ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: SYMBIOTIC CITIES: BUENOS AIRES, MONTEVIDEO, AND MASS CULTURE, 1910-1960

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This dissertation examines how Buenos Aires emerged as a creative capital of mass culture and cultural industries in South America during a period when Argentine theater and cinema expanded rapidly, winning over a regional marketplace swelled by transatlantic immigration, urbanization and industrialization. I argue that mass culture across the Río de la Plata developed from a singular dynamic of exchange and competition between Buenos Aires and neighboring Montevideo. The study focuses on the Argentine, Uruguayan, and international performers, playwrights, producers, cultural impresarios, critics, and consumers who collectively built regional cultural industries. The cultural industries in this region blossomed in the interwar period as the advent of new technologies like sound film created profitable opportunities for mass cultural production and new careers for countless theater professionals. Buenos Aires also became a global cultural capital in the wider Hispanic Atlantic world, as its

commercial culture served a region composed largely of immigrants and their descendants.

From the 1920s through the 1940s, Montevideo maintained a subordinate but symbiotic relationship with Buenos Aires. The two cities shared interlinked cultural marketplaces that attracted performers and directors from the Atlantic world to work in theatre and film productions, especially in times of political upheaval such as the Spanish Civil War and the Perón era in Argentina. As a result of this transnational process, Argentine mass culture became widely consumed throughout South America, competing successfully with Hollywood, European, and other Latin American cinemas and helping transform Buenos Aires into a cosmopolitan metropolis. By examining the relationship between regional and national frames of cultural production, my dissertation contributes to the fields of Latin American studies and urban history while seeking to de-center the United States and Europe from the central framing of transnational history.

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by

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Dedication

To Ana

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Introduction

In June 1937, the exiled Spanish actress Margarita Xirgu (1888-1969) again made her mark on the theatrical stages of Buenos Aires. At the downtown Teatro Odeon on Avenida Corrientes, Xirgu acted as the lead in *Yerma*, Federico Garcia Lorca's play about a series of tragedies caused by Catholicism in Spanish rural life.[1] Xirgu had performed in Buenos Aires as early as 1913, and she had starred in *Yerma* during the play's initial production in 1934. The 1937 performance in Buenos Aires was the American premiere of Lorca's play and brought Xirgu the applause of a discriminating *porteño* public that included many immigrants from Spain, according to contemporary observers. Lorca had tragically died in 1936 during the first months of the Spanish Civil War. Many audience members in Buenos Aires were likely aware of the emotional resonance of Xirgu performing *Yerma* in Argentina across the ocean from Spain. In March 1945, Xirgu would memorably perform another play by Lorca in Buenos Aires and gain the applause of mass publics at the Teatro Avenida on Avenida de Mayo in Buenos Aires. On this occasion, the play would be the first-ever production of Lorca's final play, *La casa de Bernardo Alba,* and Xirgu acted in another leading role that had been written for her by the Spanish dramatist shortly before his death.

The Teatro Odeon and the Teatro Avenida, like other theaters in downtown Buenos Aires during the first half of the twentieth century, offer the possibility for a historian to contemplate the importance of theaters as modern spaces that connected forms of mass culture and cultural politics across national borders. The theaters that were built in early twentieth-century Buenos Aires became urban spaces akin to the nineteenth-

[1] Maria M. Delgado, *'Other' Spanish Theatres: Erasure and Inscription on the Twentieth-Century Spanish Stage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)

century Parisian arcades analyzed by Walter Benjamin —downtown landmarks that reflected the global expansion of consumption and mass culture, experienced locally.[2] Many of Buenos Aires's theaters functioned as transnational spaces for the twentieth-century global flow of mass culture and cosmopolitanism, especially within the Hispanic Atlantic world where Margarita Xirgu was considered a peerless actress. During the 1930s, nearly all of Buenos Aires's theaters were increasingly used for either dramatic productions or film screenings. Unlike many actresses from this period, Xirgu's career uniquely reflected the central importance of dramatic performance and a preference for stage over screen.

