

Cecilia Maas

The Joy of the Modern Home

**New Media and the Entertainment
Market in Argentina, Chile, and
Uruguay (1890s–1920s)**



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Contents

Introduction.....	5
Record Kings and Cinema Emperors	12
It Is a Wired World.....	17
Imported Entertainment.....	23
Backward Linkage – or the Nation as a Niche.....	29
Selling Joy: New Technologies and Consumption at the Turn of the Twentieth Century.....	33
Entertainment in the Consumer Society	36
Between the Theater and the Living Room: Public and Private Uses of Film and Recorded Sound.....	57
Conclusions	79
Finding a Place in the Global Market: Film and Music Distribution in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay	82
The Emergence of a Global Entertainment Market (1896–1914).....	86
The Rise of Film Distributors	87
Recording Trips and Local Agents.....	94
Leisure and the Propaganda War (1914–1918)	106
The Winner Takes All (1918–1930).....	122
On the Shoulders or Under the Shadow of Hollywood?.....	123
Import Substitution in the Phonographic Industry	136
Conclusions	146
Occupying a Niche: Films and Records in the Shaping of National Cultures	149
The Truncated Dreams of Early Recorded Sound	153

Filmmakers and Elite Reproduction.....	157
Mediated Patriotism.....	171
The “Others” on the Big Screen.....	189
<i>Criollo</i> Narratives at Home and Abroad.....	203
Conclusions	216
Conclusions	221
New Media – New Game: After Broadcasting and Sound Film	229
Acknowledgments.....	235
Bibliography	237
Archives and Libraries Consulted.....	237
Newspapers and Magazines.....	237
Published Sources	238
Filmography	239
Literature	240

Introduction

This dissertation examines the introduction of the technologies of motion pictures and recorded sound in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay and analyzes the changes they triggered in communication and cultural production. More precisely, it reconstructs the lives and careers of a group of immigrant men who sold, distributed, and produced movies and records for the urban markets of these three countries, shaping the emergence of new media and the integration of the region into a global entertainment market. The strategies a group of recently arrived immigrants followed to become important cultural entrepreneurs combined a sense for the opportunities opened by the introduction of new technologies, business models based on family ties and migrant networks, and the implementation of innovative market research and selling techniques. By reconstructing these strategies, this dissertation aims to bring the economic, social, and cultural aspects of the history of media together. The focus is set between the last years of the nineteenth century, when the newly invented technologies of film and phonography arrived in Latin America, and the end of the 1920s, when the introduction of radio and sound film would once again transform the conditions of mass communication.

The media landscape at the turn of the twentieth century has more in common with the present moment than we might think. Much of what new media promises nowadays – to move beyond broadcasting, to overcome homogenization, and to present new platforms as a channel for individualization and free choice – was already present in pre-broadcasting times, before the discovery of electromagnetic waves and the invention of radio and television would allow the simultaneous transfer of contents to thousands of recipients. Although not quite the same as Netflix and Spotify’s recommendation algorithms, early film and recorded music were also on-demand and favored niche culture.¹ More precisely, and as this dissertation reconstructs, in the

¹ About on-demand models in cultural production in the digital age see Chuck Tryon, *On-Demand Culture: Digital Delivery and the Future of Movies* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013).

early years of motion pictures and phonography, films and records were produced in small amounts addressing specific social groups according to their age, gender, income, place of residence, or mother tongue; or were made at the request of institutions. In both the present and pre-broadcasting times, cultural products were destined to appeal to specific niche markets which constituted the “long tail” of the demand curve. These market niches were and are the basis for strategies of media entrepreneurs, who rather than competing for the next hit, choose to “sell less of more”.² Even though it became a trendy concept in recent years, the long tail is not a new phenomenon and can be traced back to the introduction of the first centralized warehouses in the late-nineteenth-century United States and their *Wish Books* or sales catalogs, with which people ordered products from the most distant rural areas to be sent via railway.³

The long tail economy shaped early film and recorded sound. Niche cultures’ main preconditions, namely centralized distribution mechanisms and decentralized production tools, existed within the turn of the century media landscape. The logic of the long tail guided media entrepreneurs in pre-broadcasting times before the rise of Hollywood and the concentration of labels in transnational corporations in the 1920s. Producers aimed to offer a little bit of everything, something for every taste. This aim was the reason record labels sent engineers around the world to record songs in hotel rooms: local agents went to concerts, circuses, and theaters looking for artists to record, and cameramen traveled the world taking vistas from one place to the other. Even so, this media landscape engendered the elements that would overturn its balance. With the progress of production techniques towards the 1910s, costs increased and artisanal producers who could not reconvert were excluded from the market. The tail became shorter, setting the stage for oligopolist media producers to take over. Following a strategy of vertical integration, through which companies started to take control of

² According to Chris Anderson, the long tail economy is saving cultural industries from the critical state in which internet, the generalization of personal computers, and piracy put them through in the early 2000s Chris Anderson, *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More* (New York: Hyperion Book, 2008).

³ Anderson, *The Long Tail* 42–43.

production, distribution, and commercialization, Hollywood studios and big music label corporations started to take the global market into their own hands.

The technologies of motion pictures and recorded sound were introduced in several Latin American cities shortly after the beginning of their commercial exploitation in the United States and Europe. Studios and labels rapidly turned into big companies that aimed at conquering not only the domestic markets in the United States and Europe, but also new ones around the world. For that reason, they sent agents to promote the new technologies, which were well received by the population in most major cities of Latin America. There, local retailers of household products started to commercialize the new phonographs and cinematographers, contributing to the expansion of their presence as a part of the local media landscape and entertainment markets. Film and record industries emerged in most major Latin American cities as a result of both the cooperation and competition of local actors with US and Europe-based companies. The nature of the transformations of media as a result of these contradictory relations between local entrepreneurs and globally acting companies is the main issue that this dissertation aims to understand.

Scholars have turned to the study of media with different goals in mind, each one informed by matters related to their present day. Some of the first studies on radio, film, and television aimed to understand how media manipulated audiences, replaced systems of belief and traditions, and constituted forms of social control. When members of the Frankfurt School introduced the concept of cultural industry and wrote about the mechanical reproduction of art, they were concerned with the uses of media by European fascist regimes.⁴ In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars at the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies revisited the issue with different questions in mind. They turned their attention towards popular culture and approached media

⁴ See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

studies from the perspective of reception.⁵ The combination of global uprisings during 1968, the overcoming of the 1973 economic crisis (which proved that the end of capitalism was not in sight), and a shift in social sciences marked by the crisis of structuralism, shifted the attention of studies towards the roles that subjectivity and individuality played as elements within the understanding of social structures.⁶ Influenced by the thought of Antonio Gramsci and his notion of hegemony, scholars tried to understand domination not as the result of forces external to subjects, but rather as a process that acknowledges and integrates the consciousness of subaltern subjects.⁷

The beginnings of a systematic study of media in Latin America were also informed by the context of the 1970s and 1980s. A generation of scholars, contemporaries of those who emerged out of the Birmingham School, applied the concepts of cultural theory to their local context and raised the question of the relationship between popular and mass culture. This has often led to a historic analysis of media, as is prominent in the work of Jesús Martín-Barbero for example, who has looked at the history of media in the region and identified the changes introduced by new technologies. In doing so, he has confronted the myths of his time by arguing that massification

⁵ See Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life* (London: Penguin Books, 2009). In this book, the author examines changes in the life and values of the working class in England in response to media and entertainment. Stuart Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (Birmingham: Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1973) contains the main elements of the author's approach to the study of media reception. Raymond Williams, especially in his works in the 1960s and 1970s, focused on the study of mass media. See Raymond Williams, *Communications* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1973).

⁶ On the context of emergence of the British School of Cultural Studies and its agenda see Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2003); Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" *Social Text* 16 (1986–1987): 38–80.

⁷ David Harris, *From Class Struggle to the Politics of Pleasure: The Effects of Gramscianism on Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1992); Álvaro Alonso Trigueros, "Antonio Gramsci en los estudios culturales de Raymond Williams" *methaodos* 2, no. 1 (2014): 8–22; David Harris, *From Class Struggle to the Politics of Pleasure: The Effects of Gramscianism on Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1992).

cannot be equated with a process of cultural degradation, and that neither elite nor popular culture can be disentangled from massification.⁸

When looking back at the history of media from the twenty-first century, I have different concerns in mind. The current context is full of paradoxes: we live in a globalized world, but every crisis harshly demonstrates that nation-states are more alive than ever; new technologies promise democratization of culture but end up favoring big companies and highly capitalized producers based in the Global North. From this standpoint, looking back to the times in which communication networks expanded throughout the globe will allow us to understand how technologies brought places and people closer, just as they contributed to defining differences and borders. In a moment in which new technologies are spoken about as revolutionary carriers of democratization, we can go back to the moments in which old technologies were new with the purpose of investigating how novelties have also been interpreted on the basis of expectations and fantasies rather than their concrete effects.

This dissertation poses the question of what impact the positions of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay in the global economy had on the changes triggered by the introduction of motion picture and recorded sound technologies. It argues that cities in these three countries became part of a global entertainment market between the 1890s and 1920s in a particular way, which had important implications for cultural production and communication. Unlike in the United States and Europe, where production was the most dynamic sphere and producers the most powerful actors, the growth of the sphere of consumption drove the consolidation of distribution networks and the production of films and movies in the case of the countries under examination in this study. Through advertisement and based on knowledge about the users' expectations and demands, retailers shaped the appropriations of the new technologies. Entrepreneurs followed a strategy of vertical integration by moving from commercialization to distribution, establishing agreements

⁸ Jesús Martín-Barbero, *De los medios a las mediaciones: comunicación, cultura y hegemonía* (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 1991). See also Néstor García Canclini, *Las culturas populares en el capitalismo* (México D.F: Nueva Imagen, 1982) and Néstor García Canclini, *Culturas híbridas: estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* (México D.F: Grijalbo, 1990).

with European and US based companies for the rights of their products in the region, further competing against each other for the bigger share. This had consequences for production and for the discourses that these media shaped and spread. In a market dominated by the films and records of companies based in Europe and the United States, strategies for the local production of contents were based on addressing specific niche markets. In order to compete with films and records made with better technical and economic resources than the ones they could aim for, producers were encouraged to favor certain genres and contents in which they could offer a distinctive feature based on local cultural references.

Understanding the local effects of the expansion of transnational entertainment markets requires one to move away from a series of common places in the history of film and recorded sound, which will be discussed in the following sections. First, this dissertation moves beyond the characterization of the actors involved in the history of these technologies as “pioneers” and stand-alone figures who were responsible for the creation of new media on their own. Rather, it contextualizes the role of the actors involved within their networks, acknowledging their agency but also their limitations. Second, this study questions the historiography that celebrates the first film and recorded sound exhibitions and productions taking place in Latin American territories as an unquestionable sign of the birth of “national” industries. On the contrary, it reflects on how the local developments were connected to transnational processes. Third, this dissertation moves away from models that oppose a modernizing center to a passive periphery in the analysis of technological transfer, and consider the introduction of the new technologies and the presence of cultural products from the United States and Europe as either an unmistakable sign of the arrival of modernity or as an expression of cultural imperialism.

Record Kings and Cinema Emperors

As an entry to the observation of the introduction of new technologies and the emergence of new media, this dissertation reconstructs the life and work

of the primary entrepreneurs of the film and music businesses in the region between the 1890s and the 1920s: Max Glücksmann, his brothers Bernardo, Jacobo, and Carlos, and their most important competitors, José Tagini, Julián Ajuria, Efraín Band, and Federico Valle. These actors shaped the way in which the new technologies were introduced and appropriated in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. By observing them, it is possible to understand how they conquered new markets and users of the newly introduced technologies and products through advertisement, how they negotiated with US and European-based companies to defend their positions as intermediaries, along with what their motivations and limitations were when approaching the production of movies and recorded sound. In this way, this study connects the micro level of these businessmen's lives and careers with a macro analysis of the market mechanisms.

The Glücksmann brothers were often depicted in the Argentine, Chilean, and Uruguayan press as the “kings”, “emperors,” or even “dictators” of cinematography. Shortly after arriving to Buenos Aires in 1890, Max Glücksmann started to work as an errand boy for the photography shop owned by the Belgian Henri Lepage. He was soon promoted to manager and left in charge when Lepage moved back to Europe in 1908. With Glücksmann directing the company, what started as a small business turned into an entertainment emporium that controlled around one hundred cinema theaters in various cities of the three countries along with the distribution rights of the major Hollywood studios for up to ten Latin American countries, producing weekly newsreels and feature documentaries on regular basis by the late 1920s. Max was remembered with love and hatred by tango artists such as Carlos Gardel, who would later recall his negotiations with the record producer that brought him his first successful sales. Even though the music business was more modest than his film empire, Glücksmann and his label Discos Nacional were the proud owners of the first record factory in Argentina and the second in South America.

The actors involved in this network had similar trajectories. Max Glücksmann migrated to Buenos Aires from Chernivtsi in the Austro-Hungarian Empire escaping religious persecution towards the Jewish population and later three of his brothers followed and started to work with him. Their

contenders were also immigrants who started out in small to medium shops. José Tagini (born as Giuseppe Tagini) migrated from Genoa to Buenos Aires in 1885 and started selling bazaar items, suitcases, and umbrellas in a small shop, which soon grew thanks to the success of the new entertainment technologies and to the large profits granted by film and record distribution. Julián Ajuria entered the film business while still living in Spain and moved to Buenos Aires in 1906, where he became an important film producer and distributor. Efraín Band arrived in Santiago de Chile from Tver in the Russian Empire in 1870, where he became an active phonograph producer and distributor. Federico Valle was born in Italy and settled in Argentina in 1910, where he became one of the most prolific producers of newsreel and documentaries. These men did not constitute a closed circle but were rather connected by changing relations that oscillated between cooperation and competition. Sometimes, they were allies in defending their business from the expansion of bigger firms or demanding regulations from the state, but other times, they competed for the same share. Even Max Glücksmann and his brothers, who managed different regional offices, had conflicting interests from time to time.

This dissertation looks at how these actors contributed to the shaping of the emergence of new media in relation to previously existing social practices rather than looking at them as the first to introduce something completely new. Similar to what took place with previous technologies, the introduction of motion pictures and recorded sound opened new spaces of maneuvering and created possibilities for people beyond the main power structures to shape the process of building global communication networks.⁹ In the case of turn of the century Latin America, these opportunities were taken by a handful of recently arrived middle-class immigrants. Excluded from practicing many professions, immigrants had a good chance of entering the

⁹ A similar process with the case of telegraphy is analyzed by Simone Müller, *Wiring the World: The Social and Cultural Creation of Global Telegraph Networks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

fields of media and cultural production, where there were no lobbies limiting the entrance of newcomers and the financial barriers were relatively low.¹⁰

Their condition as immigrants provided them with a few advantages. Both local and transnational networks of the migrant communities enabled them to quickly build commercial relations and expand their business beyond their place of residence. Their companies were often family businesses, in which each sibling was responsible for managing different branches or areas, family or ethnic networks providing the possibility for funding in the absence of bank credit access.¹¹ Glücksmann's company remained a family business up until its dissolution in 1957. Bernardo was in charge of the Uruguayan branch, Carlos was the general manager and travelled regularly to Chile, and Jacobo was in charge of the arrangements with US companies and managed the office in New York. Considered all together, these actors controlled most of the business of film and record commercialization, distribution, and production in the major cities of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Although they were representative of a broader group of migrant entrepreneurs in emerging technology-based activities, certain specificities and singular strategies made them exceptional, allowing us to understand the way in which they took advantage of economic opportunities by bringing their social and cultural capital into play.

This dissertation considers the figure of Max Glücksmann to be the center of the network and reconstructs his life and work as a film and record impresario, an active member within transnational migrant groups, and a leader in the Jewish community in Buenos Aires. The rest of the network will appear at specific points to illustrate aspects of the topic under examination. I dig into the limited biographical information available on these actors, whose names are known through occasional references made in newspapers and

¹⁰ An equivalent phenomenon is reconstructed for the case of the United States by Neal Gabler, who looks at a group of Jewish immigrants in the United States who became the main film impresarios in Hollywood. Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group (Kindle Edition), 2010).

¹¹ Immigrant entrepreneurs from different origins in the early twentieth century followed similar strategies. See María Inés Barbero, "Estrategias de empresarios italianos en Argentina: el Grupo Devoto" *Anuario CEED 1* (2009): 10–42.

magazines or conserved in the metadata of the few film rolls and records that are still preserved. I also build on the references to these actors in previous scholarship, which are larger for Max and Bernardo Glücksmann and only occasional for the rest of the group.¹²

The traces left by these actors are scattered in different archives and types of sources. As powerful actors behind the scenes, their work was commented on by the local press of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay and by magazines that specialized in film and music. Government records contain some dispersed financial and legal information that allows one to trace the evolution of these actors' businesses. In order to reconstruct the relations between these entrepreneurs and transnational firms, I consulted the few remaining institutional archives of US and European companies along with Foreign Office records in Germany and the United States, which as part of their cultural

¹² Studies on the history of film mention Max and Bernardo Glücksmann as pioneers, analyze some of his work as a producer of documentaries and newsreels, and use him as an example to illustrate the transnational dimension of mass culture in Argentina. See Domingo Di Núbila, *La época de oro: historia del cine argentino* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Jilguero, 1998); Irene Marrone analyzes his work as a documentary film producer in Irene Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico: identidades y representaciones en el noticiero y el documental en el cine mudo argentino* (Buenos Aires: Biblos); Matthew Karush, *Cultura de clase: radio y cine en la creación de una Argentina dividida (1920–1946)* (Buenos Aires: Ariel); Osvaldo Saratsola, *Función completa, por favor: un siglo de cine en Montevideo* (Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce, 2005). Marina Cañardo, *Fábricas de música: comienzos de la industria discográfica en la Argentina (1919–1930)* (Buenos Aires: Gourmet Musical Ediciones) includes Glücksmann as a relevant actor of the record industry in Argentina in the 1920s and analyzes some of his advertisements. Mollie Lewis' book takes him as a case to study identity formation among Jews in Argentina using secondary literature and references from the Jewish press. *Mollie Lewis, Oy, My Buenos Aires: Jewish Immigrants and the Creation of Argentine National Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press). Stefan Rinke's dissertation examined his tense relations with the German film company Ufa in the 1920s with documents from the German Foreign Office. Stefan H. Rinke, *“Der letzte freie Kontinent”: Deutsche Lateinamerikapolitik im Zeichen transnationaler Beziehungen, 1918–1933*, Historamericana, (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1996). Most of these studies refer to two texts as sources for biographical information: Julio Nudler, *Tango judío: del ghetto a la milonga* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana); *Francisco García Jiménez, Memorias y fantasmas de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Corregidor), which are journalistic works with no reference to their source of information (probably interviews).

propaganda work, reported on the cultural business landscape. A few photos, letters and personal documents, as well as the record of Max Glücksmann's inheritance process allowed me to reconstruct the life of the Glücksmann brothers and the role played by familial, social, and political relations. Records of Jewish institutions and press provide another important source of material. As an important leader in the Jewish community in Buenos Aires, the life and work of Max Glücksmann are registered in these records, including his work as a media entrepreneur, director of several Jewish institutions and a member of the community. In order to analyze their work as producers, I looked at the conserved films and records as well as the accompanying metadata. The trajectories of these actors are analyzed against the backdrop of the evolution of the entertainment markets, which I reconstructed with complementary statistical information.

Like spiders building their web, these entrepreneurs travelled around the world in order to assemble the networks that kept distant peripheries connected to the capitals of the entertainment market. In business, nothing replaced or replaces a face-to-face meeting to close a deal. That is why they spent months and sometimes years travelling around Europe or from coast to coast in the United States, where they met with representatives of studios and labels and visited laboratories developing innovations in the recording and motion pictures technologies. Once the deals were closed, they went back to putting their Latin American connections to work, distributing and selling the acquired products. Following these actors and their transnational relations sheds light on how communication networks became denser, all while they were making internal differences and hierarchies more evident.

It Is a Wired World

There are many reasons why the histories of media have been told as national histories.¹³ They range from an interest in the relations between

¹³ Studies on film and music quoted in this dissertation focus on media in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay taking them as cases limited by the national territory and in relation to the regulations imposed by the state. Studies on the topic in Latin

political press and the conformation of nation states to the implications of legal regulations in the consolidation of media in a specific territory, additionally covering the existence of state-funded media as well as linguistic delimitations and the possibilities of accessing sources. However, the fact that there is a connection between media and the nation should not be a reason to ignore media's overall role in transnational connections but should, on the contrary, be a reason to pursue research in this direction in order to understand the mutual influence between global processes and national developments.¹⁴ The need to look at media within their global dimension is especially evident in the case of the period under examination in this study. The film and record industries were born in a connected world and took these connections one step further. Moreover, they emerged in a context prior to the more systematic attempts states made to regulate and dictate the contents of media, which can be more clearly seen starting in the 1930s.

The actors behind the expansion of new media might have labeled their products "national" for marketing reasons, but they were producing and distributing in a market that consisted of a network of cities in these three countries and beyond. The geographical scope of this study is defined by the territories where these actors were present, and it includes Buenos Aires, Santiago, and Montevideo, occasionally touching on other cities in which the business was growing during the period under examination. Transcending the focus on nations as a taken-for-granted unit for media history, this dissertation considers a transnational market as its geographical scope. By jointly examining a larger market – Buenos Aires – a medium one – Santiago – and a small one – Montevideo – it also makes it possible to observe their positions within the region and the internal hierarchies.

The arrival of film and recorded sound in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay contributed to shortening the distances between this Southern periphery and the Global North and deepened the integration of communication

America put together different national cases, while some include a comparative dimension between different countries.

¹⁴ Mirta Varela, "Medios de comunicación e industrias culturales: historias nacionales y problemas globales" (*A comunicação no mercado digital*, São Paulo, Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Interdisciplinares da Comunicação, 2007).

networks. Cameras and movies, phonographs and records crossed the globe along with other industrialized products demanded by the growing economies of the world's suppliers of agricultural and mining products. In the same ships that carried these products across the Atlantic, Lumiere and Gaumont's camera operators and Columbia's recording engineers travelled around the world to capture images and sounds for their catalogs. Film and recorded sound were part of a global communication infrastructure that had been in the process of being built since the mid-nineteenth century through initiatives developed by colonial powers seeking to connect the entire extension of their overseas territories with areas of commercial interest. Between 1870 and 1930, everything involving communication and information changed entirely. These decades witnessed the expansion of print media, telegraphic networks, and postal service and the invention of the telephone, phonograph, motion pictures, and the radio.¹⁵

To understand how film and recorded sound played their part in connecting the world, we need to observe the technological landscape that existed during the time of their invention. Ocean telegraphy moved people to expand their thinking to global dimensions.¹⁶ With the cable crossing the English Channel and the success of the Atlantic cable in 1866, entrepreneurs, journalists and politicians could imagine that nothing would prevent these technologies from developing and moving to a global scale. The telegraph also brought an unprecedented sense of immediacy, as it was the beginning of a new system of global communication that radically increased the speed of

¹⁵ Robert Gordon, *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S Standard of Living Since the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press – Kindle Edition), 104, Dwayne Winseck and Robert Pike, *Communication and Empire: Media, Markets and Globalization, 1860–1930*, 43.

¹⁶ Telegraph cables only made sense within a system of cables, so cable entrepreneurs were from the beginning planning on extending the networks across the world. This stimulated the imagination and hopes for a rapidly changing world that would be rapidly synchronized. This was one more moment in a succession of episodes that intensified changes in the act of imagining oneself as part of a larger and encompassing structure, which has been present in most societies. See Müller, *Wiring the World: The Social and Cultural Creation of Global Telegraph Networks* and Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), Chapter 2, "A short history of thinking globally".

message transmission.¹⁷ The possibility of transmitting information almost instantly laid at the core of the expansion of news agencies and a transformation in the newspapers' international news coverage. With the construction of the cable line from Lisbon to Pernambuco in 1874, South America entered the network. Newspapers quickly signed contracts with European news agencies to receive the latest information, which then traveled across the Atlantic and were transmitted via costal and land cables throughout the region.¹⁸

If the telegraph brought the idea of a connected world by increasing the speed in which information travelled across long distances and even oceans, another technology of the nineteenth century, photography, contributed to this idea by enabling the visualization of distant geographies. Invented in 1838, photography evolved during the following decades with increasingly portable and cheaper cameras up until taking a photograph became as simple as pressing one button on the mass-produced Kodak cameras in the 1900s. The history of photography concurred with the expansion of European empires, becoming an important tool to express and articulate the ideologies of imperialism by depicting distant landscapes, documenting military campaigns, and being used to survey and classify "racial types".¹⁹

Music played an important role in cultural encounters in the age of imperialism. Musicians traveled from all continents to European metropolises;

¹⁷ Lila Caimari nuances the allegedly radical change in the temporality of information with the introduction of the telegraph and considers it as one important step in a process that had started earlier. The acceleration in the transmission of news had started with steamships, which increased the regularity in the dispatching of news from around to three months to three or four weeks around 1860. Once the cables were in full functioning, the speed jumped to a few hours – after arriving via transatlantic cable, they had to be re-transmitted via costal or land cable to reach different cities. Lila Caimari, "El mundo al instante: noticias y temporalidades en la era del cable submarino (1860–1900)" *Redes 21*, no. 40: 125–46), 133.

¹⁸ About the cable networks in Latin America see Jorma Avhenainen, *The European Cable Companies in South America before the First World War* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2004); Winseck and Pike, *Communication and Empire*.

¹⁹ See James R. Ryan, *Picturing empire: Photography and the visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), Elanor Hight and Gary Sampson, eds., *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place* (London: Routledge, 2002).

anthropologists and businessmen brought instruments from their travels, and these kinds of instruments were also given as presents in official visits.²⁰ Efforts to export culture constituted an important element of non-governmental diplomacy practiced by most countries. Before becoming the main exporter of their own culture, the United States had been a target for the cultural expansion of European countries, which competed against each other for preponderance on the other side of the Atlantic.²¹ Musical encounters took place in the cities of Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia and proved to generate mutual influence on musical style while also contributing to the differentiation and emergence of national canons.²²

Motion pictures and recorded sound took the interconnectedness of the world through communication networks one step further. Introduced in a world wired by telegraph cables and with photographic images circulating through various channels, their invention contributed to the integration of national markets to a transnational network of entertainment products, a process Gerben Bakker characterized as the industrialization of entertainment.²³ According to Bakker, motion pictures industrialized spectator entertainment by automating, standardizing, and making it tradable. By the end of the nineteenth century, the existent forms of live spectacles could not meet

²⁰ Liebersohn argues that in the mid nineteenth century, a qualitative leap in the integration of the world economies, evidenced in the great exhibitions, created the conditions for a new global culture. Harry Liebersohn, *Music and the New Global Culture: From the Great Exhibitions to the Jazz Age* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 19.

²¹ Jessica Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy: Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850–1920* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

²² Van der Linden argues that in the context of liberalism and empire, non-Western musicians canonized and institutionalized national musical traditions and envisaged their own genres hierarchically in comparison to Western music. Bob van der Linden, “Non-Western National Music and Empire in Global History: Interactions, Uniformities, and Comparisons” *Journal of Global History* 10 (2015): 431–56. Pablo Palomino argues that the idea of Latin American music emerges in the context of transnational connections. Pablo Palomino, *The Invention of Latin American Music: A Transnational History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

²³ Gerben Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialised: The Emergence of the International Film Industry, 1890–1940* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Bakker coins this term referring to the motion pictures. In this study, I extend it also to recorded sound.

a demand that was growing due to the fall of working hours and the increase of disposable income among urban audiences. The newly born film industry pushed these limits and brought a qualitative leap in productivity. As a music hall performer, Charlie Chaplin could appear in a maximum of three venues a night. As a film actor, he could appear in thousands of screens in the most distant parts of the globe.²⁴ In a similar way that motion pictures allowed Chaplin to appear in thousands of venues at the same time, the gramophone allowed people all over the world to hear the voice of acclaimed singers such as Enrico Caruso.²⁵

The introduction of the new technologies in the Global South relied on preexisting economic and political networks. In the months that followed their first commercial introduction in the United States and Europe, people from the most distant places of the world celebrated the novelty of the phonograph and motion pictures. Diplomatic envoys to Europe, exchange students, and businessmen attended scientific exhibitions, commenting on the latest inventions in their writings for local newspapers in their home countries, all of which encouraged the introduction of these artifacts and educated readers on their functions and features.²⁶

Motion pictures and recorded sound revolutionized entertainment by introducing the possibility of mass production and reproduction, laying the groundwork for local markets to integrate into transnational ones. By focusing on a portion of the emerging global market constituted by a network of cities in Latin America and their connections to Europe and the United States,

²⁴ Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialised*, xix.

²⁵ On the global expansion of the record industry see Peter Tschmuck, *Creativity and Innovation in the Music Industry* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), Pekka Gronow and Ilpo Saunio, *An International History of the Recording Industry* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999).

²⁶ This is true not only for Latin America but for most major cities in the Global South. See for example Christina Lubinski and Andreas Steen, "Traveling Entrepreneurs, Traveling Sounds: The Early Gramophone Business in India and China" *Itinerario* 41, no. 02 (2017): 275–303, Bart A. Barendregt and Philip Yampolsky, *Sonic Modernities in the Malay world: A History of Popular Music, Social Distinction and Novel Lifestyles (1930s–2000s)*, Southeast Asia mediated, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), Yingjin Zhang, "Industry and Ideology: A Centennial Review of Chinese Cinema" *World Literature Today* (2003): 8–14.

this dissertation observes the dynamics of the conformation of the global entertainment market. By observing how Latin American markets integrated into the global entertainment market, my aim is to shed light on the asymmetries that conditioned media, communication, and cultural production, as well as investigate the tension brought on by these markets' tendency to simultaneously reinforce processes of cultural homogenization and differences.

Imported Entertainment

When looking at the beginnings of film and recorded sound in Latin America, one of the major aspects that needs to be considered is the fact that these technologies and products were introduced from abroad. This fact inspired assumptions that lay at the core of two main approaches to the history of the new media of the early twentieth century in the Global South. On the one hand, the introduction of new technologies has been seen as an unmistakable sign of the arrival of modernity, which would have transplanted a series of values and practices into the receiving society. On the other hand, it has been understood as an expression of cultural imperialism, which would have turned those that interacted with these technologies into passive audiences that put their own under threat by consuming foreign culture. Over the past decades, the interpretations of this process have been revisited, introducing a series of nuances, but these two primary assumptions remain in the background.

Regarding the first perspective, both contemporary actors and historians have seen cinema and recorded sound in Latin America as being intrinsically connected with modernity in different ways. For contemporaries, modernity could have both positive and negative connotations. A chronicler writing for the Chilean magazine *El Film* in 1919 considered movies as a break from “the material and moral agitations of this terrible epilepsy called modern life”, while Max Glücksmann labeled gramophones and cameras as “the joy of the modern home”.²⁷ Looking back to these times, scholars have referred to film

²⁷ *El Film*, Santiago, 01.02.1919, no. 38, 6; Max Glücksmann's advertisements in *Caras y Caretas*, for example 17.12.1927.

as the quintessence of the “experience of modernity” and have seen movie theaters as the place where Latin Americans went either “to dream or to learn how to be modern”, or to see on the big screen how the differences between romanticized rural customs and “modern” urban lifestyles came to terms.²⁸ The case of recorded music is somewhat different, as scholars have seen the introduction of recording technologies as one more step in the modernization of music, not as the initiator. This modernizing force is usually equated with European and US music, and it is often argued that “non-Western” music became “modernized” by the global spread of European musicians and instruments.²⁹

Even though these studies have made important contributions to the field by showing the way in which mass media was a channel for people to make sense of the rapid transformations they were experiencing in the early twentieth century, the breadth of the concepts of *modernity* and *modern* undermines their potential as analytic categories. These terms have become empty signifiers primarily used in reference to everything that was new or associated with the introduction of cultural products or technologies that were first developed in the United States or Europe.³⁰

Several studies aim to more concretely define what modernity meant in the Latin American context in relation to the sphere of culture and media by emphasizing the way in which new and traditional cultural expressions were

²⁸ Vivian Schelling considers that mass media transformed the idea of modernity into a lived experience. Vivian Schelling, “Introduction: Reflections on the Experience of Modernity in Latin America” in *Through the kaleidoscope*, ed. Vivian Schelling (New York: Verso, 2000), 12. Studies on documentary films emphasized how they portrayed the life in the countryside in contrast to “modern” life in the city. See Georgina Torello, *La conquista del espacio: cine silente uruguayo (1915–1932)* (Montevideo: Editorial Yaugurú, 2018) and Mónica Villarroel, *Poder, nación y exclusión en el cine temprano: Chile-Brasil (1896–1933)* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2017).

²⁹ van der Linden, “Non-Western National Music and Empire in Global History”, 435.

³⁰ On the critique to the use of the concept of modernity see Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2005). The discussion on whether modernity could be given any meaningful analytical content at all is the starting point of the book edited by Nicola Miller and Stephen Hart. See Nicola Miller, “Introduction: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Modernity in Latin America” in *When Was Latin America Modern?* ed. Nicola Miller and Stephen Hart (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

articulated. Beatriz Sarlo has reflected on the distinctive features of modernity in Buenos Aires, which she has characterized as “peripheric”, by showing the heterogeneity of the intellectual and cultural landscape, in which apparently opposed elements coexist: traditionalist cultural practices with the massive import of goods, discourses, and symbolic practices; a defensive attitude with the spirit of renewal; *criollismo* with the avant-gardes.³¹ Florencia Garramuño has shown how the emphasis on “primitivists” musical elements, such as syncopation and the African roots of tango and samba, were key to Argentinian and Brazilian quests to find their own modern culture, differentiating themselves from the European one. The operation that turned these allegedly primitive elements from negative features into positive ones was related to the demand of European cultural elites at the time for something new, exotic, different, which Latin America could provide.³² Similarly, Ana López has argued that the technologies of visuality epitomized by cinema in Latin America were part of an ambiguous symbiosis of traditional experiences and modernizing innovations.³³ The concept of modernity is also key for scholars within the field of Latin American cultural studies, especially noted in the work of Néstor García Canclini, who has considered that modernity needs to be revisited from the perspective of cultural hybridization, by looking at the complex relations between tradition and modernization, and at the changes that popular culture undergoes as part of the process.³⁴

Through their more nuanced definitions of Latin American cultural modernity, these scholars have highlighted the heterogeneity of the changes that

³¹ Beatriz Sarlo, *Una modernidad periférica* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1988), 15, 28. The term coined by sarlo, “peripheric modernity”, has been extensively quoted in the historiography. For two examples in relation to media history see Karush, *Cultura de clase*; Stefan Rinke, *Cultura de masas, reforma y nacionalismo en Chile, 1910–1931* (Chile: Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos, 2002).

³² Florencia Garramuño, *Modernidades primitivas: tango, samba y nación* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007).

³³ Ana López, “Early Cinema and Modernity in Latin America” *Cinema Journal* 40, no. 1 (2000): 48–78 49. She follows in this regard the analysis of Joaquín Brunner of Latin American modernity as characterized by cultural heterogeneity and multiple rationalities.

³⁴ García Canclini, *Culturas híbridas: estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*, 13, 38–39.

were taking place at the turn of the century, going against previous approaches that saw modernization as a process that tended to erase differences.³⁵ They have also revealed that these types of changes were taking place within a context characterized by asymmetric power relations reinforced by the economic status of Latin America in the world. However, these studies did not solve the problem of the breadth of the concept of modernity. On the contrary, they made it even broader: the concept now not only referred to everything new, with a wide range of influences from industrialized countries, but also had different manifestations produced by the mix with pre-existing cultural elements. This dissertation is informed by the question, present in these studies, of how the adoption of new technologies and the reception of cultural contents coming from abroad resulted in the emergence of new social practices while these technologies were intertwining with existing ones. However, I move away from the prior discussion on whether this phenomenon should be called modernity or not along with how it compares to the experiences of Europe and the United States, focusing instead on understanding the relations of asymmetry and dependence that were the context for and the result of the emergence of new media.

The second perspective departs from another undeniable fact in the history of the entertainment industries of the early twentieth century, which is that Hollywood movies and fox-trot, Charleston, and shimmy records conquered Latin American markets and had an overwhelming presence in the cultural consumption of local audiences in the early twentieth century. The evidence of the expansion of US media abroad was the starting point for studies pursued around the 1970s and 1980s, which posited the existence of what they defined as media imperialism. Even though it remains a vague

³⁵ Classic modernization theories were introduced in Latin America, for example through the work of Gino Germani, who aimed at showing how the Argentine society had changed between the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, becoming socially equal, closer to European societies. Ezequiel Adamovsky considers that Germani's work constitutes the core of a "myth of modernization", which recent historiography contributed to debunk. Among many fields, mass culture was one in which social differences became visible. Ezequiel Adamovsky, *Historia de la clase media argentina: apogeo y decadencia de una ilusión, 1919-2003* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2009), 40-45, 104-109.

concept, media imperialism can be summarized as “the processes by which modern communication media have operated to create, maintain, and expand systems of domination and dependence on a world scale”.³⁶ In other words, this phenomenon was considered to be a specific type of cultural imperialism, defined in simplified terms as the process through which a foreign culture invades an indigenous/local one. Even so, the corpus on media imperialism has been subjected to many critiques. Among other things, critics have pointed out the difficulties of defining what a “local” or “indigenous” culture is: how does a culture *belong* to a place? If it is not a “natural” belonging but a historically constructed one, then how much time is needed for something to become “authentic”?³⁷

Even though the concept of media imperialism has become marginal in recent historiography, some of its concerns are taken into account by historians of culture and communication. In contrast to earlier models which had focused on the national level, the media imperialism approach favors a transnational scale and emphasizes the global structure and its decisive role in the development within each nation.³⁸ Aiming to overcome the main critiques without discarding media imperialism’s main contribution – centering global inequalities in reflections about culture – scholars have revisited the presence of the United States in the cultural field in Latin America. In doing so, they have introduced the concept of Americanization, which bears a close relation with that of cultural imperialism but focuses on the active role of societies in contact with the US, emphasizing the multidirectional nature of these exchanges.³⁹ Americanization has become a useful category to analyze

³⁶ Fred Fejes, “Media Imperialism: An Assessment” *Media, Culture and Society*, no. 3 (1981): 281–89, 281. Attempts to precisely define media imperialism can be found on: Jeremy Tunstall, *The Media are American: Anglo-American Media in the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Oliver Boyd-Barret, “Media Imperialism: Towards and International Framework for the Analysis of Media Systems” in *Mass Communication and Society*, ed. James Curran and Michael Gurevitch (London: Arnold, 1977); Chin-Chuan Lee, *Media Imperialism Reconsidered: The Homogenizing of Television Culture* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980).

³⁷ John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism* (London: Continuum, 1991), 23–24.

³⁸ Fejes, “Media Imperialism” 281.

³⁹ Volker Berghahn, “The Debate on ‘Americanization’ Among Economic and Cultural Historians” *Cold War History* 10, no. 1 (2010): 107–30.

the way in which encounters between Latin American societies and the United States took place within the context of an unequal distribution of power since the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, resulting in the transfer of consumption models, sociocultural practices, and production methods.⁴⁰

Drawing on these contributions, I propose to look at how the relations between the local cultural landscape in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay and new technologies and contents produced in Europe and the United States were negotiated on multiple levels: through the appropriation of new technologies on the basis of previously existing social practices and media, through the search for a place in a distribution market dominated by US and European companies, and through the mutual influences in aesthetic and narrative aspects of production. From a technology-in-use approach, I look at how technologies were appropriated on the basis of pre-existing social practices and how new media were interpreted on the basis of old media.⁴¹ This approach decenters the history of information technologies from their inventors, such as Thomas Alva Edison or Alexander Graham Bell, and instead looks at how users and retailers around the world also played important roles in shaping the evolutions in technology. By tracing the emergence and evolution of distribution networks, I dedicate attention to an underexamined aspect of media history, in which the negotiations between Latin American, European, and US actors are particularly visible. I look at the production of films and movies with attention to the technological, economic, and institutional circumstances that conditioned the way in which films and records were made,

⁴⁰ María Inés Barbero and Andrés Regalsky, eds., *Americanización: Estados Unidos y América Latina en el siglo XX. Transferencias económicas, tecnológicas y culturales* (Buenos Aires: EDUNTREF, 2014), 9–22; Stefan Rinke, *Encuentros con el Yanqui: Norteamericanización y cambio sociocultural en Chile (1898–1990)* (Santiago Chile: Ediciones de la Dirección de Bibliotecas Archivos y Museos, 2013), 174.

⁴¹ I follow the technology-in-use approach of David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History Since 1900* (London: Profile Books, 2008), and Lisa Gitelman in her approach to media as a socially realized structure of communication that includes technological forms and ritualized cultural practices. I apply Marshall McLuhan's idea of new media embracing its predecessor and turning it into its content. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Berkeley: Gingko Press, 2013).

examining the motivations and strategies that informed decisions on the narrative and aesthetic elements of production.

Backward Linkage – or the Nation as a Niche

Reconstructing the life and work of a group of entrepreneurs and especially that of Max Glücksmann, who followed a strategy of vertical integration and thus became involved in all parts of the process, allows for the observance of all the different spheres of motion pictures and recorded sound, along with the interactions between them. This dissertation is structured in a way that combines a thematic and chronologic division. I analyze the spheres of production, distribution, and commercialization of films and records separately. The chronology of the emergence and consolidation of these spheres reveals the specificity of this process in the countries under examination, differentiating their processes from the emergence of the same media in Europe and the United States, where production came first and was the most dynamic part of the process, turning producers into the most powerful actors of the field. The inventors of the technologies looked for commercial partners and founded the first companies that marketed the products, which were, for example, the first to shoot cinematographic vistas, record cylinders, and push the improvement of production techniques. In the 1910s, film studios evolved into big companies, and they followed strategies of vertical integration, thus controlling not only production, but also distribution and commercialization. In Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, the development of these media followed a reverse order, and commercialization was the first sphere that expanded and consolidated. The technologies of film and phonography were introduced as imports among many other manufactured goods by traders who aimed to meet a growing demand for entertainment among the urban population. During their early years, and while the production of films and records was still rather artisanal, it was possible for local producers in Latin America to make their own. With the evolution of production techniques, however, it became harder for local actors to reach the quality standards needed to compete with US and European products.

The history of these media shows a process that, borrowing from a concept within economic history and dependency theory, I call backward linkage: in a similar way than other non-primary activities, the expansion of the market for films and records induced producers to utilize domestic production in an attempt to supply the inputs that had formerly been taken up in the region via regular imports.⁴² With the growth in the demand for entertainment, the distribution networks expanded progressively and became increasingly stable. As of the 1910s, production started to grow strong in certain niches. Once the market had reached a certain size, local firms started to produce records and movies to supply the owners of phonographs and film reproducers. In order to do this, producers profited from the context of World War I, which limited the arrival of products from the belligerent countries. The possibilities of domestic production of supplies for these industries relied on two aspects of cultural products. On the one side, producers needed to reach the basic technical conditions for production and needed a minimal market scale for it to be profitable. In this regard, films and records were the same as any manufactured good. On the other side, producers benefited from their capacity to capture the images and sounds that were more suited to engage audiences as movies and records were products that carried symbolic content. For this reason, the niches where local production grew were mostly informative, documentary, and nationalist narrative films, niches on the recording side being a musical repertoire that enhanced a link to “tradition” and “authenticity”, which was made explicit by labeling the songs as part of a “criollo” culture.

This dissertation is structured with the purpose of making visible the dynamics of commercialization, distribution, and the production of films and records in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay and how each sphere conditioned the others. Chapter 1 focuses on the introduction and commercialization of sound reproducers, cylinders and records, along with cameras and films from the 1890s throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century. It analyzes how these products were appropriated and linked to existing social practices as well as created new ones, following the emergence of new

⁴² Albert Hirschman, *The Strategy of Economic Development* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958).

media triggered by these technologies. By following a group of actors involved in the commercialization of these products and in film exhibition in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Santiago, this chapter shows that entrepreneurs played a significant role in shaping the uses of these technologies through advertisement strategies based on their knowledge on the demands and expectations of consumers. It follows the evolution of the market throughout three decades and observes how it expanded and consolidated as a regional market that connected several cities in the three countries.

Chapter 2 reconstructs the emergence and consolidation of the networks and mechanisms of distribution of films and records in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. It looks at how retailers entered the distribution business and how they negotiated with studios and labels based in the United States and Europe in order to obtain the rights to allocate their products. Distribution was the most profitable part of the business, and it granted Latin American actors important fortunes. However, this did not last long. This chapter follows the rise and fall of distributors, from the years in which Max Glücksmann, José Tagini, and Julián Ajuria gained control of most of the distribution business in the region to the times when Hollywood studios and major transnational music labels took the distribution business into their own hands.

Distribution mechanisms largely conditioned the way in which entrepreneurs approached the production of films and records in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, which is the focus of Chapter 3. Entrepreneurs approached production as an import substitution process in a market that, because of its scale, could only substitute the making of its final product of films and records, relying instead on the import of more complex technologies such as cameras and gramophones. In a market dominated by contents produced in Europe and the United States, producers chose to focus on the forms, genres, and themes in which they could offer a distinctive feature. In the field of informative contents, newsreels and documentaries took the practice of visually informing the public started by illustrated magazines one step further. Filmmakers made movies on demand for institutions aiming to advertise their work and provided a place where social groups wishing to see themselves on the big screen could do so. In the field of fiction film and music recording, producers found a place to reshape the contents of other media and

the aesthetics of cultural expressions with popular acceptance. Producers did this in order to appeal to the audience, including characters, images, and sounds that were closer to what the audience was familiar with, finding a place in a transnational market that craved for exoticized representations of distant geographies and their characters in the process.

Selling Joy: New Technologies and Consumption at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

When Casa Lepage announced the arrival of the first gramophones in Buenos Aires, they were presented as “the theater at home”. Advertisements portrayed being the owner of sound reproducers and cinematographers as taking part in a certain kind of lifestyle, characteristic of the “modern home”.⁴³ Thanks to this and other metaphors and images, new technologies shifted from something new and unknown into something familiar in the eyes of their potential users. By the 1920s, recorded sound and motion pictures had become an integral part of everyday life and developed into two of the main forms of entertainment for inhabitants of Buenos Aires, Santiago, and Montevideo. But before reaching that point, these technologies went through a phase of adjustment, a moment in which their uses and functions were not defined. This chapter focuses on this moment, in which what we would now call “old media” were new. Following Carolyn Marvin, I consider new media to be the use of new communication technologies for old or new purposes, as well as new ways of using old technologies.⁴⁴ By investigating the moment in which two of the main innovations in the field of communications in the late nineteenth century were introduced, I aim to observe a time that Lisa Gitelman and George Pingree define as a moment in which the meanings of media are in flux, when they are not yet accepted as natural, and the material means and conceptual modes are not yet fixed.⁴⁵

⁴³ After Max Glücksmann bought Casa Lepage and renamed it as Casa Max Glücksmann, all its advertisements in the press included the claim “The joy of the modern home”.

⁴⁴ Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 8.

⁴⁵ Lisa Gitelman and George Pingree, “What’s New About New Media?” in *New Media, 1740–1915*, ed. Lisa Gitelman and George Pingree (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), xii.

In order to understand how motion pictures and recorded sound were appropriated in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, this chapter looks at key actors throughout the process of introduction of these technologies: the stores and entrepreneurs that sold them and, through different selling techniques, gathered knowledge on the demands and expectations of potential users, and targeted the new entertainment products for specific uses and contexts. This chapter argues that commercialization strategies played a central role in the emergence of new media related to recorded sound and motion pictures, as these strategies succeeded in linking them to existing social practices. More precisely, I show how existing habits of listening, playing, or dancing to music shaped the adoption of the gramophone, and how the consumption of images with the purpose of amusement, information or cherishing memories influenced the emergence of film as a mass medium.

Users of communication machines were not simply consumers of these technologies but also took an active part in defining their features. The impact of uses on these features may not seem so significant for film and recorded sound in the early twentieth century in comparison with the internet in modern times, but they still helped shape the medium in important ways. Similar to the process in which computers turned into personal computers, sound reproducers evolved into home phonographs; film evolved into mass and public entertainment at the time that became a medium to store family memories through homemade movies. The process of the domestication of sound reproducers and film cameras was multidimensional and included the metaphors used to describe phonographs and cinematographers, the advertisement used to sell them, features of the machine's design, and a variety of social practices that defined its uses, such as music making as a domestic pursuit, or shopping as a leisure activity.⁴⁶

Film and recorded sound were introduced in the context of emerging consumer societies in urban Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay.⁴⁷ In the last quarter

⁴⁶ Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press), 64.

