, ESPIGADO, Gloria and ROMEO, Mari Cruz (eds.), *Heroínas y patriotas. Mujeres de 1808*, Cátedra, Madrid, pp. 193-265; and QUERALT DEL HIERRO, María Pilar (2008), *Agustina de Aragón, la mujer y el mito*, La Esfera de los Libros, Madrid.

8 SHUBERT, Adrian (2012), “Women Warriors and National Heroes: Agustina de Aragón and Her Indian Sisters”, *Journal of World History*, vol. 23, pp. 279-313.

national hero in the light of what has been learned through this new global approach. Specifically, in this article I will explore the Agustina phenomenon in terms of how she, and not others, was turned into a national hero; how Spaniards managed the subversion of gender roles that a woman warrior represented; the effect of her long outliving the events of 1808 that made her famous; and the extent to and ways in which her figure as a woman warrior traveled.

AGUSTINA'S STORY

What did Agustina de Aragón do to become famous? In June 1808, a French army under General Lefebvre undertook a siege of the city of Zaragoza in northeastern Spain. Despite being vastly outnumbered and seeing much of the city laid to waste by the French assault, a junta under the command of Captain General José Palafox resisted the siege and compelled Lefebvre to lift it. Among the residents of the city was a young woman by the name of Agustina Saragossa y Domènech. Born in Barcelona in 1786, Agustina, with her young son, had gone to Zaragoza in the spring of 1808, following her husband, a junior artillery officer. Women played an important role in defending cities against sieges, especially carrying water and other provisions to the men who were fighting. Agustina was occupied in these tasks when the heroic moment presented itself. One British observer described Agustina: "Her countenance is mild and feminine; her smile pleasing and her face altogether the last I should have supposed to belong to a woman who had led troops through blood and slaughter and pointed the cannon at the enemy".⁹ General Palafox arrived at the scene shortly after Agustina's exploit, giving her a decoration and inducting her into the artillery as a soldier.

Historians rarely have the privilege of hearing women such as Agustina de Aragón express themselves in their own words, but in August 1809 she recounted the exploit that made her famous in a petition to the king. Agustina signed the petition but it was almost certainly drafted by someone else, presumably a lawyer or notary. Still, it contains touches one would not expect to find in a document addressed to the king and which may well be the sound of Agustina's own voice. "Pregúntese, Señor, quien hizo los primeros fuegos de la batería de la puerta del Carmen... Pregúntese quien se presenta delante de nuestra Tropa cuando... se trató de desalojar [a los

9 Cited in FRASER, Ronald (2008), *Napoleon's Cursed War*, Verso, London, p. 165.

Franceses] ... Pregúntese, Señor, que hizo esta Artillera a los tres o cuatro días que se repitió la misma salida...".¹⁰

Agustina "salió de Barcelona hacia la capital de Aragón a principios de Junio de 1808" and arrived "quando empieza a ser atacada por los Franceses. She immediately became involved in the defence of the city, taking up the usual women's role of encouraging the soldiers by "sirviendo tacos y otras provisiones". When the French began to bombard the Portillo gate, Agustina "pónese entre los Artilleros, los socorre, los ayuda y dice 'aquí hay mugeres cuando no podáis más'". Then came the key moment.

No había pasado mucho rato quando cae de un balazo en el pecho el cabo que mandaba al favor de otro jefe, al qual se retiró por muerto, y caen también de una Granada y abrasados de los cartuchos que volan casi todos los Artilleros, quedando por esta desgracia inutilizada la batería y espuesta a ser asaltada. Con efecto, ya se acercaba una columna enemiga quando *tomando la Esponente un botafuego pasa por entre muertos y heridos, descarga un canon de a 24 con bala y metralla* aprovechada de tal manera que levantándose los pocos Artilleros de la sorpresa en que yacían a vista de tan repentino azar, sostiene con ellos el fuego hasta llegar un refuerzo de otra puerta y oblige al enemigo a una vergonzosa y precipitada retirada.

Shortly afterwards, "la condecora el General [Palafox] con el título de Artillera y sueldo de seis reales diarios".

This was not the end of Agustina's service. She continued to work "en esta batería y en las demás a donde cargaban los Franceses". In addition, she would leave the battery "por auxiliar donde más era necesario, *con municiones, víveres y demás*". When Palafox saw her at this work "la concede los dos escudos con el lema Defensora de Zaragoza y Recompensa al Valor y Patriotismo". With her "entusiasmo patriótico" still strong, Agustina remained in the city when the second siege began at the end of December 1808, and she continued to act valiantly. "La Esponente, deteniéndose en medio de tanto peligro, quitó a un tambor francés la caja, cogía dos fusiles de los muertos y lo presenta todo al Comandante de su batería". Only "la cruel peste" that hit city could do what the French had been unable to: "hacerle desistir de su empeño de resistir a tan vil cañalla". Agustina was

10 Archivo General Militar, Segovia, Celeb., Caja 176, exp. 4. The following quotations are from this same document. Emphasis added.

on her sickbed when she heard the news that the city had finally fallen: "Pónese en pie, consigue que la ayuden a vestir, y también a su hijo de cinco años que se hallaba en igual estado, quiere salir huyendo, cae en manos del enemigo, y no falta quien dice 'ésta es la Artillera'". She and her son were forced to march with the other prisoners. They managed to escape but the child died soon afterwards "a la fuerza del contagio, fatiga del camino y falta de recursos para su asistencia". Agustina made it to Teruel, where the Governor gave her travel documents for Seville and two generals provided introductions to people there. "Señor, En vista de estos y otros hechos que no puede menos de gloriarse la Artillera Zaragoza con toda la Nación, qué no debe esperar de la generosidad con que VM sabe premiar *el valor y el patriotismo* más acendrado??" The petition bears a marginal note signed by Palafox confirming that what Agustina says in the document is true; "ha merecido por su valor y Buenos servicios las distinciones que usa y que es muy merecedora a la gracia que solicita".

Agustina's account is long on details of her exploits; indeed, those in the second siege receive more attention than her famous firing of the cannon during the first. It is, in contrast, short on her motivations. The French are frequently described as "el enemigo" and once as "vil canalla". Patriotism is mentioned twice. More ideological motives, such as defence of religion or the legitimate king, are totally absent. And personal motives, including romantic love or defence of family are equally scarce. Indeed, Agustina's references to her young son are minimal and tangential. Even his death is mentioned in a totally matter-of-fact-way.