Xirgu's initial success with *Yerma* at the Teatro Odeon in 1937 was quickly followed by a second staging of the same play at the nearby Teatro Smart. The run at the Smart exceeded one hundred performances. Xirgu's reading of scenes on Radio Rivadavia further extended the play's reach.[3] While in Buenos Aires in 1937, Xirgu also unwittingly became a refugee of the Spanish Civil War. At the conclusion of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, Xirgu began a permanent exile where she would reside in Argentina and Chile during the late 1930s and 1940s and then ultimately settle in Uruguay in 1949 until her death in 1969. Over the course of her residence in the Southern Cone, Xirgu continued to earn renown as the leading dramatic actress of the Spanish-speaking world. Xirgu's frequent performances in Buenos Aires were major draws at popular theaters along Avenida Corrientes and also the Spanish immigrant-owned theaters of nearby Avenida de Mayo. In Montevideo, on the other side of the Rio de la Plata, Xirgu sought a

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[2] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999)
[3] Delgado, '*Other' Spanish Theatres*, 49.

second exile from censorship in Argentina and she won continual acclaim as a lead actress and director of Uruguay's Comedia Nacional at the Teatro Solis, the Uruguayan state-sponsored opera house, located prominently on the city's Plaza Independencia.

In both Buenos Aires and Montevideo from the 1930s to the late 1950s, Xirgu interpreted a wide array of dramatic genres such as Molière's *Tartuffe*, Shakespearean dramas including *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, and Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello's *As You Desire Me* (1930). Xirgu sought to recreate on numerous South American stages the world she had abandoned in exile. In Madrid, her performances had been at the center of European modernist theater and Pirandello himself expressed the belief that Xirgu's acting in a 1935 Madrid performance of *As You Desire Me* was greatly superior to Greta Garbo's in the 1932 MGM film adaptation.[4] In the 1930s, Xirgu flourished as a leading transnational performer by acting for Spanish, Cuban, Mexican, Colombian, Peruvian, Chilean, Argentine and Uruguayan audiences. In 1938, shortly after her flight from Spain, Xirgu also starred in an Argentine film adaptation of Federico Garcia Lorca's *Bodas de sangre* (Blood Wedding) directed by Argentine journalist, critic, and dramaturge Edmundo Guibourg (1893-1986). Despite not being commercially successful, the film is historically significant for being Xirgu's sole foray into a "talkie" film. Her small participation in the Argentine film industry occurred at a moment when Argentine film studies were making hundreds of films.

The transnational repertoire of Xirgu's career was emblematic of interrelated shifts in the location, genres, and media of mass culture in the major metropolitan centers of the Spanish-speaking Atlantic world in the first half of the twentieth century. Xirgu

[4] Antonina Rodrigo, *Margarita Xirgu: una biografía* (Barcelona : Flor del Viento, 2005), 389.

participated in the dislocation and relocation of peninsular Spanish theater from Francoist Madrid to the cosmopolitan capitals of the River Plate. Buenos Aires emerged as the capital of dramatic performance in the Hispanic Atlantic, but Montevideo also played its part in advancing the place of theatrical performance as mass culture in the region. The migration of cultural figures from Spain to Buenos Aires and Montevideo also accompanied the rapid transformation of the mass culture industries in Argentina and Uruguay in the decades from 1910 to the 1950s. These transformations in theater and film also coincided with growth of mass urban culture as exemplified by the construction of numerous downtown commercial landmarks such as theaters, skyscrapers, and department stores. During Xirgu's career, the national theatrical cultures in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo underwent significant processes of massification and cosmopolitanization. While drawing large publics to downtown theaters, plays and films both shaped the discursive representations of urban culture that addressed major social transformations such as immigration, urbanization, and industrialization.