⁴⁷ On the concept of consumer societies see David Clarke, *Consumer Society and the Post-modern City* (London: Routledge, 2003); Neva Goodwin, Frank Ackerman, and David Kiron, *The Consumer Society* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1997). According to Robert Dunn, mass consumption emerges as a result of the expansion of

of the nineteenth century, the export boom resulted in the expansion of the economy and a growth in population through immigration. In these boosting economies, more people were gradually broadening and diversifying their consumption patterns. Inhabitants of cities had more disposable income to buy clothing, food, hygienic products, and also to consume different forms of entertainment. While the demand of the new middle sectors was increasingly met by local production, the luxurious consumption of the upper classes remained primarily supplied by imports.⁴⁸ Understanding media as part of consumer societies allows us to see how practices of communication intertwine with consumption habits. Media consists of more than technologies, namely of the articulation of a system with different economic actors and three components: a container, a content, and a commercialization device.⁴⁹

The novelty of the 1890s was that, for the first time, communication machines were meant for amusement in the private sphere. Their introduction marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of entertainment. Historians have traced the origins of leisure as a separate sphere of human activity to the beginnings of industrial capitalism or beyond, to pre-industrial societies that had some kind of festival culture.⁵⁰ In this longer history of free time, the late nineteenth century marks the beginning of a phase that lasts until today, in which entertainment is often mediated by communication technologies. It also marks the point in which communication technologies conquered the domestic space. At the turn of the century, a withdrawal to domestic life created a niche in which new media could grow. In this family

markets, which result in the expansion of industrial production, and the introduction of new systems of commercialization and advertisement. Robert Dunn, *Identifying Consumption: Subjects and Objects in Consumer Society* (Filadelfia: Temple University Press, 2008), 1–14.

⁴⁸ Fernando Rocchi, “Consumir es un placer: la industria y la expansión de la demanda en Buenos Aires a la vuelta del siglo pasado” *Desarrollo Económico* 37, no. 148 (1998): 533–58; Jacqueline Dussaillant, *Las reinas de estado: consumo, grandes tiendas y mujeres en la modernización del comercio en Santiago, 1880–1930* (Santiago: Ediciones UC, 2011).

⁴⁹ Patrice Flichy, *Una historia de la comunicación moderna: espacio público y vida privada* (Barcelona / México: Editorial Gustavo Gilli), 108–109.

⁵⁰ Peter Burke, “The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe” *Past and Present*, no. 146 (1995): 136–50; Joan-Lluís Marfany, “The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe (reply)” *Past and Present*, no. 156 (1997): 174–91.

space, people kept photographic albums, listened to records, and watched films. Users understood new technologies based on old ones, and domesticated motion pictures became a medium to store family memories, while gramophones replaced the piano as the centerpiece of the salon where families gathered to listen to music. These communication technologies also became a connection between the private sphere and public life outside. As Patrice Flichy argues, the withdrawal to domestic life did not imply a lack of interest for the outside world. On the contrary: “when the theater is behind closed doors, it opens a window to the world”.⁵¹

This chapter reconstructs the strategies of entrepreneurs in order to introduce the latest technologies of the 1890s and follows gramophones and cinematographers to trace the uses they had in Buenos Aires, Santiago, and Montevideo. The first section of this chapter focuses on the commercialization strategies utilized to sell communication machines and observes how entertainment evolved accordingly to the emergence of new consumption patterns. The second section analyzes how the adoption of entertainment technologies was influenced by changes in urban space and social structures, and by the increasing distinction between the private and public spheres. It argues that gramophones and cinema had an important role in differentiating but also connecting these two spaces. It looks at how the gramophone and the cinematographer were appropriated based on the experience with the media that preceded them both in public and domestic spaces, such as the piano or photography.

Entertainment in the Consumer Society

The shop that the Belgian Henri Lepage founded in the early 1890s in the center of Buenos Aires rapidly turned into one of the hotspots for new technologies. Lepage sold photographic cameras and accessories and was renowned among professional photographers and aficionados. Photography spread among amateurs towards the end of the century thanks to shops such as Lepage’s, which sold the necessary equipment and instructed buyers on

⁵¹ Flichy, *Una historia de la comunicación moderna*, 111.

their uses.⁵² Seeking to expand the variety of products offered, he decided to import the latest novelties of the time: gramophones and records, cinematographic cameras, projectors, and films. While Lepage and his employees introduced the technology of recorded sound and sold it as a new form of amusement, they were also among the first to experiment with the novelty of film and produced some of the first moving images on Latin American soil. Not only did they sell machines but also advertised them, gave instructions on their uses, and targeted the products for specific customers. It was through the mediation of shops and salesmen such as Lepage and his employees that new technologies were introduced and appropriated in Latin American cities.



Image 1. Casa Lepage on Av. de Mayo. "El hogar del 'film'", Caras y Caretas, Buenos Aires, 03.01.1914.

⁵² The magazine *Revista Ilustrada del Río de la Plata* and the book *La fotografía moderna*, written by Francisco Pociello and published by Casa Lepage in 1898 focused on explaining the technical features of photography.

The main stage for the introduction of new technologies was a handful of middle-sized shops in the capital cities of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Aside from Casa Lepage, other stores entered the business of entertainment technologies. Some examples are Casa Tagini in Buenos Aires and Efraín Band's shop in Santiago de Chile. Tagini's store was across the street from Casa Lepage in the city center of Buenos Aires. The Genoese immigrant, Giuseppe Tagini, arrived in Buenos Aires in 1885 and started out by selling bazaar items: suitcases, umbrellas, and walking sticks. By the early 1900s, he had moved to a five-hundred-square-meters shop where he sold music boxes, pianos, and a large variety of gramophones, cylinders, and records. A strong competitor in the beginning, Tagini went bankrupt in 1915 due to commercial turbulence caused by the war: not being able to offer the musical novelties of Columbia records, his business lost its main appeal.⁵³ Efraín Band migrated in 1870s from Tver in the Russian Empire to Santiago and became a cigarette trader and opened a small store. He entered the phonographic business in the 1890s, when he began to experiment with different recording techniques and made study trips to Europe and the United States to perfect his knowledge. By 1907, Band had installed a recording studio and a small record factory in his house. However, the 1910s witnessed his decline. The opening of branches of the Victor Talking Machine in Latin America and the expanding presence of Max Glücksmann made it impossible for Band to compete with them, and he ended up closing his business.⁵⁴

In the process of becoming larger sized stores specializing in household and entertainment products, these shops adopted new commercialization practices that were spreading worldwide. Casa Tagini and Casa Max Glücksmann implemented the selling methods of department stores that were popular in both the United States and Latin American capitals: they advertised their products and published catalogs in the local press, of which people could order products from anywhere in the country to be sent by post.⁵⁵ In

⁵³ García Jiménez, *Memorias y fantasmas de Buenos Aires*, 213–219.

⁵⁴ Francisco Garrido Escobar and Renato Menare Rowe, "Efraín Band y los inicios de la fonografía en Chile" *Revista Musical Chilena*, no. 221 (2014): 52–78.

⁵⁵ On the consumption practices associated to department stores see Jana Geršlová, "Department Stores – Temples of Consumption, History of the First Department Stores in Europe" *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia* 7 (2007): 119–28; Paul Frederick

addition, they moved to big buildings with several floors where they could offer something for every taste and need, a place where people could spend their free time walking around.⁵⁶ Stores were open on Saturdays and announced longer opening hours close to the higher consumption seasons such as Christmas. The new consumption patterns brought together the store as a place of socialization with the home as the place where buying decisions were made. Due to the consolidation of advertisement as a new selling practice, the decision of buying a product was no longer taken after bargaining with the shopkeeper but was now supposed to be an informed decision taken at home, looking at and considering the ads published regularly on the press.⁵⁷

Entertainment evolved accordingly to the emergence of consumer societies in turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires, Santiago, and Montevideo. Internal markets expanded due to the export boom, which resulted in the growth of the population thanks to massive immigration. The growth of the economy created an impulse for the market, which later acquired its own dynamic due to the expansion of local industrial production. Mass consumption from sectors of middle and lower incomes was the impulse for local production, whereas luxury consumption continued to rely mostly on imports.⁵⁸ Through the diversification of products offered, in both type and price, entertainment industries participated in the process of broadening consumption. The expansion of the market and of local production resulted in the increase of competition among local producers and with foreign firms. Local

Lerner, *The Consuming Temple: Jews, Department Stores, and the Consumer Revolution in Germany 1880–1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016); Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

⁵⁶ Rocchi, “Consumir es un placer”; Dussailant, *Las reinas de estado*.

⁵⁷ Fernando Rocchi, “Inventando la soberanía del consumidor: publicidad, privacidad y revolución del mercado en la Argentina, 1860–1940” in *Historia de la vida privada en Argentina*, ed. Fernando Devoto and Marta Madero (Buenos Aires: Taurus-Alfaguara), 303.

⁵⁸ On the emergence of consumer societies in Latin America see John Sinclair and Anna Cristina Pertierra, eds., *Consumer Culture in Latin America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan); on the case of Argentina see Fernando Rocchi, *Chimneys in the Desert: Industrialization in Argentina During the Export Book Years, 1870–1930* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006).

entrepreneurs had the advantage of knowing the milieu and were often more effective with their advertisement campaigns in spite of foreign firms having the greatest expertise in the field.

Brands were a key element for competition within the market. They constituted as a form of differentiation that went beyond the features of the product and resulted in the consumers making their purchase decisions not in terms of generic products but of specific brands, which were seen as a guarantee of quality and reliability.⁵⁹ As it happened with clothing and food, phonographs, cameras, records, and films were associated with specific names: Victor, Columbia, Odeon, Pathé Frères, Paramount, etc. Local entrepreneurs also developed their own brands to differentiate themselves from their competitors: Max Glücksmann called his records *Discos Nacional* and gave his own name to the store and the brand, to which he later added the claim “The Joy of the Modern Home”.

The selling techniques applied to the entertainment business in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay were a combination of the adoption of methods developed in the industry in the United States and Europe and the innovation of local actors according to their own context. As branches that were born with a global vocation, the film and record industries counted on an important element to exchange knowledge on selling techniques: trade magazines. Most of these were printed in the United States and reported with great detail on the progress of the business worldwide. They spoke directly to distributors and traders, with the purpose of keeping them informed on the latest productions and innovations, and instructing them in the selling techniques. Magazines such as *Talking Machine World*, *Film Daily*, or *Cine Mundial* – the trade magazine for the Spanish speaking world – reported on general aspects of the field, whereas others such as *The Voice of the Victor* or *Mensajero Paramount* were concerned with the interests of one specific company and aimed at being a communication channel for agents of the firm in different parts of the world.

These magazines also commented on the accomplishments and creative approaches of retailers worldwide, such as Tagini’s huge sign in the city

⁵⁹ See Rocchi, “Consumir es un placer”.

center of Buenos Aires or the “handsome window hangers” he used on his storefront. According to *Talking Machine World*, Tagini was “considered to be the largest dealer in talking-machine products in the world” in 1912.⁶⁰ However, this would change very soon. His success was built partly on his commercial skills but also relied greatly on his exclusive agreement with Columbia Gramophone Co. As the exclusive representative of one of the major music labels of the time, Tagini focused most of his activities on selling records, which granted him important earnings, but also made him largely dependent on Columbia.⁶¹ When World War I started and commerce was interrupted, Tagini’s business suffered from not having new records to offer and went bankrupt shortly after.

Unlike Tagini, Glücksmann followed a more diversified strategy. Several elements contributed to his success. The young Max Glücksmann was, according to *Caras y Caretas*, a talented salesperson who called the attention of every client who entered the store. In this way, a quick ascent started of him becoming the “king of cinematography”.⁶² He was an essential part of Casa Lepage and moved up in the ranks from errand boy to manager and then owner, when Lepage moved back to Europe. However, he owed part of his success to his networks. When Glücksmann bought Casa Lepage in 1908, he was 33 years old and a recently married man: he had married in 1907 to Rebeca Lerman, a member of a Jewish family who migrated to Argentina from the Russian Empire and whose father was the employee of the grain exporter firm owned by the German Jewish immigrant Hermann Weil.⁶³ In the years from Glücksmann’s beginnings in Casa Lepage to 1908, the shop experienced significant growth: it went from having three employees to fifty, moved from a one hundred square meter shop to a location much larger and more centrally located, and diversified the products it sold exponentially.

With Glücksmann in charge, the growth of the business Lepage had started accelerated and acquired a regional scale: the number of employees had

⁶⁰ *Talking Machine World*, New York, 15.11.1912, 6.

⁶¹ Tagini’s earnings on the day before Christmas 1911 were a record internationally. *Talking Machine World*, New York, 15.11.1912, 6.

⁶² *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 03.01.1914.

⁶³ *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, 16.05.1907; *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 20.04.1907.

tripled by 1931 and went from one shop in Buenos Aires to branches in several cities of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, and offices in Paris and New York. In addition to the stores, Glücksmann owned or managed seventy movie theaters.⁶⁴ Since 1909, a permanent representative in Santiago aimed to streamline the labor of film distribution in Chile, which the Buenos Aires office had managed until then.⁶⁵ By 1915, Max Glücksmann's was considered one of the four main cinematographic firms in Chile and had the largest stock of films in the country.⁶⁶ After a few years, he also became an important exhibitor, and by 1927, he managed nine movie theaters.⁶⁷ Max's younger brother Bernardo settled in 1913 in Montevideo and took control of the Uruguayan branch. In a small shop, Bernardo was in charge of the commercialization of photographic cameras and accessories, phonographs and records, and was decided upon to exploit the market of film and business distribution. Unlike Buenos Aires and Santiago, the field was still underdeveloped in Montevideo.

The rapid growth of these stores can also be explained by the expansion of their business branches. Films, cameras, phonographs, and records became objects of mass consumption. These products were purchased on a regular basis by people of different income levels thanks to the increase of disposable incomes, the introduction of cheaper models of cameras and sound reproducers, and the commercialization strategies that succeeded in targeting them to different categories of potential consumers.⁶⁸ Each industry required different strategies to achieve this. In the field of film, exhibitors managed to turn it into one of the main public forms of entertainment in the cities by adapting theaters to the needs of screenings and by segregating audiences according to their incomes in different types of venues. In the case of the

⁶⁴ "El primer sueldo de Max Glücksmann", *Revista Atlántida*, Buenos Aires, 16.07.1931.

⁶⁵ *El Mercurio*, Santiago, 26.02.1901, 5.

⁶⁶ *Cine Gaceta*, Santiago, second half of 1915, 9. The other firms were Compañía Cinematográfica Italo Chilena, Empersa del Cinema Teatro Lda., both based in Valparaíso, and Casa Efrain Band, based in Santiago.

⁶⁷ *El Mercurio*, Santiago, 12.09.1927, 52.

⁶⁸ Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 78.

phonographic industry, entrepreneurs managed to integrate the new technology into the music business and succeeded in selling records by linking them to existing habits of socialization and leisure by offering records of danceable music and introducing new models of portable and cheaper reproducers.

Motion picture spectacles had been a social event since their early days, appealing people to gather in salons, fairs, and theaters with the attraction of seeing moving images. However, several years passed until the activity of watching movies became associated with specific venues. Since the early 1900s, Casa Lepage offered projectors for theaters and salons, which were gradually adding film exhibition to their current program of activities. Ads claimed that the Pathé Frères cinematographer was “an endless goldmine when installed in a hotel, a bar, or a salon”.⁶⁹ During the first decade of film, most exhibitions were held in different venues that improvised a reorganization of the space to host the projection of motion pictures, which were mainly considered a curiosity rather than a proper spectacle. During the times of early cinema, exhibition habits were different from the ones that would consolidate with the emergence of narrative film. Spectators might not have been seated or silent, and the evening consisted not only of one film, but rather a dozen of short vistas – films made with a steady camera- or of a combination of a music act, a vaudeville show, and a short film.⁷⁰

It took some time until film was exhibited in venues designed for that purpose in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. When Bernardo Glücksmann traveled to Montevideo to study the film business in Uruguay in the early 1910s, one of his main observations was the lack of proper venues for the activity. As he recalls in his memoirs, when he travelled to the United States and thought comparatively to what he had seen in Montevideo, he “understood that (in Uruguay) the film business was being exploited routinely, without any commercial creativity”.⁷¹ His aim was to build momentum for film exhibition in Uruguay. The Crodara brothers, theater impresarios who until then had

⁶⁹ Caras y Caretas, Buenos Aires, 11.04.1908.

⁷⁰ André Gaudreault, “Del ‘cine primitivo’ a la ‘cinematografía-atracción’” *Secuencias*, no. 26 (2016): 10–28, 13.

⁷¹ “Memorias de Bernardo Glücksmann”, *Cinemateca Uruguay*, no date.

managed the Glücksmanns' business, controlled all the most important venues in the city and were the first to exhibit films in theaters. With the expansion of the activity, Bernardo decided to refurbish the old Buckingham theater completely, and the inauguration of the first cinema was an important event that counted on the attendance of famous personalities, among them the president of the country.⁷²

The Glücksmann brothers also saw the film deal as a real estate business. Putting the first bricks of the film infrastructure in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay was an important part of their contribution to setting the basis for the film industry in these countries. They bought or rented buildings that they then refurbished with the purpose of screening films and became some of the major film exhibitors in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, managing more than one hundred venues by the 1930s.⁷³ During the decade of 1910, the number of venues for film exhibition grew in most cities. Even though the architecture of the new movie theaters was not so different from the existing venues, some changes allowed the use of the space for this purpose: the screens were now fixed instead of hanging from machinery that raised it up as it had been with other shows, and the layout of seats was different to allow everyone a direct view of the screen.⁷⁴ The need of buildings specially designed to host film exhibitions was related to the massiveness of the phenomenon, one that required hallways and corridors big enough to allow for the entrance and exit of up to a couple thousand people. Additionally, some regulations were imposed by the corresponding authorities in order to guarantee the security of the attendees, such as the separation of the projection

⁷² "Memorias de Bernardo Glücksmann", Cinemateca Uruguaya, no date.

⁷³ According to *Cine Gaceta*, Glücksmann was one of the main four exhibitors in Santiago since the opening of his branch in 1913. *Cine Gaceta*, Santiago, second half of July 1915; According to South Pacific Mail, he was also one of the main exhibitors in 1925. South Pacific Mail, Santiago, 02.04.1925.

⁷⁴ Camila Gatica Mizala, "Social Practices of Modernity: Cinema-going in Buenos Aires and Santiago, 1915–1945" (PhD, University College London), 42. On the architecture of movie theaters in the United States see Paul William, *When Movies Were Theater: Architecture, Exhibition, and the Evolution of American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

booths from the main hall to prevent the expansion of a possible fire triggered by the flammability of film reels.⁷⁵

Since its early years, the new spectacle claimed for its own a place in the city. Even though there were touring film shows that were presented in small towns in rural areas, the first decades of the twentieth century saw film consolidated into a mainly urban activity. It was in the cities where there was capital for production and more profit could be made from movie theaters due to the concentration of population and their expendable income.⁷⁶ As buildings with singular characteristics, movie theaters had an important presence in the urban space and were proper ground for architectural experimentation. At the beginning, many of them had a monumental style. Movie theaters stood out on avenues and squares, where most of the entertainment and commercial offerings stood. Cinema's facades often evoked classical buildings, baroque palaces, or mosques, such as Glücksmann's Alcazar in Montevideo, which imitated the design of the Alcazar in Sevilla.⁷⁷ Others were more influenced by the vanguards of the early twentieth century or the art decó and functionalist movements.⁷⁸ Over the twentieth century, the architecture of movie theaters became simpler, and buildings tended to be integrated into larger commercial complexes rather than standing alone, which was the case for Max Glücksmann's Rex Theater. Inaugurated in Montevideo in 1927 on the first floor of an important building erected on 18 de Julio Avenue, this theater was considered to be a milestone of the urban change that was turning some streets, especially the main avenue, "into roads that a metropolis deserves".⁷⁹

Movie theaters targeted different audience sectors accordingly to their segregation in the city. The main innovation in cinema theater buildings

⁷⁵ Francisco Haroldo Alfaro Salazar and Alejandro Ochoa Vega, "Los espacios de exhibición cinematográfica: cines y arquitectura en América" in *Patrimonio y arqueología de la industria del cine*, ed. Miguel Ángel Álvarez Areces (Gijón, Asturias: CICEES), 144.

⁷⁶ Barbara Mennel, *Cities and Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge), 6–7.

⁷⁷ *El progreso arquitectónico en el Uruguay: revista nacional de arquitectura y obras públicas*, Montevideo, 1926, 12.

⁷⁸ Alfaro Salazar and Ochoa Vega, "Los espacios de exhibición cinematográfica", 144.

⁷⁹ *El progreso arquitectónico en el Uruguay*, Montevideo, 1926, 18.

between the 1910s and 1930s was the distinction of different kinds of venues according to their location. The so-called premiere or first category cinemas (*cines de estrenos* or *cines de primera categoría*), located in the city center and upper-class neighborhoods, were the only ones authorized to show the movies right after their release. Additionally, they had luxurious decoration and charged a high price for tickets. The cinemas of the middle- and lower-class neighborhoods, or second category movie theaters (*cines de barrio* or *cines de segunda categoría*), had to wait some time until they could exhibit the new releases and charged a lower entrance price for tickets.⁸⁰

Cinemas started to proliferate in cities that had been experiencing enormous transformations in the previous two decades. The export boom of the 1880s had changed the major cities in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, as it did in the whole Latin American region, not only in their social structure but also in their physiognomies. The population grew, activities diversified, and the lifestyle of their inhabitants changed. What had previously been the center of a colonial city, now became an area full of shops, banks, and coffee shops.⁸¹ The difference between the city center and the *barrios* (neighborhoods) followed a similar process in the three cities under examination here. The upper classes, who formerly lived close to the main squares and the old towns, started to move into other areas, such as Barrio Norte in Buenos Aires, la Alameda and Providencia in Santiago, or Prado and Pocitos in Montevideo. These new upper-class residential areas were built with elegant architecture and joined by a hippodrome, tennis club, or golf field.⁸² When movie theaters appeared in the area, their design merged with the dominant style. Even though peripheric neighborhoods changed more slowly than the city center, the emergence of commercial areas and venues for social gathering marked the introduction of features of the city center into the urban peripheries, a process that would be crowned by the inauguration of movie theaters in the 1920s.⁸³

⁸⁰ Gatica Mizala, "Social Practices of Modernity", 43.

⁸¹ José Luis Romero, *Latinoamérica: las ciudades y las ideas* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2010), 247-249.

⁸² Romero, *Latinoamérica. Las ciudades y las ideas*, 278.

⁸³ For the case of Buenos Aires see Beatriz Sarlo, *Una modernidad periférica* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1988), 17.

A logic of segregation was replicated both within neighborhoods and inside the venues themselves. When Max Glücksmann inaugurated the Electric Palace in the city center of Buenos Aires in 1913, *Caras y Caretas* commented on the initial surprise of the building being only a few meters away from one of Glücksmann's most important theaters, the Palace. The reason behind this was that the Palace was a luxurious premiere movie theater, while the Electric Palace was meant to be "eminently popular, not only for its prices but also for the special character of its performances".⁸⁴ As this example shows, cinemas reflected the eclecticism of the city centers and remained the focus of political and commercial activities around this time when wealthy families were moving out and immigrants moving in, turning big residencies into tenements in the process.⁸⁵ The new entertainment was open to everyone but not under equal conditions. Some cinemas also separated the audiences within the same venue according to the prices of each section (*balcón, platea, and galería*).⁸⁶

As practices of consumption, the new forms of entertainment were part of a series of operations of segmentation of the population being performed by the market in early twentieth century. The emergence of advertisement, which now associated certain products to specific lifestyles, increasingly targeted goods for people of a certain age, gender, or income level. Ads also promised potential buyers to be part of the social category they aspired to by buying certain clothing or smoking the right cigarettes.⁸⁷ The industries of film and recorded sound took part in these operations by addressing specific segments of the population with their products. Aside from targeting audience fragments regarding their income levels, new media also addressed potential users according their age and gender.

Targeting cameras and reproducers for family used and more precisely for children was one of the segmentation strategies that proved successful for

⁸⁴ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 18.10.1913.

⁸⁵ Romero, *Latinoamérica. Las ciudades y las ideas*, 278.

⁸⁶ Jorge Iturriaga, *La masificación del cine en Chile, 1907-1932: la conflictiva construcción de una cultura plebeya* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones), 48.

⁸⁷ According to Ezequiel Adamovsky, these "operations of classification" performed by the market are part of the process of emergence of a middle-class identity in early-twentieth-century Argentina. Adamovsky, *Historia de la clase media*, 70-72.

the film industry. The introduction by Pathé Frères of a new model of camera and reproducer of simple operation and low price, the Pathé Baby, contributed to the further development of commercialization strategies addressing families with products for children. Pathé Baby was presented as a family cinematograph, with a camera that enabled the user to record movies and a projector to watch both the homemade and professionally recorded reels. Glücksmann's advertisements showed this machine as mostly being used by women and children, and claimed that, due to its simple operation, "even a five-year-old kid could use it".⁸⁸ Max Glücksmann was not only one of the most active introducers of Pathé Baby in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, but was also involved in the production of films for children with educational purposes.⁸⁹

Offering products for children was part of a tendency that grew from the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Doing so allowed sellers to find fertile ground in the context of the expansion of consumption and also in the context of the transformation of the ideas of childhood and its place in society. Throughout the early twentieth century, a whole specialized culture for children took shape, including discourses about formal and non-formal education, sociability spaces, recreation, the appropriate kind of games and toys, etc. Both the expansion of the schooling system and general consumption contributed to the definition of the sphere of childhood and its place in society.⁹⁰ Cameras and phonographs were part of a larger set of "scientific toys" that gained popularity around this time. According to *Caras y Caretas*, "in order to satisfy the wishes of children, toy manufacturers work without a rest to find out what they could like most, and profit from the latest discoveries of mechanics, electricity, optic and every science. (...) Such is the influence of science in amusement, it penetrates, renews and vivifies everything".⁹¹

⁸⁸ *El Mercurio*, Santiago, 12.09.1927.

⁸⁹ "Letter to Loie Fuller by Max Glücksmann", *Loie Fuller Collection 1914–1928*, New York Public Library.

⁹⁰ María Paula Bontempo, "Editorial Atlántida: Un continente de publicaciones, 1918–1936" (PhD Thesis, Universidad de San Andrés, 2012), 231–234.

⁹¹ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 05.01.1907.

Aside from targeting products according to age and gender, another form of customer segmentation consisted of addressing immigrants with products that referred to their homeland. Recorded sound had a special potential for doing so, as music appeared as an effective form of providing an “emotional connection to the homeland”. The trade magazine *The Voice of the Victor* expressed this idea with the following scene, one which allegedly was faced often by record dealers in countries with a large foreign-born population.

-I would like to hear some Italian records.

-Certainly, here is the Catalog, and we have all the records in stock and will play you anything you want.

-Well, that isn't quite what I mean. I understand you have a special list of Italian records. You see, my wife is Italian – something that will remind her of home. These records by the big Italian artists, of course, are all right. We have many of them. But I want something a little closer to every-day life in Italy.⁹²

The Voice of the Victor provided careful advice to traders on how to approach the immigrant market. It recommended that they study with special care the ethnic composition of neighborhoods where the traders were active, to hire assistants who spoke foreign languages and to resort to the catalog of recordings made abroad to attract nostalgic immigrants. In order to show the commercial importance of this portion of the market, this magazine made a rather racist claim about the overall meaning of music for immigrants:

Is the foreign trade worth going after? Yes. The foreign element in our midst is enormous, and, in addition, intensely musical. Given a thousand Americans and a thousand Europeans of equal financial standing, and you would do a far bigger business in records and Victrolas with

⁹² *The Voice of the Victor*, Camden, September 1917, 173.

the foreigners than with the Americans. Music means more to them at any time, and the music of their homelands means still more. They love it as they love food. They like gypsy music, and they like it as loud as they can get it.⁹³

In Argentina, where the proportion of immigrant populations in the cities was enormous, phonographic companies also addressed their foreign-born clients with especial ads. During World War I, Victor Talking Machine released patriotic songs and military marches from different countries and encouraged the potential listeners to “stimulate the patriotism with the national tunes of your people”.⁹⁴ It is difficult to know what came first: entrepreneurs thinking of addressing the immigrant population with music from their homelands, or immigrants appropriating this technology and turning it into a channel of emotional connection with their places of origin. Even so, the discourse present in commercialization contributed to shaping the nature of this new medium: like the telephone, phonography was presented as a means that could unite the nation and supersede national boundaries through a universal language. According to Jonathan Sterne, in order to connect a nation or to connect people across national boundaries, a certain technology required a social configuration, a set of relations, interconnections, practices, and institutions. This meaning of sound recording only took place when nostalgic immigrants appropriated as a form of feeling closer to their homeland by hearing music “from home”.⁹⁵

An immigrant himself, Max Glücksmann also addressed the group he belonged to, the Jewish community, with regular advertisements in the Jewish press and with occasional releases of Jewish music on his label, including the repertoire of religious songs recorded in European temples (Image 2).⁹⁶ Max Glücksmann was the head of several Jewish institutions and was part of the editorial committee of the newspaper *Mundo Israelita*. He pushed for the

⁹³ *The Voice of the Victor*, Camden, September 1917, 173.

⁹⁴ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 16.07.1918.

⁹⁵ Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press), 213.

⁹⁶ Lewis, *Oy, My Buenos Aires*, 176.

integration of Jewish immigrants into the national community without losing their Jewish identity, and considered that the use of the Spanish language and the defense of a secular Jewish culture were important tools for this purpose.⁹⁷ By “Jewish culture” they meant a broad spectrum of expressions, which could include literature written by Jewish authors, the work of Jewish composers or the history of the Jewish people, which they translated into Spanish, published, and commented on in their newspapers.⁹⁸ Many members of this group were active in the field of culture, either as publishers, journalists, writers, or cultural entrepreneurs – fields where several immigrants from different origins were also active – and their integration strategy was also reflected in their work. By targeting products to users based on their mother tongues or places of origin, they favored an appropriation of technology that made it flexible enough to integrate cultural differences into it.

⁹⁷ Alejandro Dujovne, *Una historia del libro judío: la cultura judía argentina a través de sus editores, libreros, traductores, imprentas y bibliotecas* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores), 138–139.

⁹⁸ *Mundo Israelita*, Buenos Aires, 19.07.1914; *La Congregación*, no.15, Buenos Aires, July 1944, 2.

The advertisement is for Odeon records, titled "DISCO ODEON" and "DISCOS ODEON SON SIRONING DE CALIDAD". The main heading in Hebrew is "מקומה חדשנו או העבר עתיש דיקסום". The ad lists various record titles and prices in Hebrew, such as "מנוחה לילית" (Night Rest) for \$1.50 and "המנוחה" (The Rest) for \$1.50. It features two illustrations of gramophones: a large, ornate model on the left and a smaller, more compact model on the right. Below the illustrations, the text reads "Odeón - Verotón" and "המנוחה לילית". At the bottom, it identifies the exclusive distributor as "MAX GLUCKSMANN" with the slogan "La alegría del hogar moderno" (The joy of the modern home). The distributor's address is listed as "FLORIDA, 336-44" and "Buenos Aires, CALLE 60 793-21". There is also a small logo for "CREDITO POP" on the left side.

Image 2. Odeon's catalog of Jewish music. *Di Yidishe Tsaitung*, Buenos Aires, 04.04.1930.

Similar to the way in which movie theater design aligned with the changing architecture of the city, recorded sound technologies merged with the design of upper- and middle-classes homes. During the first early years of existence of this technology, the business of selling gramophones and records was similar to selling furniture, the elegance of the object was the main focus of advertisement. Until the late 1910s, most sound reproducers available in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay were expensive and therefore only accessible to the upper classes, looked like elegant pieces of furniture where the machine was hidden, and were shown in ads as part of the decoration of luxurious living rooms.⁹⁹ This started to change towards the 1920s. New models

⁹⁹ In Argentina in 1907, the average price of a gramophone was 40% more than the salary of an unskilled laborer. In 1914, it was 20% more. In 1925, 2.5 phonographs could be bought with one average salary. Andrea Matallana, *Qué saben los pitucos:*

appeared around this time and the prices of reproducers gradually went down, making them more broadly accessible to people of middle incomes. Their sale was also encouraged by the different payment methods introduced by stores. Probably influenced by the tendencies of industrial design on the Bauhaus, the aesthetics of reproducers changed, becoming simpler and looking less like furniture and more like machines.¹⁰⁰

¡¡CUIDADO ANTES DE COMPRAR!!

En cualquier parte encontrará Vd. Gráfonos, pero solamente en nuestra casa podrá adquirir a un precio módico los más perfectos que existen. Está en su interés comprarlo antes de efectuar su compra.

NUESTRAS OFERTAS ESPECIALES HASTA FIN DE AGOSTO.

\$35
N.º 11. BUEN GRÁFONO de 20 cm. diámetro de 20 a 22 cm. de alto. Gran potencia, amplificación del sonido. Precio con 2 platos, 100 poses y empuje gratis.

\$55
CONCERTOLA N.º 10. — El gráfono de máxima potencia, por sus buenos voces y potencia extraordinaria, cada vez más ampliamente usado, midiendo 22 a 24 cm. de alto. Precio con 2 platos, 100 poses y empuje gratis. **\$ 55**

\$35
DISCOS
ULTIMAS NOVEDADES
25 centímetros, a 3, cada disco doble.

Mis Amigos, Carolina.
El Puntero sentimental, Tangu.
Jura el Buzo, Milotary.
Jura el Buzo, Milotary.
La Vela, Pirelli.
Siete Platos, Tangu.
Mi Solista, Tangu.
Frieda, Tangu.
Jardines, Fox Trot.
Jura el Buzo, Fox Trot.
Bambuleo, Fox Trot.
Tanguito, Fox Trot.
Bany Day Bani, Fox Trot.
Bany Day Bani, Fox Trot.
Tanguito, Fox Trot.
La Vela, Fox Trot.
La Vela, Fox Trot.
La Vela, Fox Trot.

Por la célebre Orquesta
MAREK WEKSE

Discos dobles de 20 cm.
a 4, — cada uno.

Estados, Fox Trot.
Estados, Fox Trot.
Estados, Fox Trot.
Estados, Fox Trot.
Estados, Fox Trot.
Estados, Fox Trot.
Estados, Fox Trot.
Estados, Fox Trot.
Estados, Fox Trot.
Estados, Fox Trot.

Este modelo fabricado de aluminio, completamente el más moderno y más perfecto inventado hasta el momento, resiste las condiciones más duras, construido en aluminio.

\$97.50
GRÁFONO AMÉRICA N.º 14. — Caja de metal con base de aluminio para evitar los ruidos de los platos al girar. Motor de diez centímetros cilíndrico con regulador SIN FIN. Bases acústicas últimas modelo y movimiento doble de platos. Construido en metal. Precio con empuje a 100 poses y empuje gratis. **\$ 99.50**

CASA AMÉRICA
STALBERG & RIGOTTI
GRÁFONOS Y DISCOS
AV. DE MAYO, 979 — BUENOS AIRES

NO TERMINEN
BUZOSIALES.
NO SE HAGAN
LOS SAKADOS.

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Image 3. Advertisement Casa América. Caras y Caretas, Buenos Aires, 27.07.1922.

la experiencia del tango entre 1910 y 1940 (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2008), 200. Advertisement shows the introduction of cheaper phonograph models as of the 1910s.

¹⁰⁰ Juan Pablo González and Claudio Rolle, *Historia social de la música popular en Chile, 1890-1950* (Santiago: Ediciones de la Universidad Católica de Chile, 2004), 185.

An increase in the penetration of the gramophone accompanied a change in commercialization strategies, which shifted the focus from the reproducers to the content of the recordings. If records were initially an excuse to sell gramophones, around the 1920s reproducers needed to be affordable so that more people could buy records on a regular basis. This resulted in a shift in commercialization strategies, from one formerly based on the features or aesthetics of the machines to another based on the musical repertoire that labels offered. This meant moving from a durable product to a disposable one: whereas gramophones would last for several years, records could be easily damaged by normal use. In this shift to musical repertoire, the beginning of local production was of key importance. With the opening of Max Glücksmann's record factory in Buenos Aires in 1919, it was now possible to increase the supply of records of locally recorded music and to speed up the times of production. If a song became popular, it was no longer necessary to wait three to five months for the records to be produced in the factories of Europe and the United States and then shipped to Latin America. It was now possible to have them ready in a few weeks for the regional market.¹⁰¹

With the focus of commercialization shifting to the contents of the catalogs, records became part of a larger and preexistent music industry. Recorded sound found a permanent place in the consumption habits of people in different age groups, genders, and income levels by successfully connecting to consumers' previous habits of listening to music. They became one more product to consume for people who owned a piano and bought sheet music and were used to listen to music at home. Records were also another option for those customers who shifted to the player piano, introduced around the 1890s as an alternative for those who enjoyed listening to music but did not have the time to learn how to play an instrument. It was also an alternative for those who, prior to the gramophone, had only listened to music in live shows.

The focus on musical repertoire also introduced the need to gather information on the preferences and tastes of audiences. With the opening of recording studios and the first factories in Argentina and Chile in the 1920s,

¹⁰¹ *La Razón*, Buenos Aires, 11.12.1920.

local labels had the chance to differentiate from transnational labels that offered US and European music. In Argentina and Uruguay, tango was the main protagonist of music production. In order to gather insight on and offer a repertoire that met audiences' tastes, Max Glücksmann developed an effective selling technique: tango contests. Held in a fancy theater, these contests were important social events as well as effective methods of market research where Glücksmann could test the taste of the audience and guarantee a good reception of the recordings his label would release. This format had existed since the 1900s, but Glücksmann's were the first to be organized by a record label.¹⁰² Professional and amateur composers sent their pieces to the contest where a famous orchestra would perform them in front of an audience that would then express its enthusiasm by clapping.

The introduction of the gramophone also marked a turning point in the history of another social practice: dancing. The Victor Talking Machine released the first record specifically meant for dancing in 1897. After that, every label would eventually follow and develop their own repertoire of danceable music. According to Marina Cañardo, an "industry of dance" emerged at this time, with an increase in the offerings of group and individual classes with professional dancers along with books that explained with text and images how to do the main steps. The increasingly popular scenes of tango dance in film also impacted this emergence.¹⁰³ Even though there was a certain continuity with courtly dances of the nineteenth century, ballroom dance grew in popularity from the early twentieth century. These dances were now to the rhythm of what the press and the ads called "modern dances", among which tango had a central position, not only in Latin America but also in Europe.¹⁰⁴

Recorded sound found a place in the dance industry. Advertisements encouraged consumers to improvise dancing evenings at home or even outdoors with portable gramophones (image 4). In order to test what music was

¹⁰² Nicolás Stranger and Néstor Loyola, "Los concursos de tangos" *Documentos e investigaciones sobre la historia del tango* 2, no. 2 (1995): 83–108.

¹⁰³ Cañardo, *Fábricas de músicas*, 185, 203.

¹⁰⁴ Cañardo, *Fábricas de músicas*, 176. See Sergio Pujol, *Historia del baile: de la milonga a la disco* (Buenos Aires: Gourmet Musical, 2011).

better received by listeners eager to dance, record labels implemented an effective market research technique: they formed stable orchestras that performed in the carnival dances and in this way, tested the danceability of the songs that they would later record:

The orchestras of Discos Nacional, as every year, performed in the latest carnival balls held in the main theaters of Buenos Aires, and released with this purpose tangos, which had the approval of the audiences. Now here we have these tangos, which had a favorable reception, recorded by Discos Nacional through the modern electric system and played by the same orchestras that released them.¹⁰⁵

DISCOS DOBLES "NACIONAL"
SON LA MAS FIEL EXPRESION DEL ARTE CRIOLLO

Vaillita Parlante
PALACE
\$ 38

Las mejores exitos
UNA NOCHE EN EL "CASINO"
LOCURA DE JUVENTUD
FRANCO AMERICO
FORFORERITA
A S I S I A
C O S T U R E R I T A
A S I S I A
L A C H I C H I T A
L I N D A C R I O L L I T A
A S I S I A

LAS NOVEDADES DE LA SEMANA

Discos Dobles "Nacional" de 25 cts., a \$ 3.25
DUO GARDEL-RAZZANO
Con acomp. de 4 guitarras. RICARDO BARBIERI
Una noche en el "Casino", Tango. Solo Gardel.
15154 "Florencia"

15153 Caba de gran. Tanga Gardel, Sotillo, P. Polito.
15152 Misos compars. Tito. Solo Gardel, G. Barbieri.
Mistral. Tito. Solo Gardel. Simionato-Barbieri.

Discos Dobles "Nacional" de 25 cts., a \$ 3.00
ROBERTO FIRPO, Orquesta Típica y Jazz Band.
4215 Canción de despedida. Tito. Tito. Tito A. Sorvillo.
Los cuarenta. Sillman, J. Band. J. y L. Sorvillo.
4216 Ave sin salida. Tango. Oro. Tito. G. Sorvillo.
4217 Fandango. Tango. Oro. Tito. A. Sorvillo.

FRANCISCO CANARO, Oro. Típica y Jazz Band.
4218 Una noche en el "Casino". Oro. Tito. A. Sorvillo.
Kensley. Fox Trot. Jazz Band. Larry Hilly.
4219 El abanico de la noche. Tango. Oro. Tito. H. de
Joa. Herra.

4220 Falso vals. Oro. Tito. A. Sorvillo.
4221 Discos Dobles "Nacional" de 25 cts., a \$ 3.25
15155 Una noche en el "Casino". Solo Gardel. Sotillo, P. Polito.
15156 Misos compars. Tito. Solo Gardel, G. Barbieri.
Mistral. Tito. Solo Gardel. Simionato-Barbieri.

Discos Dobles "Nacional" de 25 cts., a \$ 3.25
IGNACIO CORBINI, Con acomp. de 3 guitarras.
15157 "Carmelita". Tango. Mistral. De Herra. Chiquito.
Es un ritmo de la Boca. Tango. Corini, del
Prato.

Discos Dobles "Nacional" de 25 cts., a \$ 3.00
ELEUTERIO YRIARREAN, American Jazz Band.
5928 Amor. Habano. Sillman, H. Coll.
FRANCISCO LOMUTO, Oro. Típica y Jazz Band.
7419 Florito. Tango. Oro. Típica. Del granada con-
pante. Sillman, Jazz Band. Del granada con-
pante del Grand Splendid. F. Ballo.

ADOLFO R. AVILES, Jazz Band.
4218 La Olla del Abadado. (Ullolito lady). Fox Trot.
Tango.

4219 La Noche del Abadado. Fox Trot. A. R. Aviles.
MARIO A. PARDÓ, Con acomp. de guitarras.
6440 Sada. Sada. Tango. C. Sorvillo.
6441 Para una gamba. Sillman. (Solo de guitarra). H.
Dardano.

DUO RUIZ-ACURA, Con acomp. de 3 guitarras
15210 La navidad. C. Gomez.
15211 De sus padres. Zucchi. Dito. D. Banquet.

JAZZ BAND AMERICANO.
9419 (Que aban! (Ho, Ho!) What a girl! Fox Trot.
Cachucha. (Solo de guitarra). Fox Trot. H. H.

MAX GLÜCKSMANN
BUENOS AIRES ROSARIO
CALLAO & MITRE CORDOBA 1048/52
FLORIDA & LAVALLE MONTEVIDEO
16 de JULIO 1926

Image 4. Phonographs and records to dance outdoors. Caras y Caretas, Buenos Aires, 16.01.1926.

¹⁰⁵ Caras y Caretas, Buenos Aires, 31.03.1928.

The broad acceptance of recorded sound and motion pictures as a part of everyday life was mediated by the logic of consumption. If gramophones and cinematographers became a habit of amusement, it was not so much because of the features of the technology itself, but primarily because entrepreneurs managed to portray them as a new way of satisfying old needs and desires including cherishing family memories, dancing, or listening to music, along with new practices, like spending free time shopping at a store.

Between the Theater and the Living Room: Public and Private Uses of Film and Recorded Sound

Casa Lepage announced gramophones as the new machines “that sing and speak as loud as the human voice”, with which it was now possible to “listen to famous opera singers after the season was over”.¹⁰⁶ When Casa Lepage started importing film cameras in the 1900s, the company offered to sell them both for public screenings held in theaters and for amateurs who wanted to make their own films and see them at home. Sold together with photographic cameras and accessories, as well as other domestic entertainment products such as phonographs, film was portrayed not only as a form of public entertainment but also as an article of home amusement and a medium to cherish family memories. These technologies were appropriated as they defined their functions both in the public and private space. The overlap with existing technologies and their uses turned them from curiosities into objects of everyday use.

Even though private and public uses of the technology can be distinguished from each other to a certain extent, these media also show that the boundaries between both are blurry, as they bring the public into the private sphere. According to Philippe Ariès, the definition of the private sphere as separated from the public is twofold: on one side, it refers to sociability practices and forms of intimacy and understands the emergence of private life as the

¹⁰⁶ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 22.12.1900.

substitution of an anonymous sociability in the streets, the square, the community, by a form of restricted sociability in the context of the family. On the other side, the emergence of private life is related to the rise of the modern state and is based on the differentiation between the public, understood as everything that is at the service of the state, and the private or particular, which is all that is subtracted from it.¹⁰⁷ Film and recorded sound contributed to the defining of forms of domestic sociability at a time that brought references to public life: with the home gramophone, it was possible to listen to records with the songs of the carnival and the ballrooms, as well as the speeches of the latest political events; the “family cinematographer” came with a selection of “the same vistas that can be seen in movie theaters”.¹⁰⁸

New media found a fertile ground to grow inside the domestic sphere due to a series of changes in housing in Buenos Aires, Santiago, and Montevideo towards the turn of the century. The new forms of residence for the upper and middle classes included spaces of socialization for the family, where recreation and amusement also took place, thus encouraging the emergence of new forms of indoor entertainment. The city of Santiago grew rapidly, and the increase in the price of housing in the city center forced many people to move away. The middle classes settled in small houses in the suburbs of the East, while the lower-income sectors settled in the peripheries of the South and North.¹⁰⁹ Between 1870 and 1930, the domestic settings changed in many ways in the Rio de la Plata area. Among the houses of the higher classes, the tendency was a specialization of rooms for specific functions and a clear separation from the activities held outside. Rooms were no longer linked to each other directly through doors, but they were connected to a corridor that linked them all. The dormitory became the place for intimacy, while the living room and the kitchen were designated as a place for family activities and recreation. Additionally, new forms of housing appeared among the middle classes, namely cottages, chalets and apartments. The

¹⁰⁷ Philippe Ariès, “Por una historia de la vida privada” in *Historia de la vida privada. Tomo 3. Del Renacimiento a la ilustración.*, ed. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby (Madrid: Taurus), 7–19.

¹⁰⁸ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 30.11.2907.

¹⁰⁹ Rinke, *Cultura de masas, reforma y nacionalismo en Chile*, 34.

design of these houses also followed the logic of specialization of rooms like the those of the rich but in a more compact manner, by eliminating corridors and mixing some functions into one room (eat-in kitchen or living-dining room, laundry-kitchen room). Moreover, they featured simpler and cheaper construction structures and being settled in smaller ground units, many of them had two floors.¹¹⁰

The differentiation between the private and public sphere was not so pronounced in the case of popular housing. Among the people of lower incomes, the previous model of houses with lateral yard remained, at least until the beginnings of the twentieth century. Each of the identical rooms that faced the patio could be inhabited by a family group or host different work activities such as sewing or repairing workshops. In Buenos Aires, public policies encouraged the sale of small batches and the construction of affordable housing, which led to an important expansion of single-family houses where many of the inhabitants of the *conventillos* (tenement houses) moved.¹¹¹ This also had consequences for social life and amusement. In 1913, the mayor of Santiago decreed the “prohibition of the functioning of phonographs, pianos, and other electronic and mechanic instruments in rooms or apartments open directly to the street, in canteens and other entertainment venues”.¹¹² This shows how, with poor acoustic boundaries and less private space, the forms of amusement that were emerging trespassed the porous boundaries between domestic and public space.

When the technologies of recorded sound and motion pictures were introduced, they were interpreted based on existing social practices, namely on the experience of playing music at home and consuming images as a form of information and entertainment. As Marshall McLuhan argues, when new media emerges, the environment shifts, and the role and meaning of each

¹¹⁰ Jorge Francisco Lienur, “Casas y jardines: La construcción del dispositivo doméstico moderno (1870–1930)” in *Historia de la vida privada en Argentina.*, ed. Fernando Devoto and Marta Madero (Buenos Aires: Taurus-Alfaguara).

¹¹¹ Adamovsky, *Historia de la clase media*, 71, 82.

¹¹² Quoted in Maximiliano Salinas, “Comida, música y humor: La desbordada vida popular” in *Historia de la vida privada en Chile. El Chile moderno. De 1840 a 1925.*, ed. Rafael Sagrado and Cristián Gazmuri (Santiago de Chile: Aguilar Chilena Ediciones), 86.

medium are altered. This does not mean that the older media disappear or lose their efficacy. On the contrary, it means that the new technology embraces its predecessor, as it does not have a specific content to fill it yet.¹¹³ The phonograph embraced the conventional forms of music performance in the domestic spaces that were formed around the piano. Even though both competed for the portion of disposable income, the phonograph also profited from the piano's consolidated role as a form of home amusement, as this enabled its fast acceptance. In turn, the emergence of film embraced the uses of photography as a medium for storing family memories and also as a channel to transmit information and emotions, in addition to amusement through engagement with images. In the late nineteenth century, photography was the protagonist of several forms of visual spectacles, which facilitated the reception of the motion pictures, as they were one step further in a series of experiments with light and moving images.