Up until the moment she fired the cannon, Agustina de Aragón was engaged in the well-established role of women in early modern European siege warfare. Sieges were considered attacks "on the community, and as on other occasions when the community required protection, such as food riots", women took an active part.¹¹ This view is shared by Irene Castells, Gloria Espigado and María Cruz Romeo in their introduction to a volume on Spanish women during the war against Napoleon. The power vacuum caused by the invasion and the rhetoric about "the Spanish people" made a space for women, who were stimulated by the political and cultural implications of the conflict: religion and family as well as the monarchy. "Por

11 HOPKIN, John David Hopkin (2007), "Sieges, Seduction and Sacrifice in Revolutionary War: the 'Virgins of Verdun'", *European History Quarterly*, vol. 37, p. 531. Also LYNN II, John A. (2008), *Women, Armies and Warfare in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 164-165.

eso, y desde el principio, la prensa, los manifiestos, los proclamas, las representaciones plásticas de los acontecimientos de la Guerra, al tiempo que modulaban una idea de nación, se hacían eco de las gestas femeninas. Comenzó entonces un proceso de glorificación de las heroínas”.¹²

WHY AGUSTINA? MAKING A HERO

However, very few European women were subsequently elevated to their country's pantheon of national heroes. Agustina de Aragón was immediately celebrated for her role in the defence of Zaragoza against the French in 1808 and has retained a place as a national icon, perhaps the only individual Spanish woman to do so. How did this happen? How was Agustina made as a national hero and why has she remained one?

Turning a woman warrior into a national hero “is not a straightforward process” and once attained “heroic status remains both contingent and contested”.¹³ Agustina was far from being the only woman who took part in the defence of Zaragoza; nor was she the only one who was recognized at the time for her contributions or memorialized in visual representations. These began to appear almost immediately. The commander of Zaragoza, José Palafox, was unusually attentive to public relations and after the first siege had been lifted he invited a number of artists, Goya among them, to the city. Juan Gálvez and Fernando Brambila also went, and the visit led to the “popularísima” *Las Ruinas de Zaragoza*, which was one of the very first artistic renderings of the sieges. Their album consisted of 24 prints of the siege, followed by twelve “retratos de los principals heroes y heroínas, elegidos entre las personalidades que más se distinguieron en el primer Sitio”, among them Agustina and three other women heroes: María Agustín, Casta Alvarez and the Countess of Bureta, as well as a battle scene entitled *Combate de las zaragozanas con los dragones franceses*.¹⁴ Yet it was

12 CASTELLS, Irene, ESPIGADO, Gloria, and ROMEO, Mari Cruz (2009), “Heroínas por la patria, madres para la nación: mujeres en pie de guerra”, in CASTELLS, ESPIGADO and ROMEO (eds.), *Heroínas y patriotas*, pp.22-23 and 43.

13 COTHRAN, JUDGE and SHUBERT, “Introduction”, in COTHRAN, JUDGE and SHUBERT (eds.), *Women Warriors*, p. 1.

14 GASCA, Cecilio,(1905), *Album de los Sitios de Zaragoza*, Tipografía de Mariano Salas, Zaragoza p. ix. The defence of Zaragoza was also immediately glorified in other media as well. As early as 1809, audiences in Madrid could see performances of Gaspar de ZAVALA'S play, *Los patriotas de Aragón*, Ramón Ruiz, Madrid. There were also numerous epic poems. GARCÍA CARCEL, Ricardo (2007), *El sueño de la nación indomable*, Planeta, Barcelona, p. 168, fn 10.

Agustina alone who stuck in the national memory and achieved the status of national hero, while the others were all but forgotten.¹⁵ She remained a popular subject throughout the 19th century and into the present,¹⁶ and she has been represented in a wide range of media, both visual and otherwise: painting, sculpture, music, theatre, fiction, advertising, movies and, most recently, graphic novels.¹⁷

The answer to “why Agustina?” has various components. In part, it lies in timing. The high point of her importance and popularity came in the century between 1850 and 1950 when she was the subject of innumerable history paintings, *zarzuelas*, and two movies.

The upsurge in Agustina’s popularity coincided with the take-off in interest in the national history in the second half of the 19th century. This fits with the global chronology mentioned earlier. The publication of Modesto Lafuente’s multi-volume *Historia General de España*, which began in 1857, marked what José Alvarez Junco has called “a veritable collective obsession” for history writing in Spain, one that engaged a multi-generational group of intellectuals and produced “the canonical version of the past in national terms”.¹⁸ And this national version of the past needed “heroic figures who defended their nation or community against an invading force and thus came to personify the nation-state”.¹⁹ That Goya’s *Desastres de la Guerra*, with its representation of Agustina firing the cannon, was finally published in 1863 supports this argument. In 1870, her remains were transferred from Ceuta, where she had died, to Zaragoza. They landed on the peninsula at Cádiz, where “fueron escoltados y conducidos con la mayor pompa posible a la iglesia de San Juan de Dios”. The colonel in charge of receiving the remains

15 Not entirely forgotten, though: the Aragonese artist Marcelino de Unceta painted a portrait of Casta Alvarez in 1875. The mausoleum in which her remains were interred in 1908 was not for Agustina alone: it was called the Panteón de las Heroínas, and here she rejoined the other women who had stood out in the defence of Zaragoza.

16 In January 2010, Rosa Crespo, a female police officer who was serving with the United Nations in Haiti and died in the earthquake was described as an Agustina de Aragón. *El País*, January 20, 2010 [www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/Rosa/era/solidaria/siempre/estaba/dispuesta/colaborar/elpepiint/20100120elpepiint_3/Tes].

17 During the 1808 bicentenary celebrations, there was also a Facebook page – now extinct – (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Agustina-de-Aragon/126322070592>) about her.

18 ÁLVAREZ JUNCO José (2001), *Mater Dolorosa: la idea de España en el Siglo XIX*, Taurus, Madrid, pp. 201-202.