The interlinked histories of Buenos Aires and Montevideo and their shared narratives in urban imaginaries of modernity illustrate the possibilities for a unified comparative and also transnational history of urban mass culture in the River Plate between the First World War and the 1960s. Due to the influx of exiles and transnational performers from war-ravaged Europe, Buenos Aires and Montevideo became metropolitan centers whose cultural life included not only intellectuals and artists, but also theatrical performers, dramatists, and audiences that lived side by side in the polyglot capitals. In a historical epoch of cultural production marked heavily by shifting role of theater culture and the rising dominance of film in the 1930s to the 1950s, Buenos

Aires became more than ever the capital of mass cultural production in the River Plate and South America. The growth of mass culture in Buenos Aires was manifest in its downtown theaters that functioned as transnational laboratories for the transformations of mass culture amidst the rise of the Argentine film industry in the 1930s and 1940s while facing the wide-reaching expansion of Hollywood's global influence. The histories of these overlapping processes that shaped urban spaces and cultural production in Buenos Aires and Montevideo forms the focus of my dissertation.

The dissertation also seeks to trace how commercial producers remade the urban landscapes of Buenos Aires and Montevideo during the first half of the twentieth century through regional and global processes. The study's exploration of mass culture includes the histories of skyscrapers, department stores, and theaters as central spaces where cosmopolitan identities were created through different practices of mass consumption in urban space. At the same time, the business model of mass entertainment and the location of cultural production changed to incorporate leading actors and actresses who were relevant in the changing world of theater into national films. The gravitational forces of cultural markets shifted as well, strengthening the draw of Buenos Aires-based culture industries in regard to cultural performance and consumption in Montevideo. This dissertation concerns these dynamic changes, most importantly in relation to how the theater and film industries evolved to strengthen the mass culture industries of Buenos Aires.

"Symbiotic Cities" argues that the theatrical and film industries of Buenos Aires and Montevideo played interconnected roles in the transnational making of mass culture in Argentina and Uruguay between 1910 and 1960. In a period of increased mass media

and increasing levels of cultural consumption, Buenos Aires and Montevideo were major metropolitan centers where the expansion of mass culture reshaped the significance of both cities in both national and transnational contexts. Buenos Aires's pull on Uruguayan performers and dramatists primarily increased due to the expansion of mass culture industries from the 1910s to the 1960s. The professional experiences of how Argentines and Uruguayans elected to work in the theatrical industries in Montevideo are also explored, while considering how the politics and censorship of the Peronist regime in Argentina during the 1940s and 1950s provided an opening for mass cultural production in Uruguay. At the same time, both Buenos Aires and Montevideo were also major stopping points for transnational performers from Europe, especially Spain, and other parts of the Americas. The major claims of the study focus on examining how cultural producers in Buenos Aires and Montevideo engaged with one another and how both cities developed a shared history of mass culture.

Historiography

The dissertation aims to contribute to the cultural and urban histories of Buenos Aires and Montevideo while drawing on the transnational turn in Latin American history. The transnational turn in history has shown how national discourses about culture were constructed across borders and how transnational connections created cosmopolitan urban culture and shaped national mass cultures. Transnational flows illustrate the multiple links between ideas and places and the uneven exchanges of these flows. Scholars such as Laura Isabel Serna and Seth Fein have examined how film commerce and culture within and between the United States and Mexico did not just reflect

transnational forces, but helped to create them.[5] Fein's work on Mexican cinema guides my focus to consider how both theatrical and cinematic collaborations needed to occur in a transnational context to compete with the hemispheric focus of Mexican film on collaboration, convergence, and competition with Hollywood.[6] It is my contention that the theatrical market in Buenos Aires and Montevideo performed a similar function in the 1920s and 1930s that Mexican cinema would achieve for itinerant performers during the 1940s. The competing industries provided narrative frameworks and talents to the transnational market of mass culture in the Atlantic world in the early and mid-twentieth century. As Matt Karush has convincingly argued, transnational performers in radio and film in the River Plate partially shaped possible routes for global mass culture in Argentina.[7] Karush focuses on how local contexts and Argentine authenticity were used to appeal to consumers of national music and film genres. Building on this work, my work seeks to focus more on transnational forces related to the commercialization of theaters and consider how mass culture in Argentina and Uruguay that was built on theater culture could compete with Mexican cinema as well as Hollywood in the making of mass culture in South America.