When the phonograph was invented in the 1870s, its uses were not defined, and the people involved in early experiments with sound recording had other functions in mind than those that finally became predominant. It was a rather small group of men who first developed this technology, Thomas Alva Edison and Alexander Graham Bell being the most well-known among them. Most of them knew each other and were part of the same professional networks, read similar literature, and worked under similar conditions, although independently. Both Edison and Bell financed their experiments in the field of sound with the payments they received working for others, until their first accomplishments raise the interest of investors. Both started to experiment with sound recording after working on telegraphy, which was the major context for the emergence of the phonographs, as the Western Union Corporation drove most of the research in communication technology at the time. Even though they worked with little help at the beginning, Edison and Bell later became managers of big laboratories where they rarely set foot, thus marking the transition from an artisanal to an industrial mode in the invention process.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 8.

¹¹⁴ Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 186.

Traditional stories about technologies portray these men as stand-alone geniuses who gave birth to the most wonderful inventions of their time. Also in their own words, their inventions were like their children: when Bell put together a working model of the photophone, a machine that transmitted sound through the use of light, he wrote a letter to his father with these words: “I have just written to Mamma about Mabel’s baby, and I now write you about my own! (...) Mabel’s baby was light enough at birth but mine was LIGHT ITSELF! Mabel’s baby screamed inarticulately but mine spoke with distinct enunciation from the first”.¹¹⁵ As Sterne argues, the metaphor of male-birth, persistent throughout the history of technology, has the convenience of fixing the origins in absolute terms: it places the inventor as the only relevant figure between the non-existence and the final formation of a machine.¹¹⁶

Unlike human babies, machines were supposed to appear in the world as finished and fully functional. However, sound reproduction technologies were not fully formed by the time they were introduced to the public, and this plasticity made the process of its transformation into a medium largely dependent on the context of its appropriation. As with the telephone, early promoters of the phonograph sold it as a “serious” business machine, targeting it to well-educated and overwhelmingly white middle- and upper-class people. However, and also in a similar manner as other technologies, many people found uses for the machines that were not officially promoted. Already in the 1890s, half of the phonograph leases in the major markets of the United States were residential, and frustrated merchants were moving away from business uses to the growing coin-in-the-slot deal. Located in hotel lobbies, train stations and arcades, coin-in-the-slot machines could entertain commuters in growing cities for a few minutes and a few cents. The use of the phonograph for entertainment was not completely unforeseen for its inventors, but its predominance was indeed unexpected. In an early publication on the potential of the phonograph, Edison listed ten possible uses: 1) letter dictation, 2) phonographic books for the blind, 3) teaching of elocution, 4) reproduction of music, 5) registry of the voices of family members and

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 181.

¹¹⁶ Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 181.

dying persons, 6) music boxes and toys, 7) clocks that announce the time for going home or meals, 8) the preservation of languages, 9) preserving explanations made by teachers for educational purposes, 10) connection with the telephone.¹¹⁷ Considering that most of these uses took place for at least a short time, this list has been interpreted either as a sign of Edison's brilliant and prophetic mind, or as evidence to the fact that nobody knew what to do with this technology and therefore needed explanation. Only one of the uses, the reproduction of music, became prominent in the end. This result cannot be explained by the intentions of its inventor but rather by the social world in which this technology inhabited.

The phonograph was introduced in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay at a time when the demand for entertainment was increasing, and the entrepreneurs who sold them promoted them as mostly useful for amusement purposes. However, other uses were still possible. During the early years of the twentieth century, phonographic artifacts enabled their users both to reproduce and record their own cylinders, which could lead to their use as a way of transmitting private messages. Advertisements in the earlier years of the phonograph still encouraged different uses. For example, some promoted it as a way to send private messages recorded in cylinders to a beloved one.¹¹⁸ Or, as some of the first witnesses of a phonograph in Montevideo observed, it was also possible to use it to store political discourses for the upcoming generations: "Thanks to the surprising invention by Edison, words are not blown by the wind anymore. The phonograph collects them and repeats them over and over again according to our wish, in a way that a speech by (the Senator) Tulio Freire, for example, will be heard by the future generations as if it had been just pronounced".¹¹⁹

An innovation in the design of sound machines contributed to consolidate music playback as the main use. Edison's phonographs and Bell's graphophones available in the market in the 1880s and 1890s used wax cylinders,

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Roland Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph, 1877-1977* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 29.

¹¹⁸ Santiago Videla, "Del juguete sonoro al teatro en casa: Los inicios del fonografismo en la ciudad de Buenos Aires" *Letra. Imagen. Sonido. Ciudad mediatizada*, no. 3 (2009): 45-58, 53.

¹¹⁹ *Caras y Caretas*, Montevideo, 12.04.1891.

which could not be easily mass produced. Since each machine could only record one cylinder at the time, musicians had to repeat their performance several times (usually in front of several recorders). What was a disadvantage for mass production was an advantage for homemade recordings, since these machines offered a rather simple way for users to make their own cylinders. Emile Berliner's invention, the gramophone, changed this. Made public in 1888 and first marketed in 1895, the gramophone used a rotating flat disk on a horizontal plane instead of a cylinder and was considerably louder than its predecessors. Moreover, even though it was much harder for users to make recordings, it simplified the process of mass production as disks were made through "stamping", and one master record could be serially replicated.¹²⁰ All three models were present in the Argentine, Chilean, and Uruguayan markets throughout the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. Even though a mechanism for molding cylinders from a negative matrix was perfected in 1901, it was already too late, as the cylinder had lost too much ground to the flat disc.¹²¹ With the incorporation of a spring motor, the gramophone became the sound reproducer *par excellence*.

Before becoming an element of home amusement and music making in the domestic space, the phonograph was for some years divided between the public and private spheres. When the first gramophone was presented in Chile in 1892, it was within the context of an exhibition at the theater Victoria in Valparaiso. A representative of the United States Phonograph had brought it with the purpose of introducing it in the market, and following the customs of scientific exhibitions, organized a demonstration with three shifts in which the public could listen to fragments of violin music and speeches, as well as a fragment of a cueca. The gramophone was present in Valparaiso in several salons, parks, and squares, where people could listen to a song for an accessible price, following the coin-in-the-slot business model. Since one listened with headphones, this was a hybrid of private amusement in a public space.¹²² Its presence in a public space was a continuation of previous

¹²⁰ Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 203.

¹²¹ Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph*, 81.

¹²² González and Rolle, *Historia social de la música popular en Chile*, 179–80.

practices of consumption of live music, but due to its technical limitations (low volume and poor acoustic quality), recordings were better appreciated through an individualized hearing experience. Since the gramophone did not rely on electricity to work, its presence in public spaces was considerable from the beginning. In 1914, the Victrola was announced in the Chilean press as a music instrument for parties in the countryside. Especially after the introduction of suitcase-shaped gramophones, its use for outdoor excursions was widely spread.¹²³

Eventually, and with the help of advertisement that promoted it as “the theater at home”, the phonograph found its place inside homes in what had been for a long time the piano’s territory. Several attributes made the piano especially suitable for its role in turning the home into a site of cultural activity: its size, its solidity, and its interdependence on the self-discipline of practicing. These attributes appealed to middle class women, who found in this instrument a way of expression and a leisure activity that did not disrupt their social situation and traditional family role. In nineteenth century Europe and in the United States, the great majority of amateur pianists and piano teachers were women, while most professional pianists were men.¹²⁴

¹²³ González and Rolle, *Historia social de la música popular en Chile*, 186.

¹²⁴ Jody Berland, *North of Empire: Essays on the Cultural Technologies of Space* (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 158.

Una nueva artista
tocará en su casa
si usted tiene un
STEINWAY
Piano-Pianola.

Las Señoras que no hayan estudiado música y son aficionadas a ella, pueden ser las mejores artistas e interpretar las grandiosas obras maestras, asimismo como la música liviana, con dedicar tan sólo un poco de atención y voluntad.

STEINWAY
Pianola

es sencilla
y de fácil manejo

Cualquier Señora, ejecutando en esta pianola, puede ser una
verdadera artista.

Pidan Catálogo
de la casa.

Otto Beines é Hijo
BARTOLOMÉ MITRE, 1032
BUENOS AIRES

Image 5. Advertisement of Piano-Pianola Steinway. Fray Mocho, Buenos Aires, 1916.

The gramophone inherited the gendered aspect from its predecessor: even though the inventors of most communication machines were men, the new medium of recorded sound was deeply defined by women, generally middle-class women, who helped to make it a new, newly intelligible medium for home entertainment. As Gitelman argues, middle-class women were central to the meanings of phonographs and records because they helped deeply to determine the function and functional contexts of recording and playback. Phonographs only “worked” when they managed to reproduce women’s voices with an acceptable level of fidelity, while they became home phonographs inasmuch they interlocked with the tensions around music playing at home, and with the ongoing construction of the idea of shopping as something women do.¹²⁵ Home phonographs eventually became gendered

¹²⁵ Gitelman, *Always Already New*, 60, 85.

instruments of mass culture, as we can see in the advertisements, most of which portray women as the main users of the machines. Through the symbolic and material effects of the piano, the home was redefined both as a site for family and as a site of leisure, while music became something that one did privately rather than something that only occurred in the public domain.

Around the same time, two innovations transformed the practices of music making at home: the player piano and the phonograph. The first machine that enabled the reproduction of professionally executed music in the domestic space was not the phonograph but the pianola, introduced about a decade earlier, in the 1860s. This self-playing instrument works with a music roll that contains holes that admit air, thus activating a small pneumatic valve that creates the movement of a hammer that then pushes the strings. Ads of the player piano were largely similar to those of acoustic pianos and continued to include women as protagonists. The difference was that now, mechanical instruments made music accessible to the unskilled. This feature was key to the chosen strategy to advertise them. For example, ads of player pianos in the Argentine press claimed: "A new artist will play at your house if you have a Steinway Piano-Pianola. The ladies that did not study music and are fond of it can interpret the greatest masterpieces and also light music, if they just dedicate some attention and willingness" (Image 5). With the new automatic means of music reproduction, either the player piano or the phonograph, women could continue to perform traditional feminine roles, such as playing music or being hostess of social events, if they had taken a job that did not leave them enough time to become skilled pianists (Image 6).



La Moda del Gramófono



¿Vd. busca, tal vez, un artículo de moda?
 AQUÍ ESTÁ LA
“VICTROLA”



Gramófono
VICTOR “VICTROLA”
 sin bocina

Emisión del sonido
 absolutamente natural

Instrumento
 maravilloso, ideal
PARA EL HOGAR
PARA LA CAMPAÑA

Nuevos modelos muy prácticos para el transporte, de \$^{m/n.} 125 á \$^{m/n.} 320
 Modelos de lujo, con guarda-disco, etc., de \$^{m/n.} 450 á \$^{m/n.} 1.200

Discos VICTOR
 en todos los idiomas
 Catálogos ilustrados gratis



Registrados por las más
 grandes
 celebridades mundiales

Agencia y Depósito General de la
VICTOR TALKING MACHINE Cy. de CAMDEN N. J.
“CASA LEPAGE” DE MAX GLÜCKSMANN
 638, AVENIDA DE MAYO; 637, VICTORIA; y 375, BOLIVAR
BUENOS AIRES

SUCURSAL EN ROSARIO: 860, CÓRDOBA



Se despacha en toda la República - Embalaje gratis



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Image 6. Advertisement of gramophone Victrola. Caras y Caretas, Buenos Aires, 09.12.1911.

Experiments in the design of mechanical instruments flourished in the nineteenth century, encouraged by a context marked by the withdrawal to domestic spaces and the availability of disposable income among growing sectors of society.¹²⁶ Ads of the phonograph, presented as the new form of family amusement, usually depicted the whole family group gathered in the living room listening to recorded music. Occupying the center of the salon, the gramophone was designed accordingly to the aesthetics of elegant furniture (Image 7).

¹²⁶ Berland, *North of Empire*, 70.

Artistas Exclusivos de la Victor

He aquí los mejores amigos que puede Vd. tener, los cuales le deleitarán con su música y canto, dándole á conocer todas las bellezas que encierran las composiciones de los grandes maestros, haciendo vibrar, con su arte, las fibras de su corazón y constituyendo para Vd. una fuente inagotable de inspiración.

Cualquier comerciante Victor tendrá sumo placer en enseñarle los diferentes modelos de la Victrola y en tocar cualquier disco que desee Vd. oír.

También le entregará un ejemplar del catálogo de Discos Victor, conteniendo los retratos de los artistas más afamados del mundo que están siempre dispuestos á cantar y tocar la música que sea de la predilección de Vd.

Victor Talking Machine Co., Camden, N. J., E. U. de A.

Copyright 1913
Victor Talking Machine Co.

PRATT & CIA

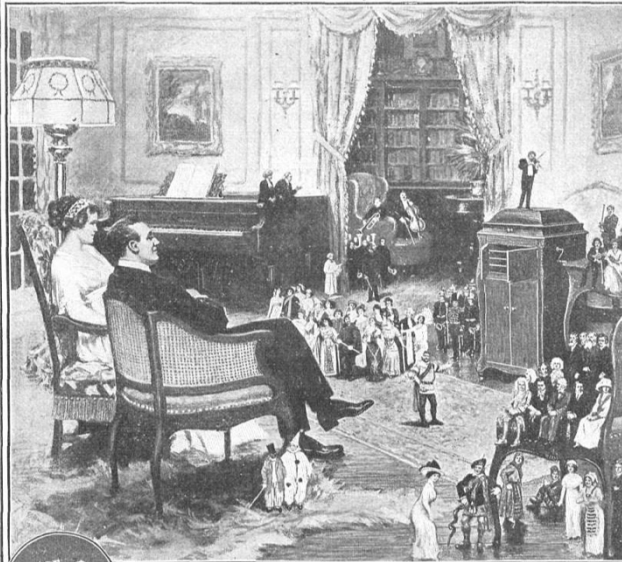
108 Calle San Martín 112, BUENOS AIRES

Calle Córdoba Esquina Maipú, ROSARIO

DELLAZOPPA & MORIXE

729-738 Plaza Independencia (Costado Norte)

Sucursal, Sarandí 614, MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY



Victor-Victrola

Image 7. Victor Talking Machine's advertisement. *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 28.02.1914.

From today's perspective, we might expect that the phonograph had eclipsed the piano and the pianola as the main home amusement. Unlike the

piano, the gramophone could be enjoyed without having any specific knowledge, and contrary to the pianola, it reproduced the sound of many musical instruments and the human voice. However, this did not happen until around three decades after its invention. In the United States, at least until 1909, more pianos than phonographs were produced, and the penetration of the phonograph was at the beginning limited by the competition with musical instruments, as the purchase of records was an alternative use for a limited family budget that was until then destined to sheet music and piano lessons.¹²⁷ In Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay we can observe the persistence of the piano and the player piano in the continuity of advertisements of these products after the phonograph was introduced. In a 1909 advertisement, Max Glücksmann offered both pianolas and phonographs.¹²⁸ If we compare the imports of pianos with those of phonographs, we can observe that the introduction of the second did not displace the first. The imports of pianos continued to grow at the same rhythm it had before. After a strong fall due to the 1890s economic crisis, the imports recovered their pre-1890 level in 1904, and continued to grow consistently until the beginnings of World War I. Even though the introduction of the phonograph did not stop the growth of the piano's import, its rhythm was much faster. Whereas similar numbers of both products were imported in 1902–1903, by 1913, ten times more phonographs than pianos were introduced.¹²⁹

Until the 1910s, the piano was competing with the poor acoustical reproduction of that time's phonographs, with breakable shellac records and their spring-loaded cranks, rather than with today's fidelity of sound reproduction and automatic machines. In order to displace what had been for a long time a symbol of cultural capital and middle-class aspirations, the phonograph would need to first reach a better sound quality, which took several years. In the humorist article "The phonograph fever", published in the Chilean magazine *Zig-Zag* in 1905, the writer claimed to be escaping from phonographs. He described the horrors of having to listen to recordings wherever he went, making explicit all the limitations of that time's recorded sound technology:

¹²⁷ Gordon, *The Rise and Fall of American Growth*, 112.

¹²⁸ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 09.01.1909.

¹²⁹ *Anuario Estadístico de la República Argentina*.

May Edison forgive this blasphemy, I appreciate his invention, I adore it, I worship it. But when, since six in the morning until twelve in the evening I have to hear everywhere, without a truce, *la donna e moville*, *morir si pura e bella* and *amor ti vieta*, either with Mazurka's compass or cake walk, according to how the wheal moves; with orchestra or with Portuguese geeses, according to the length of the horn; either with baritone or bass voices, or with frogs, according to how deteriorated the cylinder is; I either bite myself frantically or I scream with anger and run.¹³⁰

In addition to coexisting and eventually replacing the piano as a form of home amusement, the phonograph also became an integral part of a music industry composed by all sorts of live shows along with the sheet music publishing business. By the time the phonograph was introduced, a fully functional network of actors and institutions enabled the commercial circulation of music. According to Peter Tschmuck, we can speak of a music industry since the emergence of a concert culture in eighteenth century Europe. The industry's main actors were concert and opera promoters who arranged public performances and publishers who subsequently distributed sheet music with adaptations of these performances for various instruments. The power of music publishers became the most obvious in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when they gathered in Tin Pan Alley in New York, close to vaudeville theaters, and proved that they were able to turn songwriters and lyricists into stars.¹³¹

The phonograph struggled to find a place within this network. Possibly, the invention of the phonograph in the 1870s was not even noticed by the protagonists of the music industry of that time. Only after the 1890s, once phonographs were consolidated as music playback machines, did they start to compete for the portion of the income allotted to pianos, lessons, and sheet music. However, the different components of the music industry were also complementary: the songs of artists who were famous for their live performances were recorded and versions of these songs were published as sheet

¹³⁰ *Zig-Zag*, Santiago, 20.02.1905, 17–19.

¹³¹ Tschmuck, *Creativity and Innovation*, 1–2.

music for amateur players. In Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, piano shops sold mostly sheet music of European editorials until the massification of genres such as tango and cueca provided an opportunity for local publishers. As it was typical that musicians paid themselves for the first edition of their score while the editor took care of advertisement and sales, the initial investment to enter the publishing business was relatively small, and publishers could decide whether to continue working with a certain author only after seeing its commercial result.¹³²

A successful strategy to become part of the existing music industry was to link the home phonograph to public events. In order to advertise the records of his label, Glücksmann developed advertising campaigns that linked the musical repertoire to patriotic celebrations in Argentina. The name of the label itself, Discos Nacional, already pointed to the importance of what was presented as national music. Since the early twentieth century, European labels had been advertising the recordings of Latin American musicians under the name of *criollo* (creole) repertoire.¹³³ These records were only a minor part of the offerings of labels such as Victor, Columbia, or Odeon, recorded in Europe or the United States by artists that happened to be on tour or that were brought to these places with this specific purpose in mind. Occasionally, and especially during the early years of the twentieth century, these songs were recorded with portable recording machines in temporary studios set up in hotels by traveling agents of the recording companies.¹³⁴

Similar to the way that opera records provided “the theater at home”, the records of Discos Nacional brought the national celebrations into the domestic space. Local phonographic production found a niche in what could be constituted as a repertoire of “national” music. An analysis of advertisements shows that the commercial strategy of linking the musical repertoire to alleged local authenticity was already present – but marginally – since the

¹³² Máximo Perroti, *Síncopa y contratiempo: memorias de una editorial musical* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Perroti), 7.

¹³³ For example, Pathé announced cylinders and records of the *repertorio criollo* in 1908. *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 05.09.1908.

¹³⁴ David Sarnoff, “Memoirs of my Recording and Traveling Experiences for the Victor Talking Machine Company” *David Sarnoff Library*. <http://www.david-sarnoff.org/soo-maintext.html>. Accessed on 08.05.2020.

early years of the phonographic industry, and it became prominent after the emergence of local production. When Tagini opened a recording studio with the support of Columbia, some of his first recordings were “patriotic records” – as the ads claimed – with recitations of historical episodes for the commemoration of the centenary of the May Revolution in 1910.¹³⁵ Also shortly before the 1910 commemoration, Glücksmann started to emphasize the *criollo* repertoire and announced the arrival of new recordings from local artists made by the Victor Talking Machine.¹³⁶ Later on, and once he inaugurated his factory in 1919 and launched the label *Discos Nacional*, Glücksmann released special editions of patriotic songs every year for the commemoration of the May Revolution and Independence Day in July.

While the gramophone conquered the piano’s territory, motion pictures occupied what had long been the place of photography, a means of gathering family memories and reinforcing the belonging to a kinship group. During the second half of the nineteenth century, after the introduction of the daguerreotype in the 1840s, the price of a professional portrait in Buenos Aires was very expensive and therefore only accessible to the upper classes, for whom it had a function similar to the aristocratic custom of having a professional artist produce a painting of the family members.¹³⁷ A series of innovations in the field of photography simplified the technique and towards the end of the century, cheaper and lighter cameras were introduced in the market. Shops such as Casa Lepage made it possible for people of upper and middle incomes to buy their own cameras and take their own pictures, as they not only sold the artifacts, but also offered instruction on how to use them, developed reels, and edited books and magazines with detailed explanations of the features of this technology.¹³⁸ At the turn of the century, photography spread as an amateur practice and developed its uses in the private sphere,

¹³⁵ García Jiménez, *Memorias y fantasmas de Buenos Aires*, 216–217.

¹³⁶ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 25.09.1909.

¹³⁷ Andrea Cuarterolo, *De la foto al fotograma: relaciones entre cine y fotografía en la Argentina (1840–1933)* (Montevideo: CdF Ediciones), 38–39.

¹³⁸ The magazine *Revista Ilustrada del Río de la Plata* and the book *La fotografía moderna*, written by Francisco Pociello and published by Casa Lepage in 1898 focused on explaining the technical features of photography.

as a way of representing the family group through the habit of having pictures of their members as well as dead relatives exhibited at home.¹³⁹

It is no coincidence that photography had been the entryway for Max Glücksmann's career as a technology entrepreneur. Before landing on Lepage's store, he had worked as an assistant to a professional photographer, from whom he learned the technique.¹⁴⁰ In fact, most of the men involved in the introduction of film were photographers, such as Eugene Py, another of Lepage's employees and cameramen of most of Glücksmann's production.¹⁴¹ In a similar manner than telegraphy and the telephone were the precedents of recorded sound, photography was the context for the emergence of film, both in terms of its invention and its uses. It provided the groundwork and the technical knowledge for the exploration with light and moving images, as well as the audiences for visual spectacles. The plasticity of new technologies enabled their transformation into media due to existing social practices and a demand for new uses.

Classical books on the history of film in Latin America start with the arrival of the technology to the region and with the first exhibitions of Lumiere's invention in 1896 and the upcoming years in several cities of the region. This moment is often presented as a radical break with the past. According to Domingo Di Nubila, Argentine film was born in Casa Lepage a few months after the first exhibition at the theater Odeon in July 1896.¹⁴² The historiography also highlights that only a few months after the first projection of the Lumiere brothers in Paris in December 1895, European cameramen went to Latin America to record images of exotic landscapes.¹⁴³ However, the invention of motion pictures can be considered a part of a larger process of technical experimentation around "the great art of light and shadow", which paved the

¹³⁹ Luis Priamo, "Fotografía y vida privada (1870–1930)" in *Historia de la vida privada en Argentina.*, ed. Fernando Devoto and Marta Madero (Buenos Aires: Taurus-Alfaguara).

¹⁴⁰ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 03.01.1914.

¹⁴¹ Cuarterolo, *De la foto al fotograma*, 107–117.

¹⁴² Di Nubila, *La época de oro*, 11.

¹⁴³ John King, *El carrete mágico: una historia del cine latinoamericano* (Bogotá / Caracas / Quito: TM Editores), 22.

way for the emergence of the projected moving image.¹⁴⁴ Following Andrea Cuarterolo, the appropriation of the film technology can be better understood by looking at how motion pictures were part of a broader spectrum of visual experimentation, how it constituted a further step in a series of innovations that had started a long time ago.¹⁴⁵ In its early years, the technology of film found a place within a series of previously existing social practices, and in this case, practices that shaped the way in which inhabitants of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay engaged with images.

Parallel to its consolidation in the domestic space, photography also had public uses in the form of visual spectacles and as the medium for spreading information through images. The decision of entrepreneurs to invest in the newly introduced cinematographer was likely informed by the success of previous forms of visual spectacles. When Henri Lepage and his two employees, Max Glücksmann and the French photographer Eugene Py, attended the first film exhibition in Buenos Aires in 1896, they must have already been to or heard of magic lantern shows, along with exhibitions of dioramas, cosmoramas, and polioramas. These were widespread forms of entertainment for the elites in nineteenth-century Latin American capitals, who had adopted them from their European peers.¹⁴⁶ Photography was a protagonist of several forms of visual spectacles, and even in its more realistic expressions had the ability to amuse its viewers. In the nineteenth century, creative montages were made to narrate stories through photo series, and photographers experimented with different attempts to create the illusion of movement of images with the help of light games. Even portraits taken at studios had spectacular elements, such as the poses, the decoration of the settings and the clothing.¹⁴⁷ In 1868, people gathered in the theater Solis in Montevideo to witness the first demonstration of the silforama, one of the latest

¹⁴⁴ Laurent Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press) xx–xxi.

¹⁴⁵ Cuarterolo, *De la foto al fotograma*.

¹⁴⁶ Marta Dujovne and Any M. Telesca, “Museo, salones y panoramas: la formación de espacios de representación en el Buenos Aires del siglo XIX” in *Arte y espacio: XIX coloquio internacional de historia del arte*, ed. Óscar Alea (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1996).

¹⁴⁷ Cuarterolo, *De la foto al fotograma*, 21, 36.

developments in this field, and in 1873 the diaphanorama was presented in Uruguay.¹⁴⁸ In 1894, the entrepreneur Fred Figner introduced Edison's kinetoscope, a device that used a strip of perforated celluloid film with sequential images over a light source, in several Latin American cities.¹⁴⁹

Photography had contributed to the shaping of a new culture of visual information during the second half of the nineteenth century, which would be continued by film. In the 1850s, the invention of the wet collodion process made it possible to reproduce photographs using the same negative and therefore encouraged its use in the press. However, it was still time-consuming and expensive, as the negative needed to be printed separately on each copy. For this reason, it was common for magazines to use photographs as models for drawings, lithography or printmaking, which were easier to print.¹⁵⁰ The wet collodion process also shortened the times of exposure, making the process of developing significantly shorter and helping to create an idea of immediacy that was central for the informative genres. But it was not until the 1890s, when lighter and cheaper portable cameras appeared in the market, that informative images proliferated. With the introduction of the halftone photoengraving technique, it became easier and cheaper to include pictures in printed pages. *Caras y Caretas*, the main illustrated magazine in Argentina, requested the collaboration of amateur photographers who were invited to sell images related to public or curious events or personalities.¹⁵¹

In a similar way that phonographs had to find a place within the pre-existing forms of circulation of music, film technology was interpreted on the basis of the previous forms of image consumption. According to Vanessa Schwartz, the word and the image became connected in an unprecedented way in the late nineteenth century due to the development of technologies that enabled the reproduction of images in books and the illustrated press

¹⁴⁸ Eugenio Hintz, *Historia y filmografía del cine uruguayo* (Montevideo: Ed. de la Plaza), 9.

¹⁴⁹ Di Núbila, *La época de oro*; 11.

¹⁵⁰ Andrea Cuarterolo, "Entre caras y caretas: caricaturas y fotografía en los inicios de la prensa ilustrada argentina" *Significação* 44, no. 47: 155–77, 158.

¹⁵¹ Cuarterolo, *De la foto al fotograma*, 192.

leading to a great expansion of circulation of visual representations.¹⁵² Illustrated magazines had two main forms of structuring the narratives and connecting pictures to text. One was a type of vignette that gathered images that shared a common theme and were accompanied by an informative text referring to the same theme. Another form was mainly chronological, and it showed a series of images ordered according to a temporal progression together with short explanatory texts, similar to the ones that would be used in film.

Illustrated magazines created familiarity with certain themes, characters, images, narrative forms, and genres among their readers. This way, these publications provided the interpretation skills, the familiarity with conventions and forms of representation that enabled a fast acceptance of film.¹⁵³ Photographs were not only accessories to texts but also intertextual references with a central role in decoding the humorous messages. Magazines such as *Caras y Caretas*, appearing in 1898 in Buenos Aires, or *Zig-Zag*, which had been published since 1905 in Santiago, gave high importance to visual information and made use of the latest innovations in this field. These magazines combined different genres in their pages, such as chronicles, interviews, fictional stories, social life articles and a large amount of different kind of images.¹⁵⁴ Many of the stories were told as sensationalist narratives, and photographs were a central element within the role of reinforcing the credibility of a story otherwise considered implausible. This existence of this genre, known as *fait drivers*, suggested that any story could be turned into amusement, thus blurring the boundaries between information and entertainment.¹⁵⁵

Film had continuities with both the public and private uses of photography. On one side, documentary movies and newsreels continued with their pattern of informing with images that illustrated magazines had started. On the

¹⁵² Vanessa Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press), 2.

¹⁵³ Cuarterolo, *De la foto al fotograma*, 190.

¹⁵⁴ About illustrated magazines in Chile see Eduardo Santa Cruz Carlos Ossandón, *El estallido de las formas: Chile en los albores de la "cultura de masas"* (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones / Arcis, 2005).

¹⁵⁵ Cuarterolo, *De la foto al fotograma*, 193.

other side, the use of cameras to record and treasure images of family life was a continuation of the importance of photography to represent and exhibit the kinship group. According to the Chilean magazine *Cine Gaceta*, the family movie “is one of the most appealing applications of film. In the United States, this fashion is causing furor and there is no party, wedding, or baptism that is not reproduced in a tape and stored among the family memories”.¹⁵⁶ In parallel to the expansion of film as public entertainment, the private uses of this technology consolidated and were reinforced by the introduction of Pathé Baby in the 1920s, a device designed specifically for this purpose. In 1923, Glücksmann signed a contract with Pathé Frères that granted him the exclusive rights to the distribution of all Pathé Baby products in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Peru, Bolivia, and Paraguay. He started a strong advertisement campaign that emphasized the benefits of having a camera at home.¹⁵⁷ In 1929, the Department of Commerce of the United States noticed that “because Chileans rarely permit their children to attend the theater, many of the wealthier families have their own projecting machines and rent standard films suitable for children and adults alike from the film exchanges” and argued that this profitable niche needed to be better grasped by US film companies.¹⁵⁸

Even in its domestic uses, film was not disentangled from the sense of what was of public interest. Lepage, Py, and Glücksmann often took their cameras and attended public events, where they recorded images that were later to be seen in movie theaters or could be watched at home. For example, the employees of Casa Lepage took part in the visit of former president Bartolomé Mitre to the National Historical Museum, where they took vistas and photographs and attended carnival celebrations to record the parades.¹⁵⁹ Aside from its use as an archival medium that enabled the collection of family memories in the form of homemade movies, film brought images of public

¹⁵⁶ *Cine Gaceta*, Santiago, second half of July 1915.

¹⁵⁷ Pathé Baby: Relations commerciales avec l'étranger, 1931–1934, Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé, Hist-F.38.

¹⁵⁸ “Latin American and Canadian Markets for American Motion-Picture Equipment”, *Trade Information Bulletin* No.641, Department of Commerce, Washington, 1929, 23.

¹⁵⁹ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 16.02.1901, 23.11.1901.

events into the domestic space in the form of vistas that could be seen with home reproducers.¹⁶⁰

By the late twentieth century, collective forms of amusement such as theater and film turned into events where people were together but in silence, an overlap of the public and the private. However, this had not been the case since the beginning, but rather the result of a long process of transformation. After a long tradition of theater performances where there was no separation between the performers and an audience that participated actively in the show, theater evolved into a strongest differentiation on both sides towards the 1850s. Nevertheless, audiences were still not expected to remain quiet as mere observers until the end of the century. With the emergence of silent film, the public maintained the habits demonstrated during a theater performance, and it was common that they would laugh, cry, or talk. Gradually, the practices of cinema-going evolved into a collective experience of individual watching, which consolidated to a larger extent with the introduction of sound film.¹⁶¹

Motion pictures and recorded sound changed from curiosities to being part of established communication channels and entertainment forms inasmuch as they became part of existing practices of sociability both in public and domestic spaces. By embracing their predecessors, these technologies were understood and interpreted by their users based on the experience they had with other media. The plasticity of recorded sound and motion pictures allowed them to be shaped by their users in order to fit their needs, demands and desires. In order to reach these users, entrepreneurs selling gramophones and cinematographers had the role of gathering knowledge and understanding the expectations of potential customers. In doing so, they profited from new marketing techniques and developed their own strategies according to the local contest. Entertainment became part of a larger set of leisure practices crossed by the growth of consumption.

¹⁶⁰ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 30.11.1907.

¹⁶¹ Flichy, *Una historia de la comunicación moderna*, 209.

Conclusions

This chapter looked at the moment when phonography and film emerged as new media. The purpose of doing so is not only to acknowledge the initial novelty, but also to look at the first phase in the birth of a new medium, when it passes through “a phase of identity crisis, a crisis precipitated at least by the uncertain status of the given medium in relation to established, known media and their functions”.¹⁶² This crisis is resolved when it becomes clear in a certain context, what that medium does and for whom. This chapter argued that film and phonography turned into media through their link to practices of music reproduction and consumption of images that were rooted both in the domestic and public spheres. It argued further that this happened due to the action of entrepreneurs that introduced and commercialized the new communication machines. They gathered information on the habits, expectations and desires of potential buyers and through advertisement, targeted entertainment products for specific uses and customer sectors.

Users made sense of the new technologies thanks to the overlap of their uses with those of existing media. Phonography and film embraced old media, namely acoustic and automatic pianos in the first case, and photography in the second. The phonograph was appropriated based on the habits of music reproduction at home, which had the piano as its main element, while records became part of the network that enabled the commercial circulation of music, constituted by live concerts and the publishing of scores. Film was seen as a continuation of the experiments with different forms of visual spectacles that were popular among the elites in the nineteenth century. It was utilized as a way to cherish family memories similar to photography and as a medium that transmitted visual information similar to illustrated magazines.

At the same time, communication machines contributed to the differentiation of the domestic and the public sphere and to the connection between both of them. If at first cylinders and records were an excuse to sell reproducers that looked like elegant pieces of furniture, the focus of

¹⁶² Gitelman and Pingree, “What’s New About New Media?”, xii.

commercialization later shifted to the musical repertoire. In order to record music that would be better received, entrepreneurs needed to test the taste of the public and develop an offer that would meet the expectations of different segments of the audience. In this regard, Max Glücksmann invented new methods of market research: tango contests and carnival balls served the purpose of gathering information on the preferences of the public. Moreover, he followed commercial strategies that linked the practice of music reproduction at home with public events such as national holidays. Cinema was first integrated into programs of existing public entertainment and later became autonomous with the building of venues with the specific purpose of film exhibition, thus turning it into the main form of collective amusement in cities. In parallel, film was also portrayed as a medium of home amusement, which allowed consumers to enjoy the same movies shown at the theater in the comfort of their homes.

This chapter showed how the expansion of entertainment was part of the emergence of consumer societies in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Santiago. With the availability of more disposable income, the population increased and diversified their consumption habits. Selling and buying practices changed accordingly, and it was proper ground for the adoption of selling techniques developed in the United States and Europe, as well as for the innovation of methods designed for the local context. These years witnessed important changes in the techniques of market research, design features of entertainment products and shopping venues. Consumer societies emerged in the context of a connected market, which through local representatives of transnational firms and communication channels such as trade magazines, allowed the transmission of experiences between different marketplaces. Even so, selling strategies also needed to be customized to meet the local needs, and the information gathered along with networks of local entrepreneurs were key to developing accurate strategies for each context.

Successful commercialization strategies were based on targeting products to specific customer segments. In the context of emerging mass consumption, the entertainment industries took an active role in the classification mechanisms performed by the market. Advertisements of home amusement products shifted from informing consumers about the features of a product

to portraying them as a part of a specific lifestyle, targeted to those who had a certain income level, language skills, age, or gender. At the same time, the physical presence of movie theaters in the city contributed to building boundaries between those who were and were not expected to transit certain spaces. The sphere of consumption and commercialization of technological entertainment consolidated gradually over the first decades of the twentieth century. In order to meet a growing and diversifying demand in the context of a transnational market required the expansion of distribution mechanisms to supply these industries, which is the topic of the next chapter.

Finding a Place in the Global Market: Film and Music Distribution in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay

Towards the turn of the twentieth century, motion pictures and recorded sound became part of everyday life in Buenos Aires, Santiago, and Montevideo. The demand for gramophones and cinematographers, records and movies expanded consistently since the 1890s as new users entered the market, and imports of entertainment-related products grew accordingly. During the early years of these technologies, occasional shipments from factories based in the United States and Europe supplied the markets with movie reels and recordings. But soon these informal mechanisms proved insufficient, and the increasing demand for these products led to more stable and formal networks. First, US and European labels and studios signed exclusive agreements with local agents to allocate their products. In the second phase, they opened their own branches in major cities of the region. Over the first decades of the twentieth century, distribution emerged as the most profitable and competitive part of the entertainment business. Distribution became a winner-takes-all game: whoever controlled the distribution networks decided what was seen and heard and what remained unknown to the broader public.

The film and record industries emerged within an increasingly connected world and brought the expansion of communication networks one step further. The timespan between the 1870s to the 1930s saw the expansion of communication infrastructure: the spread of print media, telegraphic cables, and postal services; the invention of the telephone, phonograph, motion pictures, and radio. Media expanded accordingly to the needs of an increasingly unified market. The integration of most regions of the world into a global market required of faster and closer communication.¹⁶³ It is no coincidence

¹⁶³ See Winseck and Pike, *Communication and Empire*.

that the arrival of telegraphic cables to Latin America had taken place at the time when this region was becoming increasingly important as a supplier of raw materials for the industrialized countries of Europe and the United States during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.¹⁶⁴ The same ships that carried industrialized goods to Latin America and raw materials to Europe and the United States brought phonographs and records, and Lumiere's and Edison's cameramen came back with images they recorded. Cities such as Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Santiago, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, and Havana were among the first to receive travelling exhibitions of new cinematographers and phonographs, as well as the first shipments of records and films. Not coincidentally, these were the capitals of the regions most integrated into world trade at the time.¹⁶⁵

The integration of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay as dependent economies into the world market influenced the characteristics of media and cultural production. The technologies of film and recorded sound spread rapidly and were adopted around the world, but the technical capability and the means of production were restricted to only the industrialized countries. Film and record manufacturers and distributors faced the same challenges as other industries in a dependent context, namely that all the necessary means of production had to be imported, while local production faced markets dominated by the products of industrialized countries.¹⁶⁶ Even though the challenges of competing in a transnational market put local actors of the entertainment industries in a difficult position to compete against US and Europe-

¹⁶⁴ The first transatlantic cable to South America was the connection Lisboa-Pernambuco, built in 1874. From there, a regional system of cables brought information from and back to Europe. In the 1880s, a coastal cable along the Pacific connected Galveston (Texas) with Veracruz, and connected with another cable that reached Valparaiso. See Avhenainen, *The European Cable Companies in South America before the First World War*; and Wenzlhuemer; Roland, *Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World: The Telegraph and Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹⁶⁵ López, "Early Cinema and Modernity"; Paulo Antonio Paranaguá, *O cinema na América Latina: longe de Deus e perto de Hollywood* (Porto Alegre: L&PM Editores, 1985).

¹⁶⁶ Jorge Schnitman, *Film industries in Latin America: Dependency and development* (Norwood N.J.: Ablex Pub. Corp, 1984), 11–18.

based labels and studios organized as big corporations, this context still left margins for them to intervene and develop their own strategies.

This chapter looks at the distribution of films and records in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay as a way of understanding how this region was integrated into the transnational entertainment market that was emerging at the time. This chapter traces the strategies that entrepreneurs developed in order to find and defend their share of the business and argues that distribution was much more than a purely commercial activity, but rather a more complex form of cultural mediation, in which distributors put into play their social position, political and ethnic networks, and cultural capital. Looking at distribution allows us to see how the circulation of contents in these media was a two-way flux, in which the markets of Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Santiago were not only receptors of contents produced abroad, but also a source of new inputs for these media.

Distribution is an underexamined sphere within the history of media in the early twentieth century. Compared to studies on production, and more recently on reception, the history of how movies and records were allocated in markets around the world has received little attention. Distribution encompasses a broad spectrum of activities and actors, containing everything that happens between the production of a film or a record and its exhibition in movie theaters or its reproduction by a gramophone. Some of the few studies that did focus on this element of the business made important contributions to understanding the role of distribution mechanisms in the emergence of Hollywood as the dominant film industry in the world, in addition to the role that travelling recording engineers and regional branches of US and European labels played in the emergence of a global music industry.¹⁶⁷ Out of the

¹⁶⁷ The more comprehensive study of film distribution for the case of the US industries is Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market, 1907–34* (London: BFI Pub, 1985). The edited volume F. Kessler and N. Verhoeff, *Networks of Entertainment: Early Film Distribution 1895–1915* (Herts: John Libbey Publishing, 2008) looks at film distribution through several case studies, most of them in Europe. For the record industry, the closest attempt to study distribution is Gronow and Saunio, *An International History of the Recording Industry*, but it is only based on secondary literature and does not contribute with the analysis of new sources for the topic, which remain scarce.

wide range of literature on the history of film in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay in the early twentieth century, only very few studies focus on distribution.¹⁶⁸ Most research on recorded sound in these countries has been pursued as part of studies on the history of popular music. The few that zoom into the mechanisms of record distribution contributed to understanding the role of transnational labels in the local history, as well as how recordings helped spread US and European genres in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, and vice versa.¹⁶⁹ This chapter draws on these contributions and expands the analysis of distribution mechanisms and the actors involved in them. It considers that this sphere is key to understanding the economy of the entertainment industries as well as their processes of institutionalization and the emergence of transnational communication networks around these new media.

Distribution networks linking Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay to studios and labels based in Europe and the United States expanded due to the momentum of an increasing demand and changed accordingly with the growth of the entertainment market. We can observe how they evolved throughout the first three decades after the introduction of gramophones and cinematographers in the 1890s and how new mechanisms were introduced with each successive phase. The first section of this chapter focuses on the years ranging from the introduction of motion pictures and recorded sound until the 1910s and looks at the transition from informal and loose distribution mechanisms to the consolidation of stable networks. The second section focuses

¹⁶⁸ One example is Fernando Purcell, *¡De película!: Hollywood y su impacto en Chile, 1910–1950* (Santiago de Chile: Taurus, 2012).

¹⁶⁹ An exception is Cañardo, *Fábricas de músicas*, entirely dedicated to the history of the phonographic industry in Argentina in the 1920s. Even though her main concern is the beginning of local production, the author also gives account of how distribution worked and analyzes the role of the major labels in the Argentine market. Some examples of books on the history of music that also include research on the phonographic industry are González and Rolle, *Historia social de la música popular en Chile*, which dedicates one chapter to the record industry. Studies on tango and samba and their distribution in Europe and the United States are for example Andrea Matallana, *El tango entre dos Américas: representaciones en Estados Unidos durante las primeras décadas del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2016) and Garramuño, *Modernidades primitivas*.

on the years of World War I, which, due to the alterations of transatlantic commerce and the role of war propaganda, had important consequences for the entertainment industries. The third section looks at the 1920s, when the emergence of Hollywood as the hegemonic film industry in the world and big corporation labels such as Victor and Columbia changed the game for local distributors.

The Emergence of a Global Entertainment Market (1896–1914)

As was discussed in Chapter 1, phonographs and records started arriving to Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay shortly after their commercial introduction to Europe and the United States, and they gradually became two of the main forms of entertainment. To meet a growing demand, the imports of films and recordings stabilized and increased. In the early years, retailers selling household products acquired them through improvised distribution mechanisms, whereas studios and labels based in the United States and Europe found new ways of supplying their markets abroad throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century. The companies that exploited the recording technologies commercially became transnational corporations, and by the time World War I broke out, the phonographic and film markets were globally integrated.¹⁷⁰

Owners of the patents of the technologies of recorded sound and motion pictures had aimed to expand their business into foreign markets since the early years of their activities. For studios and labels settled in Europe, the relatively small scale of their domestic markets made it necessary to look for buyers and audiences who could help amortize the relatively high costs of production in other parts of the world. Those settled in the United States followed suit later after expanding into their own domestic market.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ On the composition of corporations in the music industry see Tschmuck, *Creativity and Innovation*, 19–27. On the role of multinational enterprises in the film industry see Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialised*, 319–340.

¹⁷¹ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 1–28.

Recording engineers working for the major European and US-based labels traveled around the world recording music in hotel rooms. They visited salons and concerts, and, in a few weeks, had the task of recording as many songs as possible.¹⁷²

As a part of this process, the figure of local film and music distributors acquired more prominence. The catalogs of the labels started to grow, integrating music performed in different parts of the world. However, the limited time and scarce understanding of the local context and preferences of the public brought them to the need to collaborate with other locally based actors. At this point, local music distributors moved into a more central role, as they were both in charge of the introduction of technologies and products, and of the selection of the music that would be integrated into the catalogs. In the case of film, studios moved from sending irregular shipments of vistas to supply stores and theaters to signing exclusive contracts with local entrepreneurs who then rented them to the venues. During this time, the figure of the film distributor emerged and turned into a highly influential and powerful position, a sort of gatekeeper in the film business.

The Rise of Film Distributors

During the early years of film, entrepreneurs involved in the commercialization of cinematographers had to get hold of movies through rather informal and irregular distribution mechanisms. Stores such as Casa Lepage announced in the press the arrival of new vistas when they received shipments from Europe or the United States.¹⁷³ Looking for reels to take back to their countries, studios sold the copies to traders, who then sold them to movie theaters or resold them to entrepreneurs who traveled to London, the main

¹⁷² See for example the memoirs of Gramophone Co.'s recording engineer Frederick William Gaisberg, *The Music Goes Round* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942).

¹⁷³ Casa Lepage announced the arrival of "vistas with the latest events in the world, such as the arrival of Krüger to Marseille, the war in China, the seizure of the Takú fortification". *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 16.02.1901.

distribution center for film at the time.¹⁷⁴ Entrepreneurs sought to get hold of stocks as large as possible, as vistas were sold for low prices but lost their quality after few uses and risked to burn, since the material of reels was highly inflammable.¹⁷⁵ Entrepreneurs needed movies in order to provide them to the salons that organized commercial exhibitions and to sell them for private use to the owners of domestic cinematographers. However, a new stock was not always easy to find and therefore film, like its predecessors theater and circus, started to be nomadic: those who managed to get hold of a significant stock could settle in the cities, whereas those who failed to acquire a large enough amount of reels to compete in the urban markets usually opted to tour around small towns and villages with their movies, or simply retired.¹⁷⁶

Over these years, studios transitioned from receiving irregular shipments to working with stable representatives in the main cities of the region. By 1901, Casa Lepage was the exclusive agent of Pathé Frères, which was, at the time, the most rapidly expanding studio in the Latin American market. Lepage became the manager of one of the first venues refurbished with the purpose of film exhibition in Buenos Aires, the Cine Opera, which only screened movies from Pathé at the time.¹⁷⁷ The quality and reputation of this studio's films was an important tool for Lepage, and then Glücksmann, to position themselves in the distribution market. Since they had access to successful movies, they gained access to exhibition venues by becoming managers or owners. Once they controlled part of the exhibition circuits, it made sense for studios to sell their films to them and not to other entrepreneurs.

¹⁷⁴ London was the main center for film distribution until World War I, when it moved to New York. Until that moment, film importers did a profitable business buying films from abroad and reselling them, thanks to the absence of an import tax until 1915. Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 64–65.

¹⁷⁵ Casa Lepage claimed to have the larger stock of films in South America in 1908. *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 10.10.1908.

¹⁷⁶ *Cine Radio Actualidad*, Montevideo, 16.09.1955; Paranaguá, *O cinema na América Latina*, 15.

¹⁷⁷ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 31.12.1901.

The distribution mechanism based on selling films to distributors or directly to movie theaters changed around 1906–1907, when it was replaced by the renting system. With the shift from short films to longer ones, a growth of fiction feature films that took place with the participation of renowned actors and actresses, the costs of production increased. Meeting the standards became harder for less capitalized producers. Copies were sold for much higher prices than before, making it difficult for individual exhibitors to own a large stock. The renting system introduced by Pathé Frères is considered a milestone in the history of film.¹⁷⁸ It first emerged as a response to the increasing demand of the movie theaters in France, which were now more stably supplied with electricity and had a loyal audience that constantly demanded new films. Due to this system's efficiency and the benefits it brought to the studios (a fixed income for every film regardless of its success), it was also adopted as the main distribution mechanism around the world. The itinerant exhibiting entrepreneurs, both in Europe and in Latin America, would soon disappear.¹⁷⁹ The decentralized and less-capitalized distribution mechanisms that were responsible for the screenings in music halls, cafés, salons, or improvised venues, those that had taken film to remote places, from big cities to small villages, were eventually replaced by an industrial organization.