19 COTHRAN, JUDGE and SHUBERT (eds.), *Women Warriors*, p. 7.

described as Agustina as “la ínclita heroína”, “esa gloria nuestra, que lo es nacional” and “inmortal heroína”.²⁰

A second factor was the political malleability of Agustina’s act, a valuable quality in a country with competing visions of the national history.²¹ She became, to use Marina Warner’s description of Joan of Arc, “a diviner’s cup, which reflects on the surface of the water the image that the petitioner wants to see”.²² Joan herself has been claimed by clericals and republicans in the nineteenth century, by Vichy and the Resistance during the Second World War, and, most recently, by both the far-right Front National and gay rights activists. The selection of a mixed-race girl to portray Joan in the annual Joan of Arc festival in Orléans in February 2018 generated a torrent of racist abuse.²³ Agustina has been almost as malleable. Even during the Spanish Civil War, she was used as an example by both sides. For the Republic, which put out a stamp to her in 1939, Agustina was “la primera miliciana sobre el solar ibérica, una mujer del pueblo que legó a los españoles su ejemplo ‘luchando heroicamente por nuestras libertades’”. One Communist Party leaflet from December 1937 called on the women of Madrid, as “descendants of AGUSTINA DE ARAGÓN”, to inspire “a tu compañero, hijos y hermanos, aunque en la ruda pelea dejes jirones en tu propia vida”.



Fig. 2. Author’s collection.

20 Twenty years later, her grandson donated her medals and other souvenirs to the state. His mother, he said, motivated by “rectos principios del Patriotismo”, had refused various purchase offers from foreigners. The grandson proposed that the donation take place on May 2, and that the military parade be extended the short distance from the monument to the heroes of the Dos

For the Nationalists, she was an icon of the national struggle against the foreign invader, a precursor to the Generalísimo himself:

Agustina de Aragón, la heroína del primer Alzamiento Nacional General Francisco Franco, director del Segundo Alzamiento Nacional.²⁴

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, there was the nature of Agustina's heroism. The interest in national history extended to the arts, especially painting, and Agustina's moment, a single, highly dramatic act, lent itself perfectly to visual representation.

Agustina benefitted from the tremendous surge in importance of history painting in the second half of the 19th century, a surge prompted by the inauguration of the Exposiciones Nacionales de Bellas Artes in 1856. According to one art historian, these Exhibitions were responsible for history painting taking the place of religious painting. The prize money offered certainly supports this claim: the winning painting in the history category received 90,000 *reales*, compared to 35,000 for religious paintings and only 17,500 for landscapes. Over the life of the Exhibitions, artists entered 625 works with historical themes, of which 52 dealt with the War of Independence. Of these, the sieges of Zaragoza, with eleven paintings, were the favoured theme, eclipsing even the uprising of May 2, 1808 in Madrid and in this work Agustina was the most frequently repeated icon.²⁵

de mayo to the Military Museum. The second part of the request was rejected and the ceremony took place at the monument.

21 BOYD, Carolyn (1997), *Historia Patria: Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1875-1975*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

22 WARNWER, Marina (1999), *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism*, University of California Press, Berkeley, p. 7.

23 "French Far Right Attack Choice of Mixed-Race Girl for Joan of Arc Role", *The Guardian*, February 23, 2018 [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/23/french-far-right-targets-mixed-race-teen-playing-joan-of-arc>] (accessed February 19, 2020).

24 NÚÑEZ SEIXAS, Xosé Manoel (2006), *Fuera el invasor*, Marcial Pons, Madrid, pp. 87-88, 232-33; UCELAY DA CAL, "Agustina, la dama del cañón", in CASTELLS, ESPIGADO and ROMEO (eds.), *Heroínas y patriotas*, p. 211; and CARBAYÓ-ABENÁZAR, Mercedes (2001), "Shaping Women", *National Identity through the use of Language in Franco's Spain*, *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 7, p. 86.

This iconography was highly standardized: other than in the *Disasters of War*, which were not known until 1863, Agustina is shown from the side with her face plainly visible, either in profile or facing the viewer. The only significant difference was whether or not a priest was included, and in this regard the outliers have been by two foreign artists. In his *Defence of Zaragoza*, Englishman David Wilkie put a priest in a prominent position, crouching close to Agustina, engrossed in writing while she fires the canon.²⁶



Fig. 3. <https://www.rct.uk/collection/405091/the-defence-of-saragossa>.

The French artist, Augustin Burdet, makes the priest more prominent still: standing next to Agustina, cross raised and pistol is his belt. While clergy did play a role in the resistance to Napoleon, and some even became *guerrilleros*, the fact that no representation by a Spanish artist includes them

25 GUTIÉRREZ BURÓN, Jesús (1989), "La Fortuna de la Guerra de la Independencia en la Pintura del Siglo XIX", *Cuadernos de Arte e Iconografía*, volumen 2, p. 350-54; ÁLVAREZ JUNCO, *Mater Dolorosa*, p. 251; and REYERO, Carlos (1985) "Los sitios de Zaragoza", in *Actas III Coloquio de Arte Aragonés*, Diputación General de Aragón, Zaragoza, p. 325.

26 Enric Ucelay da Cal argues that Wilkie's Agustina is "highly sexualized, the negation of the embodiment" of the nation. UCELAY DA CAL, "Agustina, la dama del cañón", pp. 204-205.

suggests that Wilkie and Burdet may well have been motivated by either the common foreign view that Spaniards were a particularly priest-ridden people or the Romantic image of the warrior priest. Agustina firing the cannon is the moment shown in virtually all the visual representations. Only a couple of portraits, both of which show her in uniform, do not refer to it. Even Juan Gálvez's 1810 portrait, which does not portray the battle but puts Agustina in a pastoral setting, has her leaning against a cannon with dead bodies at her feet.



Fig. 4. Juan Gálvez, *Agustina de Aragón*
© Museo Lázaro Galdiano. Madrid.

