

<b>Institution:</b> University of Exeter		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 26 Modern Languages and Linguistics		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Retrieving the untold story of Spanish feminism: delivering new cultural products and influencing public recognition of pre-Francoist feminist cultural legacy		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2007-ongoing		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Nuria Capdevila-Argüelles	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Professor in Hispanic Studies and Gender Studies	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2005-ongoing
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-ongoing		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Pre-Francoist feminist writers and artists were erased from public memory by the Spanish Civil War and the decades of dictatorship that followed. Capdevila-Argüelles's research has preserved and given the public access to this lost feminist cultural heritage both in Spain and internationally.</p> <p>She has collaborated with creative industry businesses and Fundación Banco de Santander on many new cultural products, including critical editions, English translations, documentary and feature films, multimedia projects and plays. Elena Fortún's previously unpublished Lesbian autobiographical novel became a bestseller and El País book of the year, reinstating Fortún in Spanish cultural life and leading to official acts of memorialisation including public building renaming. A two-part documentary about this generation of feminist writers reached over 500,000 households and produced material introduced into the school curriculum by the Spanish Ministry of Education. Capdevila-Argüelles's research has led to wider understanding of gender roles pre-Franco, contributing even to cultural tourism with historical feminist walks.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>The Spanish Civil War and the ensuing 40 years of Francoism succeeded in erasing feminist memory in Spain. After 1975, scholars were quick to declare the feminist debate open and activists started to dismantle Francoist misogyny, but with little awareness of a feminist legacy to support the heavy burden of undoing deeply rooted sexism. Women's rights and gender equality seemed new. Orphanhood characterised feminist debate until the new millennium. Research by Capdevila-Argüelles, carried out since joining the University of Exeter in 2005, has contributed to reversing this lack of engagement with the legacy of the mothers of Spanish feminism via monographs, critical editions and extensive collaboration with non-academic actors.</p> <p>Capdevila-Argüelles has accessed and researched new, privately held, archival material by women artists and intellectuals, placing the archival research in the frameworks of memory and gender studies. Examples of this detective work of discovering and framing the works and lives of these women within the historical context and contemporary struggles for gender equality include: Elena Fortún's previously unpublished lesbian novel <i>Oculto sendero</i>; Hildegart Rodríguez's letters, held in London; Carmen Laforet's letters; Isabel Oyarzábal's memoirs; Marga, Marisa, María and Consuelo Roësset's art and literature in Marga Clark's archive; and Lucía Sánchez Saornil's works in lost avant-garde magazines (now published as an anthology including 56 new poems).</p> <p>The results of this research were first published in 2008 <i>Autoras inciertas [Uncertain Authors]</i>, with the second edition published in 2018 [3.1]. Financially sponsored by the Spanish Ministry of Education and purchased by public and university libraries nationwide, the book stressed the importance of gender in significantly adding to the recovery of historical memory in Spain. [5.1]</p> <p>The decade between the first and the updated edition of <i>Autoras inciertas</i> produced a substantial peer-reviewed body of research on the "uncertain authors" of the title and on the groups they belonged to [3.2, 3.3], with abundant output including new editions of their work [3.4, 3.5], documentaries and creative collaborative activities (see section 4). Particularly notable</p>		

is the publication, with Capdevila-Argüelles's extensive critical introduction, of *Oculto sendero* [*Hidden Path*] in 2016, a novel hidden by the author due to its lesbian content, and passed for decades between private archives in Argentina, USA, and Spain until Capdevila-Argüelles and her co-director of the Biblioteca Fortún series [3.5], found it and negotiated its release to the Madrid City Council. The novel is now a best-seller and its English translation was published by Swan Isle Press in September 2020 with a foreword by Capdevila-Argüelles.

Biblioteca Elena Fortún series of critical editions of published and previously unpublished books and materials has been particularly impactful in reviving a feminist legacy for Fortún, creator of the celebrated children fiction series centred around the 'Celia' character, and now established by Capdevila-Argüelles's research as an important feminist figure of Francoist Spain. In her co-directorship of the Fortún series, Capdevila-Argüelles supervised the preparation of extensive critical introductions contextualising the volumes, and wrote the critical materials for titles particularly relevant in terms of feminism and women's history.