At this point, the figure of the film distributor emerged. Distributors became specialized intermediaries who negotiated with studios to acquire a stock of films and allocate them amongst movie theaters. In 1909, the first three companies dedicated exclusively to film distribution in Chile were founded: the administrator of the well-known movie theater Kinora in Santiago founded *Compañía Cinematográfica del Pacífico*, while two theater impresarios founded the *Compañía Cinematográfica Italo-Chilena*, and Max

¹⁷⁸ François Garçon, *La distribution cinématographique en France: 1907–1957* (Paris: CNRS, 2006).

¹⁷⁹ Julio Lucchesi Moraes, "Cinema in the Borders of the World: Economic Reflections on Pathé and Gaumont Film Distribution in Latin America (1906–1915)" *Cahier des Amériques Latines*, no. 79 (2015): 137–53.

Glücksman inaugurated his Chilean branch with an office in Santiago.¹⁸⁰ With this new system, movie theaters did not need to own their own stock of movies anymore but rented them from distributors, who at the time gave a portion of their incomes to the studios. This solved some of the exhibitors' problems by guaranteeing them regular access to new films. With the emergence of the role of the film distributor, the networks through which films circulated became more centralized. Most distributors were based in the major cities and from there, sent the movies using the transport and postal networks.¹⁸¹

Until World War I, most films supplying the markets in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay came from European studios. Since their domestic markets were not big enough to offset the growing costs of feature films, French, Italian and German companies sought the expansion into foreign markets from a very early time. Until the outbreak of World War I and the emergence of Hollywood as the dominant pole of production, French producers occupied the leading position in the world market. Among them, Pathé Frères played the most prominent role.¹⁸² From this leading role in the world market, Pathé was able to impose important changes in the distribution mechanisms. The main contribution of this studio was a new and successful business model, which played a key role in the process of industrialization of entertainment worldwide. Between 1906 and 1908, there was a great increase in the company's total revenues, and its market value and capitalization levels were registered. Apart from the previously mentioned renting system, Pathé's

¹⁸⁰ Alberto Santana, *Grandezas y miserias del cine chileno* (Santiago: Editorial Misión, 1957), 15; *El Mercurio*, Santiago, 26.02.1909, 5; *El Mercurio*, Santiago, 16.05.1909, 2.

¹⁸¹ Max Glücksman received films through imports in Argentina and from there shipped them to Chile and Uruguay. Evidence of this is that in 1919, Max Glücksman sued the train company Ferrocarril Buenos Aires al Pacífico for the loss of a shipment of movies sent to Santiago de Chile. "Max Glücksman contra Ferrocarril Buenos Aires al Pacífico", Fondo de Tribunales Comerciales, Archivo General de La Nación Argentina.

¹⁸² Georges Sadoul, *Histoire générale du cinéma*, vol. 3 (Paris: Denoël, 1951). Bosuquet estimates that Pathé controlled 90% of the global market by 1905. Henri Bousquet, "L'âge d'or" in *Pathé, première empire du cinéma*, ed. Jacques Kermabon (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1994).

model consisted of a new way of organizing production. Most films were produced in the company's studio, but thanks to the work of a constellation of minor producers collaborating with Pathé's projects, from which the company obtained a large number of images at low prices, shooting happened in different parts of the world.¹⁸³

Not only Pathé but also other important European film producers, namely French and Italian studios, followed strategies of transnational expansion since the beginning. Even before Pathé turned into the first large scale multinational, other companies had been trying out forms of transnational operations. In the late 1890s, the British Mutoscope and Biograph exploited coin-in-the-slot motion picture machines in several countries, and George Méliès' company opened a subsidiary in the United States to market its films in 1902.¹⁸⁴ Pathé perfected the mechanisms of expansion by setting up distribution offices in nearly every European country, opening at least one branch in every continent. In the period between 1906–1915, the foreign markets represented an average of 92% of its incomes for Pathé.¹⁸⁵ Whereas most French companies followed a similar strategy, the Italian industry was quite different. Primarily composed of small to medium firms, Italian filmmakers achieved great success by building on the know-how of theater and opera production. Until World War I, Italian films were very successful in the world market, and this industry was the country's fourth largest export. Unlike French and US companies, they did not open subsidiaries abroad but focused instead on managing trade from their headquarters in Italy. Maybe for this reason, the Italian industry was devastated by the war and never regained its position in the global market.¹⁸⁶

The competition between European and US studios explains the way in which they approached Latin American markets. Pathé Frères had conquered an important share of the United States' domestic film market in the years before World War I, and reverting his success was the first challenge

¹⁸³ Lucchesi Moraes, "Cinema in the Borders of the World", 139– 140.

¹⁸⁴ Within the European industries there were even earlier examples of transnational operations. Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialised*, 332–334.

¹⁸⁵ Laurent Le Forestiere, *Aux sources de l'industrie du cinema: le modèle Pathé (1905–1908)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 29.

¹⁸⁶ Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialised*, 332–334.

that American producers had to face in order to become the dominant industry. The size of the US domestic market accounts for both the success but also the delay of its industry in conquering the worlds' film market. No other country had so many movie theaters and such a high number of film-going public. The great demand created by the nickelodeon – the first indoor venue for motion pictures exhibition that flourished as of 1905 and charged only a few cents for the show – could only be met by adding imports to the domestic production, and the French, German, and Italian industries took advantage of this situation. Meanwhile, US manufacturers were absorbed by the competition for the use of the patents of technologies, which enabled or prevented the different firms from exploiting motion pictures commercially. Only in 1908 did the situation become more stable with the formation of the Motion Pictures Patent Company (MPPC), an agreement between several manufacturers who agreed to pay patent rights to Edison. The stability granted by this agreement enabled US studios to reconquer their domestic market and start their expansion abroad. However, not every producer was under the umbrella of the MPPC, and this could not prevent independent firms from going into production. In 1912, the US government filed an anti-trust measure against MPPC.¹⁸⁷ Its dissolution gave new momentum to independent producers, now settled in Hollywood, and drove their transformation into the larger companies, which have dominated the global market ever since.

After regaining their internal market from their European competitors, Hollywood studios were in a better position to compete for the foreign markets. US studios were able to offset the costs of their films by supplying the enormous film-going public they had access to in their domestic market, thus being able to reach the foreign markets with lower prices. The French, German, or Italian industries, however, relied on exports to cover the costs of films, which brought only modest profit in the home market.¹⁸⁸ Unlike Edison and the MPPC, Hollywood's strategy to control the US market was not

¹⁸⁷ Robert Anderson, "The Motion Pictures Patents Company: A Reevaluation" in *The American Film Industry*, ed. Tino Balio (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

¹⁸⁸ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 1.

based on the ownership of patent rights but on a strategy of vertical integration – the control of as many phases in the process of film production, distribution and exhibition as possible – and horizontal integration – the purchase of small companies by bigger ones.¹⁸⁹ The pre-war period witnessed three movements in the US film market: the reduction of the foreign share, the conformation of a group of powerful companies in Hollywood, and their expansion into the foreign markets by settling agents and subsidiaries abroad. Even so, Hollywood's conquest of the global market would not happen definitively until the war. Only then could the US industry take advantage of the reduction of the European presence abroad and take over the markets that they had previously supplied. Eroding its presence abroad, Hollywood could also overcome the European studios in their own domestic markets and become dominant in the global market, as it has been ever since.

Until the beginnings of World War I, US films in Latin America supplied only a minor share of the market and were not so much appreciated by the public. Even in countries with close ties to the United States, such as Mexico or Panama, US studios had only small shares of the market, whereas Pathé and other European studios had most of the screen hours.¹⁹⁰ According to the declarations of an executive of a distribution company based in Buenos Aires, "some movies produced in the US before the war and exhibited in Argentina had little success or failed completely. For that reason, some distributors decided to hide the names of the companies in further releases of the same studios."¹⁹¹ One of the reasons for this could have been that the material sent to Latin America was often defective, as it represented the disposal of the exports to Europe.

Despite the geographical proximity, the export of movies from the US into Latin America was not well organized. Most US films arrived through London exporters and were used reels with English intertitles. They were therefore not very well received by the audiences and left no income to their producers. In his visit to Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay in 1916, a representative of Famous Players commented in the trade magazine *Cine Mundial* on the film

¹⁸⁹ Schnitman, *Film industries in Latin America*, 13.

¹⁹⁰ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 40

¹⁹¹ *Cine Mundial*, New York, 1916, 187.

business in the region, noticing the limited variety of films and the low quality of the reels, which, “to our shame – he claimed – (...) is related to the work of representatives of US film companies, who visited South America with one or two exceptional reels and used them to mislead local exhibitors”.¹⁹² Believing that these reels represented the standard of production, distributors signed contracts for the whole stock without seeing it previously and were then surprised when they projected them and found out that the quality was much lower than the samples they had seen. The Chilean magazine *Cine Gaceta* also agreed that the reason why US films could not compete with the Europeans was related to the generally low quality of US films, but additionally attributed the fact to exporters seemingly choosing the worst ones to send to Latin America.¹⁹³

This situation would change during and especially after World War I, once US studios had regained their own domestic market and moved forward on the foreign ones, all while European studios were limited on their activities due to the war. By the time this happened, distribution mechanisms were consolidated in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, and distributors had an active role as intermediaries between US and European studios and local movie theaters. During this time, these studios profited from the foreign expansion of film industries and competed against each other for a share of the profitable business of distribution rights. Glücksmann had several competitors. Aside from the previously mentioned companies founded in Santiago, who were mostly active in Chile and Peru, Glücksmann competed with Julián Aju-ria and his Compañía General Cinematográfica, who was based in Buenos Aires and distributed films in several countries of the region from there.¹⁹⁴

Recording Trips and Local Agents

In the 1890s, phonographs started to be exhibited in different parts of the world as the latest curiosity of the progress of science, now allowing to

¹⁹² *Cine Mundial*, New York, April 1916, 150.

¹⁹³ Purcell, *¡De película!*, 25.

¹⁹⁴ *Cine Mundial*, New York, 1920, p.114.

reproduce the human voice. Even though the phonograph had first been presented in 1877, it took about two decades before the systematic commercialization of talking machines began, namely until investors based in Europe and the United States from telegraphy and telephony businesses formed companies with this purpose and started distributing reproducers and recordings, for both domestic and foreign markets, on a regular basis.¹⁹⁵ When phonographs were presented for the first time in different parts of the world, the machine itself was the focus of the attraction and was shown in public exhibitions where people could record their own voices. The Uruguayan *Caras y Caretas* reported on the first exhibition of the phonograph in Montevideo in 1890, where the University had acquired one and had it exhibited in front of a selected public: “the machine, similar in its shape to a Singer sewing machine, spoke fluently and with inspired concepts, and sung out of tune but with great musical feeling”.¹⁹⁶

Through public demonstrations, people gradually became familiar with the technology, thus setting the groundwork for their adoption as home phonographs and coin-in-the-slot machines in salons and bars along with the expansion of the distribution of cylinders with music and spoken voice recordings.¹⁹⁷ The sound quality of the phonograph had been improved in relation to its first version of the 1870s by moving from tin foil to wax cylinders. Even though the audiences of demonstrations were simultaneously enthusiastic and skeptical in front of the marvelous spectacle of the reproduction of the human voice and a sound full of scratchy noises, as the comment in *Caras y Caretas* illustrates, it was now acceptable enough to start a regular commercialization of recordings.

The evolution of technology triggered changes in the distribution mechanisms. During the time in which wax cylinders were the predominant support for recordings, the supply was very limited, as there was no method to replicate cylinders, and they needed to be recorded individually. Depending on the volume of their voices, singers could record into up to five machines

¹⁹⁵ Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph*; Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 185.

¹⁹⁶ *Caras y Caretas*, Montevideo, 18.08.1890.

¹⁹⁷ For a reconstruction of public demonstration of sound reproducers in the United States see Gitelman, *Always Already New*, Chapter 1, “New Media Publics”.

simultaneously, whereas instrumental orchestras could record into up to ten.¹⁹⁸ This meant that if a company had an order for 100 cylinders, the artists would have to play the song between ten and twenty times over. During his first years as an employee for Casa Lepage, Max Glücksmann used to drive around the city with a tricycle where he carried blank cylinders and brought them to the houses of musicians who recorded songs for Lepage. According to the testimony gathered by Francisco García Jimenez, one of these artists was Arturo de Nava, an actor and dancer from the theater company of the brothers Podestá, who made some extra money playing and recording the songs he composed. When he saw Glücksmann arriving to his house, he complained: “do I need to record ten more times today?”¹⁹⁹ This anecdote shows how during the times of the cylinder, the artisanal way of production enabled local entrepreneurs to make their own recordings. This system of production of phonograms would soon become obsolete due to the combined effect of the introduction of the record – which could be replicated and did not enable such an artisanal mode of recording – and the expansion of the market, which required the production of recordings on a mass scale.²⁰⁰

The expansion of distribution networks of the main labels in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, as well as the generalization of the flat record as the main form of recording left several actors out of business. Even though the record was introduced in 1887, more than a decade passed before it took the lead over the cylinder.²⁰¹ Once sound quality reached that of the cylinder and the production mechanisms were perfected, the gramophone and its flat records

¹⁹⁸ Gaisberg, *The Music Goes Round*, 7.

¹⁹⁹ García Jiménez, *Memorias y fantasmas de Buenos Aires*, 206.

²⁰⁰ Out of the several models of sound reproducers, the phonograph and the graphophone enabled recording, whereas the gramophone did not. With the introduction of electric recording in the mid 1920s it was not possible to make recordings with these devices anymore. See David Morton, *Off the Record: The Technology and Culture of Sound Recording in America* (Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

²⁰¹ Emile Berliner affirmed it was possible to replicate the records from a zinc matrix through a chemical process in his patent of 1887, but it took some years before he perfected the method to do it. Moreover, the quality of sound reproduction was very poor in the first versions of the gramophone and was also improved throughout the following years. Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph*, 60–61.

became predominant in the market. Mass production was now possible, since sounds were recorded into a negative matrix and then replicated by pressing it into shellac records. Even though some locally produced cylinders were still being commercialized, they would rapidly become obsolete. The possibility of producing on a mass scale motivated labels to expand their activities in the foreign markets in order to gain new customers as well as new musical content for their catalogs.

Phonograph impresarios such as Efraín Band, who had started experimenting with his own recordings in the late 1890s, and founded his own labels with cylinders of artists in Chile, had to face the competition of mass-producing transnational labels. The adoption of the gramophone and flat record – which in Chile was generalized by 1905 – as well as the growing presence of US and European labels in the Chilean market left him out of business.²⁰² He was not only excluded from distribution, a source of huge profit, but he also had troubles competing with the better sound quality of Odeon, Columbia, or Victor records, along with getting artists to record with him instead of bigger companies.

Over the 1900s, the global expansion of the record industry was largely driven by the practice of recording trips implemented by most major music labels, which consisted of sending recording technicians on trips around the world to record songs with portable studios. With the gramophone and the record as the predominant technology at this time, performances had to be recorded into a negative matrix that would then be pressed into records.²⁰³ These trips made it possible for companies to record matrixes in portable studios and transport them back to Europe or the United States to be pressed. Recording trips became a normal practice for the Gramophone Company and its US subsidiary, the Victor Talking Machine, during the

²⁰² Garrido Escobar and Menare Rowe, “Efraín Band y los inicios de la fonografía en Chile”, 55–58.

²⁰³ The innovation introduced by Emile Berliner, inventor of the gramophone, was that the recording stylus vibrated laterally on a flat surface, rather than on the curved surface of the cylinder, thus always encountering an even resistance. The matrix was then pressed on shellac. This material was rolled under hot colanders into “biscuits” that, when heated, were easily molded under pressure and, when cooled, they retained the impression. Gaisberg, *The Music Goes Round*, 12.

1900s. The Gaisberg brothers were the first to implement it. Fred Gaisberg started to work with Emile Berliner in Washington as an accompanying pianist and an assistant to the recordings. He later became one of Berliner's main partners and technicians and moved with him to London, where the company was settled. When the firm started to develop their foreign markets, the amount of work grew, and the firm hired Will Gaisberg as a recording assistant. Together, the two brothers organized their first recording trip, departing in September 1902 and returning one year later. They departed from London and traveled around India, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan, where they attended parties, concerts and theaters looking for artists to record. On the trips, the fees paid to the artist were much lower than in Europe, but the recording expenses were higher since, as Fred Gaisberg remembers, "most of the artists needed to be trained over long periods before they developed into acceptable gramophone singers".²⁰⁴

Recording trips were a catalyzer of the global expansion of the recording industry. The goal of these trips was to open up new markets, establish agencies, and acquire a catalogue of records of local music. Over the next years, most major labels implemented the idea of the Gaisberg brothers and organized their own recording trips. All the songs composing this catalog were pressed into records in the factories located in Europe and the United States and later distributed to supply the different markets. In 1905, the German-based label Beka organized the longest recording trip that had been taken up until that moment, a two-year tour that departed from Berlin and went around Austria, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Egypt, India, Myanmar, Indonesia, China, Japan, Hawaii, and finished in the United States.²⁰⁵ The interest in Latin America surfaced a few years later. The first company that organized systematic tours to this region was Victor Talking Machine. The recording engineer Harry Sooy was in charge of three trips to the region: the first in 1908 to Mexico, the second in 1909 to Cuba, and the third in 1910 to Buenos Aires.²⁰⁶ Even though Victor was the pioneer of getting hold of a

²⁰⁴ Gaisberg, *The Music Goes Round*, 57.

²⁰⁵ *Phonographische Zeitschrift*, n° 27, Berlin, 05.07.1906, 561–567.

²⁰⁶ "Harry O. Sooy Memoir", in *Sooy Brothers Memoirs, Victor Talking Machine Co.*, Hagley Digital Archives.

local catalog in this region, the rest (Columbia, Odeon, Pathé, Fonotipia) followed shortly after.

These recording trips not only enabled the inclusion of music from around the world in the catalog of the major labels, but also motivated some changes in musical repertoire being recorded. Before 1900, most recordings included folk songs and chansons, many of which had a negative reputation among sections of the audience who preferred to consume more “sophisticated” entertainment music. According to Tschmuck, the idea of changing the repertoire was suggested to Fred Gaisberg by the Gramophone agent in Saint Petersburg in 1901. He operated a luxurious salon and commented that his clients, members of the high society, were not pleased with the repertoire on offer, and suggested he record the opera star Fedor Chaljapin. After overcoming some technical obstacles, Gaisberg was able to record the opera singer, and the records were offered as a part of a new luxurious series for a higher price, the so-called “Red Label”. From that point on, Gramophone expanded his series of opera records, which were a great success in the early years of the twentieth century in many parts of the world.²⁰⁷ However, the repertoire preferences would change across time and space, and it would be up to the recording engineers and more significantly, their local partners, to be able to interpret them.

The beginnings of opera recordings resulted in the emergence of a star system in the phonographic industry, which already had a global scale. After the success of the Russian opera singers, Gaisberg approached the young star of La Scala in Milan, Enrico Caruso, and convinced him to make a few recordings. Thanks to these records, Caruso would become the first international opera star. The fee of 100 pounds demanded by Caruso for recording ten arias was astronomical and unprecedented, but Gaisberg decided to pay it

About the life and work of Harry Soy and his brothers, also employed by the Victor Talking Machine, see Paul Fischer, “The Sooy Dynasty of Camden, New Jersey: Victor’s First Family of Recording,” *Journal on the Art of Record Production*, no. 7 (2012).

²⁰⁷ Tschmuck, *Creativity and Innovation*, 29.

despite the objections of his employers.²⁰⁸ He was proven right when Gramophone recovered the investment in no time and obtained a big profit from Caruso's recordings. For the tenor, who was a celebrated star at La Scala but unknown outside of Italy, it meant his introduction to a larger audience around the world.²⁰⁹ The distributors of the Victor Talking Machine sold his records in Latin America. As this famous self-caricature shows, Caruso was a well-known star, and his private life and habits caught the attention of the audiences of the region.

AUTOCARICATURA DE CARUSO

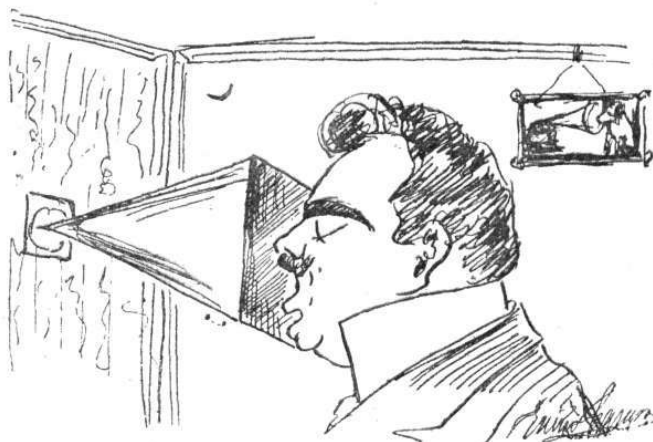


Image 8. Caruso's self-portrait. Caras y Caretas, Buenos Aires, 24.08.1907

²⁰⁸ According to Harry Sooy's memoirs, Caruso received in 1904 a sum of \$4000 for an afternoon of work, while Sooy's salary was \$936 a year. "Harry O. Sooy Memoir", in *Sooy Brothers Memoirs, Victor Talking Machine Co.*, Hagley Digital Archives.

²⁰⁹ The Gramophone Co. was not the first label to record Caruso nor the first to record opera singers. It was probably a small Milan based label producing cylinders, the Anglo-Italian Commerce Company (AICC), which recorded a number of opera singers around 1900. However, the AICC could not achieve any success outside of Italy because of its insufficient distribution network (even though it cooperated with Pathé Frères) and due to the inferiority of the cylinder technology. Tschmuck, *Creativity and Innovation*, 30.

Aiming to emulate Gramophone's success, other companies started to record opera singers. In order to prevent the competition from approaching Caruso with requests, the label offered him the first exclusive record contract in the music business in 1904. From then on, the star system and exclusive contracting became key elements of the success of the phonographic industry.²¹⁰ In doing this, labels controlled the artistic and creative input, which was the most crucial factor of the value chain. However, the recordings of the stars did not account for the majority of the profit of the labels, at least during these early years. Because the records sold for higher prices, they only constituted a small proportion of the total sales. But they worked as an advertising medium. As an executive of the Victor affirmed, "not all of our customers can afford to purchase a \$7 record, but the mere announcement of it will bring them to your store as a magnet attracts steel."²¹¹ The star system in the phonographic industry, similarly to the film industry, was first introduced and then emulated in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Where the advertisements and the local press in the early years of the twentieth century celebrated the new releases of Caruso and commented on his personal features and private life, the focus of attention would move to local musicians with the beginnings of local production.

In addition to sending technicians on recording trips, another way of expanding the catalog was to invite artists to record at the studios in the labels' headquarters or record artists who happened to be on tour in the United States or Europe. In 1909, the National Phonograph Co. invited Alfredo Gobbi to record a series of "popular songs, typical of a quaint and picturesque type of Argentina and Uruguay – the daring gaucho", which would be sold both in Latin America and the United States.²¹² Gobbi represented what Andrea Matallana calls an artist-entrepreneur. Some musicians in the early twentieth century traveled to Europe and the United States to try their luck in show business there. These artists, such as Gobbi or Angel Villoldo, usually had

²¹⁰ On the role of Caruso in the music business see David Suisman, *Selling Sounds: The Commercial Revolution in American Music* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

²¹¹ Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph*, 149.

²¹² *Talking Machine World*, New York, vol. 5, n°7, 1909, 11.

started their careers in the circus and had considerable experience as popular entertainers who had worked in precarious conditions.²¹³ The purpose of these tours was twofold: on one side, aware of the popularity that the music of Buenos Aires and Montevideo was gaining in the capitals of Europe and the United States, they went there looking for success. On the other side, they also had the goal of recording their songs, knowing that the records could then be exported to their countries of origin, thus helping to boost their careers there thanks to the prestige of well-known labels.

The popularity of musical expressions originated in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay in Europe and the United States is one example of how the global expansion of the music market created a circulation in different directions. Not only did the audiences of Buenos Aires, Santiago, or Montevideo listen to Italian operas, but also Parisians and New Yorkers danced and listened to tango. The taste for this music had been first introduced in Paris through the *thé-tango*, dancing evenings and cabarets, which included this music as one of their main attractions. The record industry played a key role in promoting this genre in Europe, not only enabling the popularization of South American artists, but also the development of new styles of tango. This was based on its appropriations abroad, which sometimes came with changes in the orchestration, singing style or the language of the lyrics.²¹⁴ The popularity of tango in Paris has been broadly acknowledged both by contemporaries and by the historiography: in 1912, *Caras y Caretas* stated that “tango is so popular in Paris that there are academies that teach how to dance to it. (...) Argentina is fashionable, and not for the agricultural products we export, but rather for this popular dance, which we had almost forgotten”.²¹⁵ It has been shown that tango became “Argentine” for the first time in Paris and that tango was popular in Italy, Germany, and England.²¹⁶

Tango arrived in Europe via multiple diplomatic and economic connections as well as the result of elites and their interest in experiencing an

²¹³ Matallana, *El tango entre dos Américas*, 105–106.

²¹⁴ Cañardo, *Fábricas de músicas*, 241–243.

²¹⁵ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 20.07.1912, 72.

²¹⁶ About how tango became associated to Argentina, see Garramuño, *Modernidades primitivas*. About the diffusion of tango in Europe see Matallana, *Qué saben los pitucos*.

“exotic” culture of other parts of the world. In the early twentieth century, tango was not only well-known in European capitals but also in major US cities. It arrived there partly as the result of the emulation of Europe, considered as the main example of sophistication and good taste by, for example, the New York bourgeoisie. Tango was one of several rhythms that became popular in the context of a boom of dancing as an entertainment activity. The Victor Talking Machine recorded several hundreds of tangos in the years that spanned from 1906 to 1914, both in their recording studios in Camden and as a part of their recording trips to Buenos Aires.²¹⁷ In this process, the record was the material medium that enabled the circulation of this music extensively and complemented the presence of tango and the musicians who played it.

Distribution networks went through a series of changes during the 1910s. Because inviting artists from abroad to record was rather expensive and recording those who were on tour only gave access to a very limited repertoire, the industry perfected the method that had been developed through the recording trips by working with locally based agents. Labels looked for ways to more efficiently select and record popular music from around the world, then pressing the records at a central plant and exporting them back to the music’s country of origin.²¹⁸ Doing so guaranteed the expansion of the catalogs offered in the markets of the North, as well as popularizing companies such as Victor, Columbia, Gramophone, Phonotopia, or Odeon in the Latin American markets. Whereas every label sold records to different entrepreneurs in the early years, each company started to work exclusively with local agents who were the only ones authorized to distribute their records after some time. In Argentina, Max Glücksmann had an exclusive contract with the label Odeon, while José Tagini was the distributor of Columbia. Entrepreneurs often entered legal conflicts to prevent others from selling the records of a certain label who had guaranteed them the exclusivity for a certain time but could not stop them from selling a remaining stock from a previous contract. In 1911, José Tagini sued Max Glücksmann for the unlawful use of the brands Odeon and Fonotopia, of which, according to a contract signed in

²¹⁷ Matallana, *El tango entre dos Américas*, 100–101.

²¹⁸ Tschmuck, *Creativity and Innovation*, 29.

1907, Tagini had the exclusive reproduction rights. However, the judge ruled in favor of Glücksmann, as he could prove that the stock of records had been bought directly from Fonotipia prior to the contract with Tagini.²¹⁹

In a move from the practice of taking recording trips to working with stable agents who were based locally, labels also increased the degree of information and understanding about the markets they aimed to conquer. It becomes clear, in Harry Sooy's memoirs, that the knowledge of traveling engineers about the local context was very limited and that they had an exoticizing approach to the countries' cultures they were visiting. Sooy recognized having several problems because he could not speak Spanish. When describing his train trip from Mexico City to Veracruz, he recalls his confusion: "we noticed everybody in the train getting up very much excited – we did not know whether this was a revolution starting or not, as we could not talk to anyone".²²⁰ Documenting his three month trip to Buenos Aires, in which his team made 424 recordings, one of his first remarks was that the Argentine capital was "an up-to-date city in every respect. The one thing that seemed strange to us was that June, July and August are the coldest months of the year, while December, January, and February are the hottest months – just think of eating Christmas dinner in white flannels, and the thermometer near the 100 mark".²²¹ Taking this into account, the contrast with figures such as Glücksmann or Tagini, who came to be in charge of selecting the repertoire for the catalogs a few years later, is enormous. They spoke the language, knew the culture, had personal contact with the artists. As immigrants with similar trajectories to many other inhabitants of Buenos Aires, they were in a position to understand the taste and expectations of the public, not a minor skill when selecting the music and the artists that would integrate the catalog.

In the years from 1905 to World War I, the phonographic market became increasingly concentrated. A large number of small companies emerged in Europe and the US but were soon absorbed by the bigger ones. Throughout

²¹⁹ *La Prensa*, Buenos Aires, 12.05.1911.

²²⁰ "Harry O. Sooy Memoir", Sooy Brothers Memoirs, Victor Talking Machine Co., Hagley Digital Archives, 14.

²²¹ "Harry O. Sooy Memoir", 26.

this process of horizontal integration, a few firms managed to get control of broad transnational networks of distributors and branches.²²² The concentration of these networks in a few big companies and the matrix exchange between the head office and the subsidiaries resulted in the integration of the market. It became much faster and cheaper to include music from the most distant parts of the world into the catalog of a label. This is the first moment in history when it became possible to listen to music from all over the world in one store, salon, or house, what has become a basic component of music consumption since then up until the present. Companies needed to offer an international repertoire in order to compete in the market, and the matrices exchange was the method developed by the industry to achieve that. Inviting artists for recording sessions meant excessive costs that most companies could not afford, while importing records was also expensive and implied long waiting times.²²³ For these reasons, exchanging matrices was the perfect solution: in one to two weeks, it was possible to receive the matrix of a recording made in any part of the world and press it into records.

Throughout the years that range from the introduction of the technology to the 1910s and due to the successive technological innovations and changes in the distribution mechanisms, the phonographic market was consolidated as a global market and the figure of the distributor emerged. This role was rather different than in the case of the film industry. Whereas a film distributor was mainly an importer, the same figure in the music industry also had a role in the inverse direction, as someone who mediated the incorporation of the popular music of a certain place into the catalogues commercialized globally. As the exclusive agent of Odeon, Max Glücksmann profited from the exclusive rights to sell the records of one of the major labels in the world, of which had an extensive catalog. However, his most prominent role in this field was to be a tango impresario, to be the figure that could grant local artists access to the transnational market, the person that could offer the local input for this global industry.

²²² "Harry O. Sooy Memoir", 21.

²²³ Dietrich Schuz-Köhn, *Die Schallplatte auf dem Weltmarkt* (Berlin: Triltsch, 1940), 80.

Leisure and the Propaganda War (1914–1918)

World War I was a game changer for the film and record industries in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay for two main reasons. On the one side, for some years these media were used as a service for spreading war propaganda; on the other, the alterations of transatlantic commerce and the economic consequences for Europe and the United States produced permanent changes in the distribution networks, resulting in a permanent shift in the power within the entertainment industries. This became evident after the end of the conflict. The mediation role played by distributors based in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay became more prominent in this context, as it was partly through their networks that propaganda material could circulate. As most of them were immigrants, they were expected to not only act according to their commercial interests but also to an alleged loyalty to their countries of origin.

The networks of the film industry were used for the purposes of spreading propaganda in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay during World War I. Because both opposing sides of the war needed to justify the millions of victims towards their home front, other belligerents, and especially towards the neutrals, this conflict led to an important escalation of propaganda as a dimension of the war.²²⁴ Even people far away from where the battles were taking place were deeply shocked by them. For many societies, including the neutral countries but also those places where no military action took place, World War I was a mediated experience.²²⁵ Since most countries in Latin America were neutral, propaganda had a special relevance in the region. Even for those people who did not take an active part in any battles, nor were witnesses or were directly affected, the war was omnipresent in the form of vivid descriptions and images of the daily events. The coverage of mass

²²⁴ Stefan Rinke, *Latin America and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

²²⁵ Carla Russ, "Persuasive Identities? German Propaganda in Chile and Argentina During the First World War" *National Identities* (2019): 1–15. Not only in Latin America but also in other regions of the world. See Jan Schmidt, "Der Erste Weltkrieg als vermittelte Kriegserfahrung in Japan: Mediale Aneignungen und Studien durch Militär und Ministerialbürokratie" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 40 Jahrg., no. H. 2 (2014): 239–65.

media was not only descriptive, but a source of interpretations and attempts to understand the phenomenon. Sometimes, the war was presented as an entertaining spectacle. The innovations in the printing technologies introduced in the years prior to the war enabled the inclusion of big sized images with low costs, thus enabling a proliferation of abundant visual information on the conflict. Newspapers and magazines were the first option for propagandists, as they were consolidated as channels of information that reached broad audiences and could combine the use of texts and images.²²⁶

Motion pictures soon proved to be one of the most effective channels for propaganda. The use of the medium of film for war propaganda enabled the viewing of real footage shot at the frontlines but also the spread of censored images of the armies and nations involved in the conflict. The film industry not only collaborated with the production of propaganda, but also made available its distribution networks in order to guarantee that the movies would arrive, and to the right hands. Film as a propaganda medium articulated the intervention of different actors, including government officials, the private sector, and civil society. At first, propaganda movies were screened in events organized by so called patriotic committees – civil associations formed with the purpose of supporting the Allies or the Central Powers – and had explicit propaganda purposes. Later, propagandists of both sides noted the importance of exhibiting propaganda war as a part of regular cinema programs, as it gave them access to much broader audiences than those who would attend exhibitions organized by the committees.²²⁷

The patriotic committees, often founded by European migrants and their descendants, had the purpose of gathering funds for the armies and garnering the support of the public opinion. They acted in two ways: they organized their own events with talks, projections, and social events to raise money,

²²⁶ According to María Inés Tato, propaganda produced both by the Allies and Germany circulated mostly in the form of brochures, books, and periodic publications. Other formats such as films, posters, postcards, and conferences were used but less profusely. María Inés Tato, “Luring Neutrals: Allied and German Propaganda in Argentina during the First World War” in *World War I and Propaganda*, ed. Troy Paddock (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2014), 324.

²²⁷ María Inés Tato, *La trinchera austral: la sociedad argentina ante la Primera Guerra Mundial* (Rosario: Prohistoria Ediciones, 2017), 28.

and they functioned as intermediaries who sold movies to local entrepreneurs, who then exhibited them as a part of their regular programs. Film distributors themselves actively sought to get hold of quality images of the war that would be appreciated by the audiences. *Caras y Caretas* celebrated the work of Julián Ajuria and his Compañía General Cinematográfica, thanks to which “all the public can admire the bloody combats and the highlights of the war, as well as contemplate the beauty of the landscapes where they take place”.²²⁸ Propaganda combined contents produced by the demand of propaganda officials with those produced by the private sector (and approved by the governments). The initiatives of the civil society through the action of patriotic committees played a key role in framing the propaganda materials so that they met the cultural codes of their audiences, a central element for their success.²²⁹ However, propaganda’s influence on the field of film was probably smaller than in textual media. It was limited to how a film was framed or presented along with the discussions before and after.

Film producers and distributors became an integral part of the networks through which propaganda circulated. Both the Allies and the Central Powers resorted to private companies as a way of hiding the official origin of propaganda material and in this way gave it more credibility. The Committee on Public Information of the United States, the entity in charge of controlling the production and distribution of propaganda material, opened a Division of Films in 1916. This Division worked closely with the film industry, both in the domestic market and abroad. All films leaving the US had to have a license granted by the War Trade Board. The Committee promised to expedite film shipments if the industry in turn agreed to include educational films as 20% of their stock, along with only renting the films to those exhibitors who also agreed to show movies sponsored by the Committee.²³⁰ An example of how film entrepreneurs joined the war efforts is the case of the Chicago-based film producer and distributor George Kleine. Even though he had opposed the decision of the government of the United States to join the war, 1918 found him making a generous offer to the Committee on Public Information:

²²⁸ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 01.01.1915, 100.

²²⁹ Tato, *La trinchera austral*, 18.

²³⁰ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 93–96.

to make his distribution networks available to the government, to accept no further films from private producers, and to refrain from further production himself for the duration of the war. His motivations were both professional and personal: aside from being concerned for the outcome of the war for his country, Kleine believed that the newsreel of the war would be popular among audiences and trusted that enlisting in the war effort would likely benefit the film industry's long-term interests and save it from being deemed "nonessential" or frivolous, thus causing a shut down for not fitting a nation at war.²³¹

The propaganda war in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay was not exactly fair: migrant communities and supporters from the Allied countries were much larger than those from the Central Powers. Even though Germany counted on many active supporters, their access to communication networks was more limited, as their telegraphic cable had been severely damaged at the beginning of the confrontation and didn't have an adequate substitute. French propaganda could build on the consolidated dominium of its film industry in the region, and the weekly newsreel distributed by Pathé, shown before commercial movies, was one of the main channels used for this purpose.²³² The British were responsible for a large part of the Allies' propaganda circulating in the region, which they controlled from the War Propaganda Bureau and sent to the diplomatic authorities in each country. Even competing in asymmetrical conditions, German propaganda was very active and also resorted to pictorial media. At the beginnings of 1917, an office dedicated to that purpose was opened, followed by the creation of a mixed entity, the Universum-Film-Aktiengesellschaft (Ufa) later that year. A letter sent by one of the promoters of Ufa to the Ministry of War in 1917 and later considered its funding document stated that "the war has demonstrated the supremacy of picture and film as instruments of education and influence. (...) Unfortunately, our enemies have so thoroughly exploited their advantage in

²³¹ Leslie Midkiff DeBauche, *Reel Patriotism: The Movies and World War I* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), xv-xvi.

²³² Rinke, *Latin America and the First World War*, 82-85.

this area that we have suffered serious harm as a result.”²³³ Ufa had important capital at its disposal, and its board of directors was made up of members of the high bourgeoisie, with a strong representation of the financial and industrial capitals. The composition of the board hid the government’s participation, which was established by contract. The office’s purpose was to operate in all branches of the film industry: production, distribution, and exhibition, and in any form of manufacture or trade related to the motion picture business.²³⁴

In order to be accepted by the public, films needed to meet certain standards. As the legation councilor responsible for the coordination of German propaganda in Latin America noted, some of the films shown did not meet the audience’s approval, some of whom were bored by the endless series of images of captured guns and obliterated forts. Sometimes the lack of explanatory texts led to misunderstandings, and the images of destroyed villages seemed to confirm what the enemies said about atrocities.²³⁵ The US Committee on Public Information gathered impressions of local agents who reported on the preferences of the audiences. A letter addressed to the responsible parties of US propaganda in Argentina and Brazil stated: “it occurred to me that what we want and need above all are moving pictures showing the stunts in the air, as the people here have read and heard a great deal about the work we are doing along that line (...) We want to show the various movements such as the tail drive, nose dive, looping the lope, etc. That would arouse a lot of interest”.²³⁶

Film was praised as a propaganda medium for its capacity to not only inform but also create an emotional reaction to what was happening far away. According to Cine Mundial, the cinematographer, unlike paintings or literature which usually idealized the war, provided a service to humanity by

²³³ Klaus Kreimeie, *The Ufa Story: A History of Germany's Greatest Films Company, 1918-1945* (Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press, 1996), 8.

²³⁴ Kreimeie, *The Ufa Story*, 29.

²³⁵ Rinke, *Latin America and the First World War*, 98

²³⁶ “Correspondence concerning dissemination of the committee’s publications and pictures material in Argentina and Chile”, Committee on Public Information, Box 1, NARA RG 63, May 1918–Jan 1919.

showing it as it was, including all of its horrible details.²³⁷ Commenting on the release of a war film in 1916, the Spanish-language trade magazine *Cine Mundial* asked: “What does modern war look like?”²³⁸ The three-page article described the details of the footage and affirmed that “even if we have a powerful imagination, we could never know exactly what it means nowadays the hostility between great powers. (...) the cinematographer came to clear up the unknowns”.²³⁹ Among the scenes captured, there was an air battle, a bombing, and a cannon attack. Of interest were not only images of military actions, but also the leisure times of the soldiers when they went back to the camps.²⁴⁰ They also showed French soldiers transport 21.000 German prisoners, and how they first “cut their straps so the prisoners would need to hold their pants with their hands”.²⁴¹ Even though the war committees were generally pleased with the achievements of these films as propaganda, they were also concerned with avoiding the reach of certain images to the public: images showing the “scientific precision” to organize slaughters or to eliminate dead bodies were meant to be excluded from films, as they might engender feelings of fear or disapproval.²⁴²

The fact that propaganda relied partly on private producers and distributors gave place to several tensions, and Max Glücksmann’s position can illustrate these tensions very clearly. As a distributor, Glücksmann had the necessary influence and networks to enable or block the circulation of war propaganda. This gave him a certain influence but at the time, made him a target of attacks. The context of the war shows how the film business was not disentangled from political tensions and how the social position of the actors influenced their role in this industry. Entrepreneurs were expected to show loyalty to one side or the other, based on their place of birth or political affinity. Meanwhile, it was openly recognized by the actors involved that film propaganda was governed by commercial principles and impresarios would follow the strategies that could favor their business the most.

²³⁷ *Cine Mundial*, New York, February 1916, 56.

²³⁸ *Cine Mundial*, New York, February 1916, 54.

²³⁹ *Cine Mundial*, New York, February 1916, 54.

²⁴⁰ *Cine Mundial*, New York, March 1916, 98.

²⁴¹ *Cine Mundial*, New York, February 1916, 55.

²⁴² *Cine Mundial*, New York, February 1916, 55.

As a film entrepreneur, Glücksmann was part of the network for the distribution of film propaganda, and his strategy seemed to be to profit from his connections on both sides. He had a contract with Ufa, which produced both commercial and propaganda films; bought propaganda films from the Buenos Aires office of the US Committee on Public Information; and offered his movie theaters for events to patriotic committees of the Allies.²⁴³ From a purely commercial perspective, this should not have been a problem, since he could offer these films to the supporters of both sides. Many film impresarios accused each other of an alleged support to one or the other side of the conflict. According to the magazine *Cine Gaceta*, Carlos Battier, the manager of Casa Glücksmann in Santiago traveled to Buenos Aires to talk to the press and discredit his contender by accusing them of being pro-German. At the time, *Cine Gaceta* echoed critics of Glücksmann by saying that “An Austrian company like Glücksmann, which claims to be pro Allies for commercial reasons, disowning his own fatherland, while quietly subscribes to German loans (...) has no right to use the name of the Allies for the purpose of dishonest competition”.²⁴⁴

According to the prominence that distributors gained in the context of the war, accusations against Glücksmann grew, and the press gave them more attention. In 1916, the Argentine newspaper *Crítica* dedicated the cover page to a campaign against him for ten consecutive days.²⁴⁵ According to the pro-Allied perspective, the conflagration was presented as an inevitable confrontation between democracy and authoritarianism, between civilization and barbarism, or between spirituality and materialism. German propaganda sought to debunk the accusations from the Allies, to show that the real imperialist power was the United Kingdom and not the German Reich and to characterize the Allies’ practices as “barbaric” (such as the treatment given to war prisoners or the recourse to colonial troops).²⁴⁶ Actively pro-Allied, the Argentine newspaper *Crítica* conducted a “campaign against German capitals”

²⁴³ “From Ackerman to Sisson”, Committee on Public Information, Division of Films, NARA RG 63, 1917– April 1919.

²⁴⁴ *Cine Gaceta*, Santiago, second half of January, 1918, 3.

²⁴⁵ *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 08.04.1916 to 18.04.1916.

²⁴⁶ Tato, “Luring Neutrals”, 331–339.

and claimed: "In Argentina, the imposition of German capitalism has failed. And it failed for two reasons. Because we do not need the German capitals for our financial development, and because we are Latins. Latins as a race. Intellectually Latins."²⁴⁷ As a part of this campaign, *Crítica* accused Max Glücksmann, among other companies, of hiddenly pursuing the interests of the German and Austrian capital: "This is an unusual case. Mr. Glücksmann, representative in Argentina of the Parisian Pathé Frères, is Austrian. This is not an obstacle for Mr. Glücksmann to unabashedly show an exemplar patriotism by protecting the Allies' Red Cross and offering advantages to their Charitable Societies".²⁴⁸ According to *Crítica*, the motivation for Glücksmann to show this kind of "detachment from his fatherland" was purely commercial, since most of the audiences of his movie theaters were clearly pro Allies.²⁴⁹

Because of his immigrant background and his commercial strategies, Glücksmann found himself between a rock and a hard place: on the one side, the Argentine press accused him of representing the interests of the Central Powers due to his alleged "Austrian" origin; on the other side, the German foreign office warned film companies not to trust him because of his collaboration with the Allies and his Jewishness. *Crítica* argued that, even though Glücksmann had become an Argentine citizen, he continued to be a subject of Franz Joseph according to Italian, English, and French law. This was proven by the fact that he and his brother had problems during their trips around Europe, where the English and Italian authorities "were not willing to accept the legal citizenship documents that are so easily granted by the Argentine state".²⁵⁰ Another argument to support this characterization of Glücksmann was that David Lerman, his father-in-law and business partner, was openly pro-German, and that Glücksmann's parents had moved from Czernivtsi to Vienna.²⁵¹ Meanwhile, the German Foreign Office had a different perspective: when the officers in charge of German film propaganda in

²⁴⁷ *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 08.04.1916.

²⁴⁸ *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 08.04.1916.

²⁴⁹ *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 08.04.1916.

²⁵⁰ *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 10.04.1916; *Crítica*, 08.04.1916.

²⁵¹ *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 09.04.1916; *Crítica*, 10.04.1916.

Latin America found out in 1919 that Glücksmann had the representation of the Ufa, they gave orders to the company to replace him immediately, due to his collaboration with the Allies during the war. They argued that having Glücksmann as a representative meant “leaving the propaganda in the hands of the enemies”.²⁵² For the German officers, Glücksmann was considered an enemy for three reasons: his Jewish origin, his naturalization as a French citizen, and his support of the Allies during the war.²⁵³

In addition to film, music also functioned as a propagandistic tool in the context of World War I. Labels and distributors emphasized their ability to enhance patriotism, and especially addressed migrant communities with offers of music of their homeland. Phonographic companies were aware of the potential of recorded music in this context and aimed to portray it as a “war-time necessity”. According to *The Voice of the Victor*, “a man’s life, whether he be soldier or civilian, moves pendulum-wise between rest and labor. His rest needs are not, however, satisfied with merely food and sleep, but must include relaxation and enjoyment”. Music was supposed to have a powerful influence on patriotism and the “love of home”, and a central role to keep the morale alive in the context of the war. Against those who would argue that music was a luxury because it fell under the category of “entertainment”, Victor’s ads argued that “entertainment is no luxury but a necessity”.²⁵⁴ In fact, the demand for records remained stable at the beginning of the war in Europe, but it was eventually affected by the general descent of consumption.

Aside from film, recorded music was also part of the experience of the war, both because of its presence in the front, and because it acted as a channel

²⁵² “Filmpropaganda Mittel- und Südamerika”, Buenos Aires, 22.10.1919, Bundesarchiv, R901-71957.

²⁵³ “Filmpropaganda Mittel- und Südamerika”, Buenos Aires, 17.11.1919, Bundesarchiv, R901-71957. According to the Ufa’s response, Glücksmann was not the representative in Argentina, but had only acquired a part of the Ufa’s material with the compromise of showing the films in his well-known movie theaters in Buenos Aires. However, according to them, Glücksmann had claimed he was forced by the Allies to show exclusively their films in his theaters, or otherwise he would lose his business with companies from the Allied countries. “Filmpropaganda Mittel- und Südamerika”, Berlin, 04.12.1919, Bundesarchiv, R901-71957; Bundesarchiv, R901-71957, “Filmpropaganda Mittel- und Südamerika”, Berlin, 05.11.1919.

²⁵⁴ *The Voice of the Victor*, Camden, February 1918, 26.

for the spread of propaganda, enabling the circulation of songs with nationalist topics. Relying on the distribution networks created during the pre-war years, this music also reached Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, where immigrant communities, among others, consumed it as a way of “fostering their patriotism”.²⁵⁵ The following Victor Talking Machine’s ad (Image 11) aimed to address the different communities from the belligerent countries. However, most of the records included in the catalog are in English, together with some instrumental pieces and a few songs in French. This can be explained by the greater presence of Victor Talking Machine in English-speaking countries and a more limited access to music from other countries during the war. This was coupled with the intention to address one of the richest communities in Buenos Aires, those of British descent. Even though the ad also mentions Italy on the illustration, it does not include songs in Italian, probably due to the collapse of the Italian industry after the country entered the war, or due to the impossibility of interchanging matrixes with Italian records during the conflict.