What was true of painting was also true of monuments. The late 19th and early 20th centuries were the moment that Carolyn Boyd has called “monument mania” and Carlos Reyero and Ignacio Peiró Martín see as a “Golden Age of the public monument” that contributed to the creation of a “landscape of official memory”.²⁷ This is part of what Joep Leerssen has presented as

the continent-wide phenomenon of “Romantic Nationalism” which included, among many other things, making public spaces “increasingly nationalized and historicized by architectural, pictorial and sculptural means”.²⁸

The celebration of the first centenary in 1908 gave Agustina’s public profile a major boost. Zaragoza was the “epicenter” of the celebrations and the only place in the country to receive funding from the national government. (This supports Stéphane Michonneau’s findings for Barcelona between 1830 and 1930 about the primacy of local rather than state initiative in Spanish memory politics before the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.)²⁹ Most of the events emerged from local initiatives and the celebration reflected the struggle between Catholics and liberals and republicans. The Church made a major effort to infuse the centennial with a religious flavor and it succeeded quite well.³⁰ King Alfonso XIII and most leading politicians were in the audience when Canon Florencio Jardiel gave the eulogy for the heroes of the sieges in which he described patriotism as the “baluarte” of religious faith. For his part, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Zaragoza described the struggle against Napoleon as less a patriotic war than a religious crusade. The celebrations also stressed local heroes, especially the women, and here Agustina had pride of place. Her act of glory filled one face of the monument to the heroes of the siege that was inaugurated in the presence of Alfonso XIII, and he presided over the transfer of her remains from the cathedral to a specially constructed mausoleum in the church of Our Lady of the Portillo.³¹

27 BOYD, Carolyn (1999), “Statue-mania in 19th-century Spain”, Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies, April 1999; REYERO, Carlos (2009), “El reconocimiento de la nación en la historia. El uso espacio-temporal de pinturas y monumentos en España”, *Arbor*, vol. 185, p.1206; and PEIRÓ, Ignacio (2017), *En los altares de la patria*, Akal, Madrid. See also CASTELLS, Luis (2010), “Celebremos lo local, celebremos lo nacional. Política estatuaría en el País Vasco (1860-1923)”, in *Procesos de nacionalización en la España contemporánea*, Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca, pp. 355-378.

28 LEERSEN, Joep (2014), “When was Romantic Nationalism? The Onset, the Long Tail, the Banal”, *NISE Essays*, 2 [<http://nise.eu/news/new-publication-on-romantic-nationalism/>], p. 13.

29 MICHONNEAU, Stéphane (2007), *Barcelone: Mémoire et identité 1830-1930*, Université de Rennes, Rennes, p. 13.

30 MORENO LUZÓN, Javier (2007), “Fighting for the National Memory: The Commemoration of the Spanish ‘War of Independence’, 1908-1912”, *History and Memory*, vol. 19, pp. 75-80.

31 Cited in PEIRÓ, Ignacio and RÚJULA, Pedro (2000), *Trabajo, Sociedad y Cultura. Una Mirada al Siglo XX en Aragón*, Publicaciones Unión, Zaragoza, p. 282.

Agustina's moment appears on the monument to the sieges of Zaragoza, and it is also the subject of the monument in Fullea, her parents' home town. Mariano Belliure's 1902 statue in the Zaragoza city hall is a partial exception. It does not show Agustina firing the canon but does make reference to it. The statue consists of a bust of Agustina perched atop a vertical canon covered in wreaths.³² The image proved so powerful that it was quickly co-opted for other purposes, including the cover of the sheet music for Justo Blanco's *jota* "Agustina de Aragón", published in 1893, which before was illustrated with a drawing of Agustina firing the canon; the dead soldiers at her feet were accompanied by a crossed rifle and guitar.

Just as Spain has had competing nationalisms, Agustina's role as a national icon has not gone uncontested. Basque nationalism, with its particular take on the role of women, has been keen to create its own pantheon, including creating its own women warriors. In his role as playwright, Sabino Arana would create the figure of Libe as a genuine Basque woman warrior; twelve years later she would be cast as a much more feminine figure by Manuel de la Sota. In the meantime, Sorne Untzueta, leader of the Basque nationalist women's organization Emakume Abertzale Batza declared that the movement had no need for figures like Agustina de Aragón or Joan of Arc: the "total volume of work undertaken" by Basque women was more "interesting."³³

REPRESENTING – AND DOMESTICATING – AGUSTINA

How did Spaniards manage the subversion of gender roles that a woman warrior represents? The most common strategy is "to have these intrepid heroines revert to their feminine roles shortly after performing their feat of bravery".³⁴ Many visual representations did just this, portraying Agustina in the women's clothes she would have worn at the time. Both David Wilkie and Agustin Burdet do so, as do almost all of the Spanish artists who rendered her, such as Juan Gálvez and Goya himself. Miguel Navarro Cañizares' *Defence of Zaragoza* (1862), which was later used on a sherry label by the Fuentes Parrilla company, is an excellent example. The posters for both movies about her show Agustina in woman's clothes, although the one for Florian Rey's 1928 film represents her as almost masculine in her ferocity.

32 Cited in *Zaragoza y los sitios*, (Zaragoza, 1952), p. 35.

33 ARESTI, Nerea, "Women Warriors or Mothers of the Fatherland: Hero Cults and Gender in Basque Nationalism", in COTHRAN, JUDGE and SHUBERT (eds.), *Women Warriors*, pp. 59-61.



Fig. 5. Early twentieth-century sherry label based on *The Defence of Zaragoza* by Miguel Navarro Cañizares (1862). Courtesy of José Luís Jiménez.

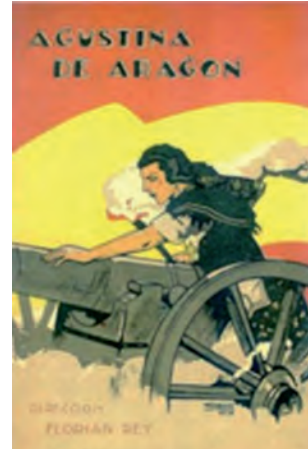


Fig. 6. Biblioteca Nacional de España.