As well, my project explores a different perspective by studying how important performers from the River Plate in the period from the 1920s to the 1950s were able to build and then sustain their careers by acting in theatrical production and films while

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[5] Laura Isabel Serna, *Making Cinelandia: American Films and Mexican Film Culture before the Golden Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014)
[6] Seth Fein, "Everyday Forms of Transnational Collaboration: U.S. Film Propaganda in Cold War Mexico," in Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. Legrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of the Imperial Kind: Writing the Cultural History of U.S. - Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 400-450.
[7] Karush, *Culture of Class*, 166.

moving freely across national borders. Performers that contributed to Argentine mass media productions in film and television participated in the mid-twentieth century hemispheric ordering of mass culture-- also taking place in Hollywood, Mexico, and Brazil--that included theater, film, and television while arguably relying on their theatrical background and the theater culture of Buenos Aires as a base. For Montevideo-based performers, Buenos Aires and Montevideo separately and together functioned as "contact zones" for theatrical performers in South America as disparate cultural practices from immigrants, exiles, and Argentine and Uruguayans were merged in the construction of regional and national cultures.[8]

In terms of the comparative design of my study between Buenos Aires and Montevideo, few historians have included twentieth-century Argentina and Uruguay in single studies since they have privileged the nation-state as a major factor in their analysis while overlooking the importance of region across national borders. Noteworthy studies have focused on political and immigration history, including Argentine and Uruguay's expanding states and political cultures, the rise of left-wing political factions in the 1960s, human rights movements, Southern Cone feminisms, and studies about immigration to the River Plate.[9] There are exceptions, including Ivette Trochon's study of

[8] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992)

[9] Ximena Espeche, "Cerca de la revolución. Uruguay, el semanario Marcha y la integración latinoamericana (1958-1959)," *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*, 2011, 1-20; Aldo Marchesi, "Revolution Beyond the Sierra Maestra: The Tupamaros and the Development of a Repertoire of Dissent in the Southern Cone," *The Americas*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (2014), 523-553; Asunción Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1890-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 1995.

prostitution networks in the Southern Cone in the early twentieth century.[10] Also, theater scholars Osvaldo Pelletieri and Roger Mirza have explored the importance of the Uruguayan dramatist Florencio Sanchez in shaping the theatrical traditions of both Uruguayan and Argentine theater.[11] In the case of Sanchez, scholars have addressed his work as speaking to *rioplatense* cultural traditions, but over time, this term has been mostly employed to describe literary traditions, but not the role of dramatists and performers in defining the growth of Argentine and Uruguayan mass culture.

In the historiography of theater in the River Plate, historians such as Osvaldo Pelletieri have shown that a number of genres helped to construct national and regional theatrical cultures in the River Plate. These included genres such as the vaudeville-like *teatro de revista,* Spanish zarzuelas, and the Argentine grotesque, as well as middle- and high-brow dramatic plays of sainetes by Argentine and Uruguayan playwrights, including Florencio Sanchez, Samuel Eichelbaum, and Armando Discepolo.[12] Yiddish and Italian theater, performed in the original and in translation, were also important. Like Hollywood's early recruitment of vaudeville performers who traded on a diverse range of Jewish ethnic humor (e.g., Al Jolson, Charlie Chaplin, and the Marx Brothers), the popular stage and early cinema in the River Plate grew as performers and dramatists from various ethnic milieus began to transit between an increasingly wide range of media and