²⁵⁵ This was claimed by advertisements offering recordings of patriotic songs during the war.

DISCOS PATRIO





FRANCIA ITALIA

ESTIMULE SU PA AIRES NACIONALES

AQUI TIENE LOS



Discos Dobles, cantados en Inglés, a \$ 2.50 m/n. c/u.

14141 — God Save The King..... Alex Turner.—Baritone.
— Rule Britannia..... Alex Turner.—Baritone and Chorus.

13009 — It's Time for Every Boy to be A Soldier... Charles Hart.—Tenor.
— What Kind of an American are You..... Position Quartet.

14322 — America..... Mixed Chorus of 2200 Voices.
— Bill Oh..... Mixed Chorus of 2200 Voices.

Discos Dobles, 10 pulgadas, de Banda, a \$ 2.50 m/n. c/u.

14821 — American Patrol..... Susan's Band.
— La Serenita..... Susan's Band.

17068 — La Marsillaise..... Susan's Band.
— Belgian National Air..... Victor Band.

17851 — It's a Long Way to Tipperary..... Victor Band.
— Soldiers of the King..... Victor Military Band.

18910 — Gathering Passado..... Victor Military Band.
— Belongers Round..... Victor Military Band.

62455 — Mische Reul de Italia..... Baula Peyer.
— Altre Parolotto di Italia..... Baula Bess.

PIDAN CATALOGO ILUSTRADO, GRATIS

TICOS "VICTOR"





BELGICA INGLATERRA

TRIOTISMO CON LOS DE LOS SUYOS

ULTIMOS DISCOS "VICTOR"

Discos Sello Azul, 10 pulgadas, en Inglés, a \$ 3.00 m/n.

4111 — Battle Hymn of the Republic..... L. McManack.—Bulwark.
— Columbia the Gem of the Ocean..... L. Murphy.—Tenor and Male Quart.

Discos Sello Rojo, 10 pulgadas, en Inglés, a \$ 3.00 m/n.

46114 — Best Runged Barrel..... J. McManack.—Tenor and Chorus.
41113 — Pope of Godd's Men..... Ivan Williams.—Tenor.

Discos Sello Rojo, 10 pulgadas, cantados en Francés, a \$ 3.00 m/n.

41217 — Pave de la Victoire..... M. Journot.—Bajo.
41216 — Marche Lorraine..... M. Journot.—Bajo.

Discos Sello Rojo, 12 pulgadas, en Francés, a \$ 4.75 m/n.

74109 — La Marsillaise..... M. Journot.—Bajo.

Victor Talking Machine Co., Camden, N. J., E. U. de A.

La famosa marca de fábrica de la Victor, "La Voz del Mundo", representa la mejor en materia de sonido. Sólo música en esta línea garantiza de la superioridad de nuestro producto, y aparece entusiasmado en todos los aparatos Victor, Victrola y Discos Victor Injuntados. Para evitar imitaciones, exijan siempre esta marca de fábrica.

PRATT & CIA.
265 calle San Martín, 217 Calle Córdoba con, Malabú
Buenos Aires Rosario

DELLAZOPPA & MOVISE
729-733, Plaza Independencia, 729-733 (Estación Nueva)
Buenos Aires Montevideo, Uruguay



Image 9. Victor's "patriotic records". Caras y Caretas, Buenos Aires, 16.07.1918

Music labels as well as government and military officials were aware of the relevance of recorded music, both as a propagandistic medium and as a tool to increase the moral of the soldiers. Fred Gaisberg, who was traveling around Russia and Great Britain during the early years of the conflict and continued with his work as a recording engineer, observed an increase in the demand for records both from soldiers and civilians: "In England, during the war, the cheap portable machine proved to be a boon to the soldiers, as it broke the monotony of their routine existence in the dugout. Popular patriotic songs were recorded and distributed in thousands; the gramophone was encouraged by the military authorities of both sides, who looked upon it as a vital necessity."²⁵⁶ The emotional power of music was well known by officers, who resorted to listening to it for different purposes. During his time in

²⁵⁶ Gaisberg, *The Music Goes Round*, 71, 79.

Italy, Gaisberg was sent to prison camps near the frontlines at the Isonzo river. He was asked to record Slav, Croat, Serb, Hungarian, and Czech deserters singing folksongs and speaking, urging their listeners to drop out of the armies and join them. These records were then played at the trenches opposite the places where the enemy armies were known to be posted.²⁵⁷ Of all the musical genres during World War I, popular songs constituted the broadest repertoire, and this music was used as a call to patriotism and to the participation of civilians in the war effort in all countries.²⁵⁸

Patriotic songs spread around the world through different channels: with migrants who played them and through records that were distributed thanks to the global reach of the phonographic industry. According to Luis Velasco Pufleau, the relationship between music and propaganda is ambiguous, and the meaning given to music depends largely on the rituals from which it is issued and the context of its reception.²⁵⁹ The record industry added a mediated experience as a way to become a part of a shared discourse, despite being far away from where the war was taking place. As Gaisberg remembers, exiled musicians in Paris, London, Rome, Shanghai, and Constantinople popularized songs of their places of origin.²⁶⁰ Then, the recordings and the publishing of the music sheet of these songs brought them to the rest of the world through the usual networks of the phonographic market. *Caras y Caretas* published the score of a British war song and affirmed that “war chants have been and are patrimony of every people, as they keep the patriotic enthusiasm alive”.²⁶¹ In an article about “good humor in the (Italian) war camps”, it was claimed that since Italians love music, soldiers looked for every possible way to bring instruments to the frontlines: they would hide them in their baggage, acquire them in the conquered territories, or get them as presents from their families. With the instruments, they would sing the songs of their

²⁵⁷ Gaisberg, *The Music Goes Round*, 78.

²⁵⁸ Glenn Watkins, *Proof Through the Night: Music and the Great War* (Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press, 2003), 5–6.

²⁵⁹ Velasco Pufleau, “Reflections on Music and Propaganda” *Contemporary Aesthetics* 12 (2014): n.p.

²⁶⁰ Gaisberg, *The Music Goes Round*, 71.

²⁶¹ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 26.12.1914, 8.

places of origin, especially patriotic songs.²⁶² While these articles reported on the experience of music at the frontlines to their readers in Argentina, record labels offered a repertoire of patriotic songs during the years of the war. Records also joined other consumption goods in using the context of the war as a selling strategy, by turning objects into a sort of souvenir that would in the upcoming times become a reminder of the years of war.²⁶³

Due to their use as channels to spread propaganda, neither film nor recorded sound lost much ground during the war. Even though many companies interrupted the production of reels or records due to the context, their presence as key communication channels and leisure activities remained throughout the conflict and prepared the stage for the rapid expansion in the post-war times. The war had important consequences for the power relations within the markets of both industries. In the case of the film industry, it affected mostly the balance between European and US based studios, creating an opportunity for the latter to take over. In the case of recorded sound, the war had important consequences for the transnational structure of the record industry, as most of the companies were corporations in which the capital came from different places and had branches in different countries.²⁶⁴

During the war, the center for film distribution moved from London to New York. Even though the British would try to regain their position afterwards, post-war economic difficulties in Europe (mainly inflation) made it unlikely for buyers to operate in London rather than in the flourishing context of the United States.²⁶⁵ In these spaces, entrepreneurs came together and negotiated the terms of distribution, arranging most transactions. Glücksmann started to travel regularly to New York and other cities of the United States “to study the market and select those films that would adapt better to the taste of South Americans”.²⁶⁶ In order to make more fluid and efficient his commercial deals in the United States, Max Glücksmann hired a permanent

²⁶² *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 07.08.1915, 36.

²⁶³ Casa Matucci in Buenos Aires offered clocks, jewelry, gramophones, and records with designs referring to the European War. *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 22.08.1914.

²⁶⁴ Tschmuck, *Creativity and Innovation*, 27–28.

²⁶⁵ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 71.

²⁶⁶ *Cine Mundial*, New York, 1916, 499.

representative in this country, Frederick Knocke, who had been an export manager for Pathé Frères, could speak six languages, and had traveled extensively around Europe, Latin America, and Asia. In 1917, his brother, Jacobo Glücksmann, settled in New York permanently and took control of the office.²⁶⁷ Soon after settling in New York, Jacobo was able to finalize important arrangements with several studios, and in 1917, Glücksmann claimed to have the most extensive program in the territories where he was active.²⁶⁸ The exclusive right to distribute films of major US studios was key to dominating the market and was the reason the role of the buying representative played a key role. Judging by the relevance given in trade magazines to the relocation of buying representatives and their personal characteristics, this was a highly personalized form of negotiation. For example, *Cine Mundial* reported on the relocation of Jacobo and emphasized that “besides being an attractive young man, he is also proactive and wise. In four months of methodical studies he learned English, good enough to being dragged into a love story. And to emphasize his youth, he shaved his mustache”.²⁶⁹

The war was the perfect occasion for US producers to take over European studios’ control of foreign markets. With the beginning of World War I, film distributors in Latin America foresaw the difficulties in maintaining the supply of European films and out of need rather than conviction, resorted to US producers. Even though the US industry was optimistic about taking advantage of the decreasing European supplies ever since the war had begun, it was not until 1916 that it succeeded in expanding its presence in Latin America, since until then it had still been possible to get supplies from Europe and most US firms had no representation in the region.²⁷⁰ The movies purchased in the first years of the war were better than those previously available in the Latin American market but were still of a lower quality than those few films that continued to arrive from Europe.²⁷¹ The increase in US exports during the first two years of the war resulted mostly from the decline

²⁶⁷ *Cine Mundial*, New York, 1917, 283.

²⁶⁸ *Cine Mundial*, New York, June 1917, 315.

²⁶⁹ *Cine Mundial*, New York, 1917, 631.

²⁷⁰ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 54.

²⁷¹ *Cine Mundial*, New York, April 1917, 296.

of European studios. From 1916 on, the US industry started to adopt new strategies in order to reach a more solid position in the foreign markets, opening subsidiary offices and changing their distribution mechanisms. The key to this strategy, which guaranteed a domain that would be hard to erode after the war, was to take over the non-European markets while French, British, and Italian studios were not in conditions to fight back. Universal opened major distribution branches in Mexico and Australia, and Fox expanded in South America with an office in Rio de Janeiro. Besides opening subsidiaries, studios had other tools to become more active in foreign markets, such as having specialized sales offices for different regions and advertising in their press and trade magazines.²⁷²

The US industry found an important obstacle in the Latin American markets: local distributors. They wished to keep US films away because they were more expensive than European ones, and for some time, they had certain success in doing so. According to the magazine *Moving Picture World*, the end of 1915 saw only about 15% of movies exhibited in South America being from US studios, independent distributors buying most of these materials from European producers. In Chile and Brazil, independents controlled up to 70% of the market. Colombian theaters were reported to have used mostly French and Italian films and when the war prevented them from getting hold of these films, they preferred to offer live shows or close down rather than turning to US suppliers.²⁷³ Despite these discouraging numbers, important actors of the film industry argued from the pages of trade magazines that it was the right time for US producers to take over the markets in Latin America, since banking facilities and transportation had improved considerably and “the old prejudice against the Yankee is rapidly dying out”.²⁷⁴ These efforts started to pay off from 1916 on, especially once the US industry started to develop new strategies and methods for its export trade, allowing them to gain a firm control of foreign markets around the world. Through the opening of subsidiary offices, studios were able to bypass some of the

²⁷² Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 71–73

²⁷³ *Motion Picture World*, New York, 02.10.1915, 83; *Motion Picture World*, New York, 18.12.1915, 2.

²⁷⁴ *Motion Picture World*, New York, 18.12.1915, 2.

intermediaries and deal directly with exhibitors. In doing so, they were also able to adjust to the demands of their audiences by including Spanish inter-titles.²⁷⁵

Unlike in the film industry, in which there was a clear competition between US and European studios, record labels were more integrated in both continents. Most of the major companies were organized as corporations combining capital from different origins, headquartered in both continents, with a large structure of branches in different parts of the world. Despite the maintenance of the sales during the first years of the conflict, the war had a great impact on the economic situation of this industry: it changed the ownership structure of the record industry in Europe and created an imbalance between the two sides of the Atlantic. According to the time when each country entered the war, an uneven development in the record industries of the different European countries and the United States was created. While Italy remained neutral, its industry underwent a short period of flourishing, only limited by the lack of raw material coming from England.²⁷⁶ But the persistence of the conflict eventually affected the commercial organization of the music business. During the years before the war, most labels had turned into transnational corporations, but the branches now located in enemy territories were confiscated. The most seriously affected firm was the Lindström Corporation, of German capitals, which lost its factory in Paris and offices in Great Britain, Spain and Italy.²⁷⁷

In contrast to the situation in Europe, the industry based in the US was strengthened by the effects of the war. Whereas the European markets shrunk during the years of the conflict, the new predominant role of the US in the world economy resulted in a boom of its music business and the proliferation of new companies. In 1912, there were only three manufacturers active in the market: Victor, Columbia, and Edison. In 1914, six new companies entered the business, and in 1915, eighteen more. By 1916, there were

²⁷⁵ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 76.

²⁷⁶ Shellac was produced at the time exclusively in India, and British companies controlled its commercialization.

²⁷⁷ Tschmuck, *Creativity and Innovation*, 27.

forty-six firms active in the record industry based in the United States.²⁷⁸ Even so, the growth of the industry and the emergence of new firms was not reflected in the progress of music or the recording art. According to Gaisberg, “it was a sterile period of suspended animation. At best it left the appetite whetted for a feast”, which, indeed, came with the boom of recorded music in the post-war years.²⁷⁹

This blow to the European industry had important consequences in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. The interruption of trade obstructed the regular arrival of records to the region. For Tagini, this meant the end of his business.²⁸⁰ Without the novelties of Columbia arriving from Great Britain, the most profitable part of his business was seriously damaged, and he closed his doors before the end of the war would bring a renaissance of the activity. Glücksmann, on the contrary, took advantage of the situation and facing the weakening of his German partner Odeon (part of the Lindström Corporation), he used the situation to follow an import substitution strategy, opening his own factory. Overcoming the difficulties of the war made his position stronger, especially since many of his competitors were left out of business. However, the context also strengthened the role of Victor Talking Machine, which reinforced its presence in the region. Victor and Glücksmann’s Nacional-Odeon would be the main actors of the record industry throughout and especially after the war.

The Winner Takes All (1918–1930)

The years after the war saw the recovery of the entertainment industries in the United States and Europe, along with a boom in the consumption of their products and services in the 1920s. These industries emerged from the war very different to the way they were before, especially in terms of the power balance on the two sides of the Atlantic. The US was especially favored, and in terms of the structure of entertainment corporations, was now less

²⁷⁸ Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph*, 190.

²⁷⁹ Gaisberg, *The Music Goes Round*, 78.

²⁸⁰ García Jiménez, *Memorias y fantasmas de Buenos Aires*, 219.

integrated transnationally. In the 1920s, labels and studios had an aggressive presence in the markets of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay in order to profit from the expansion the entertainment business had been experiencing in their major cities. Thanks to the consolidation of stable distribution mechanisms, in combination with the boom of the market, distribution became a highly profitable business, and distributors competed against each other for the lion's share. The distribution business became a winner-takes-all game, in which the most successful distributors began to accumulate more and more allocation rights and therefore the control of large shares of the market in the region. However, during the second half of the decade, the direct presence of US studios and labels via their regional branches, which had the intention of eliminating intermediaries between producers and retailers or movie theaters, would pose an additional challenge for local entrepreneurs. In this context, the ones that managed to keep their positions were those that applied successful strategies of vertical integration, along with securing their positions in the distribution market by maintaining a presence in the commercialization and production sectors.

On the Shoulders or Under the Shadow of Hollywood?

Immediately after the war, the US industry had to face some challenges to keep its position in the world market. The dollar's strength in relation to other currencies created a barrier for exports, since it became very expensive for distributors to purchase films priced in dollars. US producers could not just reduce their prices to a competitive level as soon as the problem appeared, because the earnings from abroad since 1917 had been considered fixed and predictable (usually 20% to 40% of a film's revenues) and were therefore considered when calculating the costs. Payments, such as fees for performers and script authors, were calculated based on worldwide revenues, and because of this, the industry did not have the needed flexibility to charge lower prices abroad to compensate the currency problem.²⁸¹ This

²⁸¹ Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 104.

situation allowed the industries in Germany, France, and Italy to recover and gave them something of an advantage when exporting to countries with a stronger currency, such as the US. As Glücksmann observed in 1920, “French and Italian producers are making very serious efforts to re-establish themselves in foreign fields, this being especially noticeable in Latin America. British productions are appreciably on the increase. Germans are just now doing everything possible to get a foothold again”.²⁸² However, it was soon clear that by then, European industries were not in any condition to compete with Hollywood, as they were severely weakened after the war, with only a few movies reaching the standards of US producers.²⁸³ The share of US films in Argentina and Chile was overwhelmingly high, close to 95% in 1920. The currency problem also affected this market. In Chile, the US share fell to 65% in 1921 but then recovered in the following years.²⁸⁴ As Glücksmann predicted: “The Americans have fixed themselves very firmly in Latin America, and by giving proper attention to this market, their position can be certainly maintained”.²⁸⁵

During the postwar years and until the mid-1920s, distributors in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay were able to profit from the expansion of Hollywood. During this time, they were standing on the shoulders of the giant that was the US industry and achieved great success. Those who managed to get the distribution rights of the major Hollywood studios had access to a gold-mine business. For some years, Glücksmann was winning the game. By the early 1920s, we can see that not only was his company growing, but also his status as a successful and influential businessman. His personal life and public habits demonstrated a significant fortune: he owned an apartment in the most expensive area of Buenos Aires;²⁸⁶ he and his family spent several months a

²⁸² *Wid's Yearbook*, Los Angeles, 1920, 257.

²⁸³ *Wid's Yearbook*, Los Angeles, 1920, 104.

²⁸⁴ *Wid's Yearbook*, Los Angeles, 1920, 139.

²⁸⁵ *Wid's Yearbook*, Los Angeles, 1920, 257.

²⁸⁶ “Juicio de Sucesión Max Glücksmann” and “Incidente de Colación” Archivo de Tribunales, Buenos Aires.

year traveling around Europe,²⁸⁷ and in 1921, he applied for the admission to the main aristocratic institution of Argentina, the Jockey Club.²⁸⁸

A closer look at Glücksmann's activities in the early 1920s and the source of his fortune will allow us to observe the mechanisms and dynamics of film distribution at this time. Film was consolidated not only as a mass entertainment but also as an important economic activity by this time. Therefore, the reports on this business can be found not only in film magazines, but also in daily newspapers. In 1921 and 1922, the announcement of a series of new contracts between major Hollywood studios and Max Glücksmann brought controversy in the Argentine press. Some voices celebrated the large variety of movies offered in his program: according to the newspaper *La Razón*, a look at Glücksmann's program shows that "due to the diversity of the program it is offered to them, Argentine audiences are among the most favored in the world".²⁸⁹ According to the article, whereas in the United States, France, or Italy, most of the films exhibited were made locally and producers insisted on having regulations to prevent foreign films to enter the market, the theaters in Argentina showed films of all the major producers in the world. For this newspaper, this was a merit of commercial liberalism: "it is true that all of these countries have the advantage of having their own industry. However, as we said, the Argentine audience, free of all the obstacles of nationalist protectionism, is the most favored one. All the best films, regardless of their origin, pass before their eyes".²⁹⁰

While some commentators celebrated Glücksmann work as a distributor, others accused him of monopolizing the market. According to *Crítica*, Glücksmann's goal was to "offer a bad show in detriment of the public, let the quality of the movies go down, increase the price of the tickets, ruin the import business and turn into an octopus in detriment of honest producers".²⁹¹ This newspaper affirmed that Glücksmann and his partners, including his father-in-law David Lerman and the theater impresario Faustino da Rosa, planned

²⁸⁷ *Mundo Israelita*, Buenos Aires, 24.06.1924, 27.07.1929

²⁸⁸ His application to the JCA was rejected. *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 08.10.1921, 3.

²⁸⁹ *La Razon*, Buenos Aires, 14.01.1922, 4.

²⁹⁰ *La Razon*, Buenos Aires, 14.01.1922, 4.

²⁹¹ *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 17.10.1921, 5.

to buy or rent as many movie theaters as possible in order to reduce the resistance to their monopoly. As managers of a large amount of venues, they would be able to impose higher rent prices and pressure the studios to sell the distribution rights for a higher price, thus increasing the profit margin of distributors.²⁹²

In 1922, a contract between Paramount and Max Glücksmann was announced. This agreement authorized Glücksmann's firm to distribute 281 movies in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Paraguay. According to *Cine Mundial*, "for the number of reels it includes, for the importance of the territories it affects and for the amount of money it involves, this contract is, without a doubt, the most important and celebrated between a studio and a distributor of Latin America in recent times".²⁹³ The attention that this contract received, not only in film trade magazines, but also in the newspapers of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, suggests that it constituted a turning point for the distribution market in these territories. The exclusive access to Paramount's movies placed Glücksmann in an advantageous position. It favored him especially in front of his main competitor, Julián Ajuria, whose contract with the studio had just expired.²⁹⁴ Paramount's films were highly appreciated by Latin American audiences due to their technical quality and the well-known artists they featured. At that time, South America represented one of the main areas of export for the company. Its movies were regularly exhibited in Argentina and Uruguay, and with this contract, they would enter the Chilean market.²⁹⁵

The criticisms raised against this contract shows how the distribution business was organized in the early 1920s: in the absence of legal regulation, informal agreements within impresarios ruled the market. The Uruguayan magazine *Semanal Film* argued that even though the contract was legal from every perspective, it represented a breaking of a "gentleman's agreement" that had existed among film impresarios. According to this journal,

²⁹² *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 17.10.1921, 5.

²⁹³ *Cine Mundial*, New York, 1922, 92.

²⁹⁴ In Argentina, Glücksmann was authorized to distribute the films released after the end of the contract with Ajuria in May 1921, whereas for the rest of the countries it included the production since 1918. *Cine Mundial*, New York, 1922, 92.

²⁹⁵ *Semanal Film*, Montevideo, 31.12.1921.

Glücksman offered a higher price for the rights of Paramount than the one paid by Ajuria. An article titled “Moral and Business”, reported an interview with Bernardo Glücksman about the contract with Paramount. Bernardo did not confirm the existence of an agreement between his brother and Sociedad General Cinematográfica but still pointed to the fact that Ajuria had been the one who “threw the first stone” by signing a contract with Glücksman’s previous partner, Pathé New York.²⁹⁶ According to *La Semana Cinematográfica* “there is, at least, decency, gentleness and moral to make every honest person respect the rights of the others”.²⁹⁷ The arrangements between entrepreneurs were, among other things, supposed to avoid the competition for the distribution rights of the main studios and prevent the agents from reducing the prices in order to gain more clients.

Since the late 1910s, studios’ main mechanism was to grant the exclusive right to allocate a set of films on a certain territory to one entrepreneur for a certain period of time. In this way, they aimed to avoid the circulation of pirate copies that left no profit for the producers. Exclusive contracts also gave a tool to distributors to initiate legal actions when another firm was offering the same film. Firms often accused each other of having acquired copies illegally, but this was often hard to prove. For example, in 1920 a conflict took place between Glücksman and the Peruvian firm Teatros y Cinema regarding the rights of the Ufa film *Madame Dubarry*. Even though Glücksman had the exclusive rights of the German company, Teatros y Cinema acquired an old copy of the film in Barcelona and projected it in Santiago de Chile before the official release that Glücksman had been planning. To avoid a possible intervention of Glücksman before the release of the film, they did not announce the name of the film until the day of the first exhibition, advertising instead “a surprise by the best artist in the world”.²⁹⁸ Glücksman started legal actions against Teatros y Cinema but only after the damage was done. The magazine *La Semana Cinematográfica* published a series of articles on the matter, calling on the audience to punish the company and “withdraw their support to a company that makes a clean sweep of the most

²⁹⁶ *Semana Film*, Montevideo, 31.12.1921.

²⁹⁷ *La Semana Cinematográfica*, Santiago, 30.12.1920, 2–3.

²⁹⁸ *La Semana Cinematográfica*, Santiago, 30.12.1920, 2–3.

fundamental principles of respect to the rights of the others, which are the basis of social order".²⁹⁹

Potential challenges to distributor's control of the market were their disputes with movie theater owners. In January 1920, a group of theater managers sent a letter to Glücksmann and Ajuria complaining about the high prices of the films and argued that due to the decrease of the viewing public during the summer months, it was not possible to pay such high fees.³⁰⁰ As they did not receive an answer, they decided to exclude the movies allocated by these firms from their programs.³⁰¹ By 1921, the boycott kept going, at this time only destined to Glücksmann. The owners of one hundred movie theaters excluded the films distributed by him from their venues and congregated around the recently founded Circuito Argentino de Exhibidores.³⁰² *Crítica*, aiming to support the exhibitors, made a call from its pages to the audience to support the boycott: "it is time for those who pay a ticket to become a part of these issues and be aware of who they support and try by all means to contribute to the progress of those businessmen who defend their pockets and artistic taste".³⁰³ The tensions between distributors and exhibitors shows how the increasing specialization of the tasks within the film business created conflicting interests and led the actors to develop strategies to defend their own profit margin.

As the previous examples show, newspapers and magazines were the main platform where the conflicts of the film business were expressed. The emergence of specialized journals and recurring newspapers sections dedicated to film was an integral part of the consolidation of motion pictures as a form of entertainment, which was now separated from the variety show. As of 1915, several journals appeared in Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. These magazines, with differing lifespans from a few months to several years,

²⁹⁹ *La Semana Cinematográfica*, Santiago, year 3, n°138, 30.12.1920, 2-3.

³⁰⁰ *Cine Mundial*, New York, 1920, 506.

³⁰¹ *Cine Mundial*, New York, 1920, 887.

³⁰² *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 08.10.1921, 8.

³⁰³ *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 17.10.1921, 5.

delineated the first discourses about film in the Latin American context.³⁰⁴ Film magazines could be connected with the industry and its different actors to a larger or lesser extent: some represented the voice of the producers and aimed to highlight the importance of local production, others had the task of defending film from critics that accused it of being immoral or anti-artistic. At times, the magazines defended one of the parts in a conflict between entrepreneurs or acted as a platform for both to publish their opinions.³⁰⁵

From the pages of its cinematographic section, *Crítica* continued the campaign against Glücksmann that had been started during World War I. In order to harm his activities as a film distributor, *Crítica* resorted to arguments that went beyond his commercial activities and referred to his personal life and especially to his Jewish origin. A series of articles published in 1921 and 1922 portrayed Glücksmann as dishonest and as the orchestrator of conspiracies. As a part of these accusations, *Crítica* resorted to anti-Semitic stereotypes. In an article published in 1921, they called Glücksmann “*el qui mi cointas*”, a Yiddish accented broken Spanish for “*¿qué me cuentas?*” (what’s up?). The illustrations show him in his previous jobs as a servant and then as a film impresario. The text connects this trajectory of social ascent to his ambition and attempt to become a hoarder, which, *Crítica* argues, would be a typical attribute of Jewish immigrants: “the man has no moral stature to deal with matters of such financial transcendence, but he is not lacking the guts to do it, similarly to the Muscovite peddlers of Libertad Street. Since he could not fulfill his hoarding dreams, he only gets to peddle in the movies.”³⁰⁶

As a part of his campaign to discredit Glücksmann as a film impresario, *Crítica* resorted to anti-Jewish stereotypes. Even though there are no explicit references to Glücksmann Jewishness, the adjective Muscovite probably refers to the fact that a large part of the Jewish community emigrated from the Russian Empire. Similarly, Libertad Street, was where the Temple of the Jewish Congregation was located, the place where Glücksmann was based and

³⁰⁴ Eduardo Santa Cruz, “Cultura de masas y espacio público en Chile: las revistas de cine (1910–1930)” *Comunicación y Medios* 15 (2004): 139–55. See also Carlos Ossandón, *El estallido de las formas*.

³⁰⁵ Wolfgang Bongers, “El cine y su llegada a Chile: conceptos y discursos” *Taller de letras* 46 (2010): 151–74, 153–154.

³⁰⁶ *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 17.10.1921.

acted as the director around those years.³⁰⁷ The figure of the *qui mi cointas* corresponded to a representation of Jewishness that was not based on physical aspects (such as hooked nose or long beards, often used at the time as alleged markers of Jewishness) but on linguistic elements (most vowels being replaced by an “i”).³⁰⁸ Even though *Crítica* clearly differentiated itself from right-wing periodicals that reproduced anti-Semitic discourses and representations of Jewish people based on alleged behavioral and physical aspects, this newspaper also gave use to negative stereotypes about Jewish people, representing them as stingy, cowardly, too ambitious, or disloyal.

³⁰⁷ The reference to the street Libertad could also be related to the presence of several stores owned by Jewish people in this street.

³⁰⁸ The character of the *qui mi cointas* would later become a permanent comic in the pages of *Crítica* with the strip “Don Jacobo in Argentina. Life of a *qui mi cointas*”. See Ariel Svarch, ““Don Jacobo en la Argentina” Battles the Nacionalistas: *Crítica*, the Funny Pages, and Jews as a Liberal Discourse (1929–1932)” in *The New Jewish Argentina. Facets of Jewish Experiences in the Southern Cone*, ed. Adriana Brodsky and Raanan Rein (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2012). About representations of Jewishness in pictures, see Julia Schäfer, “Über “Judenbilder” in der Karikatur als historische Quelle” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 10 (2001): 138–55.



El qui mi cointas Glücksmann (Max);
cuando actuaba en calidad de mucamo
en la casa de Soly Borock.
(Apuntes de la época)



Max Glücksmann, con su característico
utensilio en la época que era mucamo
en la casa particular de Soly Borock.
(Apunte gráfico de esa fecha).



Image 10. "Max Glücksmann, the qui mi cointas". Crítica, Buenos Aires, 17.10.1921

The prominent role that Glücksmann occupied in the film business in the early 1920s, which had made him the focus of attention and a target of attacks, would not last much longer. This loss in prominence reflected a more general situation for local film distributions, which were gradually being displaced by an increasingly direct presence of studios in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Towards the mid-1920s, Glücksmann's appearance in the press became only sporadic. The reason for this was probably the gradual loss of the most profitable part of his business due to a change in strategy of Hollywood studios in Latin America. The demand for US films continued to grow throughout the 1920s. The promising perspectives, the consolidation of bigger markets, and the opening of smaller ones motivated most major studios to consider establishing their own distribution branches in the region.

The opening of Hollywood studios' branches was a threat for local distributors. As Jacobo Glücksmann noted in 1925, this meant that "little by little, as the American concerns take hold in the foreign markets, the business of

the local distributors is deceased and in some cases entirely destroyed”.³⁰⁹ Even though operating their own branch had higher costs than doing it through a distributor, studios could then eliminate intermediaries and thus enlarge their profit margin. The inauguration of the Paramount’s office in Buenos Aires in 1925 was a serious blow for Glücksmann. After that point, he began a slow decline that would aggravate with the financial crisis of 1929. However, the attempt of Hollywood studios to take direct control of distribution was not unchallenged. Glücksmann encouraged distributors to counterbalance the situation by increasing their purchase of European material. From his perspective, “this material is gradually obtaining greater acceptance because the exhibitors prefer to do business with their old established friends rather than with foreigners.”³¹⁰

Hollywood reached a dominant position in the Latin American film markets mainly due to two interrelated elements: the commercial power of US producers and distributors, and the emergence of a cult of the movie stars. Aside from its direct presence through branches and distribution offices in the region, US studios relied on a wide acceptance of their movies. Hollywood studios turned into big companies that could make expensive productions and achieve great success among their audiences. The managers of movie theaters discovered the attraction of expensive productions and were willing to favor the presence of American films over local productions in their programs. By 1931, seven major US studios supplied 62% of the films exhibited in Argentina.³¹¹ The public looked forward to the next films of Douglas Fairbanks, Rodolfo Valentino, or Greta Garbo. Film entrepreneurs actively promoted the fascination with movie stars. Producers and distributors advertised their movies and especially their stars in the pages of the numerous film magazines and entertainment pages of the local press. The representatives of the US industry in Latin America had a special interest in encouraging the familiarity of audiences with Hollywood stars, as that was the main element that could guarantee the loyalty of the public to the studio’s production. Magazines in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay reported with detail on

³⁰⁹ *Film Daily Yearbook*, New York, 1925, 661–662.

³¹⁰ *Film Daily Yearbook*, New York, 1925, 661–662.

³¹¹ Karush, *Cultura de clase*, 105–106.

numerous aspects of Hollywood actors and actresses' private lives. They emphasized their physical aspects, the artistic merits and the fabulous fortune of the protagonists of the movies.³¹² They would do the same with the protagonists of local productions, which they also aimed to turn into stars.

The role of stars was central in every part of the process of the film industry. For producers, hiring a star was not only supposed to guarantee a professional and quality performance, but also a commercially successful film. Distributors profited from the use of the star's image for marketing and selling the film, both in the domestic and foreign markets, while exhibitors were confident that showing films portraying stars would guarantee public attendance.³¹³ The star system had not been present since the beginning of film, but became a central element as a part of the industrialization process, especially with the emergence of Hollywood. During the earliest phase of cinema, the movies themselves were only secondary to the business of film, which was driven by the attraction of the technology itself. Most films were documentaries and those that included actors or actresses had no names to identify them. The performers of early narrative cinema were therefore usually unknown. From 1907 on, the production of narrative films increased and the production mode changed from a system centered on the cameraman to a director-led system, eventually transforming into a studio system, as narrative films could be planned and contained within the controlled environment of the studio. According to Paul McDonald, "the star system in American cinema developed through the detailed division of labor, the redefinition of performance space in narrative film, and the widespread distribution knowledge about individual film performers".³¹⁴ In fact, contracts signed between studios and performers gave film impresarios the right to exploit the star's image in different media. The star's images were one of the main tools of film distributors utilized to open new markets abroad.

The cult of movie stars created a close relationship of cooperation between the US film industry and the industry of consumption goods. The everyday

³¹² Rinke, *Encuentros con el Yanqui*, 187– 188.

³¹³ Paul McDonald, *The Star System: Hollywood's Production of Popular Identities* (London: Wallflower, 2000), 5.

³¹⁴ McDonald, *The Star System*, 38.

and private lives of movie stars turned into a topic of interest for the press, and the audiences became interested in their lifestyles, including the cooking tools they owned or the autos they drove, what they did in their free time and what newspapers they read.³¹⁵ Once Hollywood conquered its dominant position in the global market of motion pictures, film became a key feature of what Victoria de Grazia calls the “market empire”: the leading role of US firms in global markets, the great influence of its business networks, the recognition of its brands and the familiarity with the American way of life around the world. Film played a central role in establishing this empire, as “no American industry was more self-consciously rivalrous about its role in shaping international cultural trends, none more engaged in reaching out, responding to, and shaping consumer tastes abroad, none more aggressive in taking on the barriers and obstacles to its installation in other societies.”³¹⁶

Allocating US films in Latin America was not only a form of making money, but also constituted a tool to strengthen commercial relations between the United States and the countries of the region, and a propagandistic tool to represent the country in the eyes of Latin Americans.³¹⁷ The presence of US film was part of a larger influence in the cultural, economic and social spheres – what has been called the process of Americanization.³¹⁸ Understood as a complex process of encounters with the material and symbolic presence of the United States, crossed with an unequal distribution of power, Americanization is not a linear process of homogenization. On the contrary, it is contested, and both approval and rejection are an integral part of the process.³¹⁹ Mass culture constituted one of the main spaces where these encounters took place, and especially in film, can be considered a key element in this process. Film had the power to appeal to audiences of different social classes, ages, and genders, along with creating powerful beauty and

³¹⁵ Rinke, *Encuentros con el Yanqui*, 190–191.

³¹⁶ Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2006), 288.

³¹⁷ Purcell, *¡De película!*, 12–13.

³¹⁸ About the discussion on the concept of Americanization see Barbero and Regalsky, *Americanización*.

³¹⁹ Rinke, *Encuentros con el Yanqui*, 23.

consumption standards, another reason why it was considered of high importance among the complex of Americanization.³²⁰

After resisting the expansion of the US presence in the film market before the war and during the first years of the conflict, distributors ended up embracing it throughout the post-war times. With the emergence of Hollywood as the dominant pole of film production, their huge investments setting the standard for production costs as much higher than earlier, along with the promotion of the cult of movie stars, their expansion in the world market became unstoppable. Independent distributors in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay found a way to profit from this expansion for a few years, acting as intermediaries between studios and movie theaters. In doing so, they became mediators in the presence of US cultural influence in the region. But their margin of action would soon narrow down. In 1927, Paramount celebrated the second anniversary of its Buenos Aires office with a dinner party that had most of the theater managers as guests, thus making it clear that its goal was to work in close contact with exhibitors. By doing this, they eliminated the intermediation role previously fulfilled by the distributors. The rise and fall of Max Glücksmann overlapped with the rise and fall of the role of film distributors in the region. At first a facilitator and mediator, the local distributor became an obstacle that Hollywood, in their expansion into the global market, had to eliminate.

Import Substitution in the Phonographic Industry

The phonographic industry survived the challenges imposed by World War I and witnessed a global boom in the years ranging from the end of the conflict to the crisis of 1929.³²¹ In Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, the

³²⁰ Rinke, *Encuentros con el Yanqui*, 523.

³²¹ Tschmuck, *Creativity and Innovation*, 41. In the United States, the record sales reached a historic peak in 1921, which would not be surpassed until 1945. Sales experienced a moderate decline between 1921 and 1925, and boomed again until the market crash of 1929 would create a drastic decline that lasted until 1933. Industries in Europe also recovered after the war and face periods of expansion and

combination of alterations of commerce during the war and the opportunities offered by the boom of the 1920s created a unique opportunity for the local industry to gain momentum. Several local distributors such as Tagini and Band went bankrupt during the war, creating a broader margin for those who stayed in business, Max Glücksmann being the most prominent. The Victor Talking Machine, which emerged strengthened from the conflict, developed a more aggressive policy towards Latin American markets and soon became Glücksmann's main competitor.³²²

The post war years offered the right setting for record entrepreneurs to follow strategies of vertical integration and import substitution in order to take control of as many phases of the process as possible. After the inauguration of a record factory in Brazil in 1913, Glücksmann's in Buenos Aires was the second of South America, and contributed to the supply of demand in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. It was the only factory in the territory of these three countries until Victor opened his own in Buenos Aires in 1924, followed by one in Chile in 1927.³²³ The import substitution process that took place during the 1920s with the inauguration of factories in Argentina and Chile had a great impact on how music was distributed. The mechanism on which the record industry had relied for three decades now started to change. The matrix exchange practice did not disappear but turned into a reciprocal transaction, through which music circulated in both directions. The newly inaugurated factories could press both local recordings as well as the matrices of famous European and US songs, whereas the factories in the north were able to have access to recordings of music from Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, all of which was increasingly popular in their own domestic markets, especially in the case of tango. The times for production changed enormously: if it was necessary to wait for four to five months for a song to be pressed into a record ready for commercialization (or even more if the matrix happened to have failures) before, it was now possible to complete

recession during the 1920s and 1930s, but there are no data available to reconstruct the precise evolution of sales.

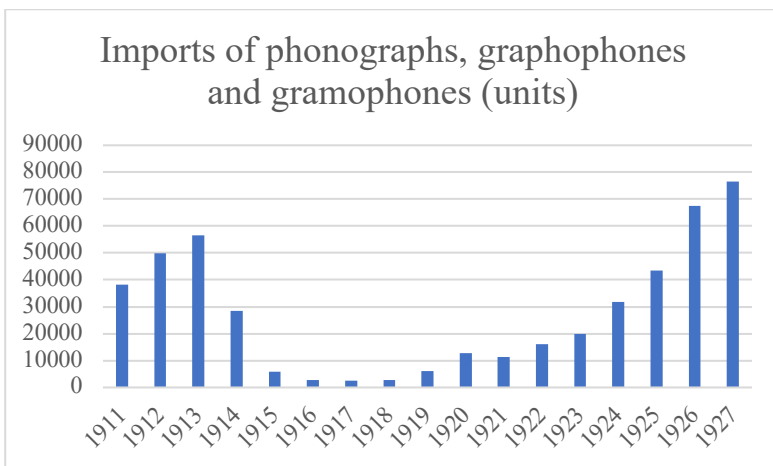
³²² For the case of Argentina see Cañardo, *Fábricas de músicas*.

³²³ *The Voice of the Victor*, Camden, nº4, 1924, 6.

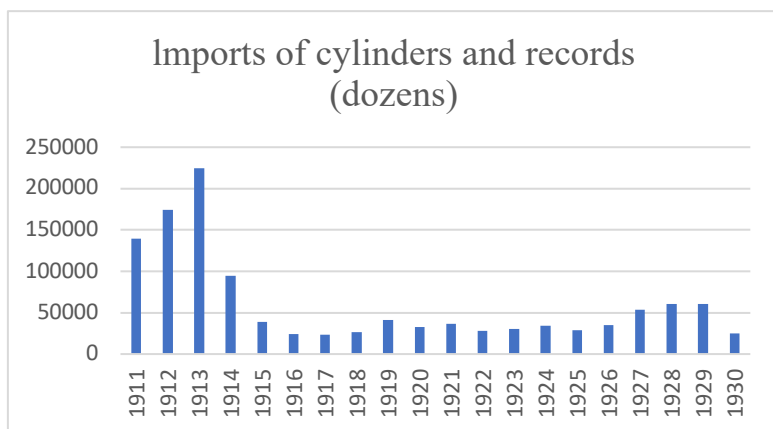
the whole process in a couple of weeks.³²⁴ This enabled entrepreneurs to react faster to the good reception of a song or a new orchestra and have it on record soon after it had been awarded the best piece at a tango contest or had been well received during the carnival balls.

It is possible to observe the impact of the import substitution process by comparing the evolution of imports of sound reproducers (phonographs and gramophones) and of recordings (cylinders and records). As the next graphs show for the case of Argentina, the imports of reproducers started to recover after the war and increased consistently during the 1920s (Graph 1). This was mostly due to the recovery of imports from Germany and to a lesser extent, by increases of imports from the United States. The imports of cylinders and records, on the contrary, only experimented a minor recovery in 1919, but never reached pre-war levels again (Graph 2). This gap between the increase of imports of reproducers and recordings reflects the import substitution process. Considering that reproducers were durable products that could be used for many years, an increase in the imports resulted in a growth of the total number of reproducers available. Even though there are no sales statistics available, it is possible to assume that the number of users increased, absorbing the growth in the number of unities available in the market. Since cylinders and records were disposable products, which often broke after a short period of usage due to the fragility of their material, a larger number of available reproducers demanded a consistent increase in the number of records and cylinders circulating in the market. If this demand was not being supplied by imports, it meant that it was being supplied through local production.

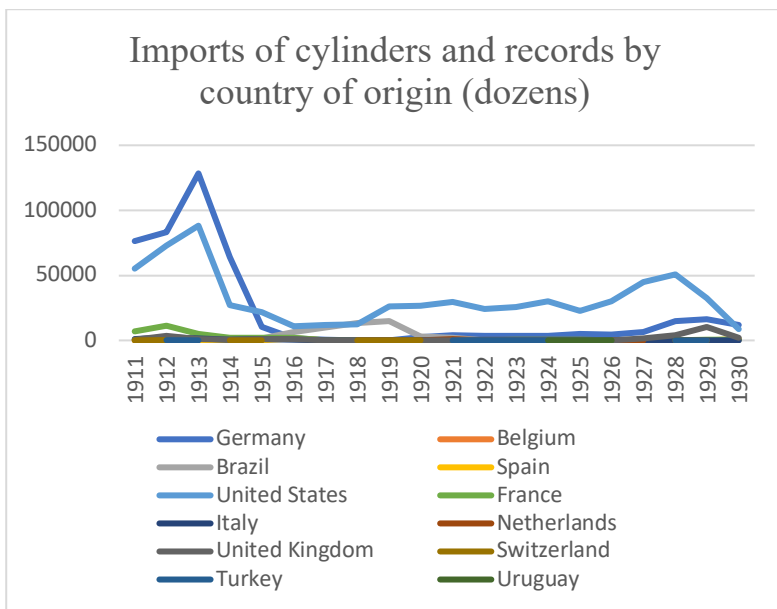
³²⁴ *La Razón*, Buenos Aires, 11.12.1920, 4.



Graph 1. Imports of phonographs, graphophones and gramophones in Argentina. Based on data from Anuario de comercio exterior de la República Argentina.



Graph 2. Imports of cylinders and records in Argentina. Based on data from Anuario de comercio exterior de la República Argentina.



Graph 3. Imports of cylinders and records in Argentina. Based on data from Anuario de comercio exterior de la República Argentina.

Not only the opportunity created by the war, but also the general increase in the demand for new recordings since the 1910s motivated the inauguration of factories in Latin America able to supply quickly and effectively to local markets. In 1913, the first factory in South America opened in Brazil, run by the entrepreneur Fred Figner in collaboration with Odeon. This factory also supplied part of the market in Argentina, as it may be seen in Graph 4, and it accounts for part of the substitution in the fall of imports from Germany and the United States during the war. The imports from Brazil went down in 1919, when Glücksmann's factory was inaugurated in Buenos Aires. The establishment was capable of supplying an important part of the demand in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. With 32 machines, it could produce a range of 4,000 to 5,000 records a day.³²⁵ Considering that the highest

³²⁵ La Razon, Buenos Aires, 11.12.1920, 4.

imports of records in Argentina were registered in 1913, with a total of 224,257 dozens, the capacity of this factory was enough to substitute at least an important part of the supply, with a maximum of around 83,000 dozens.³²⁶

Figner's and Glücksmann's similar trajectories account for a successful model of the music entrepreneur. Fred Figner, who was also born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, migrated to the United States and settled in Texas in 1882, where he had his first contacts with the phonograph. In 1891, he decided to travel and bring the novelty to places where it was still unknown. He first arrived in Belen, in Brazil, carrying phonographs and blank cylinders, organized demonstrations of the talking machines, and recorded lundus, modinhas, and operetas in hotel rooms. After this successful experience, Figner decided to travel to other Brazilian cities to promote the talking machine and finally settled permanently in Rio de Janeiro.³²⁷ He opened a store named Casa Edison and kept selling cylinders and recording Brazilian artists. From then on, he followed a similar trajectory to Glücksmann's: he entered negotiations with Odeon and became their exclusive agent for the Brazilian territory. He negotiated the terms of the artists recording for this label and had the exclusive right of distributing their records. In 1913, he inaugurated the first record factory in the country.³²⁸

The beginnings of record production in Latin America in collaboration with European-based labels encouraged a fluid exchange of music between the regions. Figner's factory was opened in cooperation with Odeon, and more than likely, the one Glücksmann opened in Buenos Aires in 1919, too. The terms of the agreement included Figner's exclusive right to distribute Odeon records in Brazil in exchange for his commitment to buy a minimum of units every year. Figner was also able to produce records in his factory with the matrixes recorded by Odeon in Europe, while Odeon could do the same with

³²⁶ Anuario de Comercio Exterior de la República Argentina, 1913.

³²⁷ Eduardo Gonçalves, "A Casa Edison e a formação do mercado fonográfico no Rio de Janeiro no final do século XIX e início do século XX" *Desigualdade & Diversidade – Revista de Ciências Sociais*, no. 9 (2011): 105–22, 106–107.

³²⁸ Gonçalves, "A Casa Edison e a formação do mercado fonográfico no Rio de Janeiro", 119.

Figner's recordings.³²⁹ This matrix exchange agreement explains the fast diffusion of the music of Brazilian and Argentine artists in Europe in the 1920s. With the beginning of World War I, distributors settled in Buenos Aires resorted to the Brazilian factory to supply the demand that could not be met with the imports from the headquarters in Europe, which at this time were interrupted because of the conflict. Until the inauguration of the factory in Buenos Aires, the Brazilian factory largely depended on the demand of the neighboring countries. However, the opening of the factory in Argentina seemed to be planned in accordance with Figner, proven by a letter to Figner from Cohn, the technician who ran both Figner's and Glücksmann's factories. He informed Figner of having found a proper place for the factory in San Fernando, within the vicinity of the Argentine capital.³³⁰

Victor and Odeon had different business models in the region: while Odeon operated through stable exclusive agents, such as Glücksmann and Figner, both with whom he cooperated with to install factories and handle distribution, Victor sent his own representatives from the headquarters in the United States. The first of Victor's representatives was sent to settle in Buenos Aires in 1922, from where he managed all the business in the region. The main goals were to expand his knowledge on the market and speed up the production of local novelties now that Odeon did the complete process locally. This goal was first partially met by establishing permanent recording studios, but the matrixes were still being sent to the United States for pressing until 1924 when the company decided to add to the recording studio, a new establishment to press records.³³¹ The Chilean and the Uruguayan market were supplied with the production of the US and Buenos Aires factory during these years. In 1927, both Victor and Odeon opened a factory in Chile where they pressed the music recorded in the studios of Buenos Aires or Santiago.³³²

As a way of differentiating his company from Victor, Glücksmann emphasized the local element of his company in his advertisement campaigns after

³²⁹ See Humberto Moraes Franceschi, *A Casa Edison e seu tempo* (Rio de Janeiro: Sarapui, 2002).