There are also a number of exceptions, including what was likely the first portrait of Agustina ever done. In a miniature painted by a Col. Landmann while she was in Gibraltar in 1809 she appears wearing a military tunic. Another exception was the portrait painted by Lucio Rivas, now exhibited in the Museo del Ejército in Toledo, that shows her standing next to a cannon wearing a military tunic, her medals, and a sword. In 1885, Agustina's granddaughter, Agustina Atienza Cobos, painted another portrait of her in military uniform. A commission from the ayuntamiento of Zaragoza, the painting and was exhibited in the Exposición Aragonesa of 1885-1886.³⁵

34 COTHRAN, JUDGE and SHUBERT, "Introduction", p. 11.

35 In 2009, the city of Zaragoza named a street after Agustina Atienza Cobos. It had previously born the name of a Francoist officer, Coronel Arce [https://www.elperiodicodearagon.com/noticias/temadia/coronel-arce-nieta-agustina_492335.html]. In 2017, the mayor of Zaragoza, Pedro Santistevé (Podemos) replaced the portrait of King Felipe VI in his office with the portrait of Agustina de Aragón. [<https://intereconomia.com/noticia/alcalde-zaragoza-cambia-retrato-del-rey-despacho-agustina-aragon-20170210-1333/>].



Fig. 7. Anónimo
Retrato de Agustina de Aragón, h. 1809.
Acuarela. Fundación Ibercaja. Museo
Goya, Zaragoza.

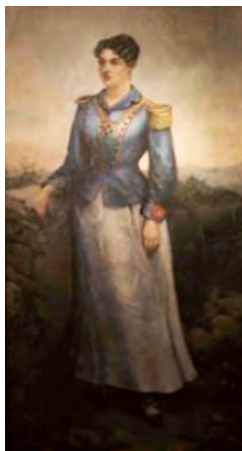
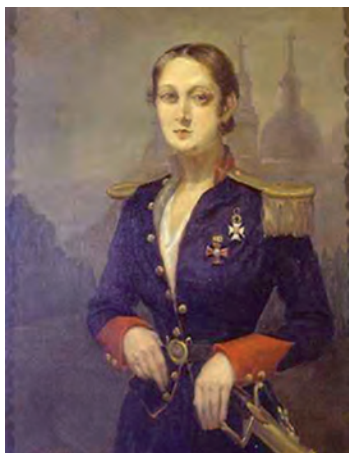


Fig. 8. Left: <https://www.alamyimages.fr/agustina-saragosse-je-domenech-conocida-como-agustina-de-aragon-1786-1857-subteniente-infanteria-auteur-lucio-ribas-emplacement-alcazar-museo-de-lejercito-coleccion-toledo-espagne-image208186218.html>

Fig. 9. Right: http://www.zaragoza.es/ciudad/cultura/patrimonio/detalleBien_PatrimonioCultural?id=513

Two monuments in Zaragoza inaugurated during the 1908 centennial give contradictory images. The monument to the Sieges contains a conventional Agustina, dressed in women's standing beside the cannon she is about to fire. (This is also how she appears in the statue in her home town of Fullede.) In the monument to Agustina herself, however, she stands atop a cannon, a dead civilian at her feet, wearing a military tunic with prominent epaulettes and her medals.

Other forms of representation: history writing, fiction, theatre and film address Agustina's motivations in crossing the line that separated the "normal" behaviour of women during a siege from the man's role of direct military action. They provide two conflicting answers. The Agustina we find here is driven either by the feminine motivation of love or the masculine motivation of patriotism.

The first important account came from Palafox, the commander at Zaragoza, and he attributed her heroic act to a motivation he himself invented: Agustina was moved to act by the death of her lover, an artillery sergeant. This fiction would have a long afterlife, starting with Lord Byron:

Her lover sinks- she sheds no ill-timed tear;...
Who can appease like her a lover's ghost?...
Yet are Spain's maids no race of Amazons
But form'd for all the witching arts of love.

This version was repeated by Emilio Castelar in a book on Spanish women published shortly before he became President of the First Republic in 1873. Before describing Agustina's actions, he says that Aragonese women in general "undoubtedly have something manlike about them". Yet, "her first impulse was that of a woman: seeing the sergeant whom she loved dead at her feet" she grasped the fuse from his hands and fired the cannon "with genuine fury".³⁶ Writing in 1868, Carlos de Rada said Agustina acted with "noble love for the Fatherland and love for her chosen one in her heart". He then added religion: after firing the canon, she invoked the Virgin of the Pillar. Agustina Coy Cotonat directly rejected Palafox's version; Agustina was not moved by the death of a lover but "solely and exclusively by the duty of a wife and patriot".³⁷

36 CASTELAR, Emilio (1873), "La mujer de Zaragoza", in *Las mujeres españolas portuguesas y americanas*, Miguel Guijarro, Madrid.

The latest literary Agustina is very different from all her predecessors. The protagonist of the 2009 comic by Fernando Monzón and Enrique Mendoza is very much a 21st-century heroine who bears a much greater resemblance to Lara Croft “Tomb Raider” than to her own previous incarnations. The authors describe their Agustina as “Far removed from the archetype of a docile, complacent wife, she embodies values that in literature have traditionally been associated with male characters: taking the lead rather than staying in the background, courage rather than the need to be protected.... She is a woman with a burning desire for freedom, prepared to fight for it till the very last breath”. In this version, Agustina’s historic heroism is the reaction of a moment, “no decision. It is a reflex”. After Zaragoza, she joins the guerrilla and becomes its leader, giving orders to the men in her unit. After an attempt to capture Napoleon’s brother, King José, goes awry, she is captured by the French, but manages a daring escape and rides off into the sunset.³⁸ Interestingly, this very modern Agustina dresses as a woman, albeit a risqué one.



Fig. 10. <https://www.fernandomonzon.com/agustina-de-aragon/>

37 DE LA RADA, Carlos (1942), *Mujeres Célebres de España y Portugal*, Espasa-Calpe, Buenos Aires, p. 164; and COY, Agustín (1914), *Agustina Saragossa Domenech*, Imprenta José Guerra, Ceuta, p. 103.