The flow of Capdevila-Argüelles's research and impact is ongoing and expanding, as new research on new archival material is commissioned by leading publishers, and new ventures, such as the ongoing *Cartas Vivas*, are developed to disseminate its results [see section 4]. This story of research and impact momentum is the unifying thread of the book *El regreso de las modernas* [3.6], commissioned by La Caia Books for their collection on 'women rebels' (Las rebeldes). The book creates a narrative of the journey that led to the definitive return of Spanish modern authors to the cultural realm, a point emphasised in the prologue written by leading Spanish novelist Elvira Lindo. It sold over 1,000 copies and was nominated for a prestigious Spanish €100k National Prize in the Humanities in 2019. The nomination stated that 'the research work of Professor Capdevila has been key in the recovery of the legacy of the Spanish intellectuals and artists who were part of the Silver Age [i.e. pre-Francoist] [...], who remained hidden or were relegated because they were women' [5.4].

### 3. References to the research

- 3.1 Capdevila-Argüelles, N. (2018, 2008) *Autoras Inciertas*. Madrid: Sílex. ISBN: 978-84-7737-543-2. *Submitted to REF2014*.
- 3.2 Capdevila-Argüelles & Fraga, MJ (2015): *El camino es nuestro. Elena Fortun y Matilde Ras*. Madrid: Fundación Banco de Santander, ISBN: 978-84-92543-64-9. Anthology edited and with extensive introduction by Capdevila-Argüelles. *Submitted to REF3032*
- 3.3 Capdevila-Argüelles, N. (2013), *Artistas y precursoras*, Madrid: horas y HORAS, ISBN: 978-84-96004-54-2. *Submitted to REF2014*.
- 3.4 Capdevila-Argüelles, N. & Cerezales Laforet, Cristina y Silvia (2017) *De corazón y alma*. Madrid: Fundación Banco de Santander. ISBN: 978-84-15813-13-2. Anthology edited and with an introduction by Capdevila-Argüelles. *Available on request*
- 3.5 Biblioteca Elena Fortún Book Series: Capdevila-Argüelles, N. & Fortún, Elena (2016) *Oculto sendero*. Sevilla: Renacimiento. ISBN: 978-84-16685-77-6, *Celia madrecita* (ISBN: 978-84-16246-85-4), *Celia institutriz* (ISBN: 978-84-16246-39-7), *Celia se casa* (ISBN: 978-84-17266-55-4). The series has now 17 titles edited by Capdevila-Argüelles, co-director MJ Fraga or renowned writers such as Elvira Lindo, Purificacio Mascarell, Paloma Gómez Borrero, Cristina Cerezales Laforet or Ana Vega Toscano as guest editors. *Available on request*
- 3.6 Capdevila-Argüelles, N. (2018) *El regreso de las modernas*. Valencia: La Caja Books. ISBN:978-84-17496-16-6. *Available on request*

### 4. Details of the impact

#### **Elena Fortún: reviving the cultural and literary legacy, and inspiring and co-creating new forms of artistic expression, commemoration and memorialisation**

Since 2015, titles published under Capdevila-Argüelles's co-directorship of the Biblioteca Elena Fortún series, and those drawing on Fortún's work and collaboration with other mothers of

Spanish feminism, enjoyed great commercial and critical success. *El camino es nuestro* [3.2] – an anthology of Elena Fortún and Matilde Ras’ work co-edited by Capdevila-Argüelles – marked the beginning of Fortún’s revival. Now sold out, it paved the way for *De corazón y alma* [3.4], a collection of Fortún’s correspondence with Carmen Laforet, had two editions (2,600 copies) sell out in less than three months [5.1] and a theatre adaptation produced in the Conde Duque Theatre in April 2017 [5.2]. Meanwhile, new critical editions of Fortún’s previously published ‘Celia’ work transformed this saga in Spanish children and teenage fiction into bestselling women’s history books (with sales of more than 20,000 [5.1]). Renacimiento, which publishes the Biblioteca Elena Fortún series, has strategically strengthened its portfolio of recovered feminist writers, culminating in the award of two prizes for its feminist memorialisation work [5.1].

Fortún’s previously unpublished autobiographical novel, *Oculto sendero*, now a best-seller, was named one of the books of the year by *El País* in 2017. Widely reviewed and praised in Spanish media [5.1], the book also sparked a surge of international interest in its author’s significance as a feminist and lesbian thinker in turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century Spain. Examples include a discussion with Capdevila-Argüelles on BBC Radio 4’s *Women’s Hour* in May 2017 [5.1], annual talks to schools in Somerset and Devon as part of the *Horizon* lecture series [5.3], and the English translation with a foreword by Capdevila-Argüelles, promoted by Instituto Cervantes-Chicago in December 2020 [5.1].