³³⁰ Cañardo, *Fábricas de músicas*, 36–37.

³³¹ "Harry O. Sooy Memoir" 122.

³³² González and Rolle, *Historia social de la música popular en Chile*, 192.

the inauguration of his factory. Ads referred to his records as a “genuinely Argentine industry”, and this aspect was also emphasized by the press when highlighting that almost all the supplies used in the factory were “of national production” and that, of the over one hundred employees, “all of them were Argentines except for a handful of foreign technicians”. However, this factory was actually dependent on imported supplies, since shellac, the main component for the production of records, was almost exclusively produced in India at the time.³³³

The possibility of local record production set the stage for changes in the musical repertoire, not only related to the incorporation of musical genres from different parts of the world, but also to internal changes within the genres. Music from the US and Europe was still imported in the form of finished records, but it also became more common for local bands to play their own versions of shimmies and foxtrots, while more tango records and artists were arriving in Europe and the US. The relevance given to the local genres does not mean that other music styles lost their importance. Max Glücksmann offered a catalog of records that included a repertoire recorded in Buenos Aires under the label Discos Nacional, while those records imported from Europe were under the name Discos Odeon. During the 1920s, Victor and Odeon continued to distribute opera records. In 1925, Victor published *El libro Victrola de la Ópera*, which included a summary of the plot of over 150 operas and a historical overview of the genre in Latin America, thus making explicit the relevance of the genre in Spanish-speaking markets in the 1920s.³³⁴

The 1920s saw the rapid popularization of jazz and new musical styles and associated dances such as the shimmy, charleston, black bottom, and fox trot, which gained a fast acceptance in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Santiago. Not only were the records of jazz musicians selling well, but dance teachers were also hired to teach the locals how to do the new steps, which had also been learned through photos published in the press. New dancing salons

³³³ La Razon, Buenos Aires, 11.12.1920, 4.

³³⁴ El libro Victrola de la ópera, (Camden: Victor Talking Machine, 1925).

opened in Santiago, and dance contests became important social events.³³⁵ The new styles not only attracted fans, but also opponents. Some of them objected to the dances because they involved closer physical contact and were seen as immoral by critics. Another argument used against these dances was that they represented the penetration of a foreign culture, a detriment to their own. In the context of the growth of a nationalist rhetoric during the government of Carlos Ibañez, those who claimed the need for supporting an allegedly “authentically Chilean” culture represented in the cueca and other folkloric rhythms raised their voices against the North American musical genres.³³⁶ Jazz arrived in Buenos Aires shortly after the end of World War I, about the same time it entered Europe.³³⁷ Some of the most celebrated artists were Paul Whiteman or the Benson Orchestra of Chicago, whose records sold well and whose music largely influenced the local jazz musicians.³³⁸ But despite the fact that the most “white” versions of jazz had a great impact on the South American scene, jazz was still perceived as a part of an African-American genealogy, and artists that emphasized this genealogy, such as Josephine Baker or Sam Wooding, also performed in Buenos Aires, in 1927 and 1928 respectively.³³⁹

The record industry played a central role in the spread of jazz in the region and all the major labels took part in it. But Victor and Nacional-Odeon had a very different approach. Being a US-based label, Victor had contracts with several of the main jazz artists (including Whiteman until 1928) and was able to offer an extensive catalog of this genre, which was usually grouped under the name of “danceable music”.³⁴⁰ But the distribution of US artists was not the only way in which jazz was present in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. The

³³⁵ The regulations against night noise applied by the municipal authorities of the Chilean capital put in evidence the magnitude of the phenomenon. Rinke, *Encuentros con el Yanqui*, 173.

³³⁶ Rinke, *Encuentros con el Yanqui*, 174–175.

³³⁷ Sergio Pujol, “El jazz en Argentina: del paladar mundano al gusto local” in *Jazz en español. Derivas hispanoamericanas*, ed. Julián Ruesga Bono (Xalapa Ver. México: Universidad Veracruzana, 2013), 60.

³³⁸ Karush, *Cultura de clase*, 73.

³³⁹ Pujol, “El jazz en Argentina”, 62.

³⁴⁰ Tim Gracyk and Frank Hoffmann, *Popular American Recording Pioneers, 1895–1925* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 301.

interpretations of jazz music made by tango orchestras was also another expression of it. Since this genre was so popular to dance, it was common for orchestras to include some fox trots in their repertoire, both live and in records, and label themselves as “Orquesta Típica and Jazz Band”. Glücksmann’s label and the orchestras recording for him, such as Roberto Firpo’s and Francisco Canaro’s, did this during the 1920s. Towards the 1930s, a larger specialization and differentiation of the genres would become predominant, thus ending this practice.³⁴¹

Jazz was not first invented and then exported as a finished product, but it was created in the course of its diffusion. Its adoption in Latin America had a great impact in the United States, where the combination of patterns from this region’s music gave birth to Latin Jazz.³⁴² It additionally had a great impact in the musical landscape of Latin America. The encounter of jazz with tango had an influence in both directions: the interpretation of jazz by tango orchestras brought some new elements to the style, while the presence of jazz had an influence in the way tango was played in the 1920s. Inspired by the jazz records that they listened to, musicians in Buenos Aires formed orchestras that combined typical tango instruments, such as bandoneon and violin, with those commonly used in jazz bands, such as trumpets and drums.³⁴³ Aside from the instruments they used, jazz also had an impact on the compositions. It is likely that the stylistic changes that tango underwent in the 1920s were related to the influence of jazz. Leaving behind the references to the habanera, whose rhythmical pattern had been present since the first tangos, the new compositions used a four-beat structure.

³⁴¹ Karush, *Cultura de clase*, 74.

³⁴² Julián Ruesga Bono, “Jazz en español” in *Jazz en español: derivas hispanoamericanas*, ed. Julián Ruesga Bono (Xalapa Ver. México: Universidad Veracruzana, 2013), 15.

³⁴³ Karush, *Cultura de clase*, 75. See also Sergio Pujol, *Jazz al sur: la música negra en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2004).

Conclusions

This chapter traced the evolution of distribution networks and mechanisms and looked at actors who played a role in this sphere of the history of the motion pictures and recorded sound. It analyzed the strategies that they followed in order to position themselves as intermediaries, to defend their business in front of the expansion of transnational firms, to compete against each other, and to navigate the tensions with other actors of the field. By doing so, it was possible to observe how distribution networks and mechanisms emerged and changed through time. Throughout the period under examination, distribution turned from irregular shipments of movie reels, cylinders and records to stable networks that guaranteed a regular supply for the expanding entertainment scene in the major cities of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay.

The rise and fall of distributors, due to the possibilities and limits for the scope of action for local actors, show the asymmetries in the global market. The major cities of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay became integrated into a transnational communication network as a dependent region in accordance with its integration into the world economy. This chapter showed how this economic dependency had an impact on the history of communication media. Namely in terms of technological dependence and the role of corporations based in the industrialized countries, these communication media had access to more capital and larger domestic markets than any firm based in Latin America. It also showed how local actors managed to find margins of action within the limitations imposed by the asymmetries in the market and had access to the high profit margins of the distribution business at least until the late 1920s.

By looking at the activities of local distributors, it was possible to observe the way the circulation of contents in these media was a two-way flux. The integration of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay into a global market of entertainment products and services transformed it into a receptor of contents produced abroad but also into the source of new inputs for these media. The role of distributors was key for allowing the circulation of contents and cultural products between different contexts. It thus contributed to the

reception of films and music produced in the United States and Europe, which offered images and recordings from Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay as input for the contents consumed abroad at the time. The focus on the level of individual actors and their strategies showed that distribution was not only a commercial activity, but also a mediation function where different elements played a role. To perform this role, distributors had to have a broad knowledge and understanding of the preferences and expectations of the audiences, along with the ability to articulate a series of skills that included social and political strategies to negotiate with commercial interlocutors but also government officers or the press. Especially during World War I, distributors played an important part in enabling and spreading the circulation of propaganda in the circuits of commercial entertainment.

Due to the different and sometimes opposing interests of actors involved in the functioning of media, tensions emerged at different points, and became more pronounced as the tasks of production, distribution, and commercialization became increasingly separated. According to this specialization, the interests of those active in each of these three spheres were at times opposed. For this reason, conflicts between movie theater owners and film distributors, or between local film producers and those allocating foreign films, emerged. This was also the reason local record producers were against flooding the market with imported recordings, whereas those working closely with European or US labels were interested in allowing this flood. Additionally, tensions emerged between US or European labels and local distributors, especially towards the mid 1920s. Major entertainment companies developed a more aggressive expansion in the Latin American markets, often opening their own branches to eliminate intermediaries.

The trajectories of local distributors in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay show that especially in the earliest years of the emergence of these two media, these distributors were important allies for the European and US companies that sought to expand their business in the region. Later on, however, the now transnationally acting corporations often aimed to control all parts of the process and thus sought to eliminate the intermediaries. This process showed some differences in the cases of film and phonography. In the first case, it is possible to observe a clear trajectory of the rise and fall of film

distributors, of which Max Glücksmann is a representative figure. The rise can be explained by the possibilities offered by the distribution of foreign films, a highly profitable activity, whereas the fall was due to the change of strategy of Hollywood studios, which opened their own branches in the region and eliminated the intermediaries. In the case of phonography, the early globalization of the industry driven by European and US labels created an opportunity for agents who acted simultaneously as distributors and curators of the music catalogs. The most successful strategy for local distributors in this industry proved to be a combination of collaborating with transnational labels but also maintaining a certain margin of independence. Max Glücksmann gained a position as a tango impresario acting as an intermediary between artists and the label Odeon, but he also opened his own label for local music. When European labels suffered the consequences of War World I, Glücksmann and his label Discos Nacional were autonomous enough to stay in business, whereas Tagini, dedicated almost exclusively to distributing Columbia records, went bankrupt. After the war, Glücksmann went one step further with his independence from foreign labels and opened his own factory, with which he supplied the regional market. This activity would be key to overcoming the effects of the crisis of 1929, as he managed to pay his debts by selling the movie theaters he owned while still staying active in the record business.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁴ “Juicio de Sucesión Max Glücksmann”, Archivo de Tribunales.

Occupying a Niche: Films and Records in the Shaping of National Cultures

The first films and records made on Argentine, Chilean, and Uruguayan soil were the result of Lumiere's and Gaumont's cameramen's work and of travelling agents exhibiting the newly invented technology of the phonograph. Soon after, and once cameras and recording devices started to become a regular presence, more images and sounds were recorded, shaping the first catalogs of films and records made locally in the last years of the nineteenth century and first years of the twentieth century. The emergence of prolific film and recording industries followed in the next two decades with extensive catalogs of vistas, documentaries, and narrative films; and recordings of different music genres to sell in local and foreign markets.

As the previous chapter showed, the film and recording industries emerged in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay as part of the media that integrated this region into transnational communication networks. This chapter looks at how film and music impresarios approached the production of movies and records, along with their strategies to compete in a transnational market. It argues that producers based in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, conditioned by the presence of US and European companies and the contents they manufactured, approached recordings and filmmaking looking for market niches, which would allow them better conditions to compete with foreign producers. Drawing on Chris Anderson's concept of the long tail, this chapter looks at how "selling less of more" became a successful strategy for early film and recorded sound.³⁴⁵ Along the long tail of the demand curve,

³⁴⁵ According to Anderson, a successful strategy in media businesses is to address those market niches found along the long tail of the demand curve, more precisely the large variety of products that are sold on relatively small quantities. Whereas the "hits" would be found on the left side of the curve, the long tail towards the right has proven profitable for media business in the digital age and, as I argue, also in the pre-broadcasting times. Anderson, *The Long Tail*.

namely the part in which a medium to low demand could be met with relatively low costs, producers in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay found niches in which they could compete with contents produced in the United States or Europe. If we consider the demand of films and records on a global level, we can also identify demand niches for contents portraying distant geographies of the Global South. With representations of local characters and popular culture, producers based in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay could offer something distinct. Rather than competing with Hollywood' high budget fiction films, many filmmakers chose to focus on documentaries and worked on demand for local institutions such as philanthropic societies, state ministries, or political parties. Music entrepreneurs, on the other hand, having completed a strategy of vertical integration and having access to the means of local productions, focused on recordings of local artists, which at the time emulated certain aesthetic and technical elements present in the recordings of US and European music. They profited from the knowledge of the preferences of the public, composing their catalogs with awarded songs from popular celebrations such as carnival and ballroom dances. Producers also aimed to find a niche in the transnational market, resorting to reshaping elements of popular culture of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay and then presenting them in Europe and the United States.

The way in which producers addressed different market niches was influenced by the singular social position they occupied. By following the strategies and trajectories of film and music producers in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, this chapter observes their relations with state and private institutions and with different social groups, their access to sources of funding, and how they addressed the diverse expectations of segmented audiences. The commercial logic of these media cannot be disentangled from their political agenda. By looking at the ownership structure of these industries and how producers accessed funding and resources, this chapter analyzes how film and record production were channels which led to the representation and self-representation of social groups, the creation of images of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay to be sold abroad, and the shaping of representations of national history and national identities in each of these countries. Tracing the social position of film and music producers means seeing them as part of

social, political, and commercial networks and therefore helps one move beyond the idea of the pioneer or self-made-man, widespread stereotypes in the analysis of the beginnings of film and recorded sound.³⁴⁶

The introduction of motion pictures and recorded sound motivated a handful of entrepreneurs not only to engage in the commercialization and distribution of the new entertainment technologies, but also to experiment with their own productions. Lepage and his employees took out their cameras to record vistas of important events and everyday life in the city, while phonograph enthusiasts experimented with recording spoken voices or local musicians. However, about two decades separated these artisanal beginnings from an industrial organization of record and film production in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. During this time, entertainment entrepreneurs followed different strategies to find a place in a market becoming increasingly marked by the presence of US and European products.

The strategies followed in the two industries differ to a certain extent, the niche strategy being much more successful in the case of the film industry, as it was for record production. Film producers profited from two different forms of funding their work: through selling tickets in commercial movie theaters and producing films on demand for public and private institutions. Recorded producers, on the other hand, attempted to produce small amounts of recordings for the local market during the times of the cylinder, up until flat records and transnational acting music labels were consolidated, reducing the scope of their activities. Later, by the 1920s, those who managed to enter the industrial production of flat records, found a place again as producers.

This chapter looks at the contents of movies and records from the perspective of the motivations of producers in order to engage with these topics and genres, while analyzing the strategies producers followed in order to position themselves in the transnational market. This is an alternative approach

³⁴⁶ Most studies on early film and recorded sound with a biographic approach consider actors as pioneers and present them as stand-alone figures. For example, Gracyk and Hoffmann, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*; Donald Godfrey, *C. Francis Jenkins: Pioneer of Film and Television* (Urbana, Chicago, Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2014); Domingo Di Núbila, *Cuando el cine fue aventura: el pionero Federico Valle* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Jilguero, 1996).

to that of most studies on the history of silent film, which mostly focus on the topics of movie contents in order to elaborate a comprehensive catalog of the themes of silent films: rituals of power, social life of the upper classes, portrayals of new technologies and urban life.³⁴⁷ The debate on whose perspective these images fit, or whose interests were better served, remains open. Some scholars argue that silent film represented a straightforward view of the economic and political elites, whereas others consider that film integrated the perspectives of the middle and lower classes by becoming a popular, accessible spectacle.³⁴⁸ Offering an alternative view to this debate, this chapter argues that film profited from a segmented audience by offering different and even contradictory representations. Recorded sound, on the other hand, generated less concern in the historiography about its political agenda, at least before the introduction of radio. Research on popular music pointed out the role of the state and intellectuals in consecrating certain genres as national, such as tango or cueca. These studies paid less attention to the role of the market and the strategies of producers in shaping these genres and taking part in the struggles over the definition of how national cultures were understood, which this chapter contributes to understand.³⁴⁹

This chapter analyzes the strategies of film and music producers in five sections. The first one focuses on the earlier times of recorded sound and analyzes the failed attempts to develop a local production of cylinders and records based on artisanal forms of production. The second zooms into an important part of the corpus of early film production and analyzes how filmmakers worked together with elite institutions and, in doing so, positioned themselves as collaborators of the elite's social reproduction strategies. The third section observes the collaboration made with the state and the role of films and records in propagating images and sounds of patriotic celebrations as well as versions of national history. The fourth focuses on the representations of migrant communities, workers, and poor inhabitants of

³⁴⁷ Villarroel, *Poder, nación y exclusión en el cine temprano: Chile-Brasil (1896–1933)*; Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico*; Torello, *La conquista del espacio: cine silente uruguayo (1915–1932)*.

³⁴⁸ Karush, *Cultura de clase*; Iturriaga, *La masificación del cine en Chile*.

³⁴⁹ An exception is Garramuño, *Modernidades primitivas*.

the cities achieved through the collaboration between documentary filmmakers and different institutions of the civil society, as well as in narrative film. The fifth section shifts the focus to the strategies used by producers to compete, not only in the local context, but also in the transnational market. It analyzes the uses of characters that became symbols of national identities during the early twentieth century, namely the gaucho in the Río de la Plata area and the huaso in Chile, in order to present their contents as representative of allegedly national cultures.

The Truncated Dreams of Early Recorded Sound

Even though the first recordings were received with great enthusiasm in the major cities of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay in the late 1890s, the emergence of local recording industries took more than two decades to find impulse. With the inauguration of Max Glücksmann's factory in Buenos Aires in 1919 and Victor Talking Machines factories in Buenos Aires and Santiago in 1924 and 1927, the 1920s are usually considered the beginning of recording industries.³⁵⁰ The scene of recorded sound before the inauguration of the first factories was, however, much more dynamic than it has usually been acknowledged. This early artisanal phase of recorded sound was a fertile ground for the attempts to develop local production, since with the same machine – Edison's and Pathé's phonograph – it was possible to both record and reproduce sounds, and blank cylinders could be bought for low prices. While the technology was still rather a novelty, some aficionados started to experiment with home recordings.

One example of a producer during these artisanal times was Efraín Band, who made one of the earliest, albeit unsuccessful, attempts at developing a

³⁵⁰ This section focuses on the context of Chile and Argentina since, during the period under examination there was no production of recordings in the territory of Uruguay, which was in practice a periphery of Buenos Aires in terms of the phonographic market until the 1940s. See Marita Fornaro Bordolli, "La radiodifusión y el disco: un análisis de la recepción y adquisición de música popular en Uruguay entre 1920 y 1985" *Nassare Revista Aragonesa de Musicología XXI* (2005): 143–56

record industry in Chile based on the recordings of local music. This owner of a cigarette store had migrated in the 1870s from the city of Tver in the Russian Empire and settled in Santiago, where he became one of the most active in introducing phonographic technologies. Band entered the business in the 1890s, when he began to experiment with different recording techniques. By 1907, he had a recording studio and a small record factory installed in his house.³⁵¹ Casa Lepage in Buenos Aires attempted something similar but in a less systematic way, recording songs of local artists on cylinders one by one and offering them as an alternative to the imported recordings with US and European music.³⁵²

Technological innovations changed the conditions for production. Those entrepreneurs who managed to transition successfully were better positioned to compete. During the first years of the cylinder, there was no method to create several copies out of the same recording. For this reason, the copies were limited to a small number and the prices were high, as musicians needed to record each one individually. The cylinder started to lose ground in the early 1900s against the flat record, since this technology enabled the serial production of recordings.³⁵³ The introduction of Edison's moulded cylinders in 1902 allowed for several copies to be manufactured with the same matrix. This enabled the cylinder to keep a market share for some time, but it was eventually displaced by the flat record and its better sound quality.³⁵⁴ The transition from phonograph's cylinders to gramophone's flat records posed a challenge for recorded sound producers in the first years of the twentieth century. Whereas Band managed to transition to the new technology, Casa Lepage temporarily interrupted its production of local recordings and only restarted it in the 1910s, when Glücksmann

³⁵¹ Garrido Escobar and Menare Rowe, "Efraín Band y los inicios de la fonografía en Chile".

³⁵² García Jiménez, *Memorias y fantasmas de Buenos Aires*, 206.

³⁵³ Even though gramophone and the flat record were patented by Emile Berliner in 1887, due to its dependence on a complicated manufacturing process and its poor sound quality, it did not displace the cylinder in a first phase. Only after it was perfected, it became the main support for sound recording and reproduction. Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph*, 60.

³⁵⁴ Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph*, 158–160.

inaugurated a studio in Buenos Aires and sent the matrixes for pressing in Germany, until he opened his factory in 1919.³⁵⁵

The case of Efraín Band offers an example of a failed strategy to compete in the phonographic market without the collaboration with US or European labels. Whereas he attempted to build a “national” recording industry, other entrepreneurs became representatives of Pathé Frères and profited from the popularity of their recordings.³⁵⁶ Band was connected through family relations to musicians in Chile, which might have influenced his early motivation to record local artists and move away from the most straightforward path to making money with recorded sound as an importer. He took the development of the recording techniques seriously and, as his early membership to the Sociedad de Fomento Fabril shows, conceived his activity as an industrial one. In 1901, he had a recording laboratory where he was able to record and press wax cylinders. When he requested state support to make a trip to the United States and Europe to study their recording techniques, he argued that by producing cylinders locally, the costs would be reduced by 75%, and it would be possible to create sources of employment and develop the music industry based on local taste.³⁵⁷

Despite Band’s label, Fonografía Artística, had a moderate success recording local artists during its first years, the 1910s saw the decline of his phonographic endeavor. The opening of Victor Talking Machine branches in Latin America and the expanding presence of Max Glücksmann, who by then was the exclusive agent of the German based label Odeon and made his own recordings in Buenos Aires, made it impossible for Band to compete with them. For some time, Band combined his national records with a new catalog of US music, which he produced without the permission of labels, creating illegal copies out of imported records. Since these copies were not made with the original matrix, the sound quality was much poorer and had bad chances of

³⁵⁵ This interruption is deduced from the advertisements published in the local press. Lepage started offering recordings of local music in 1912, but made explicit that these were pressed in Odeon’s factories in Germany.

³⁵⁶ For example, Casa Pathé, owned by Ernesto Würth and located in the center of Santiago, was the main distributor of Pathé’s recordings. Zig-Zag, 03.06.1906, 10.

³⁵⁷ “Estudio de la fabricación de cilindros para fonógrafos y gramófonos”, Boletín de la Sociedad de Fomento Fabril, XVIII/10, Santiago, 1901, 365–366.

competing in the market.³⁵⁸ The fact that Band had to combine the production of local artists with foreign music proves that the “national” repertoire was still not profitable enough to guarantee the sustainability of a label. Unlike Band, Max Glücksmann and José Tagini succeeded in the task of developing a catalog of local artists while working as distributors of Odeon and Columbia respectively. They approached local recordings as a niche that could coexist but not replace the commercialization of US and European music.

The attempts of early recorded sound production to develop an industry locally that could compete with imported records failed. On the contrary, local record industries would emerge in collaboration with US and European labels, first with the system of matrix exchange and later with the inauguration of factories that used imported pressing machines and raw materials, and hired technicians with experience in record factories abroad.³⁵⁹ Record producers presented local artists, which they grouped under the label *repertorio criollo* as an alternative within a broader offer of imported records. However, unlike producers in the field of film, they did not develop a niche strategy addressing a segmented audience with different contents. Even though the commercialization of records profited from the existence of segmented consumers, especially in terms of addressing migrant communities with imported records of music in their own languages, producers did not engage in making records locally for different targets. A marginal niche strategy was applied in the 1920s in the context of the emergence of industrial production. Producers included, within a catalog of popular music, occasional releases of hymns and patriotic songs, dramatic recitations, or gymnastic classes.³⁶⁰ As the final section of this chapter will discuss, the consolidation of the record industry around music of local artists expanded and became successful within the transnational market by emulating certain elements of US and European music and by enhancing its connection with popular culture and national identities.

³⁵⁸ Francisco Garrido Escobar and Renato Menare Rowe, “Efraín Band y los inicios de la fonografía en Chile” *Revista Musical Chilena*, no. 221.

³⁵⁹ *La Razón*, Buenos Aires, 11.12.1920, 4.

³⁶⁰ Cañardo, *Fábricas de músicas*, 159.

Filmmakers and Elite Reproduction

When considering the film made on the occasion of the livestock exhibition celebrated in Santiago in 1907, one could wonder, along the same lines of humorous comments in the newspaper *El Mercurio*, what or who was the real object of display.

In the Animal Exhibition, inaugurated officially yesterday with great solemnity, the men and women who attended had the opportunity to see the wonderful specimens of the cattle, equine and sheep breed; but it is also true that those who recently arrived from the breeding establishment had the chance to observe in front of their big and crystalline eyes, a wonderful exhibition of the rational animal in its diverse manifestations.³⁶¹

The conserved fragments of this movie show the arrival of the guests descending from their cars and walking through the park Quinta Normal exhibiting luxurious clothing. The livestock exhibition was not only an event of great commercial relevance for the livestock industry, but also an important social gathering. It took place in one of the emblematic recreational spaces for the Chilean elites, not coincidentally one of the main locations where filmmakers took their cameras to shoot images that would later be included in newsreels and documentaries portraying life in the city.

³⁶¹ *El Mercurio*, Santiago, 08.11.1907.



Image 11. Frames from La exposición de animales (1907)

A great number of the first films made in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay portrayed wealthy people participating in social activities, thus turning the public and private lives of a specific social group into images for consumption for broader audiences. The public saw these images as vistas screened before the exhibition of feature films or included as part of newsreels. The presence of the elites and their weddings, Sunday walks, and philanthropic activities in silent movies has been acknowledged by most studies on the

topic.³⁶² However, what remains less explored is the motivation of the people behind the cameras to produce these images, along with how film producers became part of the elites' strategies for social reproduction while profiting from this collaboration for their own social and professional ascent.³⁶³

With a similar format to the images taken at Quinta Normal in Santiago, films produced in Argentina showed members of the elites during their Sunday walks in Palermo, while those taken of Montevidean elites were at Parque Prado. In the first years of film, it was common to find announcements in the press with information regarding the time and place where the cameras would be, so the readers could attend with the intention of appearing in a movie.³⁶⁴ Attracted by the appealing new technology and the novel experience of being filmed, the same people who attended the shoot would then buy the vistas at the stores to watch them on their home reproducers or go to see them at public screenings. Even though the casting call was formally open to everyone, the locations chosen, and the medium used to announce it created a bias in terms of which social groups were "invited". This practice slowly disappeared towards the 1910s and with the emergence of newsreels, the decision of who was and was not being shown became more explicit, as the producers took their cameras to the events they considered worthy of reporting.

Aside from vistas taken at social events, film producers engaged in larger joint productions with the elite's institutions, both in the documentary and

³⁶² Villarroel, *Poder, nación y exclusión en el cine temprano: Chile-Brasil (1896-1933)*; Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico*.

³⁶³ By elites I refer to a group that occupies positions of superiority in diverse spheres: political, economic, or cultural. This does not refer to a homogeneous group that controls all different spheres, but rather to several features (political power, economic power, prestige, knowledge, and family background) that combine in different ways, defining an internally segregated group. This concept was defined by Vilfredo Pareto and applied extensively by historians of the turn of the century in Latin America. Vilfredo Pareto, *The Rise and Fall of the Elites: An Application of Theoretical Sociology* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1991). Even though it implies a simplification of the social structure, the concept serves the analytic purpose of referring to a heterogeneous group that occupies positions of power in different spheres.

³⁶⁴ For example, *Caras y Caretas* announced that Casa Lepage would be taking vistas during the carnival celebrations in 1901. *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 16.02.1901.

narrative genres. The film *Del pingo al volante* (1929), one of three full length films produced in Uruguay during the silent era, was a collaboration of a philanthropic society and Bernardo Glücksmann. This film can be considered as part of the strategy utilized by traditional Montevidean elites to defend their social position from the challenges faced in the early twentieth century. The movie's purpose was twofold: it contributed to gathering funds for the association Bonne Garde to continue with their work providing housing for young single mothers, and it offered elite families the satisfaction of fulfilling the narcissistic desire of seeing themselves on the big screen.³⁶⁵ The collaboration between philanthropic institutions and film producers was of mutual benefit. With this film, the Bonne Garde had access to Glücksmann's infrastructure for film production, to his movie theaters, and to his advertising mechanisms. On his end, Glücksmann obtained the funding to produce a movie that was received with great attention and was announced by the press as the "birth of Uruguayan cinema".³⁶⁶

By showing how a wealthy Montevidean family escaped the risk of losing their fortune, the film *Del pingo al volante* offered a possible happy ending for the crisis of social reproduction the traditional elites were facing at the time. The film tells the story of a widow from a wealthy family whose deceased husband's fortune is to be transferred to her sister-in-law. The only way for her to maintain her economic position is if her daughter marries her nephew who lives in the countryside with the widow's sister-in-law. The two cousins are introduced without knowing about the financial situation and end up falling in love and saving the family's fortune. Thematising the changing relations between city and countryside, the movie portrays the cousin from the countryside as virtuous and noble, opposite the corrupt and vicious man from the city who also tries to seduce the widow's daughter. The rural cousin learns some "refinement" in the city, like driving a car and dancing, but is not changed by its influences. In this way, the film offered a happy

³⁶⁵ Christine Ehrick, "Beneficent Cinema: State Formation, Elite Reproduction, and Silent Film in Uruguay, 1910s–1920s" *The Americas* 63, no. 2 (2006): 205–24, 215–216.

³⁶⁶ *El Dia*, Montevideo, 11.07.1929.

ending story in which the family is able to find a solution without compromising their moral values.

This film fulfilled a pragmatic need: the gathering of private funds for charity in a moment in which philanthropic associations were facing a crisis. Since the emergence of Uruguay's welfare state during the government of José Batlle y Ordóñez, between 1903 and 1907, and between 1911 and 1915, social assistance started to fall increasingly under the umbrella of the state. At the beginning, the same ladies' committees formed by elite women were maintained and started to be subsidized with public funds. By the 1920s, however, there was increasing pressure to bring these activities definitively to the government's orbit and replace them with trained social workers. In an attempt to guarantee the persistence of their philanthropic activity – which can be seen as more about the justification of social hierarchies than it was about helping the poor – the ladies' committees started to look for new sources of private funding. They turned to film as a source of fundraising venues and techniques, finding a powerful propaganda tool as part of a series of strategies to maintain their social position.³⁶⁷

The films made by Bonne Garde also fulfilled the desires and voyeuristic venture of the Montevidean elites, who paid for watching themselves and their peers on the big screen. This was the case for both an earlier film made in 1926 as it was for *Del pingo al volante*. The 1926's film followed the format of institutional propaganda documentary (a genre that was expanding around this time and in which the Glücksmanns were very active) and showed the members of the association in their charity duties. *Del pingo al volante*, on the other side, was a hybrid of documentary and narrative film, in which all the performers were members of the association or of elite families that played themselves. It is not coincidental that Bonne Gard had turned to Bernardo Glücksmann for this purpose. He was not only one of the main film producers in the city, but also personally close to several social circles of the elites: after making his fortune as a film impresario, he started

³⁶⁷ Ehrick, "Beneficent Cinema: State Formation, Elite Reproduction, and Silent Film in Uruguay, 1910s–1920s" 206–208.

to invest in real estate. Through this activity, he shared several social circles with traditional wealthy Uruguayan families.³⁶⁸

The first narrative feature film made in Argentina was also the result of the collaboration of film producers with a philanthropic society. *Amalia* (1914) was made as an initiative of the president of a benefic society, who called Enrique García Veloso to take care of the adaptation of José Marmol's novels into script and Max Glücksmann to take care of the production. The film premiered in the Teatro Colón – the most important theater and opera house in Buenos Aires – in the context of a beneficent screening.³⁶⁹ *Amalia* was the only narrative film produced by Max Glücksmann, whose work as a filmmaker was extensive, but with this exception, was limited to vistas, documentaries, and newsreels. With this film, Glücksmann strengthened his ties with elite institutions and had access to funding to cover the costs of producing a narrative film, which was often more expensive than documentaries.

For the Buenos Aires elites, *Amalia* served several purposes in the context of their strategies to defend and legitimize their role in society. Since all the characters in the film were played by members of the elites themselves, the film fulfilled, similarly to *Del pingo al volante*, the desire of seeing themselves on the screen. At the same time, hosting the release at Teatro Colón functioned as a way for the elites to affirm their spaces of sociability, recovering the Colón as a public space for their own private use. The Argentine-born elites were, in a way, reenacting the nineteenth-century *tertulias* (social and artistic gatherings) represented in the film – in a context in which an immigrant elite was emerging with their own sociability spaces and institutions, such as the Circolo Italiano or the Club Español.

The plot also acquired a special meaning in the political context of the time. In the 1910s, the control of the state by the Partido Autonomista Nacional, which represented the interest of a sector of the elites linked to the agro-exporting model, was challenged by the emergence of the Partido Radical and a movement that demanded a broadening of the political system for the

³⁶⁸ Saratsola, *Función completa*, 13–25.

³⁶⁹ *Preliminary study to the facsimile of the screening program*. Museo del Cine Pablo Ducrós Hicken, Buenos Aires.

emerging middle classes.³⁷⁰ Revisiting episodes of the nineteenth-century civil wars can be seen as part of a discursive strategy for elite groups to portray themselves as more homogeneous than they really were: Marmols' novel was the fictionalization of an episode that occurred in 1840: a group of *unitarios* escaped from Juan Manuel de Rosas and was led into a trap that got them killed. In the cinematographic adaptation, however, the history had some differences, for example Rosas appeared sharing the same sociability spaces with his enemies. Perhaps the context of the 1910s was calling the elites to reevaluate the past and see in Rosas a figure with some appealing features, such as his charismatic power.³⁷¹ The screening at Teatro Colon was part of an attempt by the elites to show themselves as united despite their internal differences, as representatives of different groups of the political elites, usually major competitors, attended and shared the social gathering.³⁷²

Several vistas and fragments of documentaries and newsreels showed images of events that would nowadays be characterized as private: weddings, anniversaries, funerals, birthday celebrations, and recreational activities, such as sports or walks around parks and private country houses. Somehow in between the format of family films and celebrity media, what these films shared is that the people involved belonged to the elites, and these activities were held in fancy locations. They resembled the movies made with portable cameras exhibited in home reproducers, which were very popular during the early years of film and re-launched in the 1920s with the introduction of Pathé Frere's portable camera Pathé Baby. The difference is that these films were screened in movie theaters rather than at home. They were, in this regard, not so far away from the present phenomenon of celebrity media, which turns the images and news of private lives of well-known individuals

³⁷⁰ According to David Rock, the Partido Radical emerged from a group within the elites and their alliance with sectors of the emerging middle classes. David Rock, *El radicalismo argentino, 1890–1930* (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, 1977).

³⁷¹ See Héctor Kohén, "Algunas bodas y muchos funerales. Imágen cinematográfica e identidad nacional en el período 1897–1919" *Cuadernos de cine argentino* 5 (2005): 30–47.

³⁷² Nicolás Suárez, "La transposición de Amalia en las postrimerías del Centenario" *Exlibris* 2 (2013): 133–42, 136.

of the show business or of the political sphere into an object of mass consumption.³⁷³ What we find in silent films, and before that on newspapers and illustrated magazines, is a predecessor of this phenomenon. Wealthy families are represented not only inasmuch they occupy political positions and appear in their official roles, but also through a broad spectrum of activities that include the social assistance of their philanthropic activities and different forms of sociability.

The broad presence of films portraying wealthy families in silent film can be understood partly because of its similarity with the so-called “social pages” of illustrated magazines. Readers of magazines such as the Uruguayan and Argentinean *Caras y Caretas* or the Chilean *Zig-Zag* were familiarized with images of private events of the upper classes. In many cases, these articles appeared as a part of a section written by women and were dedicated to a feminine readership.³⁷⁴ The interest of these articles was usually related to the appeal of the consumption patterns of wealthy people and to fashion, but there were also comments on the importance of “being in the right place”, especially when the events had a philanthropic purpose. In other occasions, under the label of “social news”, with no specific gendered target audience, illustrated magazines reported on the same kind of events, usually commenting explicitly on the political relevance of these events. For example, on the occasion of the wedding of Sara Unzué and Carlos Madero, *Caras y Caretas* pointed out how this event represented the “alliance of two representative families of Argentina.”³⁷⁵ With these words, magazines pointed to the fact that while wedding and funerals would normally be considered private events, the same events of certain people were considered newsworthy. These events would serve to build alliances or show groups that were

³⁷³ See Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

³⁷⁴ For example, article on the wedding of a member of the aristocracy from Madrid in Montevideo, *Caras y Caretas*, Montevideo, 29.03.1891, 3.

³⁷⁵ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 10.12.1898, 7. Another example were the pages dedicated to the funeral of Bartolomé Mitre y Vedia, the son of the former president, where the journalist and director of the newspaper *La Nación* referred to the attendance of “families of a high social position, politicians belonging to different groups”. *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 05.05.1900, 13.

internally fragmented as if they were homogeneous. Unlike the social pages, which justified the inclusion of these news by making explicit comments to its political relevance or through the attendance of politicians, film turned these images into a usual and unquestioned part of the coverage of the reality of newsreels and documentaries. The intertitles gave information on the context, location and people involved but did not seem to have the need to justify why these images were at all relevant.

Along the same lines as the images of private events, one of the videos conserved as part of the Max Glücksmann Collection at the National Archives of Argentina shows images of a group of people in what seems to be a social or family gathering in a country house. If we did not know who they were, we would think that it would be one of those films portraying the social life of an elite family. The situation seems to be part of a private gathering, as we can see a group of people, wearing typical fashionable clothing and hairstyles, exiting a house and walking around a garden, waving to the camera as they pass in front of it. However, we know that one of them is Max Glücksmann himself.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁶ There is no information available that refers to the context in which this film was exhibited. Since it is part of the Max Glücksmann collection at the National Archives in Argentina, which was formed after the expropriation of the company in 1955, they video must have been part of the company's patrimony and not of the private belongings of the family.





Image 12. Frames from video (untitled) included as part of Max Glücksmann Collection at the Archivo General de la Nación (Buenos Aires). The man on the bottom right image is Max Glücksmann.

Due to his proximity to the upper classes' social circles and practices, Max Glücksmann occupied a singular position at the margins of the elites. Even

though he did not belong to any of the traditional elite families of Argentina nor practice a profession typical of the members of the high society, the similarity between he and his family's lifestyle and that of the elites was not an illusion created by this video. A look at his patrimony shows that they followed similar consumption patterns to those customary of the elites: he owned an apartment in one of the richest areas of Buenos Aires along with a country home in the Northern periphery and had a collection of expensive furniture, paintings, and books. However, unlike most elite families, his fortune came exclusively from his activity as a cultural entrepreneur; he never invested in land or got involved in other typical economic activities of the elites.³⁷⁷ In 1921, Max Glücksmann requested to become a member of the Jockey Club Argentino, the main institution of the Argentine oligarchy. His application was rejected, thus marking a limit to his integration into the elite's spaces.³⁷⁸

Bernardo Glücksmann, who had been settled in Uruguay since 1913, went some steps further in becoming part of the local Montevidean elites. He was among the richest men of the city, having made his fortune as a film entrepreneur and later as a real estate investor. He was an active member of the Jewish community and also joined clubs of other migrant communities, such as the Italian, probably with the purpose of strengthening relations of commercial partnership.³⁷⁹ A piece of evidence to prove his proximity to non-immigrant privileged groups was his belonging to the board of the Uruguayan Auto Club in the 1920s, where he served together with several well-known aristocrats and politically powerful men.³⁸⁰

Max Glücksmann's social position can be better understood taking into account the changes in the composition of the elites in Argentina that took place between the 1890s and 1920s. The integration of the country into world trade in the last quarter of the nineteenth century had brought some changes for the social structure. Before 1880, the local elites' living standard

³⁷⁷ "Juicio de sucesión Max Glücksmann", Archivo de Tribunales.

³⁷⁸ "El imperialismo de Max Glücksmann: fracaso de sus anticipadas dictaduras", *Crítica*, Buenos Aires, 08.10.1921, 8.

³⁷⁹ Saratsola, *Función completa*, 15–25.

³⁸⁰ *El Día*, Montevideo, 07.04.1928.

had been far from those of their European peers. With the boom of the export model, however, the sectors linked to agricultural production conquered a level of wealth that enabled them to imitate the consumption patterns of the European upper classes, all at a time when the control of the state was achieved with the leading role of the Partido Autonomista Nacional, which was in power until 1916. This was also a context marked by mass immigration and increased social mobility, which resulted in the emergence of middle sectors. The response of the elites was the search for mechanisms to differentiate themselves by adopting a Europeanized lifestyle and consumption patterns along with the establishment of exclusive spaces of distinguished sociability. They became more hermetic than before. If until the last quarter of the nineteenth century they had been permeable to the incorporation of migrant families that became wealthy, the opportunity for new incorporations started to be restricted in the new period.³⁸¹ This attempt to close ranks could explain why Max Glücksmann's request to become a member of the Jockey Club Argentino, the main social institution of the elites, was rejected in 1921. There are no records that allow one to know the reasons behind the decision, but it is possible that being Jewish was part of the reason for an almost exclusively catholic group.

Bernardo and Max Glücksmann were close to the circles of the most economically and politically powerful people in Argentina and Uruguay, but, at least in the case of Max, were ultimately excluded from them.³⁸² From this position, the two brothers developed a relationship of mutual dependence with elite members and their institutions.³⁸³ The Glücksmanns profited from

³⁸¹ Leandro Losada, *La alta sociedad en la Buenos Aires de la belle époque* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2008), xvii.

³⁸² The Argentine president Marcelo T. de Alvear attended the inauguration of Glücksmann's company new building in 1927, probably as a combined result of the importance of the symbol of the growth of his media emporium and the personal relation between the two men and their wives. *Mundo Israelita*, Buenos Aires, 03.09.1927, 2. Alvear, married to a Portuguese opera singer, had connections to the show business in Europe and in Argentina. See Leandro Losada, *Marcelo T. de Alvear: revolucionario, presidente y líder republicano* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2016), p.32.

³⁸³ Between the 1910s and early 1930s, he produced movies for the Rural Society, the Hippodrome, the Golf Club of Mar del Plata, the French Hospital, the Jockey Club

their requests to produce films, while the elites needed the visibility given by movies and by the extensive exhibition and advertisement machine that the film impresarios controlled. After the decline of his application to the Jockey Club, Max Glücksmann attempted “to win the aristocratic sympathy” according to the newspaper *Critica*.³⁸⁴ He did this by making a decisive financial contribution to the reconstruction of the Teatro Cervantes, a project started by a Spanish actress and her husband, which had a great symbolic relevance for the local elites. These elites aimed to have their own luxurious, European-style theater but were unable to gather enough of funds until the salvation came from Glücksmann’s pockets.³⁸⁵

This social position for media entrepreneurs was a novelty of the early twentieth century and its new media. Until the nineteenth century, and in some cases throughout the first decades of the twentieth, newspaper owners had themselves been members of the elites and direct representatives of the ideologies of political groups. With the transition towards a model of commercial media in the early twentieth century, newspapers stopped being openly partisan, but their ideological orientation and political interest remained close to those of the elites. There is, in this regard, a difference between the ownership structure of old and new media, namely between newspapers on one side, where owners were often members of the local elites; and film, records, radio, and publishing houses, whose were often immigrants.³⁸⁶ Even if their economic positions made them close to the elites in many ways, they were ultimately excluded from their institutions and circles

and the Industrial Union, among others. Colección Max Glücksmann, Archivo General de La Nación Argentina.

³⁸⁴ “El imperialismo de Max Glücksmann: fracaso de sus anticipadas dictaduras”, *Critica*, Buenos Aires, 08.10.1921, 8.

³⁸⁵ “El imperialismo de Max Glücksmann: fracaso de sus anticipadas dictaduras”, *Critica*, Buenos Aires, 08.10.1921, 8. About the reconstruction of Teatro Cervantes see Beatriz Seibel, *Historia del Teatro Nacional Cervantes (1921–2010)* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Nacional del Teatro, 2011), 16.

³⁸⁶ In Argentina, besides Glücksmann there were important media entrepreneurs who were Jewish immigrants, such as Jaime Yankelevich in radio, Samuel Glusberg, Manuel Gleizer in the publishing industry, Julio Korn especially in entertainment magazines. Glücksmann’s main competitors in the field of film, Federico Valle and Julián Ajuria were also immigrants, the first Italian and the second Spanish. In Chile, Efraín Band had migrated from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

or placed as external collaborators. The increased autonomy of the media overlapped with the tendency towards an increasing autonomy between spheres within the elites. While the large majority of men who served in a political office also had a prominent economic position and belonged to distinguished social institutions in the late nineteenth century, by the early 1920s these percentages had reduced considerably, to less than half.³⁸⁷ This does not mean that the economic elites were losing their political power, but rather that their political influence adopted more mediated forms than in the past.

Thanks to this relationship of autonomy but ultimate dependence between film producers and elite groups, both sides profited from mutual collaboration: film served the strategies of the elites, while filmmakers profited from the access to funding and audiences. A similar relationship took place between cultural producers and state institutions, resulting in the use of the medium for the purpose of advertising the work of public institutions, and granting filmmakers access to state resources.

Mediated Patriotism

A great number of the images taken in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay during the times of silent film showed scenes of public celebrations in the streets. With intertitles remarking on the participation of government representatives or important guests and transcribing parts of the speeches given at the events, these movies documented and advertised the patriotic liturgy or, as Mónica Villarroel has called it, the rituals of power.³⁸⁸ Included as parts of newsreels before commercial screenings or as parts of documentaries, these films constituted a channel, not only to archive these events for the future, but also to reach broader audiences than those present at the moment. Aside from documenting public celebrations, films also portrayed the

³⁸⁷ Leandro Losada, "Élites sociales y políticas en Argentina: Buenos Aires, 1880–1930" *Colombia Internacional* 87 (2016): 219–41, 227.

³⁸⁸ Villarroel, *Poder, nación y exclusión en el cine temprano: Chile-Brasil (1896–1933)*, 121.

accomplishment and progress of the economic, infrastructure, and social programs. Taken all together, these films constitute a comprehensive documentation of the work of the state. The record industry also profited from national celebrations and used them as an opportunity to launch special catalogs with hymns, patriotic songs, military marches, and speeches. In this way, the new media of the early twentieth century enabled a mediated way of taking part in national holidays, allowing for the festivities to be enjoyed for home consumption.

By taking part in this enterprise, film producers played a significant role in state propaganda. They established a cooperative relationship from an autonomous position, in which they could work with different groups and institutions, producing material that was often not explicitly presented as an advertisement of the state's work, but rather a recording of reality from a documentalist or journalistic perspective. Whereas the Glücksmanns were in charge of producing an important part of the elite institutions' and their philanthropic activities' filmic material in Argentina and Uruguay, one of their competitors, Federico Valle, was in charge of a significant amount of propaganda movies for the Argentine state. Even though before the 1930s there was no official governmental agency regulating or funding film production, a great number of movies were done on demand by different state ministries. Cinematografía Valle was founded in 1914 by an Italian immigrant who settled in Buenos Aires after working in the Italian film industry. It became the main contender of Glücksmann in the field of filmmaking for the Argentine market.³⁸⁹ Cinematografía Valle inaugurated a new form of organizing film production, in which a team collaborated with differentiated tasks.³⁹⁰ Either as a result of direct competition or agreements to distribute potential clients, Valle and Glücksmann seemed to have even fares of contracts to produce propaganda materials, while both continued to produce their own respective newsreels.

³⁸⁹ *Cine Mundial*, New York, January 2020, 116. On the life of Federico Valle see Di Núbila, *Cuando el cine fue aventura*.

³⁹⁰ Cinematografía Valle was integrated by a team of technicians, cameramen, producers, most of whom had afterwards successful careers and were among the founders of the major production companies of the sound film times in Argentina. See Di Núbila, *Cuando el cine fue aventura*.