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[10] Yvette Trochon, *Las rutas de Eros: la trata de blancas en el Atlántico Sur, Argentina, Brasil y Uruguay (1880-1932)* (Montevideo, Taurus, 2006)
[11] Osvaldo Pelletieri and Roger Mirza, eds. *Florencio Sánchez entre las dos orillas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 1998)
[12] Osvaldo Pelletieri, *Cien años de teatro argentino: del Moreira a teatro abierto* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1990); Gonzalez Velasco, *Gente de teatro*; Kristen L. McCleary, "Culture and Commerce: An Urban History of Theater in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1880-1920," PhD diss., University of California-Los Angeles, 2002.

spaces.[13] A disproportionate amount of the major stars of film in the River Plate from the 1930s to the 1960s were comic actors like Luis Sandrini and singers like Carlos Gardel whose performances on stage bequeathed them the abilities and reputations to become stars on the silver screen.[14] Sandrini's career as a performer began in the 1920s when he worked with the circus troupe and also on stage with the traveling troupe of Enrique Muino.[15] In comparison, Gardel began performing as a singer in the 1910s in Buenos Aires and was soon traveling to perform in Uruguay in 1915 and 1916, where he performed with José Razzano at Montevideo's Teatro Royal and Teatro 18 de Julio.[16]

In the realm of Latin American cultural history, the transnational turn has been influential for scholars interested in understanding how transnational connections were important for the development of popular cultural forms like music, but less so for theater. My work seeks to draw on the historiography of theater for the River Plate spearheaded by scholars such as Osvaldo Pelletieri, Roger Mirza, Jean Graham-Jones, and Beatriz Seibel and to look at it in a transnational framing. Graham-Jones has pursued this framing in her studies of Latin American theater history, but her work belongs more strictly to the field of cultural studies and Latin American literary scholarship.[17] As well,

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[13] Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1988)
[14] Julián Barsky and Osvaldo Barsky, *La Buenos Aires de Gardel* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2008)
[15] Osvaldo Pelletiteri, "Sandrini o la fusión de la risa y el llanto," in *De Totó a Sandrini: del cómico italiano al "actor nacional" argentino* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 2001), 179-190.
[16] Simon Collier, *The Life, Music & Times of Carlos Gardel* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986), 40-41.
[17] Jean Graham-Jones, "Aesthetics, politics, and vanguardias in twentieth-century Argentinean theater," in James M. Harding and John Rouse, eds., *Not the Other Avant-Garde: The Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 168-191.

scholars of Latin American cultural and intellectual history have examined how discourses about race and national identity have been constructed not merely in national contexts, but across national borders. Micol Seigel, Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, Bryan McCann, and Karin Rosemblatt have all lucidly explored how transnational connections diffusely shaped ideas about race and nation by looking at transnational exchanges between the United States and Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico.[18] Their works reflect different approaches to transnational history. Seigel has argued that transnational history overcomes the flawed lens of comparative history for understanding transnational processes since the comparison reifies difference. In contrast, Rosemblatt has argued that comparisons do not necessarily reify such differences and the transnational lens can be used to understand commensurability and how intellectual exchanges themselves were contested processes between American and Mexican intellectuals about the relationship between nature and culture in determining poverty. McCann's work the history of popular music in Brazil traces the construction of Brazilian mass culture as shaped by transnational commercial actors such as musical producers and recording companies. The transnational turn has profitably focused on the arbitrariness of national-bounded histories and the need to write through them. This impetus has come down from a variety of Latin Americanists and the edited volume *Close Encounters of Empire* stands out among the most thorough examples of the benefits for scholars to

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[18] Micol Seigel, *Uneven Encounters*: *Making Race and Nation in Brazil and the United State*s (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Jesse Hoffnung-Garskoff, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music and the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, "Other Americas: Transnationalism, Scholarship, and the Culture of Poverty in Mexico and the United States," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 89, no. 4 (2009): 603-641.