Fortún’s life and works are the subject of two sold-out theatre adaptations at Centro Dramático Nacional in 2019 and 2020. The director of the centre expressed appreciation for the ‘invaluable contribution’ of Capdevila-Argüelles’s published research to these productions. The ‘rigorous work of theoretical research carried out around the writer was highlighted’, creating an ‘initiative that restored the contribution of a writer who, due to incomprehensible and unacceptable prejudices, had been displaced to an unjust and discreet place in the canon of contemporary Spanish literature’ [5.2]. Meanwhile, the stage director and playwright María Folguera asserts her reliance ‘on the existing bibliography on Elena Fortún, in which Nuria Capdevila-Argüelles plays a decisive role, so much so that Capdevila-Argüelles features as a character in one of the plays’. [5.2]

The former minister of education, Ángeles González-Sinde, states that Capdevila-Argüelles’s research shows today’s feminists ‘are not alone’ and that ‘young people know that the feminist plight is not new and has a history that belongs to them’. Leading cultural figures such as the writers and journalists Almudena Grandes and Elvira Lindo, and Octavio Salazar (jurist, lawyer, writer and queer activist), have also underlined the impact of Capdevila-Argüelles’s work, with Grandes noting that it ‘has been fundamental to the recovery of such important authors as Elena Fortún, of whom [...] we now know that she was much more than the great creator of Celia’s books’. Lindo writes that ‘we owe it to Nuria Capdevila-Argüelles’s work to know the mothers of our feminism continued to be faithful to their vocations despite exile’, and Salazar praises Capdevila-Argüelles for bringing to light and explaining the dimensions of ‘Fortún’s rebellion against heterosexuality and patriarchy’. Judge Balaguer has specifically mentioned the influence of Capdevila-Argüelles research methodology in her book *Que Nadie Muera Sin Amar El Mar* [5.4; 5.5]. Finally, reinstating Fortún in Spanish cultural life led to official acts of public recognition in Spain and the UK, including public building renaming in Madrid in 2016 [5.6] and the official launch of one of Capdevila-Argüelles’s outputs [3.2] at the Spanish Embassy in London in 2015, with Spanish ambassador praising Capdevila-Argüelles’s critical essays for ‘making us aware that Elena Fortún, Matilde Ras and others made great contributions to Spanish literature’ and for ‘raising them up from oblivion’ [5.7].

### ***Las Sinsombrero* and *Cartas Vivas*: new cultural and educational products re-establishing forgotten Spanish feminist figures**

*Las sinsombrero*, described in a 2016 article on RTVE as ‘the first big Spanish transmedia project’ [5.8], is a two-part TV documentary series with a host of associated educational and cultural programmes, first launched in 2015. The project is defined by series director Tania Balló as a ‘visual translation of the “uncertain authorship” explored by Capdevila-Argüelles in her books’ [5.8]. Spanish for ‘the hatless women’, it is now a term used to group women authors and

artists from the 1927 Generation, whose recovery, legacy and memory is at the centre of Capdevila-Argüelles's research.

Capdevila-Argüelles acted as an official advisor and one of the 'talking heads' for Part 1, and as advisor, narrator and script writer for Part 2 in 2018. When Part 1 was first aired on TVE 2 on 15/10/2015, *Las Sinsombrero* broadcast to 250,000 households, and having moved to an online catch-up service, was seen 25,000 times in the first six months. The accompanying educational material was accessed 45,000 times online in the first 12 months, with the time spent on the page surpassing ten minutes. Official RTVE data show that the documentary reached a target audience of 18-35 year olds – a significant departure for the channel, which has a typical audience of over-45s [5.8].

The educational part of the project was developed in collaboration with the Spanish Ministry of Education, and in 2016/17 was included in the curriculum of the fourth year secondary and second year Baccalaureate education. Capdevila-Argüelles has also delivered multiple school talks sponsored by the ministry [5.8]. The second part of *Las Sinsombrero* premiered in Abycine Festival (26/10/2018), in Madrid (09/03/2019) and on national TV during the week surrounding 2019 International Women's Day (audience: 321,000 households). Social media posts written by Capdevila-Argüelles on *Las Sinsombrero* Facebook and Twitter pages prompted users to comment that 'words cannot describe how important learning about the past is' (14/03/2017) and that 'I look for and buy every book that you recommend in your page' (12/05/2017) [5.8].