Valle's filmography reveals a clear commitment to advertising the economic program of the Argentine state. According to Irene Marrone, his institutional movies were conceived of as essays in which he took images shot to be included in his newsreels, edited and combined with intertitles in order to construct an argument. These movies seem to go beyond the purpose of registering the reality and rather aimed to express a point of view with the support of visual documentation.³⁹¹ Valle specialized in a series of themes, above all, the registering of the progress of the industry. On this topic, he produced films about sugar production plants in Tucuman, oil refineries in Rosario, and estates in the Pampean region.³⁹² Valle actively offered his services to ministries, industrialists, and traders and produced 127 short and middle length films on demand during the 1920s. Evidence of his dependence on this type of funding is the fact that he went bankrupt shortly after the 1929s crisis, a moment when both public and private institutions reduced their expenses in advertisement and propaganda.³⁹³

A good example of how Valle built a documented argument on the economic progress promoted by the Argentine state is *La pampa*, a documentary film of institutional propaganda made at the beginnings of the 1920s. There is no explicit information about who requested the film, but it was probably either the Sociedad Rural or the Ministry of Agriculture. With a pedagogic tone, it explains the transformation of agricultural landscapes that took place thanks to the implementation of an exporter model. The documentary takes on a historical narrative that opposes the images of "yesterday", shown as dispersed rustic ranches framed by stormy skies, in comparison with a version of "today", which is represented as estates and luxurious mansions under a shining sun. The film presents 1870 as the turning point: "with their work over half a century, our *estancieros* changed radically the aspect of the pampas". By placing this date, the year Sociedad Rural was founded, the institution is presented as an agent of change. After the images of the cattle lands and images of the cattle exhibitions, the movie shows images of the refrigeration establishments, which are presented as an "indispensable

³⁹¹ See Erik Barnow, *El documental: historia y estilo* (Buenos Aires: Gedisa, 1995).

³⁹² *Cine Mundial*, January 1920, 117.

³⁹³ Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico*, 47–51.

complement for our cattle wealth” and “one of the most powerful industries of the country”. Social conflict is absent from the film, even though there were many conflicts at the time and Sociedad Rural, Unión Industrial, and Bolsa de Cereales formed an alliance to oppose the demands of the workers’ movement.³⁹⁴

Among the different kinds of public events that appeared in early non-fiction films, a recurrent topic was the inauguration of monuments and commemorative events. These ceremonies were an important part of the ritualization of history, an attempt at building a patriotic liturgy through the staging of the historical narratives that were aimed to be spread via the writings of intellectuals and the public discourse of the state. Patriotic celebrations were usually organized by the government or assigned to civil organizations that acted as co-organizers, sometimes involving tense negotiations regarding the terms of the celebration, for which the movies cannot be seen as a direct result of the official discourse.³⁹⁵ Max Glücksmann and other film producers took their cameras to capture images of these patriotic and civil festivities. These recordings were then exhibited several times a week in movie theaters. Films had the function of encouraging familiarity with the calendar of dates and a pantheon of national heroes.³⁹⁶ An educational dimension was also present in the inclusion of images of the vast amount of event attendants who were portrayed as a disciplined and enthusiastic audience. In this way, movies were also instructing on how to perform a patriotic liturgy. These types of film often gave predominance to the performative aspect of the events, separating the act of speaking from its textual content. In many scenes, as can be seen on Image 13, people appear delivering speeches, sometimes for several minutes, without any transcription of what they were

³⁹⁴ Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico*, 63–65.

³⁹⁵ Carlos Demasi, *La lucha por el pasado: historia y nación en Uruguay (1920–1930)* (Montevideo: Ed. Trilce, 2004), 129. Another example of a movie made on demand for a state ministry is *Viaje al río Bermejo*, produced by Max Glücksmann around 1915 for the Ministerio de Obras Públicas in Argentina. Andrea Cuarterolo, “El viaje en la era de la reproductibilidad técnica: discursos etno-gráficos en los primeros travelogues argentinos” *Cine Documental* 3 (2011): 2–28.

³⁹⁶ Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico*, 35.

saying, as if the most important feature were the act of public speaking and the act of listening.



Image 13. Teniente coronel Mendoza speaking at homage to Rivadavia in the hundred years anniversary of his presidency (left). Speech at the inauguration of the monument to Alvear (right).

These images appeared systematically as part of a cinematographic genre that grew in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay in the 1910s: the newsreel. Even though they could differ in several formal and aesthetic aspects, newsreels shared a number of features: they appeared regularly and at relatively short intervals (monthly, weekly, or by-weekly), they included several topics not directly related to each other, referring to the current events of general interest at the time of the presentation, and they had a straightforward presentation of the theme, rather than an interpretative or didactic one.³⁹⁷ The aim of early film producers was to bring to their audiences a film taken from everyday life. The first movies made by the Lumiere brothers in France, *La sortie des usines Lumiere* (1895) and *Arrivée d'un train en gare à La Ciotat (1896)*, could be considered newsreel subjects. In the early years, cinema news was not presented in a journalistic format but rather a mix of comic, dramatic, or newsworthy episodes exhibited by travelling showmen. The newsreel as such emerged accordingly to two changes in the industry, which took place between 1905 and 1908 in France, England, and the United States, and expanded to other countries: the transition from travelling shows to permanent halls as the main exhibition format, and the change to a renting-based distribution system. It was within the context of World War I, however, that the newsreel asserted itself by spectacularizing contemporary facts as it reported on the battles and campaigns with a strong focus on showing the deployment of war technologies.³⁹⁸

Film producers in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay followed the new tendencies. Since 1913, Max Glücksmann offered a newsreel screened on a regular basis before commercial films and conceived according to the journal format, under the name of *Max Glücksmann Journal* or *Información de Max Glücksmann*.³⁹⁹ Its main competitor was Federico Valle's newsreel *Film Revista*,

³⁹⁷ Peter Baechlin and Maurice Muller-Strauss, *Newsreels Across the World* (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), 9.

³⁹⁸ Baechlin and Muller-Strauss, *Newsreels Across the World*, 11.

³⁹⁹ The reconstruction of how the newsreels were exhibited in movie theaters, compiled in the collection *Mosaico Criollo*, allows us to see how different topics were put together in a ten minute s long reel alternating the images with explanatory intertitles. *Colección Mosaico Criollo: primera antología del cine mudo argentino*, (Buenos Aires: Museo del Cine Pablo Ducrós Hicken, 2009), The Max Glücksmann

which appeared weekly between 1920 and 1930. In Uruguay, newsreels were exhibited irregularly during the first decades of the century and consisted mostly of images shot by a few local filmmakers, cameramen settled in Buenos Aires who traveled occasionally to Montevideo, or of films made in Argentina. Since 1913, the year Bernardo Glücksmann settled in Uruguay, his newsreel started to be shown regularly. In the 1920s, Uruguayan production of cinematic news became more stable, one prominent figure being the French immigrant Henri Maurice, some of whose films are among the few preserved samples of the period, which will be analyzed below.

In the case of Chile, the earliest attempts at newsreel production date from 1919 with the beginnings of the screening of *Actualidades Punta Arenas* and *Actualidades Magallanes*, which lasted until 1922 but never achieved regular releases, only being screened thirteen times throughout these four years. Newsreels became regularly seen fare in 1927 with *Actualidades La Nación*, *Actualidades Mercurio*, and *Actualidades El Diario Ilustrado*, all funded by the main newspapers in Chile and produced by local or US-based studios.⁴⁰⁰ Silent newsreels grew during the presidency of Carlos Ibañez del Campo, who applied a strong censorship on the media. In 1927, he expropriated the newspaper *La Nación* and turned it into the official press organ of the government. This also extended to the audiovisual field, where the newsreel reported extensively on matters of the government and its institutions, the progress of

Collection kept at Argentina's National Archive includes more than one hundred videos, many of which were included as part of the newsreels, but many of which lack the specific precedence information. Due to a fire none of the copies of Valle's newsreel are preserved, and it is only possible to reconstruct their contents through the press reports on the screenings. About Valle's newsreel, see Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico* and Di Núbila, *Cuando el cine fue aventura*.

⁴⁰⁰ Newsreels were produced by such as Andes Film, Herald Films, Page Bros Fil, Paramount and Eca Film. According to the research conducted by Ximena Vergara and Antonia Krebs, *Actualidades La Nacion* and *Actualidades El Mercurio* had more than two hundred episodes each during their four years of existence, whereas *Actualidades El Diario Ilustrado* had 38 episodes in two years. Ximena Vergara and Antonia Krebs, "Prolongaciones de la prensa moderna: difusión masiva e inmediatez en los noticieros cinematográficos chilenos (1927-1931)" in *Memorias y representaciones en el cine chileno y latinoamericano*, ed. Mónica Villarroel M (Santiago: LOM Ediciones).

public works and the economic achievements, as well as on the private life of Ibañez.⁴⁰¹

One of the hypotheses among film scholars is that Latin American newsreel followed the model of Pathé Freres' *Le Journal Pathé* and the US edition *Pathé's Weekly*, which had been regularly screened since 1908 and 1911 respectively. These newsreels were based on a format of four sections on different topics, which in total added up to ten minutes and included explanatory intertitles. Following Marrone, it is possible to add nuance to this interpretation if we take into account the continuities between the newsreel and the illustrated press. In fact, the audiences had been exposed to the consumption of information through images joined by short explanatory texts. Their transition into the format of film was as such a consequence of the introduction of the new technology, but it would be closer to the adaptation of a previously existing narrative form than to the creation of a new one.⁴⁰²

The criteria of newsworthiness for film were different than for the printed press. Newsreel producers did not take their cameras to shoot spontaneous or sudden events but rather to well-planned and timely announced institutional events. It is likely that they received the information from the press, or that they were invited by the organizing institutions. In many cases, it is also possible that newsreels producers charged a fee for the coverage of an event.⁴⁰³ This shows a different understanding of how to achieve "neutrality" as within the printed press. Newspapers were going through a transition into becoming commercial media, leaving behind their partisan nature. The idea of objectivity was supposed to be achieved through the balance in the sources and a neutral language. In film, however, the idea of objectivity was allegedly portrayed through the nature of the technology in which, as with photography, was conceived of as a truthful reflection, an unmediated reproduction of reality. According to an argument by a chronicler of *Chile*

⁴⁰¹ Vergara and Krebs, "Prolongaciones de la prensa moderna: difusión masiva e inmediatez en los noticieros cinematográficos chilenos (1927-1931)", 249.

⁴⁰² Irene Marrone, "Discursos y prácticas del cine informativo silente en Argentina" (IV Congreso AsAECA, Rosario, 2014), 806. Eduardo Romano, *Revolución en la lectura: el discurso periodístico-literario de las primeras revistas ilustradas rioplatenses* (Buenos Aires: Catálogos, 2004).

⁴⁰³ Marrone, "Discursos y prácticas del cine informativo silente en Argentina", 809.

Cinematográfico magazine, film was superior to theater, travel books, postcards, and photography as a way of portraying reality.⁴⁰⁴ This perception of the medium became irrelevant if an institution demanding the production of a film, payed for it and thus influenced the script and editing. In some cases, what was presented as part of the newsreels had been produced under these conditions. As long as the content was considered newsworthy, these conditions were not a reason to exclude it.

As part of its news coverage, Glücksmann's *Actualidades* reported on a number of commemoration events, including the inauguration of monuments. During the first decades of the century, but especially around the Centenary in 1910, there was an official program for the construction of a series of commemorative statues in the streets of Buenos Aires. The director of the Museo Histórico Nacional, in charge of one of these campaigns, saw it as a chance to "fight against the effects of cosmopolitanism, which, even though it makes us move further, also tends to weaken our sense of nationality".⁴⁰⁵ For some referents of nationalist political groups, the inauguration of monuments was a way of the appropriation of cities, considered to be perverted by mercantilism and cosmopolitanism.⁴⁰⁶ These commemorative sculptures complemented public buildings, new streets and avenues, parks, and boulevards and turned the cities into pantheons where, within the names of the streets and parks, and through the presence of monuments, history was written into stone.⁴⁰⁷

Aside from spreading the images of commemoration rituals and the inaugurations of monuments to broader audiences than those that had been present at the events, films could also include comments on the meaning of the ceremony, thus contributing to turning the monuments into discourses about the nation. One example of this is the film *Inauguración del monumento a Artigas*, made by Henri Maurice in Uruguay in 1923. The construction of

⁴⁰⁴ *Chile Cinematográfico*, Santiago, 15.07.1915.

⁴⁰⁵ Quoted in Rodrigo Gutiérrez Viñuales, *Monumento conmemorativo y espacio público en Iberoamérica* (Madrid: Ed. Cátedra, 2004), 159.

⁴⁰⁶ Adrián Gorelik, *La grilla y el parque: espacio público y cultura urbana en Buenos Aires, 1887-1936* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 1998), 217.

⁴⁰⁷ Gutiérrez Viñuales, *Monumento conmemorativo y espacio público en Iberoamérica*, 19.

the monument dedicated to José Gervasio Artigas, a military man who fought in the Uruguayan independence wars, marked the culmination of the process of the consecration of Artigas as a national hero, even though he had formerly not been accepted by the elites who had considered him to be a plebeian political figure.⁴⁰⁸ The statue had the goal of representing a nation united beyond the civil wars by coming back to a figure who could appear as a hero, respected by everyone beyond the current controversies between political parties and forces. During the ceremony, the statue was covered by two flags, the flag of Artigas on one side and the national Uruguayan flag on the other, which uncovered the statue at the moment of the inauguration. However, the filmic register only showed the images of the national flag, while the *artiguista* flag remained at the back. According to Georgina Torello, the film took part in the conciliatory program and the attempt to go beyond the divisions around accepting Artigas as a national hero.⁴⁰⁹ With the flag as its leitmotiv, enhanced not only in the images but also in the intertitles (“the national flag flies in the heights, above everything”), the film contributed to emphasizing how a contested figure could become a symbol of unity, as a result of a nation moving beyond its internal divisions.

⁴⁰⁸ Demasi, *La lucha por el pasado*, 61.

⁴⁰⁹ Georgina Torello, “Patriótico insomnio: las conmemoraciones oficiales en los registros documentales del Centenario” in *Uruguay se filma: Prácticas documentales (1920–1990)*, ed. Georgina Torello (Montevideo: Irrupciones, 2018), 21–22.



Image 14. Frame from the film Inauguración del monumento a Artigas (1923)

Another example of how films took part in shaping the discourses on the commemoration of patriotic events is the movie *Inauguración del monumento a la batalla de Sarandí*. The debates on the meaning of the episodes of the independence wars were especially heated in 1923, the year of the construction of a monument which commemorated the battle against the Empire of Brazil in 1825. Unlike in neighboring countries, where there had been celebrations for the one-hundred-year anniversaries of the most symbolic date in the process of achieving independence during the 1910s, Uruguay was going through a debate of what that exact date should be. The polemic found on one side the representatives of the traditionalist approach, mainly the Partido Nacional, who considered the most meaningful date of the declaration of independence to be on August 25th, 1825. In contrast, the so-called reformist side – mostly supporters of the reform program of Batlle y Ordóñez – argued in favor of commemorating July 18th, 1830, the date the Constitution was sworn in. The first position was held by those who saw the declaration of independence as the permanent achievement of a pre-existing national community. The discourse that supported July 18th, on the contrary, referred to the signature of a social contract between groups, regardless of their

shared past.⁴¹⁰ Different historical narratives corresponded to different projects for the nation state, both of which shared the aim to cancel the viability of alternative versions of national history.

The film commemorating the Battle of Sarandí in 1825, took part in the polemic supporting the claim of the Partido Nacional. By stating in the inter-titles that “finally the Uruguayan people erects this great monument”, a reference to the four decade delay after the approval of the project, and by emphasizing that Uruguayan people as a whole were the ones who were erecting the statue, the film can be seen as an attempt to remind people that the date, regardless of being associated with the Partido Nacional, belonged to the nation as a whole.⁴¹¹ According to the prominent presence of members of the civil association Asociación del Centenario on screen, one can presume that the film had been made on demand for this group, which aimed to give widespread coverage to the inauguration of the monument, as part of the struggle over the role of this event in the narrative around the birth of the Uruguayan nation.

The decisions that needed to be made around what to film and how to edit the reels resulted in the giving of more attention to certain participants over others. This is clear for example in the movie made by Max Glücksmann in 1927 on the inauguration of a monument that honored the ex-president of Argentina, Bartolomé Mitre. In the six-minute movie, an important amount of time is dedicated to portraying the members of the civic committee in charge of the monument, which had promoted the construction of the statue and co-organized the event with the government. The intertitles emphasize the central role of the civic commission by saying that their president welcomes the Argentine president Marcelo T. de Alvear, showing the moment when they uncover the statue together.

⁴¹⁰ Demasi, *La lucha por el pasado*, p. 76–78.

⁴¹¹ Torello, “Patriótico insomnio: las conmemoraciones oficiales en los registros documentales del Centenario”, 25.



Image 15. Frame from film Inauguración del monumento a Mitre. The President of the civic committee and the President of the Argentine Republic, Marcelo T. de Alvear, uncover the statue.

The intertitles of the film on the inauguration of Mitre's monument show how this was one more step in the process of turning the former president into a national hero: "Mitre received during his life the immense gratitude of his fellow citizens". The process of consecration had already started when Mitre was still alive through a series of tributes, such as the impression of his face on paper money and the register of his activities, such as in the previously mentioned recording of his visit to the museum. The proposals for building a monument in his honor started the year of his death in 1906, at a time when monuments were reserved for a handful of independence war heroes. The arguments in favor of having Mitre in stone presented him as the "author of the indestructible unity of the nation" for commanding the armies of Buenos Aires that defeated the Confederation armies in charge of Urquiza. Even if the building of a monument in the city of La Plata was approved in this year, the figure of Mitre as organizer of the nation was still contested by some voices that considered that the true organizer had been Urquiza. An agreement between the different opinions was achieved in 1921 when the first stone of the new monument to be erected in Buenos Aires was placed in

the presence of representatives of different sectors of the elites, those of whom had previously been in disagreement regarding the legacies of Mitre and Urquiza. The film then not only had the purpose of reporting on a public event, but also of presenting the construction of the monument as a legitimization of the consecration of Mitre as a national hero, not only remembered by his followers and fellow party members, but also, according to the inter-titles, “by the spontaneous and unanimous will of the Argentine people.”

Another aspect in which films contributed to framing the reception of the celebrations was related to the role assigned to the public. The traditionalist approach to commemoration celebrations pursued by civil associations saw popular participation as a key element for patriotic celebrations to become more than solemn ceremonies, turning them into educational experiences that contributed to expanding the popular basis of national projects.⁴¹² These ceremonies took place in the presence of a public that ranged from a few dozens to hundreds. Comparing several film recordings of public celebrations allows us to see that some of them portray the public as one of the main elements – or even as the only one –;⁴¹³ others portray the public as disciplined, only standing in the designated areas and only holding the national flag. Other films, however, do not show the public and only focus on the stage, official speakers and the statue itself. Studies on these commemoration events show that the public sometimes attended with their own signs and flags, differing from the message encouraged by organizers, a sort of transgressive gesture, giving a slightly different meaning to the commemoration than the official one.⁴¹⁴ But according to the way in which the public was portrayed in the film, these transgressions could be blurred, as in the film *Inauguración del monumento a Artigas*, in which the public is first shown after uncovering the statue and only briefly, maybe as a way of hiding the audience’s disruptive gestures.

⁴¹² Demasi, *La lucha por el pasado*, 79.

⁴¹³ For example, several films made on the celebrations of the Centenary in Argentina in 1910 only show the public and do not include images of the stages or official speeches.

⁴¹⁴ Demasi, *La lucha por el pasado*, 129.

Even though less systematically as film, the record industry also played a role in the conformation of a patriotic liturgy. Despite most of the records produced in the emergent local industry in the 1920s were of popular music, a few had a different type of content. Especially advertised in the proximity of patriotic celebrations, Glücksmann's label, Discos Nacional, released a special repertoire of "patriotic music". This included versions of the national hymn, military marches, and recited poems of patriotic themes. Weeks before the celebrations of Argentina's two main patriotic holidays, the first commemorating the May Revolution on May 25th and the second, the declaration of independence on July 9th, labels announced the release of patriotic recordings. In this way, the celebrations took place not only in the public space where commemorative events were organized, but also in the private sphere, where records were heard. Patriotic songs were often announced as "school songs" and included instrumental versions of hymns and marches specially arranged and recorded for children to sing along.⁴¹⁵

The nationalist rhetoric was also used for advertisement. Glücksmann's company, which aimed to highlight that his was the only company producing locally in Argentina, also made use of the patriotic holidays as a way to portray his company as the only "truly national" one. On the occasion the commemoration of Argentine independence on July 9 in 1924, Discos Nacional announced the release of its recordings for the patriotic holidays. With an illustration of the declaration of independence and one of people in a salon dancing to the music of a gramophone, the advertisement presented this moment in time as "the independence of the record", presenting Discos Nacional as a "truly Argentine industry". Aside from using the occasion of the holiday to advertise their catalog of patriotic songs, Glücksmann took these dates as occasions to distinguish his company from his main competitor, Victor Talking Machine, based in the United States and acting in the region through a subsidiary which had just inaugurated the second record factory in the region that year.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁵ Cañardo, *Fábricas de músicas*, 162

⁴¹⁶ *Voice of the Victor*, Camden, nº6, 1924, 15.

his role in the independence war had been an important presence in literature, theater, poetry, and historical writings.⁴¹⁸ The press presented the 1920 version again as a faithful reconstruction of the story and pointed out especially how realistic the costumes and locations were.⁴¹⁹

Whereas these two films followed the consensus on how to portray the war and present the main character as one of the “big men” of history, *El húsar de la muerte* introduced a series of variations in the interpretation of the past. Structured as a melodrama, the movie presented the independence war as a confrontation between the rich and the poor, who at the time were portrayed as the “bad” and the “good”, associated with the rural and urban contexts respectively. This way of presenting history was different from the official narrative, which did not conceive the independence as a class conflict and did not see the role of the lower classes as prominent. This re-interpretation of history might have had more to do with the situation in Chile in the 1920s, when this social question figured prominently. The film projected the concerns of the present to the past, offering a conciliatory solution. This is expressed via the role of Manuel Rodríguez, the hero who appears as someone who belongs neither to the upper classes nor to the lower classes, and can move between the two sides. He travels between the city and the countryside, can adopt the sociability habits of the rich and can also mingle with the poor.⁴²⁰ The conciliatory program is also achieved through the introduction of a (not historically verified) romance story between Rodríguez and a woman of an aristocratic family with ties to the Spanish side. The absence of Bernardo de O’Higgins in the film also contributes to the same purpose, as it avoids the need of confronting his role in the hero’s death.⁴²¹

Narrative films based on historical themes, such as *El húsar de la muerte* or the previously mentioned *Amalia*, combined the function of spreading historical narratives about the national past to broad audiences with an

⁴¹⁸ Tomás Cornejo Cancino, “Manuel Rodríguez y el húsar en el cine: un discurso histórico sin historiadores” *Universum* 2 (2012): 45–58, 47.

⁴¹⁹ *La Nación*, Santiago, 02.06.1920, 9.

⁴²⁰ Cornejo Cancino, “Manuel Rodríguez y el húsar en el cine: un discurso histórico sin historiadores”, 54.

⁴²¹ Cornejo Cancino, “Manuel Rodríguez y el húsar en el cine: un discurso histórico sin historiadores”, 57.

intervention in contemporary discussions. They offered a channel for film producers to take part in current political and intellectual debates. The limits between fiction and non-fiction were also not completely clear during the early years of feature film, and the emergence of a local production field triggered discussions about the role of movies and whether they should be expected to have an educational purpose, act as a tool to document reality or be a medium for entertainment only.⁴²² These concerns were present regardless of whether the film was fictional or a documentary, as in many cases narrative films were built around the representation of reality combined with fictional elements. Through displacements in the understanding of historical characters and episodes, films took part in controversies around how to interpret the history in light of the present. At the same time, the use of historical narratives and characters, mediated by its re-elaboration in literature, theater, and poetry, enabled producers to present these narratives and characters as “patriotic” and “truly national”.

Producing patriotic films often brought filmmakers not only recognition as producers, but also compliments directed to them as people and their companies, celebrating their commitment to the national cause. On the occasion of the production of the film *Todo por la patria* by Frey Film in 1918, *Cine Gaceta* celebrated the “purely nationalist spirit” of this film company and welcomed a production that was not only based on national history, but also was played by Chilean – or foreign but “completely Chileanized” – actors and actresses. The nationalist tone gained the sympathy of the press and also the government, who covered part of the costs of production by providing costumes and armaments of the Pacific War and committing army troops to appear in the film.⁴²³ Max Glücksmann received similar acts of sympathy from the press and official institutions, an example being the occasion of the screening of one of his films made in London. It advertised the flourishing

⁴²² Andrea Cuarterolo, “Primeros debates y reflexiones en torno al cine nacional” in *Una historia del cine político y social en Argentina*, ed. Ana Laura Lusnich and Pablo Piedras (Buenos Aires: Nueva Librería, 2009).

⁴²³ *Cine Gaceta*, Valparaiso, second half of February 1918, n^o1.

Argentine economy, geography, and society as a way of encouraging investors to do business in the country.⁴²⁴

The corpus of film and music productions of the first decades of the twentieth century reveals the commercial strategies followed by cultural entrepreneurs in order to meet the expectation of audiences while also working on demand for those actors and institutions who had the resources to pay for it. This resulted in the prominent representations of the elites and the state, directly or indirectly, and allowed entrepreneurs to position themselves as a key factor in the production and spreading of patriotic discourses. However, since media impresarios were not themselves members of the elites or government officials, but rather worked on a relationship of collaboration from an autonomous position, there were opportunities and margins for the production of contents that escaped this logic and offered a depiction of broader sectors of the society. This phenomenon is the topic of the following two sections.

The “Others” on the Big Screen

Many film scholars have argued that despite the broad spectrum of activities and social groups portrayed in filmmakers’ work analyzed in the previous pages, several actors were absent. The elites would be the prominent actor of silent cinema and when “others” appeared, they did so in a subordinate role, either as the recipients of the elite’s charity, or as passive and disciplined audiences in official events. According to this perspective, it seems that in an attempt to portray the economic progress being witnessed, filmmakers ignored social conflict, poverty, and political movements questioning the status quo. According to Marrone, in the production of filmmakers in Argentina, there seems to be no place to challenge the ruling order imposed by the agro-exporting model nor the power of the elites linked to these activities.⁴²⁵ For Villarroel, the representation of Chilean society in early film only reserved a passive and subordinated role for urban and rural

⁴²⁴ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 27.02.1909.

⁴²⁵ Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico*, 36.

workers and other subaltern sectors.⁴²⁶ Following Torello, Uruguayan silent film focused mostly on the spaces frequented by the Montevidean elites, portraying a harmonic social system.⁴²⁷ The cameras only entered on a few exceptions the tenant houses and rural ranches to show the social inequalities.⁴²⁸ This section will focus on these alleged “exceptions” and inquire whether the perspectives present in silent film only responded to the perspective of those in power, or, according to the singular social and political position of film producers, there were margins in which other social groups were also represented on the screen from a different perspective.

Even though a first look at the remaining films from the silent era gives the impression of a filmography dominated by the elites, their activities, and their views, there are a number of films that offer a different perspective. Fragments of newsreels, a handful of narrative movies, and institutional propaganda reels offer a more complex mosaic of social actors and processes. Looking at these films from the perspective of their producers and understanding the motivations and the relationships of cooperation that existed between those behind the cameras and those being represented on film, enables an analysis of how different social groups had access to the representation on the screen, and what this meant for their strategies of legitimization. Among the different silent film genres, institutional propaganda movies offered different groups, not only the elites and the state, a channel to being represented on the big screen. Producing films on demand was one of the main activities of filmmakers during the silent period, as it offered a much more secure source of funding than embarking on expensive narrative film productions that would compete against US and European productions in commercial programs. Film producers worked along the long tail of the demand represented by institutions and groups willing to pay to see themselves on the screen, which resulted in a broad spectrum of institutions such

⁴²⁶ Villarroel, *Poder, nación y exclusión en el cine temprano: Chile-Brasil (1896–1933)*, 203–205.

⁴²⁷ Torello, *La conquista del espacio: cine silente uruguayo (1915–1932)*. See Chapter 3 “Exhibiciones y camuflajes: ficciones topolíticas de la elite”.

⁴²⁸ Georgina Torello, ed., *Uruguay se filma: prácticas documentales (1920–1990)* (Montevideo: Irrupciones, 2018), 171–172.

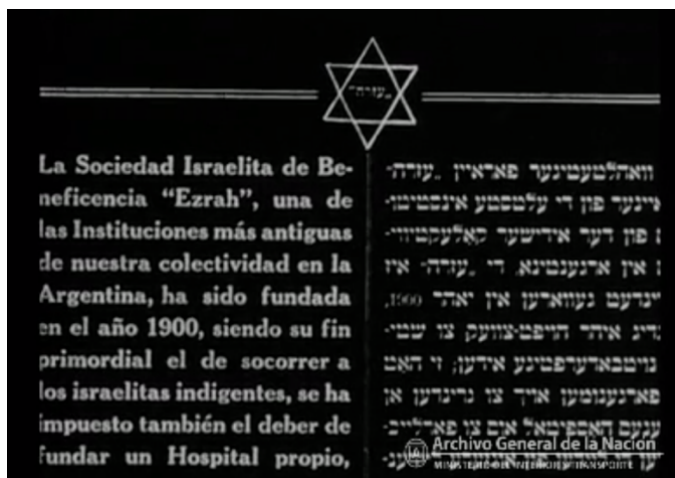
as immigrant communities, unions, and political parties being represented on film.

Aside from films made for the elites' philanthropic associations, such as the ones analyzed in the previous section, a broader spectrum of institutions can be found in the movies produced by Max Glücksmann. The propaganda films made by Max Glücksmann for Jewish associations were part of a legitimization strategy of these institutions, which emphasized their contribution to society and public service. One focus of these movies was the portrayal of the philanthropic activities of Jewish institutions. Even though social assistance had been an activity mainly dominated by elite ladies' committees, it was not exclusive to them in the case of early twentieth century Argentina, and many migrant communities had their own beneficent initiatives to assist the vulnerable sectors of their communities. They too made use of film as a way of promoting their work. In the case of the Jewish community of Argentina, their access to film production was direct, as Max Glücksmann himself, along with his wife, was among the directors of several Jewish philanthropic associations.

One example of a film on Jewish philanthropy was the movie made on the beneficent society Ezra, which had the goal of taking care of homeless Jews in Buenos Aires. The film was made for the inauguration of its hospital. With intertitles in Spanish and Yiddish, the video was directed both to Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. It advertised the new achievement of Ezra towards the Jewish community, whose members had contributed financially to the construction of the hospital at a time when it constituted a channel for the legitimization of the Jewish community in the eyes of the rest of Argentine society. The intertitles explicitly stated the purpose of Jewish philanthropy: "This is to alleviate the suffering and pain of our brothers and to contribute at the same time to relieve the municipal hospitals of the burden of our sick." The Jewish community in Buenos Aires was the umbrella for a significant number of philanthropic institutions and initiatives whose goal was on the one hand, follow a principle of social justice, and at the same time, legitimize the role of the community through the capacity of "taking care of its own

poor.”⁴²⁹ The names chosen for the two pavilions of the hospital were pointed out in the intertitles of the video as a clear way of establishing connections between the history of the Jewish people and the Argentine people:

the first pavilion has been called *Centenario*, thus associating us with the celebrations of the Argentine independence, and the second pavilion is called *2 de Noviembre*, in reference to the date in which the League of Nations officially recognized the right of the Jewish people to build a national home in Palestine. Both dates have a great affinity, as they commemorate acts of independence of the two peoples.



⁴²⁹ Some of the philanthropic institutions encompassed by the Jewish community in Buenos Aires were the Asilo Argentino de Huérfanas Israelitas, Sociedad Israelita de Protección a Niñas y Mujeres, Sociedad de Protección al Enfermo, Junta de Ayuda a Víctimas de la Guerra. About Jewish philanthropy see Luisa Levi d’ Ancona, “Philanthropy and Politics: Strategies of Jewish Burgeois in Italy, France and England between the End of the 19th and the Beginning of the 20th Centuries” *Traverse: Zeitschrift für Geschichte -Revue d’Histoire* 13, no. 1 (2006): 83–100.



Image 17. Frames from Inauguración del Hospital Israelita (1928). Presentation in Spanish and Yiddish and images from meeting of the ladies' committee.

These films were part of an attempt at emphasizing the contribution of Jewish institutions as a separate but simultaneously integral part of the nation. This was necessary in a context marked by the individual access of Jewish immigrants to citizen rights but a less clear legitimacy for the community as a collective. According to Leonardo Senkman, even though Argentina was a primarily catholic and secular nation, the republican liberalism of a large sector of the elites and the motto of the melting pot allowed for the tolerance of the cultural practices and ethnic associationism of the immigrant communities. These conditions were highly attractive for Jewish people but did not mean that as a community they were afforded a legitimacy among the society. It also did not prevent the peaks of xenophobia that took place in these times.⁴³⁰ Jews active in the cultural sector were committed to the promotion of the work of their institutions but also to the development of a Jewish

⁴³⁰ Leonardo Senkman, "Ser judío en la Argentina: las transformaciones étnicas de la identidad nacional" in *Identidades judías, modernidad y globalización*, ed. Paul R. Mendes-Flohr, Yom Tov Assis, and Leonardo Senkman, Biblioteca universitaria de la cultura judía (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Lilmod, 2007), 406–407.

culture that was compatible with its integration into the Argentine society. The group of writers, intellectuals, cultural entrepreneurs, and businessmen who gathered around the Sociedad Hebraica Argentina promoted a Jewish culture that was secular and in Spanish.⁴³¹ Along the same lines as Ezra's video, they often aimed to show a Jewish culture that should be conceived as compatible and an integral part of the Argentine society.

The representation of different social groups was present in the entire spectrum of silent film. Newsreels and vistas focused prominently, but not exclusively, on the elites and their social practices, while the practice of institutional propaganda created a channel for the self-representation of unions and political parties, many of which included workers as protagonists. Also in the field of narrative film, the use of melodrama as a prominent genre enabled the portrayal of characters and practices from the lower classes. Some of the first movies ever made showed images of workers, often following the model of Lumiere's *La sortie de L'Usine*, and shot images of workers in their daily labor activities, such as the lost movie *Desembarco de operarios en el muelle de Valparaiso* from 1902.⁴³² According to Marrone, the hundreds of strikes taking place at the time in Argentina, many of which were harshly repressed, were completely absent from films during the times of silent cinema.⁴³³ A fragment included in Max Glücksmann's newsreel might prove this statement to be wrong, as it shows images of a harbor strike in 1925. However, it is interesting to note that the images of the strike focus on the empty port and do not include any images of the workers in an assembly, meeting, or demonstration that were presumably taking place. The workers are, in this case, literally represented through their absence.

⁴³¹ Alejandro Dujovne refers to this group gathered around the Asociación Hebraica first and then the Sociedad Hebraica Argentina as the "Hebraica constellation". As member of the board of the Asociación Hebraica and of the directory of the newspaper *Mundo Israelita*, closely connected to this institution, Max Glücksmann could be considered part of this group. See Dujovne, *Una historia del libro judío*; Alejandro Dujovne, "Einstein y la comunidad judía argentina" in *Visitas culturales en la Argentina 1898-1936*, ed. Paula Bruno (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2014)

⁴³² *El Heraldo de Valparaiso*, 26.05.1902, quoted in Villarroel, *Poder, nación y exclusión en el cine temprano: Chile-Brasil (1896-1933)*, 214.

⁴³³ Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico*, 36.



Image 18. Actualidades Max Glücksmann. Images of strike at a harbor.

According to Villarroel, in the case of Chilean cinema, there are a few films that constitute an exception to the rule. The author considers these exceptions as part of counter-discourses that moved away from the elite's perspectives, representing the lower classes from their own point of view and putting the social question at the forefront.⁴³⁴ This phenomenon is what we can observe, for example, in the film *Gran rodeo a la chilena en el Parque Cousiño* from 1909, in which we see a group of people gathered in the park, dancing and drinking alcohol. It is highly symbolic that this celebration was taking place at Parque Cousiño, as it was often considered a recreational space for the elites but as can be seen in this movie, not uncontested in that regard.



⁴³⁴ Villarroel, *Poder, nación y exclusión en el cine temprano: Chile-Brasil (1896-1933)*, 206. This would be a specificity for the Chilean case, as there is no evidence of something similar in the other case she researches, Brazil.



Image 19. Frames from Gran rodeo a la chilena en el Parque Cousiño (1909)

Adopted as an important propaganda medium, institutions of different kinds resorted to the production of movies to advertise their work and history. In the case of institutional propaganda, the depiction of different social groups and actors corresponded to the perspective of the funding entity. For example, in the film that the Federación Agraria commissioned to Federico Valle, *En pos de la tierra*, the chosen figure to tell the story of the institution was an Italian peasant, José, who migrated to Argentina escaping poverty. The depiction of topics such as work, migration, and the relations between city and the countryside are shaped to fit the purposes of the institution. The immigrant arrives to the city alone and with no help from the state, only has access to temporary and precarious jobs, and lives in overcrowded tenements. The countryside is presented as close to the utopic place he was looking for and once he moves there, his working and living conditions improve radically. After a short time, he is able to rent a piece of land and bring his family from Italy to join him in Argentina. Turned into a farmer, José became an ally of poor rural workers, who supported him against intermediaries who bought his production and kept the lion share of the profits. This movie combined elements of narrative film, such as the fictional character of José, and was conceived to synthesize a romanticized story of social progress with

images of the current leaders of the Federación Agraria.⁴³⁵ Rather than following a specific genre, the goal of this production was to put forward a message that addressed the goals of the funding institution. Filmmakers resorted to several elements available and combined the cinematographic languages of documentary and narrative film.

A different perspective on the role of workers in society can be found in the propaganda films produced for political parties and unions. According to Villarroel, there are only a few exceptions in which the representation of the lower classes was conceived from the perspective of workers themselves and their leaders, as opposed to the passive and objectified roles given to them in the reels produced from the perspective of the elites.⁴³⁶ A look at the films that correspond to this approach shows that this self-representation is mediated by the role of institutions that commissioned the films or by the proximity of film producers themselves to worker's organization. An example of this is the film made on the occasion of the death of Luis Emilio Recabarren, a unionist and founder of the Partido Socialista Obrero, which then became the Communist Party of Chile. *Los funerales de Recabarren* was made by Compañía Cinematográfica Renacimiento in Chile in 1924. Carlos Pellegrín, the producer of the film, was himself close to Luis Emilio Recabarren and was the first to find him in his house after he had killed himself. He later filmed the funeral, and with those images, produced a movie of hybrid genre between newsreel and documentary, which was shown in the movie theaters of the country in the months following the event.⁴³⁷

Produced by a filmmaker who was himself a unionist and close friend of Recabarren, *Los funerales de Recabarren* offered a flattering view of the worker's movement. The film's publicity presented Recabarren as an undisputed and beloved leader of the worker's movement, as the "leader and

⁴³⁵ See Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico*, 66–67.

⁴³⁶ Villarroel, *Poder, nación y exclusión en el cine temprano: Chile-Brasil (1896–1933)*, 206.

⁴³⁷ *Ecran*, Santiago, nº1807, 14.09.1965. The images taken in Recabarren's house after his death could not be restored and the available fragments of the film only consist of images of the funeral. "Imágenes del Centenario 1903–1933. Documentos históricos II," ed. Centro Cultural La Moneda (Santiago Centro Cultural La Moneda, 2016).

comrade” whose funeral was a public event with the attendance of fifty thousand workers walking under the sun to say goodbye to their “guide and apostle”.⁴³⁸ With images of the procession and the ceremony, one can see thousands of people walking in organized columns carrying flags that identify with their organizations, portraying the Socialist and Communist parties as massive and disciplined organizations. A significant part of the footage is dedicated to the images of other union leaders reading discourses at the funeral, thus showing the literacy of the typographer’s leadership in a context in which the percentage of illiterateness were still very high in Chile. The proximity of the producer to the subjects represented on film is made explicit through the appearance of Pellegrín himself reading a speech at the funeral.



⁴³⁸ *El Mercurio*, Santiago, 26.12.1924, 11.



Image 20. Frames from Los funerales de Recabarren (1924). Carlos Pellegrín reading a speech at Recabarren's funeral, and funeral procession.

Political propaganda was an important market niche for filmmakers in the silent times. Even though there are no records on whether *Los funerales de Recabarren* was funded by a union or political party, it is likely that this was the case, as the costs of producing a full-length film probably exceeded the resources Pellegrín could have had on his own. The narrative structure of the film also resembles other examples of political propaganda of the time, in which parties and unions are portrayed as part of a broader representation of workers as an organized force. Max Glücksmann and Federico Valle were active in this field, and their institutional documentaries have some similarities but also show their own specific marks. Even though neither of them had any organic engagement in a political force, it is no coincidence that they were convened to produce the film propaganda of the parties they had more affinity to in the context of the elections of 1928. Yrigoyen's party chose to work with Valle rather than with Glücksmann, as Glücksmann was close to his main contender Marcelo T. de Alvear, who was in charge of the propaganda of the Partido Socialista Independiente, a competitor of the Partido Radical led by Yrigoyen.

Combining the input of the propaganda committees in charge of the election campaigns and the style of filmmakers, political documentaries made in

Argentina within the context of the 1928 election portrayed social movements and parties aiming to represent themselves in different ways. Two of the main examples of this phenomenon are *La obra del gobierno radical*, made by Cinematografía Valle, and *El Partido Socialista Independiente*, by Max Glücksmann. In the film made on the Partido Radical, the focus is set on the leader, Yrigoyen, who is portrayed as a messiah, and masses of people who constitute, according to the intertitles, a “peace army”.⁴³⁹ The movie on the Partido Socialista Independiente, on the contrary, focuses on the leadership of the party and the supporters are absent. The party had been recently founded after a fracture from the Socialist Party, and the investment in this expensive propaganda material was probably related to the intention of convincing groups or individuals who had still not taken part in the polemic, to join the new group. The film has an almost neglected aesthetic, made with a very simple montage with images taken with a steady camera. Unlike other documentaries of the time, which resorted to a “before and after” type of narration, this film’s structure is a succession of different aspects of the party’s activities and an explanation of the mechanisms of decision making, illustrating several points of the party’s statute. This choice was probably meant to emphasize the modern and disciplined political structure, which appeared as regulated and transparent, in opposition to the undisciplined forms of political organization associated with Yrigoyen and his followers.⁴⁴⁰

Aside from documentaries, narrative film also constituted a fertile ground for a broader representation of different social groups. In the context of a market dominated by US and European productions, local filmmakers chose to emphasize elements of popular culture. What would become more prominent with the introduction of sound film already had some precedents with silent movies: melodrama shaped the form and contents of mass culture in Latin America with aesthetics of an excessive emotionality and the portrayal of a society divided in rich and poor. Melodrama was present in theater and literature since the nineteenth century and stayed alive through radio, tango lyrics, and early cinema. It has been seen as a way of depoliticizing

⁴³⁹ Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico*, 87.

⁴⁴⁰ Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico*, 93–97.

inequalities due to its discourse of resignation and victimization.⁴⁴¹ However, according to Karush, melodrama was also a channel for the lower classes to be proud of their own culture in contrast to foreign ones, an anti-elitist narrative.⁴⁴²

Two of the earliest films in Uruguayan and Chilean production respectively stand out as exceptions to most silent film due to their anti-elitist aesthetics and narrations. *Almas de la costa* (1924), directed by Juan Borges in Montevideo, is considered by film scholars as the only movie of the time to show an image of society that is different to the rest, one that portrays the harshness of poverty in fishing villages of the Uruguayan coast.⁴⁴³ The Chilean production *Los desheredados de la suerte* (1924), directed and produced by Carlos Pellegrín, addresses the environment of poor urban workers through an example of a man who goes to prison after committing a crime seeking revenge for his sister. After going out of prison, the man is unable to find a new job and ends up joining a criminal band. Both films, considered to be exceptions to the canon that was being built at the time, share the feature of having been the only narrative film made by their producers, who made their living with other professional activities. Their differences with the rest of the corpus might be explained either by the fact that they were produced by outsiders to the film business – even though they followed the standard of professional filmmaking at the time – or by the fact that different funding sources were utilized. Pellegrín wrote, directed, and performed in the movie *Los desheredados*, and after making *Los funerales de Recabarren* later that year, he left the film industry and founded a business in a different sector.⁴⁴⁴ *Almas de la costa* was produced by a regular film company, Charrúa Film, but decided on a different source of funding than the usual. This decision was presented as a part of the company's "independent" character, both in financial and

⁴⁴¹ On the presence and uses of melodrama in Latin America see Martín-Barbero, *De los medios a las mediaciones*, 167. The presence in the region was part of a larger phenomenon. On the history of melodrama in Europe see Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

⁴⁴² Karush, *Cultura de clase*, 123–124.

⁴⁴³ Torello, *La conquista del espacio: cine silente uruguayo (1915–1932)*, 177.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ecran*, Santiago, nº 1807, 14.09.1965.

ideological terms. Rather than with an official sponsor, the producers of this film resorted to a scheme of small investors.⁴⁴⁵

Through the collaboration between filmmakers and migrant communities, unions, and political parties, as well as in the production of a handful of narrative films made by outsiders to the business, a corpus of film with representations of those that escaped the world of the elites appeared during the silent period. In most cases, the depiction was mediated by the agenda of institutions, which aimed to legitimize their role in society and advertise their work. Parallel to the use of the language of documentary filmmaking (either in institutional propaganda, newsreels, or narrative films), another type of discourse enabled the representation of broad sectors of society in films and music, namely one that aimed to include characters and themes who, regardless of how faithfully they represented real people, allegedly condensed the essence of popular culture and the nation's soul.

Criollo Narratives at Home and Abroad

In 1903, the newspaper *El Mercurio* of Valparaíso announced the invitation to a “cinematographic picnic” that would be “a truly *criollo* spectacle”. Early films in Chile, as well as in Argentina and Uruguay, often included images of men driving horses and wearing typical clothes from rural workers, presented as part of a *criollo* world. In the case of the Río de la Plata area, gauchos were the protagonists and in the Chilean context, huasos. With the goal of capturing scenes of “local culture” that could be presented as a mixture of a documentation of reality and a staging with entertainment purposes, early films in Chile contributed to the reshaping of the huaso, a character present in literature and music who allegedly represented the rural inhabitant and condensed elements of the national soul. The main attraction of the picnic was the huaso Rodríguez, who arrived by horse and danced a cueca to entertain the attendants.⁴⁴⁶ Including images of the huaso, easily recognized by his clothing, was a straightforward way of making it

⁴⁴⁵ *El País*, Montevideo, 23.09.1924, 5; *El País*, Montevideo, 24.09.1924, 6.

⁴⁴⁶ *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, 09.01.1903, 5; *Sucesos*, Valparaíso, 16.01.1903, 17.

clear that the scenes filmed were a representation of local culture. Organized by the company founded by Massonier – a cameraman who worked for Lumiere in France and then settled in Uruguay and Chile –, the “cinematographic picnic” had the purpose of producing vistas that would later be screened in his movie theater in Valparaiso, combining them with reels imported from Europe.

Aside from their inclusion in early vistas as a reference to local culture, gauchos and huasos turned into an important element of the contents of narrative films and recordings made in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. These figures seemed to have contributed to the success of cultural productions not only in the local, but also in the transnational markets. The first feature film produced in Argentina to achieve box-office success in the transnational market also included references to *criollo* narratives. *Nobleza gaucha* (1915) was a film protagonized by a brave gaucho who rescued a young country maid from a landowner who had kidnapped her. This film was part of a series of productions that can be considered part of a *criollo* aesthetic, which combined narrative structures that emulated those of European film with atmospheres, themes, and characters that referred to the local context and contributed to the re-shaping of the figure of the gaucho under the conditions of the new medium.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁷ Paul Schroeder Rodríguez, “Latin American Silent Cinema: Triangulation and the Politics of Criollo Aesthetics” *Latin American Research Review* 43, no. 3 (2008): 33–58, 34.



Image 21. The protagonist of *Nobleza Gaucha*. *Cine Mundial*, New York, September 1916, 381.

The focus on local themes was not only related to finding a niche to compete with foreign films for the attention of local audiences, but also with the prospect of having a place in the transnational market. In 1919, the producer of the film *Juan sin ropa* stated: "I would like to produce and sell abroad. That is why my plan is not to engage in universal matters, but rather to offer an "Argentinean film", a synthesis of my race, of gaucho psychology, an ethnic compendium of my homeland."⁴⁴⁸ According to *Cine Mundial*, the film *Nobleza Gaucha* ended up revealing the mystery of the "character of Argentines: how is the true criollo of the Rio de la Plata area like? (...) is its race also as mixed as it is in the United States, where of Anglo-Saxon it only has the name? Is the gaucho comparable to the "cowboy", which sometimes seems Greek or Russian and speaks a terrible English?"⁴⁴⁹ According to the writer, the film confirmed that Argentina was following the same steps as the

⁴⁴⁸ *Excelsior*, Buenos Aires, nro.271, 21.05.19, 599.

⁴⁴⁹ *Cine Mundial*, New York, 09.09.1916, 381.

United States, and “the gaucho is exotic, sui generis, only comparable – to the gaucho. He is not Spanish, nor Italian, nor German”⁴⁵⁰.