38 MONZÓN, Fernando and MENDOZA, Enrique (2009), *Agustina*, 3lemon Soluciones Tecnológicas, Zaragoza.

Agustina has also been the subject of at least two *zarzuelas*. The first, Sebastián Alonso Gómez's *Agustina de Aragón*, debuted in Zaragoza in June 1907, just before the centenary of the siege. This Agustina is motivated primarily by love, for her husband, for her father and her friend's love for a French sympathizer. The opera begins with Agustina's wedding. A messenger arrives ordering all men under forty to report to the city for military duty. Agustina tries to convince her husband not to go but finally relents, telling him to go "to kill and if necessary to die". Her husband is soon killed; Agustina then goes in search of her father and follows him to the Portillo gate. When he dies manning a canon, she steps up and fires it shouting "Father, you are avenged!" There is also a romantic subplot: Agustina's friend María is in love with Belfort, who has been arrested as a French spy. Agustina agrees to help free him because, as she proclaims: "What heart can be unmoved when love is invoked!" She succeeds, but Belfort breaks his promise not to participate in the attack on the city. Religion has an important role in this *zarzuela*. The messenger who calls the men to the army says that it is "Our Captain, La Pilarica, [the little Virgin of the Pillar]" who "calls us to her defence". And when Agustina agrees to help Belfort she places her hope in the assistance of "La Pilarica".³⁹ Much of this is invented. Agustina was already married and a mother when she arrived in Zaragoza; her husband was a serving soldier; and her father was not in the city during the siege.

The second *zarzuela*, *Agustina de Aragón (La Heroína del Pilar)*, also debuted in Zaragoza, but half a century later. This Agustina is a very different type of woman: she is driven not by romance but by patriotism, which she places even above religion. She first appears in scene 13, bandaging Pedro, a wounded artillery sergeant. When she has finished she tells him that she has done her duty "as a woman and a Spaniard". Later, she talks of fighting for Spain and for the Fatherland, and when a nun makes a group of women kneel and pray for the Church Agustina adds "and for Spain". Before the big battle, Pedro asks Agustina for a kiss but he is rebuked: if she has to kiss a man, she tells him, "it will be when I'm dead or at the foot of the altar". After General Palafox promotes Pedro, Agustina does fall in love with him. The operetta ends with Agustina telling a group of French officers to let Napoleon know that:

39 ALONSO GÓMEZ, Sebastián (1907), *Agustina de Aragón*, R. Velasco, Madrid.

There is in Spain a fierce and strong people
That knows how to fight to the death...
Tell him that, after winning this campaign
The living who defeated him,
With their bodies will block the road
Of Your Emperor!... This is Spain!⁴⁰

The War of Independence has also been a popular topic for filmmakers, both Spanish and foreign.⁴¹ Two of these films are about Agustina. The first was made in 1928 by Florian Rey, one of the dominant figures of early Spanish movies, a screenwriter and director committed to building a national cinema. Rey was particularly interested in history as the subject for his work, and his Agustina was one of the first history films made in Spain. Rey was commissioned by a group from Aragon, who provided the backing for the production based on a script that Rey himself wrote.⁴²

Only a few minutes of this film remain, but its messages can be reconstructed through the "novelized version" that was published in *La novela semanal cinematográfica* in 1929. Starting with the siege of Zaragoza, Rey "[i]ntroduces a melodramatic vein, the love story between a Spanish woman and a Frenchman, and the conflicts between duty and emotion that affect the protagonists... This is essential for the development of the character of Agustina because it allows an exploration of her double condition as woman and soldier, which then articulate the film's overall narratives: Spanish national exaltation and a discourse of peace with France".⁴³ The message is that Spaniards acted unanimously to defeat the French and that civilians were the real heroes.

40 DE MENDIZÁBAL Federico (1965), *Agustina de Aragón (La Heroína del Pilar)*, Imp. Taravilla, Madrid.

41 Bernard Cornwell's *Sharp* novels, set during the War of Independence, were made into a 16-part television series. There was a French film made in 1909 and an Italian one the following year [http://www.bne.es/es/Micrositios/Guias/Guerra_independencia/GICine/].

42 GARCÍA CARRIÓN, Marta (2008), "Por qué me habéis hecho soldado si no podía dejar de ser mujer. El mito de Agustina de Aragón en su primera recreación cinematográfica", in CASTELLS, ESPIGADO and ROMEO (eds.), *Heroínas y Patriotas*, pp. 133-135.

43 GARCÍA CARRIÓN, "Por qué me habéis hecho soldado", p. 137.

Rey's film champions the conservative and, above all, Catholic vision of Spanish identity. The weight of religion was evident even before audiences entered the cinema. The poster showed Agustina wearing a cross, and in the film itself her oversized cross is very visible. A priest has a major role in the movie and Agustina is shown as religiously, even divinely, inspired: in one scene, the Virgin of the Pillar, the patroness of Zaragoza, appears to her and this apparition prompts her to act. The film also presented a Spanish nationalism that also drew on regional identities. Rey emphasized the Aragonese nature of the resistance, using the word *baturrea*, which was evolving from meaning simply a farmer from the region to referring to the region as a whole; having his actors dressed in identifiably Aragonese clothing; and showing the people of the city celebrating their victory with by dancing a *jota*.⁴⁴

Gender is absolutely central to Rey's film. The battle scene is the climax, and Agustina emerges as the personification of "the Spanish nation in arms... the representation of Spanishness". General Palafox appears to make her an officer, after which she dresses in military uniform. But the roles of woman and patriot do not go together easily. Agustina is shown as a mother and at a key moment her maternal feelings trump her patriotic ones: she frees the French soldier with whom her daughter was in love. Palafox pardons this act of treason when he accepts her explanation that for a woman there is a "law stronger than the law of war".⁴⁵

The second movie about Agustina, the 1950 version directed by Juan de Orduña and starring Aurora Bautista, the Spanish box office star of the day, is much better known. It was one of a large number of history films made in the early Franco period and which presented the regime's National Catholic view of the nation's past. In this Catholic charge, as well as a strong folkloric vein, it resembled Rey's film, but it differed from it in a number of key ways. Where Rey sought to promote French-Spanish friendship, Orduña is strongly

44 In 1935, Rey released *Nobleza Baturra*, in which Aragonese folklore was central. On the way in which regional sentiment could contribute to a Spanish nationalism see ARCHILES, Ferran (2006), "*Hacer región es hacer patria. La región en el imaginario de la nación española de la Restauración*", *Ayer*, vol. 206, pp. 121-147. Agustina herself was the subject of a dispute between Aragonese and Catalans over her origins. In 1914, Agustín Coy Cotonat, an army captain, published a book in which he disputed claims that Agustina was born in Zaragoza. She was, he argued, born in Barcelona of Catalan parents, so that "the blood which ran in her veins was clearly Catalan... she is a pure-blooded daughter of Barcelona". COY, *Agustina Saragossa*, pp. 4 and 90.