embrace the transnational turn in Latin American history.[19] With its focus on re-writing U.S.-Latin American relations, *Close Encounters* shows U.S. power as it manifested itself through non-state actors and was contested on the ground in this North-South encounter. Historians involved in the volume like Seth Fein, Catherine Legrand, and Ricardo Salvatore have looked at American company towns as "contact zones", cultural expeditions by early twentieth-century geographers and social scientists as being about racialized hierarchies and constructing narratives to reproduce power, and resultant hegemony and counter-hegemony in shaping national cultures by local non-elite actors. In this vein, Fein's work on transnational connections in U.S. and Mexican cinema is especially fruitful for my study since it shows the importance of transnational connections for shaping national cultures yet my work will consider mass culture as being shaped by Hollywood in addition to the regional, national, and transnational frames in the River Plate, Argentina, Uruguay, and Atlantic world. Fortunately, the literature on transnational actors and intellectuals in the Río de la Plata has expanded with great promise but has not paid sufficient attention to Argentine-Uruguayan cultural exchanges. There is intrinsic value in studying South-South cultural exchanges and understanding how Argentine and Uruguayan performers, dramatists, and critics considered their contributions to national cultures in a global context. By looking at Buenos Aires and Montevideo in narratives of global mass culture, it is possible to decenter the histories of mass culture from being about technological advances and U.S. and European hegemonies. Instead, the transnational flows of mass culture occurred within South

[19] Joseph, Salvatore, and LeGrand, *Close Encounters of the Imperial Kind: Writing the Cultural History of U.S. - Latin American Relations.*

America and along numerous vectors that were North-South, East-West, and South-South within Latin America.

In the Argentine context, Sandra McGee Deutsch has looked at Argentine Jewish women as helping to construct Argentine identities by their movements across geographic and social borders and defining their roles as spokespersons for both state and community building.[20] Intellectual historian Federico Finchelstein has looked at how Argentine fascists communicated in transatlantic dialogues, especially with Italian intellectuals, and how Argentine fascists were influential in the national public sphere in constructing ideas about national identity and anti-Semitism based on assorted intellectual hierarchies imported and redefined.[21] In work on the importance of positivist-influenced social sciences in racializing Argentine state policies, Julia Rodriguez has explored the importance of transatlantic exchanges in the global development of criminology. In particular, Argentine intellectuals became part of the expanding state apparatus by leveraging these transatlantic connections for prestige and patronage. These transnational studies have focused on national identities and politics rather than mass culture, and there is an important opening for a transnational study of Argentine national theater in dialogue with Uruguayan theater.

The rise of mass culture in Argentina and Uruguay in the early twentieth century became especially significant in the realm of cultural politics during the intense cultural nationalism associated with the populist regimes such as Peronism in Argentina and the

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[20] Sandra McGee Deutsch, Deutsch, Sandra McGee. *Crossing Borders, Claiming a Nation: A History of Argentine Jewish Women, 1880-1955* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010)

[21] Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010)

Batlle faction of Colorado Party in Uruguay. The rapid urbanization of the River Plate also led to levels of mass consumption comparable to other urban centers in the Atlantic world. The increasing role of the state politicized everyday and cultural life in the Rio de la Plata in the 1930s and 1940s. In particular, the Peronist regime, which rose to power in Argentina at the end of the Second World War, sought to use the burgeoning forms of mass culture such as radio and film, as well as the established market in theater, to further its political appeal.[22] My work departs from the recent and important historiography about mass culture and popular culture in Argentine by not primarily focusing on mass culture merely as a national phenomenon that connects directly to the national origins or impact of Peronism. Instead, my work seeks to place theater and mass culture in a longer transnational trajectory in the Rio de la Plata to understand mass culture as being shaped by factors beyond national politics. After 1955, opponents of Peronism responded after the fall of the populist regime through their attempts to reshape Argentine national culture and minimize the cultural influence of Peron's supporters yet this process also crossed borders in forcing performers into exile and reshaping a larger cultural landscape.[23]