Capdevila-Argüelles's work influenced other activities and enterprises such as *Proyecto Wemen* (a multimedia project showcasing men's views on feminism), card game *Theatre Against Oblivion*, feminist tourist walks *Herstóricas* (in Madrid and London) and the cultural tourism project *Rutas Teatrales*. Her research of a 'field [...] forgotten by official history but [...] of great importance for the construction of collective memory' informed the design of the tour *Mujeres que inspiran* (Inspiring Women) taken by over 200 people on a single day – International Women's Day in 2019 – as part of official City of Madrid activities. *Herstóricas* meanwhile assert that her research 'and, most importantly, her methodology':

*'...has inspired us to always challenge the absence of women in any cultural space and to rethink our cities and their history as herstory. Through works like Nuria's Artistas y precursoras, Autoras inciertas, her extensive critical editions of Fortún [...] we have rediscovered a genealogy, worked with other feminist groups and scholars, developed our cultural walks, workshops and our card game 'Herstóricas Pioneras.'* [5.9]

In 2019, in collaboration with Fundación Banco de Santander (FBS) and the University of Barcelona, Capdevila-Argüelles launched *CartasVivas* (registered patent 4015976), a series of short films featuring acclaimed Spanish actors reading letters and memoirs by women intellectuals and artists from the Spanish avant-garde, featured in *Autoras inciertas* and *Autoras y precursoras*. For FBS, which normally does not fund university-based work, this project is a culmination of the ongoing relationship with Capdevila-Argüelles. Critical reviews across a number of national and international media platforms, including El País, El Mundo, Guardian, ABC, and many others, have hailed the importance of the project in making invisible women visible today. The project engages with audiences beyond academia via the Edinburgh Spanish Film Festival, which has showcased the project in Edinburgh, Stirling and Glasgow in 2019 and 2020 and via its digital platform [5.10].

Capdevila-Argüelles's 'reputation as a leading feminist scholar' led to a collaboration with Avalon Production Company on a biopic of Hildegart Rodríguez, one of the 'autoras inciertas'. Avalon testimony declares that Capdevila-Argüelles has had a 'critical impact on our project [...] liaising with the creative team [...] and] revising versions of the script'. They add that the field of historical feminist memory is becoming more alive in Spain, influencing the publishing industry, film, theatre and television, and that 'Prof Capdevila-Argüelles's skills have no doubt played a key role in this' [5.9].

Confirming her influence abroad, a recent evaluative review of Capdevila-Argüelles's work in the literary supplement of Argentine broadsheet *La Nación* notes that pre-Francoist women's history has finally been connected with post-Francoism, and that the importance of the public, private and secret lives of women, along with the need to know about the impact of gender violence and discrimination in all three, has been understood by Hispanic audiences and those interested in Spanish history and culture, influencing public debate as well as cultural, educational and political development [5.1].

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Impact of Fortún critical editions (evaluative and media reviews; publishers' emails with information on sales; *Oculto Sendero* international promotion – Woman's Hour screenshot and email communication from Swan Isle Press).
- 5.2 Impact on theatre (Centro Dramático stage director 15/4/20 and Centre director 5/5/20 testimonials; production booklets; Conde Duque adaptation promotion).
- 5.3 Horizon lectures series invitation and letter of thanks (emails April 2020).
- 5.4 2019 National Prize in the Humanities nomination.
- 5.5 Acknowledgement from leading Spanish feminist figures (article and email from Ángeles González-Sinde; articles by Manuela Carmena, Laura Freixas, Octavio Salazar, Elvira Lindo; reference to Capdevila-Argüelles's methodology in María Luisa Balaguer's book).
- 5.6 Evidence of public recognition of Fortún's legacy (booklet for renaming Madrid's important Retiro Library Elena Fortún on 24/10/16; booklet for event on 22/04/16 with Manuela Carmena, the former mayor of Madrid, and Capdevila-Argüelles presenting a Biblioteca Fortún title, highlighting the importance of Fortún in the recovery of Madrid's historical memory and honouring her with a memorial plaque on the house in which she lived).
- 5.7 Spanish Embassy London letter 28/10/15.
- 5.8 *Las sinsombrero* impact (email corroboration from Tania Balló [Intropia Media] 27/7/16; 12/3/19; *Las sinsombrero* impact evaluation; *Las sinsombrero* Facebook analytics; festival promotion material; Ministry of Education sponsored talks promotion. The project has a social media following of over 11k on Facebook and is a recipient of multiple awards, including the 2016 PRO-DOCS Award for Best Television Documentary at the International Documentary Film Festival *DocsBarcelona*, and the 2015 National Prize for Historical Memory Luis Romero Solano).
- 5.9 Impact on cultural initiatives (testimonials by Rutas Teatrales 10/5/19; Herstóricas 18/3/20; Avalon; workshop information on Theatre against oblivion).
- 5.10 *CartasVivas* impact (FBS contract indicating financial commitment; patent; press dossier; screenshots of media reviews and Edinburgh festival programme).