45 GARCÍA CARRIÓN, "Por qué me habéis hecho soldado", pp. 147-148.

anti-French. And while both films include an important – and completely fictional – love interest, one that conflicts with patriotic duty, they resolve the conflict in opposing ways. The 1950 film shows Agustina going to Zaragoza to join her fiancé. When she arrives, she finds that he is pro-French, which leads her to break off their engagement and take part in resisting the siege. Here she again meets Juan, the guerrilla leader who had saved her from being raped by French soldiers. They fall in love, but Juan is killed in battle. Unlike Rey's Agustina, Orduña's puts patriotism ahead of love. In a striking inversion of the usual gender roles, she is "better than the men at putting the political before the personal: both Agustina's lover and her fiancé... state that their political decisions are motivated by love for her, while she repeatedly takes political decisions on patriotic grounds knowing they threaten the lives of the men she loves".⁴⁶ The film ends with Ferdinand VII giving her a medal and declaring "You are the symbol of all the heroes of Spain".

Agustina was not the only such female protagonist in early Francoist cinema. Strong women were common, at least in the historical films, something surprising for a regime that had systematically turned back the clock on the status of women. It was women who embodied typically male virtues, not men, who were given the role of representing the nation. The Franco regime was far from consistent in this respect. Women "wielding swords not needles" appeared in collections of exemplary women's lives directed at schoolgirls, and Agustina was one of the most popular. However, these women were "represented as taking up arms because their husbands, or other male figures, are either absent, wounded, or recently dead. However bravely... they were forced into their historic role by circumstance, not perceived choice."⁴⁷

While there has been no single representation of Agustina, the predominant response to her transgression of fundamental gender norms has been to domesticate her, assigning her motivations such as love and religion,

46 LABANYI, Jo (2016), "Feminizing the Nation: Women, Subordination and Subversion in Post-Civil War Spanish Cinema", in SIEGLÖHR, Ulrike (ed.), *Heroines without Heroes: Reconstructing Female and National Identities in European Cinema, 1945-1951*, Bloomsbury, London, pp. 175-176.

47 ALONSO LÓPEZ, Jesús (2009), "1808-1950: Agustina de Aragón, estrella invitada al cine histórico franquista", in ÁLVAREZ BARRIENTOS, Joaquín (ed.), *La Guerra de la Independencia en la Cultura Española, Siglo XXI*, Madrid, pp. 379-400; and HARVEY, Jessamy (2007), "Domestic Queens and Warrior Wives. Imperial Models for Spanish Schoolgirls during the Early Francoist Regime", *History of Education*, vol. 36, pp. 289-290.

which were characteristically female, even when this had no documentary basis and meant ignoring the actual facts of her life, including the rest of her military activities, of which she herself was so proud but which would not fit these explanations.

OUTLIVING THE HEROIC EVENT

Agustina lived for almost half a century after the events of Zaragoza. What did this mean for her fame? Was she one of those “women who outlive their deeds [and] pose significant challenges”?⁴⁸

Agustina was certainly far from shy about using her service in the war to request compensation. She was an active agent in advancing her interests, and the military authorities took her very seriously, as the copious documentation makes clear. (To begin with, her file describes her as: “Branch: Infantry, Title: Heroine, Rank: Junior Lieutenant”).⁴⁹ Thus, in 1814, she wrote to King Ferdinand, newly returned to Spain after his enforced stay in France, requesting additional funds because her salary was not enough to support her. The king granted her an additional 100 *reales* per month. In 1822, she successfully to request that her salary be increased, in line with laws passed in 1820 and 1822, and following the death of her husband in 1823 she sought, and received, two payments that were owing to her. Four years later she requested that her salary not be subject to the standard 12 per cent deduction for the *Montepío Militar*. This requested was denied, on the grounds that she was “bastante recompensada”, but she petitioned again, this time successfully, in 1847. Then in 1852, she requested an exemption from the 15 per deduction levied on retirees and that she be declared to be on active duty. The military authorities agreed that such a “mujer singular, sobreponiéndose a su sexo, ha inmortalizado su nombre, ligandose con el hecho más glorioso de nuestra historia contemporánea” should receive the sought-after exemption.⁵⁰ She petitioned yet again the following year, complaining that the exemption was not being honoured by the military authorities in Ceuta, where she was living. Her final petition, again successful, came in 1853 when she requested that her salary be raised to that of a lieutenant.⁵¹

48 COTHRAN, JUDGE and SHUBERT, “Introduction”, p. 11.

49 Her grandson Francisco de Paula Atienza y Cobo was an army officer and is listed in the files as “Grandson of the Heroine Agustina of Aragón”. Archivo General Militar, Segovia, Celeb., Caja 176, exp. 4.

50 *Boletín Oficial del Ejército*, agosto de 1852.

51 These petitions and related documents are in her personnel file, Archivo General Militar, Segovia.

In her successive petitions, Agustina also alluded to her motives, and in the process revealed some ability in maneuvering through Spain's complex and changing political landscape. Her original petition, addressed to the King, although he was captive in France, mentioned only patriotism and hatred of the French. (In his memoirs, Palafox claimed that as she lit the cannon, Agustina cried "Viva España! Viva mi Rey, Fernando VII" It would have been to her advantage to have included this in her petitions to Ferdinand, had she in fact said it.) In her petition of 1814, however, Agustina announces her "decidido amor a su real persona" and says that she had been moved by the desire to "ser útil a VM y a la justa causa que se defendía en 1808". The "justa causa", a wonderfully ambiguous phrase that. Writing to Isabella II in 1845, Agustina refers to her innato patriotismo" and her desire to "ser útil a su Rey y a su Patria".⁵²