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[22] Matthew Karush, "National Identity in the Sports Pages: Football and the Mass Media in 1920s Buenos Aires," *The Americas* Vol. 60, No. 1 (2003): 11-32; Matthew Karush and Oscar Chamosa, eds. *The New Cultural History of Peronism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Mariano Ben Plotkin. *Mañana es San Perón: A Cultural History of Perón's Argentina* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003); Eduardo Elena, "Peronist Consumer Politics and the Problem of Domesticating Markets in Argentina, 1943-1955, *Hispanic American Historical Review* 87, no. 1 (2006): 111-149; Clara Kriger. *Cine y peronismo: el estado en escena* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2009)

[23] Laura Podalsky, *Specular City: Transforming Culture, Consumption, and Space in Buenos Aires 1955-1973* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004)

"Symbiotic Cities" studies how theatrical performers and playwrights became involved in the shifting cultural dynamics that shaped mass culture back and forth across the Río de la Plata were politicized by both local and global cultural flows.[24] The historiography of the transition between theater and film in the United States has shown the links to the era of vaudeville for both the performers and producers of early film and its rapid commercialization. Studies have shown how Jewish Hollywood moguls, including Adolph Zukor, Carl Laemmle, and Louis B. Mayer, and the Warners, all leveraged their contacts with established theatrical producers and sought out established vaudeville and dramatic performers in New York to help build the Hollywood film industry.[25] In my work, I focus on the importance of networks for performers, directors, producers, theater owners, and film exhibitors, including the familial connections that drove many performers and cultural impresarios, as well as professional friendships that endured over decades while making contributions to stage and screen.

The development of mass culture in Argentina and Uruguay has been an increasingly important topic for research by literary scholars and cultural historians. In Argentina, the scholarship on theater culture by scholars like Beatriz Seibel and Osvaldo Pelletieri has provided precise periodizations for epochs of Argentine theater history and both have paid attention to the ebb and flow of performers from Uruguay. Kristen McCleary has also undertaken a social and urban history of Argentina theater from 1880 to 1930, showing the emergence of theater as a form of mass culture that heavily drew on

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[24] Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2, no. 2 (1990): 1-23; David Palumbo-Liu and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, eds. *Streams of Cultural Capital: Transnational Cultural Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997)

[25] Robert W. Snyder, *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York, 1880-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989)

the cultural impact of Spanish immigration and genres like the zarzuela. However, the emphasis of these scholars is strictly national and they do not consider how performers pursued opportunities in both a regional and more global context. Theater histories as well as film studies have understandably been written in a national frame, but in an area like the River Plate, this tendency overlooks the fluid nature of theater culture and the hegemonic place of Buenos Aires in the regional and hemispheric cultural market.

Scholars of mass culture in both Argentina and Uruguay have profitably explored the development of newspapers, film, and sport as prominent influences in the development of national identity in the 1920s and 1930s.[26] In Uruguay, scholars have primarily focused on the importance of popular entertainments such as carnival, club activities, soccer matches, and silent film in the period from 1910 to 1930.[27] There are theater histories by scholars such as Roger Mirza but they have focused more narrowly on the Uruguayan stage in its national context. Moreover, the principal liabilities of these cultural histories have been a periodization too closely tied to political regimes, the use of the populist state (especially Peronism) as the principal explanatory tool of cultural change, and the inattention to transnational developments. A close reading of the intertwined histories of theater and film addresses many of these shortcomings. The recent scholarship about the massification of society in Uruguay in the 1910s and 1920s focuses on theater as being an important form of elite and popular culture but overlooks the role of theater in the transition to mass culture. As well, my work aims to be among the first to examine the influence of Buenos Aires on Montevideo's unified cultural

[26] Matthew Karush, "National Identity in the Sports Pages: Football and the Mass Media in 1920s Buenos Aires," *The Americas* 60, no. 1 (2003): 11-32.
[27] Daniela Bouret and Gustavo Remedi. *Escenas de la vida cotidiana. El nacimiento de la sociedad de masas (1910-1930)* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 2009)

market during the early twentieth century while documenting for Argentine and Uruguayan scholars that the cultural histories of these two national capitals were linked on various interrelated levels.