A good example of the successful use of *criollo* narratives in the transnational market was the work of Julián Ajuria, the Basque film entrepreneur based in Buenos Aires who was active in the distribution market in several Latin American countries. Unlike Glücksmann or Valle, Ajuria was not present in the field of newsreel and documentary production and focused mostly on narrative films that aim to compete in Europe and the United States. Not only was he responsible for the production of *Nobleza Gaucha*, but also another successful film based on Argentinean themes. *Una nueva y gloriosa nación* (1928), was based on a fictionalized romantic story between Manuel Belgrano and the daughter of a Spanish general in the context of the independence wars. Even though the film was not specifically connected to *criollista* literature or characters, the English translation of the title, *The Charge of the Gauchos*, functioned as an effective way of linking this film with other Argentinean productions. The poster described a film with “flashing steel, whirling bolos, galloping gaucho in a romance of the Argentine pampas”.⁴⁵¹ *Una nueva y gloriosa nación* was an attempt at shooting a historic film with the technical and aesthetic standards of Hollywood. Since US producers denied financial support to Ajuria, he managed to finance it with his own private money. The film was shot in Hollywood studios with the technical support of recognized professionals of the field and starred by well-known Hollywood actors and actresses. The film was exhibited in South America, the United States, and Europe.⁴⁵²

The motivations of Ajuria to produce an “Argentine film” in Hollywood have been seen by contemporaries and scholars as related to his own personal feelings towards his country of residence. Ajuria himself wrote some years later that he was full of enthusiasm and gratitude for the Argentine people and wanted to spread the word on the great heroes of its patriotic

⁴⁵⁰ *Cine Mundial*, New York, 09.09.1916, 381.

⁴⁵¹ *Motion Picture News*, New York, 01.02.1929.

⁴⁵² Andrea Cuarterolo, “Una nueva y gloriosa nación (Albert Kelley, 1928): entre la ‘ficción orientadora’ y la ‘fantasía histórica’” *Revista de la Asociación Argentina de Estudios de Cine y Audiovisual* 8 (2013): 1–32, 4–5.

history and the origins of the nationality.⁴⁵³ Mario Gallo, who worked with Ajuria, considered it to be “his way of adhering to his new fatherland.”⁴⁵⁴ Film historian Jorge Finkielman considers that Ajuria’s motivation was also related to his discontent with how Argentina was being represented in foreign productions. As a response, he wanted to make a more authentic production.⁴⁵⁵ However, even though Ajuria conferred with advisers on how to reconstruct the historical episodes of the independence wars, the production of the film was not completely realistic, as the scenography was distant from a faithful reconstruction of the geography of the Argentine territory and instead included reproductions of paintings of the Italian countryside.⁴⁵⁶

In order to incorporate criollo narratives into the contents of new media, producers pulled from an extensive reservoir of *criollista* stories present in literature and music since the nineteenth century. The gaucho, a romanticized inhabitant of the rural areas of the Pampas; the huaso, a worker of the Central Valley countryside in Chile; and the roto, an ideal type of the poor inhabitant of the Chilean cities, were chosen as figures that allegedly symbolized the national identity. This operation was an important element of nationalist discourses in Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile. Present in literature, theater, music, and visual arts, these characters were at the core of *criollista* narratives and through the actions of intellectuals, the market, and the state, *criollo* figures were presented as the soul of the nation in the three countries under examination, but with different nuances and temporalities according to the contexts of each one. By including the *leit motifs* of these narratives into the contents of the film and recording industries, cultural producers not only were able to effectively differentiate their movies and records from those produced by Europe and US based companies, but also took part – willingly or unwillingly – in controversies around the meaning of *criollismo* in the understanding of what national culture was or should be.

⁴⁵³ Julián de Ajuria, *El cinematógrafo como espejo del mundo: artes, ciencias, teatro, cultura, lujo y belleza a través del lente mágico* (Buenos Aires: G. Kraft, 1946), 19.

⁴⁵⁴ Jorge Miguel Couselo, “El período mudo” in *Historia del cine argentino*, ed. Jorge Miguel Couselo (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1984), 1.

⁴⁵⁵ Jorge Finkielman, *The Film Industry in Argentina: An Illustrated Cultural History* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1970), 81.

⁴⁵⁶ Cuarterolo, “Una nueva y gloriosa nación”, 15.

Even though stories of gauchos had been present in the territories of Argentina and Uruguay throughout the nineteenth century, the operation that turned them into the emblems of nationhood took place in the early twentieth century. In Argentina, the meaning of the term *criollo* started to change in the years around the Centenary of the 1810' Revolution and the end of the political cycle that had begun with the organization of the nation state in the 1880s. Around these years, what Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo called a "nationalist reaction" emerged, consisting of a series of different intellectual responses to a moment of change, in which the question about the national identity arose with great strength.⁴⁵⁷ In this context, the meaning of the term *criollo* changed. Whereas in the mid nineteenth century it had had a negative connotation, associated with primitivism and opposition to the idea of progress for the elites, it started to be associated with positive values, opposing the term *gringo*, towards the turn of the century. These changes in the meaning of the term *criollo* and the values associated with it were part of the quest to establish traditions that could go beyond the xenophobic reaction to everything foreign and the nostalgic evocation of the past. The search for national identity needed powerful myths that could enable a collective identification. One of the expressions of this quest was the movement of the revalorization of the poem *Martin Fierro*, which had one of its turning points in the conferences of Leopoldo Lugones in 1913 and was part of the series of operations that turned the gaucho into the archetype of the Argentine nation.⁴⁵⁸

In Uruguay, cultural nationalist discourses were mobilized against the sector of the elites that was in power in the early twentieth century. A type of conservative nationalism emerged as a reaction to the program of reforms carried out by the government of Batlle y Ordoñez during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The landowning oligarchy appropriated the figure of the gaucho as an emblem of tradition, which they considered threatened by the "cosmopolitan" program of reforms driven by the government. By the time this happened, the gaucho had already been disentangled to a

⁴⁵⁷ Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, *Ensayos argentinos: de Sarmiento a la vanguardia* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1997), 162.

⁴⁵⁸ Altamirano and Sarlo, *Ensayos argentinos: de Sarmiento a la vanguardia*, 187.

large extent from its previous popular character and was compatible with the elites' conception of tradition.⁴⁵⁹ On top of holding a protagonist role in the literature of the Rio de la Plata area since the nineteenth century, the figure of the gaucho increased its presence in the iconography and in different media during the early twentieth century. The context of the centenary provided a favorable context for the publication of different reflections on the national history and identity, as seen, for example, in the *Libro del Centenario uruguayo, 1825–1925*, with its numerous articles on the history and culture of Uruguay, along with the extensive use of gaucho iconography.

Criollista discourses emerged in Chile later than in Argentina and Uruguay, namely in the early twentieth century. As a reaction of a group of intellectuals against the Europeanization of the elites, *criollistas* advocated for the valorization of local culture and aesthetics.⁴⁶⁰ In the literary essays of the early twentieth century, both the roto and the huaso were presented as a synthesis or symbol of the "Chilean race".⁴⁶¹ Within this movement, the opinions were divided in terms of whether the huaso or the roto represented the nation the most. The myth of the roto had its origins in the Pacific War, and it represented the adventurer, a brave, great soldier, while at the same time, a troublemaker. The roto was a mix of the urban and rural world, and took some elements of the imaginary of those who migrated from the countryside to the city looking for jobs. Some *criollistas* argued that the roto was only a contingency, whereas the huaso was the most permanent representation of the essence of chilenidad. A symbol of rural customs and traditions, the huaso was associated with horses, rodeos, and the skills of countryside's workers and functioned as a shared identity between classes that contributed to blurring social differences in the rural world.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ Carla Giaudrone, "El gaudicho en el ámbito iconográfico del Centenario uruguayo (1925–1930)" *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 61, no. 2 (2008): 149–64, 151–152.

⁴⁶⁰ Michela Coletta, *Decadent Modernity: Civilization and "Latinidad" in Spanish America, 1880–1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018), 79.

⁴⁶¹ Bernardo Subercaseaux, "Literatura, nación y nacionalismo" *Revista Chilena de Literatura* 70 (2007): 5–37. For example, the writings of Benjamín Vicuña Subercaseaux, Nicolás Palacios, Alberto Cabero, Mariano Latorre.

⁴⁶² Subercaseaux, "Literatura, nación y nacionalismo", 10.

By including representations of figures that allegedly represented national identities, film producers succeeded in including their work as part of a corpus considered as national culture in these three countries. Adapting the *criollista* narratives to a new medium, movies had the effect of not only spreading the stories of gauchos and huasos among broad audiences, but also produced some minor changes in their meaning. In the case of Chile, film and recorded sound included representations of the huaso, whereas the roto, present in literature and other cultural forms, was virtually absent. The introduction of changes in the characterization of *criollo* characters is more prominent in Argentine productions than in Chile and Uruguay, as the gaucho was the protagonist of prominent productions of silent film there.

In the case of *Nobleza Gaucha*, we find an example of the adaptation of *criollista* narratives to a new medium. Even though the references to literature are explicit, as fragments of *Martin Fierro*, *Santos Vega*, and *Fausto* are included as intertitles, it represents a re-elaboration of the figure of the gaucho and its character. The protagonist of the film is seen as a disciplined and domesticated gaucho who has lost the rebellious spirit of Juan Moreira.⁴⁶³ When the gaucho travels to the city to save his beloved woman from her kidnapper, the city appears, as was commonplace in gauchesque literature, as the opposite to the values of the countryside. However, it is also represented as a place the gaucho could conquer, where he could go in and out without any major setback. In the film, the city is not something that overrides the gaucho, but rather incorporates him. It does not exacerbate his dismay but rather he becomes a witness of a process in which he could take part.⁴⁶⁴ The role of the gaucho's friend, an Italian immigrant who first offers to help him but abandons him in the moment when he is needed most, has also been seen as an expression of the current xenophobic distrust towards immigrants.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶³ Patricio Fontana, "El gaucho y el tranvía: notas sobre el criollismo de *Nobleza gaucha* (1915)" in *El matadero. Ensayos de transposición. Literatura / Cine argentinos*, ed. Emilio Bernini (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Literatura Argentina "Ricardo Rojas", 2010), p. 17.

⁴⁶⁴ Fontana, "El gaucho y el tranvía", 30.

⁴⁶⁵ Schroeder Rodríguez, "Latin American Silent Cinema: Triangulation and the Politics of Criollo Aesthetics" 48.

The adaptations of *criollismo* to film spoke more to their current contexts than to the past and found new uses and functions for these figures.

The emerging record industries in Argentina and Chile also used the term *criollo* as the distinguishing element of the catalog produced by local artists as a way of differentiating it from the repertoire imported from Europe and the United States. Victor Talking Machine and Odeon presented the first recordings made in the 1900s and 1910s by musicians in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, marketing them as examples of *criollo* music. Victor announced their recording artists as those who can “give a criollo taste and expression to our typical music”.⁴⁶⁶ After Max Glücksmann opened the first record factory in Buenos Aires in 1919, he announced the regular releases of his label as “the archive of everything criollo, everything typical, everything Argentinean”.⁴⁶⁷ This label included a large variety of musical genres, both of rural and urban origins, and also featured versions of US music played by local artists.

⁴⁶⁶ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 23.10.1926.

⁴⁶⁷ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 22.11.1924.

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- | Me pides que te cante. Valz. Solo Tapia

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 9 de Julio, 76. SANTA FE: Salta, 2061. SANTIAGO DE CHILE: Alameda, 91.

Image 22. "Disco Nacional is heard everywhere with great interest", "the faithful expression of criollo art". Caras y Caretas, Buenos Aires, 21.12.1927.

A look at the catalogs published by the labels gives us an idea of what was encompassed under this tag and how it changed through time. Advertisements of releases grouped under the label *repertorio criollo* appeared regularly from 1909 on the press. The first catalogs included a variety of genres, most of which were related to the rural world and folkloric music, such as payadores' improvisations, gato, milonga, vals, estilo, combined with a

strong presence of comic scenes and songs, military marches, and tango. Towards 1915, the releases tended to focus much more on tangos, which constituted the majority of the catalogs. In the 1920s, the musical offer labeled as *criollo* repertoire expanded to include versions musical genres originated in the United States and played by local musicians (often tango orchestras): fox trot, one step, and shimmy. The catalog of Discos Nacional also started to integrate genres of the Rio de la Plata area, together with musical forms popular in the West and North of Argentina and Chile, such as tangos, zambas, cuecas, and tonadas.⁴⁶⁸

The recording industry was intertwined with the debates around what “national music” was or should be, with the statement “¿do you love criollo (music)? Bring home the best expression of national music”.⁴⁶⁹ This process was layered with several levels of tension, such as the debates between hispanists and cultural nationalists and the attempts of regional elites to place cultural expressions from their territories as the center of the national canon. Whereas hispanists saw the local folklore as variations of European music, cultural nationalist put indigenous elements at the center and considered them the only authentic cultural element. These different legacies were treated differently according to the medium. Whereas indigenous visual art was often given a great deal of importance in Chile, indigenous musical expressions were oftentimes excluded from the allegedly national repertoires of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay that the recording industry contributed to shape.⁴⁷⁰ This does not mean that indigenous music was completely erased from the idea of folklore, but rather it received a different treatment. Instead of being part of the music that had to be recorded to be sold and spread, it was meant to be recorded for “preservation”. Musicologists and collectors took up the task of recording indigenous music with the purpose of preserving it in museums and archives, while the record industry conceived popular

⁴⁶⁸ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, different numbers from 1909, 1915, 1917, 1927.

⁴⁶⁹ *Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires, 21.07.1917

⁴⁷⁰ This prominence can be seen for example in the case of the Chilean pavilion in the Ibero-American Exhibition of 1929 in Seville, where the decoration was based on mapuche art. See Sylvia Dümmer Scheel, “Los desafíos de escenificar el “alma nacional”: Chile en la Exposición Iberoamericana de Sevilla (1929)” *Historia crítica* 42 (2010): 84–111, 93.

music as something alive that needed to be registered in order to be sold.⁴⁷¹

The figure of the huaso functioned as a cohesive element among different sectors of Chilean society. In the second quarter of the twentieth century, groups of the conservative elites and of the middle classes adopted a huaso-based conception of chilenidad that was expressed in *criollista* discourses in literature and especially music. Whereas the elites were attached to a European-based sense of identity in the 1910s, they began to adopt rural images and traditions as part of their notion of chilenidad towards the 1920s. The huaso-based identity meant a very clear preference for the practices and customs from rural areas of the Central Valley. The production system of this area was based on the work of transient, seasonal labors, and tenants. At the top of the social pyramid was the rural elite who owned the lands. The romanticized huaso identity was presented in *criollista* discourses as a shared identity among these groups, despite the fact that their experiences and interests were opposed.⁴⁷² Turned into the symbol of Chilean identity, the Central Valley huaso was used as a tool to “Chileanize” the northern areas, where the territories had been obtained through the Pacific War (1879–1884) from Peru and the population still identified with Andean cultural practices.

By incorporating the gaucho and the huaso as central elements of the musical repertoire for sale, the record industries also took part in the disputes around regional hierarchies in the definition of national cultural canons. The canonization of the gaucho in Argentina meant the consecration of the Pampa region’s culture at its core. As the musician Buenaventura Luna would argue in the 1930s when he arrived from San Juan to Buenos Aires, he did not feel identified with the construction of a criollo identity around the figure of the gaucho, as this figure did not exist in his region and was related to the province of Buenos Aires. He then pushed to turn the figure of the gaucho into a broader symbol that would encompass a larger variety of cultural

⁴⁷¹ For example, the compilation work of the Sociedad de Folklore Chileno in the 1910s and of Carlos Vega in Argentina in the 1930s.

⁴⁷² Jedrek Mularski, “Singing Huasos: Politics, Chilenidad, and Music from 1910–1950” *A contracorriente* 12, no. 2 (2015): 178–211, 187–188.

elements from different provinces with different ethnic identities.⁴⁷³ As a figure used metonymically to represent the whole, the gaucho actually only represented a small part of the population, a sector that was ambiguously mestizo but definitely not indigenous.⁴⁷⁴ By aiming at formulating a unifying discourse, the operations that turned the gaucho into a symbol for the whole nation also had the effect of consecrating regional hierarchies.

The canonization of cueca as a national type of music in Chile, to which the recording industry contributed, played an important role in crystalizing regional hierarchies. In the 1920s, diverse social groups embraced cueca as the national music. Among the different variations of the genre, the one that was canonized as the national dance was that of the Central Valley, interpreted by so-called huaso groups. These groups, composed largely of educated young men from families that owned lands in the Central Valley or had ties to the region, held to the belief that folkloric music could be refined in order to compete with international music styles popular at the time.⁴⁷⁵ This was part of a process of revalorization of folkloric culture encouraged by some nationalists, who argued that it was necessary to emphasize the national elements in music, theater, visual arts, and dance. Cueca was well known in Europe but was not receiving an equivalent attention in Chile, because it was considered a rural and therefore inferior cultural expression. Nationalists criticized the elites for leaving the roots of the national character aside in order to imitate European customs.⁴⁷⁶

Part of the contribution of the recording industry to turning cuecas and tonadas into national music can be attributed to a series of subtle

⁴⁷³ Ezequiel Adamovsky, "La cuarta función del criollismo y las luchas por la definición del origen y el color del ethnos argentino (desde las primeras novelas gauchescas hasta c.1940)" *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana "Dr. Emilio Ravignani"*, no. 41 (2014): 50–92, 63. As Ezequiel Adamovsky showed, *criollismo* was also a vehicle to subtly undermine the "whitening" discourses that managed to erase ethnic differences of the Argentine population.

⁴⁷⁴ Kathryn Lehman, "The Gaucho as Contested National Icon in Argentina" in *National Symbols, Fractured Identities: Contesting the National Narrative*, ed. Michael Geisler (Middlebury: Middlebury College Press, 2005), 154.

⁴⁷⁵ Mularski, "Singing Huasos: Politics, Chilenidad, and Music from 1910–1950", 200–202.

⁴⁷⁶ Rinke, *Cultura de masas, reforma y nacionalismo en Chile*, 126–127.

transformations introduced in relation to the live expressions of these musical forms, which managed to produce versions of these genres more suitable for urban markets. Recorded tonadas adopted broader harmonic and melodic languages, varied the tempo, resorted to vocal and instrumental virtuosity, and expanded the instrumentation to encompass combinations of piano, bass, harp, accordion, and even orchestras. Huaso groups remodeled cuecas to fit the three and a half minutes of the records, sometimes repeating a 90 seconds cueca several times, or adding dialogue, exclamations, or interludes.⁴⁷⁷ Even before the government started to openly endorse huaso groups and present Central Valley cueca as the national dance in the 1940s, the record industry had contributed to the emergence of a new version of cueca that brought together rural traditions and the demands of the market. This version of Chilean identity was not unchallenged, and in the 1940s, other versions of Chilean folklore were promoted by different institutions, aiming to present a version of *chilenidad* based on various regions as opposed to the exclusively Central Valley huaso identity.⁴⁷⁸

Conclusions

This chapter reconstructed the strategies followed by cultural entrepreneurs when approaching the production of films and records. It found out that, in the context of a transnationally integrated market with a strong presence of contents produced in the United States and Europe, the most successful strategy was one that focused on market niches in which local production could compete under better conditions with foreign contents. This strategy was twofold. On one side, the niche strategy expressed in how producers approached the local markets, where they profited from the segmentation of audiences. Rather than driving homogenization from the audiences, or the polarization between the rich and the poor, as previous studies on the topic have argued, mass culture in the pre-broadcasting times offered channels for the representation for a broad spectrum of social groups, including the elites,

⁴⁷⁷ González and Rolle, *Historia social de la música popular en Chile*, 387.

⁴⁷⁸ Mularski, "Singing Huasos: Politics, *Chilenidad*, and Music from 1910–1950", 208.

migrant communities, and unionized workers.⁴⁷⁹ On the other side, it meant that producers emphasized the connections between the films and records they were offering and previously existing elements of local popular culture. These allegedly “authentic” contents were seen positively not only by local audiences, who recognized what was being seen or heard, but also in foreign markets, in which the demand for more diverse and often exoticized contents was growing.

Producers of films and records approached market niches differently according to the divergences between the two media. If we compare the number of filmmakers with those able to produce recordings during the first fifteen years of both technologies (roughly until the end of the 1900s), we can see that the beginnings of production were faster and more decentralized in film’s industry than in the field of recorded sound. With the available cameras and blank reels, filmmakers in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay were able to record vistas, documentaries and even narrative films that were not so far from US and European standards. Those who attempted to produce recordings in the early years, however, did not manage to achieve an acceptable sound quality to compete with labels such as Odeon, Columbia, or Victor, and were left out of the market, at least for some time. When an industrial record production finally emerged in the 1920s, it was through the collaboration with Odeon and through the presence of Victor in the region. The technological reliance on imports was high in this industry, since the pressing machines had to be imported from Europe and the United States, and the shellac was only produced in India.

⁴⁷⁹ Leandro Gutiérrez and Luis Alberto Romero have argued, for the case of Argentina, that during the interwar period film and radio, among other elements, contributed to create a sense of shared culture among lower class immigrants and their descendants, which tended to erase class identities in favor of the aspiration to become members of the middle class. Leandro Gutiérrez and Luis Alberto Romero, *Sectores populares, cultura y política: Buenos Aires en la entreguerra* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1995). This was challenged, among others and referring specifically to the role of mass culture, by Karush, who has argued that film and radio contributed to define class identities by reinforcing the polarization between rich and poor. Karush, *Cultura de clase*. For the case of Chile, Iturriaga has argued that the appropriation of film on behalf of the lower classes turned it into part of a plebeian culture contrary to that of the elites. Iturriaga, *La masificación del cine en Chile*.

In order to address differentiated audience segments and sources of funding, cultural producers profited from their position as part of social and political networks. As this chapter showed, some filmmakers were close to the elite's circles of sociability, but in most cases, ultimately excluded from them. From this position, the producers collaborated closely with the elites, thus constituting film as a channel for the elite's strategies of legitimization, socialization, and gathering of funds, and in turn filmmakers profited not only from their access to resources to produce movies, but also the opportunity to position themselves as belonging to these social groups. However, other collaborative relationships between producers and institutions existed beyond the elite's circles. The examples analyzed showed different forms of collaboration between filmmakers and institutions. This included the films made by Glücksmann for the Jewish community in Buenos Aires, to which he belonged himself, and the role of Pellegrín, who, coming from a working-class context, engaged in the production of movies to promote the work of unions and their leaders, and narrative films portraying the lives of poor urban workers; and the role of filmmakers such as Glücksmann and Valle in the production of political propaganda for the parties they were close to.

Before the introduction of sound film and broadcasting, cinema and recorded sound grew as forms of mass entertainment in almost complete absence of state regulation or support.⁴⁸⁰ This could create the impression that silent film and pre-radio recorded sound was somehow independent from official discourses. However, a closer look at how producers positioned themselves in front of public institutions and how they established relations of professional cooperation with a broad spectrum of social groups and actors reveals a strong presence of state institutions and groups aiming to influence public discourse and legitimize their role in society within the fabric of actors in which film and recorded sound emerged as media. The role of the

⁴⁸⁰ Unlike in Argentina and Chile at the time, film was not actively integrated to the initiatives to advertise the work of Battle y Ordóñez's government in Uruguay. Contemporary actors of the film industry claimed for a more active promotion and protection from the state, arguing in favor of its utility for state propaganda. Torello, *La conquista del espacio: cine silente uruguayo (1915-1932)*, 17-18. *Semanal Film*, Montevideo, 26.11.1921

state in the entertainment market during the period under examination was largely mediated by the market but nevertheless present.

Whereas the connections between film and the attempts to contribute to “national culture” have been seen by scholars more explicitly during the times of sound film, this chapter showed that the commercial and political logics of silent film production cannot be disentangled from each other.⁴⁸¹ From a position of relative autonomy from different social groups and institutions with resources to fund their movies, film producers engaged in the production of political discourses that combined the perspective of their funders with their own aesthetic and narrative repertoire. Engaging in the production of contents presented as “national film”, producers also found ways to portray themselves as proud members of the national communities of their countries of residence, as was discussed with the case of Ajuria. Something similar can be seen in the case of the record industry, where Glücksmann’s emphasis on his being the only “truly national” label (despite collaborating with the German-based Odeon), granted him the support of newspapers and magazines.

Partly influenced by the demands of the audiences and partly by their own motivations and strategies, music and film producers engaged in the production of contents that included references to central themes of current discourses about the nation in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Films and records included references to patriotic holidays and commemorations of events and men consecrated by nationalist discourses, reenacted historical episodes associated with narratives on the birth of the nation, and included characters and themes considered as the condensation of the national soul. In doing this, producers engaged in current debates on how to define national identities, contributed to the spread of nationalist discourses to a much broader audience than those that were reached by the writings of intellectuals.

⁴⁸¹ For example Stites Mor and Richter discuss how early sound film engaged in conceptions of national identity in Argentina, and consider that silent film producers, on the contrary, were “more preoccupied with competing for market shares with imports, US imperialism, and the rapid pace of technological modernization”. Jessica Stites Mor and Daniel Alex Richter, “Immigrant Cosmopolitanism: The Political Culture of Argentine Early Sound Cinema of the 1930s” *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 9 (2014): 65–88, 66.

As this chapter showed, new media reproduced the discourses formulated by intellectuals and the state while also introducing a series of nuances and changes to them. This happened through a series of operations inherent to the language of each medium and to the transposition of pre-existing forms of popular culture to the new media: filmic register of patriotic celebrations could emphasize the participation of certain actors and censure others or could contextualize the interpretation of an event with the intertitles; the conformation of catalogs of “national music” favored certain genres over others, creating or reproducing regional hierarchies on the national canons; the use of the term *criollo* and of stories and images of gauchos in the Río de la Plata and the huaso in Chile broadened the term until it included virtually everything local with a plebeian element; records and movies turned the gaucho into the symbol of a traditionalism that could peacefully coexist with “modern” technologies and urban life and turned it into the symbol of Argentina and Uruguay both locally and abroad.

Conclusions

Through the reconstruction of the lives and careers of a group of immigrants who played central roles in the emergence of the film and record industries in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, this dissertation revealed the mechanisms of the entertainment market and of the birth of new media between the mid 1890s and the late 1920s. The examination of the strategies of media entrepreneurs along with their social and commercial relations with other actors in the field made visible the dynamics of the entertainment industries. It also permitted the analysis of the commercial opportunities introduced by the availability of new communication technologies, as well as the limitations imposed by the asymmetrical relations within their partnerships and competitors in Europe and the United States. In doing so, this dissertation also revealed the way in which the production of cultural contents that gave shape to “national” cultures was partly influenced by actors’ strategies to position themselves in a transnational market.

The analysis of the emergence of new media triggered by the introduction of recorded sound and motion pictures in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay allowed for the observance of how the markets of these three countries became integrated into a transnational market of entertainment products and services, further revealing the implications of this process in the fields of communication and cultural production. This study traced the evolution of the spheres of commercialization, distribution, and production of films and records, observing how they were concatenated with each other. As the first chapter showed, sound reproducers and recordings, cameras and movies were introduced and commercialized among other products for home amusement present in the context of emerging consumer societies in the major cities of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, and became part of the forms of entertainment taking place in public venues such as theaters and salons. The dynamism of consumption created a rapidly expanding market for the new forms of technological entertainment and communication and motivated the actors involved in commercialization to push for a regular supply of these

products. This led, as the second chapter reconstructed, to the engagement of local cultural impresarios in distribution networks, regularly connecting to South American markets with the suppliers based in Europe and the United States. Over roughly the first two decades of the existence of these industries, local production of films and recordings in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay was only marginal and was based on artisanal forms of production. All the while, most of the supply of contents for movie theaters and home gramophones came from the big labels and studios based in the United States and Europe. The industrial production of entertainment products emerged, as the third chapter showed, within the context of markets dominated by imports. Local productions succeeded in finding a place in the market inasmuch as they addressed segmented audiences and portrayed “national cultures” as a differentiated niche within the transnational market.

The chronology of the concatenation of these three spheres reveals an inherent logic behind the emergence of industries relating to the technologies of motion pictures and recorded sound, which I characterized in this thesis as backward linkage. The introduction of products manufactured abroad in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay drove a process that led to the substitution of some of the supplies needed for these industries. In the case of motion pictures, the consolidation of the market led to the local production of movies that competed with foreign films. However, it did not lead to the substitution of camera production or blank reels, which were still imported throughout the entire period under examination. In the case of recorded sound, the process of import substitution also reached the production of records, but the record industry still depended on imports of phonographs and gramophones, as well as the raw material (shellac) needed to press the records in factories inaugurated in Buenos Aires and Santiago.

Aside from the implications at the level of the industrial organization of the production of films and records, this dissertation showed how the emergence of new media within the context of a transnationally integrated market influenced how producers approached contents. The strategies utilized were diverse according to whether they were making records, narrative movies, documentaries, or newsreels. The findings of this study show that early cinema and recorded sound functioned with the logic of the long tail economy,

which is also characteristic of media in the digital age nowadays. Rather than compete with the industries of Europe and the United States to produce the next hit, most producers addressed market niches in which they could capture the attention of specific audience segments or sources of funding more effectively, usually meaning the sale of less unities of a larger variety of products. What distinguished local producers from foreign labels and studios was a combination of their knowledge on the demands and expectations of audiences and their direct connections to institutions or actors interested in funding the production of on-demand contents. The niche strategy was effective both in the markets of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, utilized as a way to distinguish local productions from foreign ones, and in markets beyond the region, where portraying “national” characters, stories, and landscapes from Latin America was an effective way of offering something distinct and perceived as exotic.

This study’s interpretation of the history of film and recorded sound constitutes an alternative to the two predominant perspectives on the history of early-twentieth-century media in Latin America, namely one that considers the emergence of new media as the result of cultural imperialism along with another that sees the introduction of new technologies as an unquestioned sign of the arrival of modernity. Departing from the fact that new media emerged as the result of imports from the industrialized countries and within the context of a transnational market, this dissertation transcended the limitations of these two approaches: it went beyond the characterization of Latin American audiences as passive receivers of foreign contents by analyzing how they interacted with sounds and images in the context of broader social practices of consumption. Rather than considering new technologies as carriers of certain social values, this dissertation observed the context of appropriation of sound reproducers and cinematographers and looked at how technological transfer created or transformed relations between local markets all within a transnational one. By assessing how the asymmetries in the world market influenced the emergence of new media in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, this study analyzed the impact of these unequal relations in the industrial structure of film and recorded sound as well as in the contents. Bringing the spheres of consumption, distribution, and production together,

it was possible to observe the effect of asymmetries in the transnational market in the configuration of new media as such.

The scope of this study's analysis was made up of the regional and transnational market integrated by a number of cities in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, connected to commercial networks in the United States, Germany, France, Great Britain, Spain, and Italy. By setting the focus on the actors involved and their networks, it became clear that the limits of the entertainment market in the period under examination were not defined by national borders, but rather the geographical proximity and availability of transportation, the shared language, and the existence of common social and commercial networks within different cities. This allowed entrepreneurs and companies to have a scope of action that encompassed different cities within the region. The places in which the new entertainment industries expanded rapidly shared a number of features: they constituted nodes of transatlantic commerce of agricultural products and industrial goods, they witnessed economic and urban growth during that time, and they experienced important immigration fluxes resulting in the fast increase of populations.

The joint analysis of these markets, pursued through the reconstruction of the scope of action and networks built by film and music entrepreneurs, also revealed the internal hierarchies within them. Several of the companies analyzed in this study managed the regional market from their headquarters in Buenos Aires, which constituted the largest market of those under examination due to its population and economic size. From there, these companies started to expand their businesses in the region until the point where it became necessary to open branches in other cities. The Chilean market was closely connected to Argentina but also shared some companies with Perú and Bolivia. Due to its proximity to Buenos Aires, the markets in Uruguayan territories were often handled from the Argentine capital, either because the same headquarters controlled the allocation of films in movie theaters on both sides of the Río de la Plata, or because recordings were made in Buenos Aires and shipped to Uruguay. The case of Glücksmann's enterprise served as an example of how a company functioned in this regard as an angle to observe the possibilities of operating within a regional market. Starting from Buenos Aires, his company expanded to the cities of the three countries, with

branches in the capitals and offices in other important urban centers. The presence of the same entrepreneurs in all the territories does not mean that they were perceived as locals, as could be observed in the case of Glücksmann's firm in Chile, which received hostility for being an "Argentinean" company.

The trajectories and strategies of music and film entrepreneurs allowed the understanding of how commercialization, distribution, and production of movies and records connected to each other and resulted in the emergence of new media. According to the possibilities opened by the broad and fast acceptance of the new technologies as products for amusement in the public and private sphere, entrepreneurs engaged in the expansion of distribution networks. When approaching production, these entrepreneurs had access to the knowledge regarding the social practices and patterns of different customer segments' image and sound consumption, all of which had been gathered through these businessmen's own life experiences and their work as retailers. By zooming into the dynamics of commercialization, distribution, and production, each chapter revealed often under examined aspects of the phases of the emergence of new media. More precisely, the chapters shed light on the processes of introduction and appropriation of new technologies, the integration into a transnational market, and the emergence of local production in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, along with how films and records shaped the idea of a "national culture".

The first chapter showed how the newly introduced technologies of motion pictures and recorded sound turned into media through their link to the practices of music reproduction and the consumption of images anchored in both the domestic and public spaces. By doing this, technologies contributed to defining the limits between the two spheres along with the connections between them. The gramophone was interpreted by users on the basis of the habit of making music at home which had been formed in relation to the piano. In this way, the new technology redefined the socialization practices of middle- and upper-class families. At the same time, music listened to at home was closely connected to current events taking place in the public sphere, as the repertoire included in the catalogs of gramophone records was integrated by songs that were positively received at live concerts, music contests,

carnival and dance balls, and patriotic celebrations. In the case of film, the appropriation of the technology took shape partly through its incorporation into public entertainment venues and partly through its utility as a means to make and see home movies, thus continuing the practice of storing images of family memories that had been started with photography. In order to successfully meet the demands of potential consumers, the people in charge of defining the contents of films and music catalogs needed to have detailed knowledge on and sound evaluation of the popular taste and current cultural trends of the time. Strategies of commercialization that encouraged the segmentation of audiences favored the broad and fast penetration of recorded sound and motion pictures. Advertisements addressed potential customers according to their age, gender, income level, or mother tongue with different models of sound reproducers and musical repertoire, while movie venues offered different entrance prices according to their location in the city.

The second chapter reconstructed the evolution of distribution mechanisms from the earlier years of recorded sound and technologies and observed the conformation of stable film and record distribution networks, connecting the markets of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay with the production centers in Europe and the United States. It traced the emergence of the figure of local film and record distributors and characterized this role as a sort of gatekeeper who, with an intermediate position and use of commercial, social, and political connections, influenced the arrival of contents from abroad, additionally turning the industries of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay into sources of input for the transnational market. By looking at how distributors interacted with other actors in the field, such as record retailers, film exhibitors, or producers, this chapter identified tensions between them, thus reconstructing the complex internal structure of these media, which cannot be seen as homogeneous entities with a shared agenda. Distributors had changing and contradictory relations with European and US labels and studios, as the collaboration with them first enabled the growth of their businesses but eventually put an end to the most profitable part once the main companies decided to take distribution into their own hands towards the late 1920s.

Understanding how the sphere of distribution worked allowed for the shedding of new light on the decisions that shaped the local production of

films and records. The third chapter revealed how film and music impresarios approached production in order to compete in a transnational market, identifying niche markets in which they could address specific audience segments and sources of funding. The catalog of films and records resulted from the strategy of addressing specific market niches influenced by what was understood at the time as “national culture” in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, both locally and abroad. The effectiveness of this niche strategy had differences in each of the two media under examination. Addressing niche markets was a successful strategy for film producers who made a broad spectrum of documentaries and newsreels that functioned as channels for the representation and self-representation of different social groups in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. These movies coexisted harmonically with those produced from US and European studios, as they were shown before commercial films in movie theaters or exhibited in non-commercial events such as institutional celebrations or beneficial screenings. The producers who engaged in making narrative films did aim to compete with those from abroad and with this purpose in mind, resorted to the reshaping of characters and themes present in popular culture as a way of offering something distinct. The niche strategy was not so successful in the case of the record industry. Early attempts at locally producing a small number of cylinders with recordings of local musicians were only a marginal practice, threatened by the competition of imported recordings with better sound quality. The emergence of phonography as a medium based on the production of music according to the local taste took place effectively with the opening of the first record factories and the consolidation of the mechanism of matrix exchanges with European and US labels during the industrial times.

This study contributed to the field of global history of media by analyzing how processes of global integration, such as the incorporation of Latin American territories into world trade at the end of the nineteenth century, had an impact on the field of culture and communication. It further shed light on how the definition of “national culture” was shaped in the context of a transnational cultural market. This study focused on a regional and transnational market as its unit of analysis, reconstructing the networks that connected different nodes among it. This focus allowed for a contribution to be made to

the field of media studies in Latin America by revealing a shared history in terms of how technology triggered changes in communication and cultural production. The shared experience of becoming part of the global economy since the last quarter of the nineteenth century resulted in the resemblance of the changes in the sphere of media and communication in several parts of the region, but at the same time there were internal differences given by the particularities of each territory in terms of political processes and intellectual discussions.

The period under examination was marked by the history of the technologies that initiated the emergence of new media. This period started in the mid 1890s with the commercial appearance of the first sound recorders and reproducers along with the invention of the motion pictures, presented in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay a few months after their first exhibitions in Europe and the United States. The end of the period was marked by the introduction of sound film and broadcasting, which started to be tested in the late 1920s and was generalized in the early 1930s. Within this period, new media was born, went through an early artisanal phase, and consolidated with an industrial model. The mechanisms of the global entertainment market also changed within this time frame, starting with a more decentralized structure of production and evolving towards an oligopolist model, in which a handful of studios and labels supplied most of the world market. This study identified the challenges posed to actors based in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay by the process of concentration that the industries of film and recorded sound went through until the late 1920s. During this time, local actors managed to profit partly from the collaboration with more powerful companies based in the United States and Europe and partly from the possibilities to compete with them. This was a dynamic field, in which changes in the world economy along with the introduction of new technologies that altered the media landscape, would keep imposing new challenges.

New Media – New Game: After Broadcasting and Sound Film

The 1930s saw important changes for the media landscape in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay due to the combined result of the introduction of new technologies and the effects of the economic crisis of 1929. For film impresarios, the introduction of sound would mean the need for major adaptations in terms of the forms of production and of screening infrastructure: studios needed to be equipped to produce reels with synchronized audio, and movie theaters had to be wired in order to reproduce sound. Meanwhile, the introduction of the radio changed the patterns of music consumption and the record industry had to adjust to them, as it was now possible for owners of radio transmitters to listen to unlimited songs for free. The chronology of media and of the careers of their main entrepreneurs overlapped to a large extent, as most of the actors of the pre-broadcasting times played only marginal roles as of the 1930s or went out of business completely, if they had not done earlier.⁴⁸²

Even though the introduction of sound film and radio in the 1930s changed the game for entrepreneurs of the times of silent film and pre-broadcasting phonography, several of the mechanisms of the entertainment market built during the period examined in this dissertation remained throughout the following decades. The dependent integration of the markets of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay into a global entertainment market, which this dissertation analyzed, conditioned the subsequent phases in the history of media. Both the technological dependency and the concentration of the market with an oligopolistic structure played important roles in the entertainment industries after the introduction of sound film and broadcasting. While the rise of

⁴⁸² Max and Bernardo Glücksmann remained active during the 1930s and 1940s, but with an important reduction in the scope of their businesses. Efraín Band and José Tagini had gone bankrupt in the mid 1910s. Julián Ajuria did not take part in productions of sound movies but remained active as distributor. Federico Valle produced around ten editions of his newsreel with sound, but the difficulties in accessing funding from state institutions for his documentaries finally left him out of business.

Max Glücksmann, his partners, and his competitors allowed me to reconstruct in this dissertation the history of the emergence of new media, their decline show some key moments of tension that the new media of the 1930s would have to overcome in order to find a place in society.

As a central actor of the field, Max Glücksmann was aware of the new innovations that were emerging in the mid and late 1920s. However, they caught him in a moment of decline. When the first attempts to include sound in movies were being tested in Europe and the United States, he followed the progress of the technique with great interest. In a two-year trip between Europe and the United States from 1927 to 1929, Glücksmann visited several of the laboratories that were testing the different sonorization techniques. Even though he declared being enthusiastic about the possibilities of a suitable sonorization method to be achieved within a short period of time, there were no definitive results in that moment.⁴⁸³ The reasons why he did not break into the business of sound film when this emerged powerfully in the 1930s might have been related to the effects of the economic crisis, which forced him to sell most of his movie theaters to cover debts.⁴⁸⁴ Even though Glücksmann did not take part in sound film as producer, he did so as a distributor of Pathé Frères' talkies in the 1930s and as an importer of sound equipment for movie theaters.⁴⁸⁵ The Uruguayan branch of the Glücksmann company was the one that most successfully transitioned and adapted to the times of sound film. Having more liquidity in comparison with the Buenos Aires headquarters allowed Bernardo to face the economic crisis under better conditions and even rescue part of his brother's business. The office in Montevideo became an independent company in 1936, and he kept his movie theaters, screening spoken films that had arrived from Hollywood and European studios.⁴⁸⁶ Max Glücksmann also made a timid attempt at entering the radio business, but he does not count among those that would turn broadcasting

⁴⁸³ "De regreso de Europa y los Estados Unidos D. Max Glücksmann nos refiere sus impresiones de viaje". *Mundo Israelita*, Buenos Aires, 27.07.1929.

⁴⁸⁴ "Juicio de Sucesión Max Glücksmann", Archivo de Tribunales.

⁴⁸⁵ Leaflets of several Pathé Frères sound films, Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé; "Glücksmann contra Barone", Fondos Tribunales Comerciales, Archivo General de la Nación Argentina.

⁴⁸⁶ Saratsola, *Función completa*, 18-19.

into the new mass medium in the 1930s. Shortly after the first transmission in 1923, Radio Splendid started to function in the upper floor of his biggest movie theater, the Grand Splendid. The radio station remained active during the next years and profited from Glücksmann's contacts with Hollywood studios, through which he invited movie stars to give interviews in their visits to Argentina.⁴⁸⁷

During the 1930s and 1940s, in a similar way than during the times of silent film, the relations between US and Latin American film enterprises were unstable. In the early 1930s, Hollywood took one step back and two steps forward. Even though sound ultimately reinforced the hegemony of Hollywood in the global entertainment market, it also created opportunities for the local industries, at least for a certain time. Since this innovation overlapped with the economic crisis, the expansion of Hollywood's talking pictures was delayed. Moreover, the first attempts at producing films in Spanish and Portuguese were not well received by the audiences, who were disenchanted by the artificial dubbing that included some dialect that was not their own. Eventually, dubbing and subtitling techniques improved and gained the approval of Latin American audiences. Even so, the delay in the expansion of Hollywood's talkies created opportunities for film industries, especially in Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil, to strengthen their presence in the regional market for some time. Since the costs of producing sound film were much higher than for silent movies, productions became much more concentrated and left amateur producers out of business.⁴⁸⁸ Those who did succeed in transitioning to sound production gained the acceptance of the audiences, which were strongly appealed by the possibilities of listening to movies in their own language and accent.⁴⁸⁹

The place that the entrepreneurs of silent film had occupied was not left empty for too long. The advent of sound film provided opportunities for new actors to move to prominent roles. It also resulted in a more concentrated

⁴⁸⁷ *Cine Mundial*, New York, March 1935, 199.

⁴⁸⁸ King, *El carrete mágico*, 53–54; Beatriz Sarlo, *La imaginación técnica: sueños modernos de la cultura argentina* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1992), 125–126.

⁴⁸⁹ Clara Kriger, *Cine y peronismo: el estado en escena* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2009), 27.

economy, not only within each country, but also regionally, with a predominance of Mexican and Argentinean industries within the Spanish speaking markets. The asymmetries between the Argentinean, Chilean, and Uruguayan industries also remained beyond the times of silent film: the first sound film studios opened in Argentina in 1933 and proliferated in the next years, reaching nine studios and thirty companies by the end of the decade.⁴⁹⁰ In Chile, the transition to sound film by local companies took a few years and only started in the late 1930s.⁴⁹¹ Local producers in Uruguay could not afford the transition to sound and at least during the first years, the Argentine industry, together with the US and European studios, dominated the market.⁴⁹² Aside from local companies, US and European studios also produced films locally for the regional market or invited well-known artists to star in big Hollywood productions shot in the United States, a good example being the case of Gardel's movies made by Paramount.⁴⁹³

Even bigger than the challenges that sonorization imposed to the film industry were those introduced by the emergence of broadcasting for the record business. On a global level, the record industry ended up becoming an appendix of radio. After the first transmissions in 1923, radio started to grow through the proliferation of amateurs' associations that built their own equipment and experimented with the first transmissions. The first firms that exploited the new technology formed in the 1920s in the United States and Europe, in some cases as subsidiaries of electric companies, and drove the process that turned radio into a commercial medium. The major labels in Europe and the United States first saw broadcasting as competition, therefore attacking the new medium and rejecting any collaboration. During the 1930s, several record companies filed for bankruptcy and were taken over

⁴⁹⁰ Schnitman, *Film industries in Latin America*, 34.

⁴⁹¹ Roberto Reveco Fissore, "La construcción de estudios cinematográficos en el Chile de los años cuarenta" in *Nuevas travesías por el cine chileno y latinoamericano*, ed. Mónica Villarroel (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2015)

⁴⁹² Paranguá, *O cinema na América Latina*, 62.

⁴⁹³ Simon Collier, "Carlos Gardel and the Cinema" in *The Garden of Forking Paths: Argentine Cinema*, ed. John King (London: BFI, 1987).

by broadcasting networks, thus achieving a de-facto merge of the two media.⁴⁹⁴

Radio rapidly became a mass phenomenon in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay in the 1930s and was fertile ground for the action of local entrepreneurs.⁴⁹⁵ Even though the record industry was well consolidated and spread as one of the main forms of domestic entertainment, its penetration into the market was limited to people of middle and high incomes. The introduction of radio allowed access to broader sectors of society to listen to recorded music at home for the single price of the transmitter. Those musicians who had started their road to fame with records became widely known artists thanks to broadcasting.⁴⁹⁶ Even though records and radio may have seemed like competing media as both offered recorded music, they were also complementary. The fame that musicians gained through their presence on the radio also resulted in the demand for more records.

After a fast growth that turned Max Glücksmann into one of the main cultural impresarios in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and beyond by the mid 1920s, a slow decline began and continued until the 1950s. The first obstacle in this process was the opening of the major Hollywood studios' branches in Buenos Aires and Santiago, which left him out of the profitable business of film distribution. The second was the crisis of 1930, which forced him to sell most of the movie theaters he owned. After that, and with the separation of Bernardo's branch in Montevideo, Glücksmann's company continued as a modest business in the field of phonography and film distribution in Argentina, with a minor presence in Chile. Max Glücksmann transferred the property of his company to his wife and one of his daughters in September of 1946, one month before his death.⁴⁹⁷ Handled by his successors, the scope of the

⁴⁹⁴ Tschmuck, *Creativity and Innovation*, 62.

⁴⁹⁵ Andrea Matallana, *Locos por la radio": una historia social de la radiofonía en la Argentina, 1923–1947* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2006); Christine Ehrick, *Radio and the Gendered Soundscape: Women and Broadcasting in Argentina and Uruguay, 1930–1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Cristóbal Quezada and Martín Pérez Comisso, "De la telegrafía sin hilos a la radiodifusión: apropiación tecnológica de la radio en Chile, 1901–1931" *Hib: revista de historia iberoamericana* 9, no. 1 (2016): 103–25.

⁴⁹⁶ Karush, *Cultura de clase*, 89.

⁴⁹⁷ Boletín Oficial de la República Argentina, 23.09.1946, 17.

business kept being reduced, especially due to a legal conflict between his children regarding the inheritance, until it was officially dissolved in 1957.⁴⁹⁸

Combining the biographical elements of individual entrepreneurs with a macro-history of the entertainment market allowed me not only to reveal the mechanisms of media, but also to contribute to restoring the human element in the history of media and technology. This means not only to acknowledge the agency of actors in shaping technologies and their uses, but also their limitations and failures. Following these actors wherever they went, and zooming into the local expressions of global phenomena in a series of Latin American cities, as well as shedding light into the local appropriations of technologies and commercial practices and their role in re-shaping cultural expressions, allowed to restore centrality to spaces often considered as peripheral in the history of media.

⁴⁹⁸ “Juicio de sucesión Max Glücksmann”, “Antecedente de colación Max Glücksmann”, Archivo de Tribunales.

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The invention of the gramophone and film cameras in the 1890s changed how people around the world communicated and consumed culture. With these new technologies, industries with a global vocation were born. Even though far away from the center of the inventions, Latin American cities were at the center of the transformations triggered by them. By reconstructing the lives and careers of a group of immigrants who first introduced the new technologies in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, Cecilia Maas observes the transformations that they triggered in communication and cultural consumption.

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