Petitions were private documents but Agustina also sought to shape her image publicly. She wore her medals and military uniform until her death in 1857. There are also unsubstantiated reports that at times she put on a false moustache.⁵³ The historical novel *La ilustre heroína de Zaragoza, o la célebre Amazona de la Guerra de la Independencia*, by Agustina's daughter, Carlota Cobo, to which Agustina contributed as an interviewee, provides a very different picture from that offered by many male authors. Her Agustina is a real Romantic heroine, with "una fisomanía marcada por el dolor, una belleza que presagia desgracias, un aspecto que infunde respeto. Es generosa y nunca se mueve por intereses materiales". Instead, she is a patriot first and foremost, although one who fights for a traditional Spain and its conservative ruler, Ferdinand VII. For her part, Carlota Cobos had a well-developed sense of public relations, perhaps an inheritance from her mother: as well as enjoying the patronage of Queen Isabel II, she donated her receipts from sales to the army that was fighting a colonial war in Morocco.⁵⁴

via, Celeb., Caja 176, exp. 4. The petitions did not end with Agustina's death. Her daughter Carlota Cobos requested and was granted a pension of 3,300 reales per year for life in 1860, and in 1877 Carlota wrote again requesting payment of money that was owing to her mother when she died. Then in 1895, her grandson, Francisco Cobos, wrote to the army and the parliament on behalf of two of Agustina's granddaughters, who were suffering financially; they were both granted a pension of two pesetas a day by King Alfonso XIII.

52 Archivo General Militar, Segovia, Celeb., Caja 176, exp. 4.

53 GARCÍA CARCEL, Ricardo (2007), *El sueño de la nación indomable: los mitos de la Guerra de Independencia*, Ariel, Madrid, p. 174 [<https://www.elmundo.es/suplementos/cronica/2007/617/1187474408.html>].

54 SIMÓN PALMER, María del Carmen (2001), "Agustina de Aragón novelada por su hija", in *Homenaje a Elena Catena*, Castalia Ediciones, Madrid, pp. 487 and 490.

Agustina struggled to shape her own image in the remaining fifty years of her life, and she would have been pleased with the immediate response to her death in Ceuta in August 1857. All officers in the garrison were ordered to attend her funeral. There would be “un piquete para hacerle los honores fúnebres que corresponden á la clase de la ilustre finada, con arreglo a lo prevenido en el art. 58, tratado 3.º, tít. v de la Ordenanza, con el cual irá la banda de música del propio cuerpo, asi como la charanga del batallón cazadores de Barcelona, romperá el corteje fúnebre”.⁵⁵ However, Agustina died just at the moment that she and her famous deed would be propelled into public memory like never before. And in this process, she would have no say.

AGUSTINA CIRCULATES

The figure of Agustina de Aragón circulated beyond Spain. As early as 1813 a young German woman would refer to the exploits of Spanish women as an inspiration: “I have been a soldier for four weeks now! ... In my innermost being I was convinced of committing no bad or hasty act; one need only look to Spain and the Tyrol, and the conduct of their women and girls!”⁵⁶ Agustina was powerfully present in the Anglophone world. Famously, she appeared in Lord Byron’s poem *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1812–14). She was also at the centre of prominent British artist David Wilkie’s 1828 painting, *The Defence of Saragosa*. Between 1830 and 1940 she appeared in many of the more than 900 collections of female biographies published in the United States and Great Britain.⁵⁷ A very feminine and distinctly unwarlike “Maid of Saragossa” also formed part of a group of “warriors” that included Jeanne d’Arc, Boadicea, Agnes of Dunbar, Emilie Plater, the Rani of Jhansi, Christian Davies, Hannah Snell, and Mary Ann Talbot, in suffragette Cicely Hamilton’s stage spectacle, *A Pageant of Great Women*, which was performed across Britain in 1909.⁵⁸

55 *La Esperanza*, 16 de julio de 1857

56 HAGEMANN, Karen (2007), “‘Heroic Virgins’ and ‘Bellicose Amazons’: Armed Women, the Gender Order and the German Public during and after the Anti-Napoleonic Wars”, *European History Quarterly*, vol. 37, p. 507.

57 BOOTH, Alison (2004), *How to Make It as a Woman. Collective Biographical History from Victoria to the Present*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 2.

58 HAMILTON, Cicely (1910), *Pageant of Great Women*, The Suffrage Shop, London, p. 41.



Fig. 11. <https://archive.org/details/pageantofgreatwo00hami/page/n57/mode/2up/search/Saragossa>

Agustina also circulated outside the West, appearing in at least two compilations in the late 19th and early 20th-century Ottoman world. Butrus al-Bustani included her in his eleven-volume encyclopedia published in Beirut and Cairo between 1876 and 1900. "When the French besieged the city ... she participated in the defence, growing famous for the courage she displayed. She was called 'Artillery woman' because she wrested a fuse from an artilleryman's hand ... and fired cannon at the besiegers. As reward for her service ... she was given leadership of a soldiers' unit and several medals." She was also among the 456 famous women, including a number of women warriors, in Zaynab Fawwaz's biographical dictionary *The Book of Scattered Pearls Regarding Categories of Women*. These figures "combined smart strategy—reversing misogynistic notions of 'women's wiles' deployed in Arabo-Islamic polemics to demolish women's public activities—with strength and loyalty to family and 'nation.' Often, they succeeded to leadership because of kinship ties to men. But they succeeded in leadership through their own abilities".⁵⁹

CONCLUSION

Agustina de Aragón in Cairo? What is this iconic Spanish figure doing in the early 20th century Ottoman Empire? This unexpected incident becomes intelligible only in the context of an important and enduring global phenomenon: the woman warrior who is made into a national hero. Placing her in this wider frame allows us to understand why the figure of Agustina circulated so widely. It also allows us to ask new questions about the Agustina cult, its creation, evolution and persistence, to see those aspects of it that are widely shared and those that are specific to the local context. This global gaze brings new depth to the history of Spain while, at the same time, taking it out into the wider world.⁶⁰

59 BOOTH, Marilyn Booth, "Jeanne d'Arc, Arab Hero: Warrior Women, Gender Confusion, and Feminine Political Authority in the Arab-Ottoman Fin de Siècle", in COTHRAN, JUDGE and SHUBERT (eds.), *Women Warriors*, pp. 162-163.

60 For another approach to this question, see LUENGO, Jorge and DALMAU, Pol (2018), "Writing Spanish history in the global age: connections and entanglements in the nineteenth century", *Journal of Global History*, vol. 13, pp. 425-445.