"Symbiotic Cities" examines leading performers, themes, and genres that appeared on the Río de la Plata stage and screen that helped shape global mass culture in the transnational connections between Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and throughout the Americas. The globalization of mass culture in the early twentieth century was a process whereby so-called "peripheral" metropolitan centers like Buenos Aires were central to the making of cultural markets.[28] Building on the work of Carl Schorske and Marshall Berman regarding the trajectories of urban modernity in fin-de-siècle Vienna and early twentieth-century New York City, respectively, Beatriz Sarlo identifies the 1920s and the 1930s as the key decades for understanding the development of modernity in Buenos Aires.[29] "Symbiotic Cities" aims to build on the conceptual framework of Sarlo while also including Buenos Aires and Montevideo in a single frame, and both cities in the larger frame of the Latin American history.

The relationship between mass cultural producers and urban space is another theme that is explored in the dissertation. Both Buenos Aires and Montevideo's downtown districts became popular sites for mass cultural producers ranging from cultural impresarios to performers and critics. In the formulation of the urban sociologist Richard Florida, the creative class remade the downtown cores of global cities during the

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[28] Beatriz Sarlo, *Una modernidad periférica. Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Vision, 1988)
[29] Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna*: *Politics and Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980); Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1982)

last decades of the twentieth century by functioning as a mobile workforce.[30] Florida examines modern practitioners of the creative economy and argues that attracting young professionals as fundamental for the cultural vibrancy of cities. Was the same true for contributors to theater and film industries in Buenos Aires and to a lesser degree Montevideo during the early twentieth century in an industrial age? Florida's provocative and much-debated analysis about the benefits of the creative workforce emerged from the field of urban economics that seeks to understand how the market can transform the city. While sympathetic to the points made by Florida's various critics about the problems of focusing on branding the "creative class," I believe the concept of the "creative class" also provides an interesting frame for understanding urban space the early twentieth century Rio de la Plata.[31] Architects, cultural impresarios, writers, and playwrights all helped to define the urban imaginaries in Buenos Aires and Montevideo during the early twentieth century. This was most noteworthy in how Buenos Aires's downtown entertainment district was largely shaped by an array of historical actors who were the early twentieth century representatives of the creative workforce. Performers and urban intellectuals converged around theaters and cafes in the city center, building alliances that reflected the ability of writers to work in newspapers and magazines and also contribute to the ever-expanding fields of mass entertainment. The urban cultural landscapes of

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[30] Richard Florida, *The Rise Of The Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community And Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
[31] Among the many provocative criticisms of Florida, see Steven Malanga, "The Curse of the Creative Class," *City Journal* 14 (Winter 2004), accessed at http://www.city-journal.org/html/14_1_the_curse.html

early twentieth century Buenos Aires and Montevideo were driven by creative producers whose work provided representations of everyday life in these modern cities.

The urban landscapes of both Buenos Aires and Montevideo were particularly transformed by the expansion of theater culture, radio, film, and television. Downtown theaters served as venues for plays, radio plays, movies, and the spatial importance of these theaters was gradually displaced by television and its exponentially increased importance in the 1960s. Television initially arrived in Argentina in 1951 when cultural impresario and radio station owner Jaime Yankelevich started broadcasting on Argentina's Canal 7.[32] In Uruguay, television began in 1956 with private channels but did not become a state initiative until 1963. In both Argentina and Uruguay, early television programming drew heavily on *rioplatense* theatrical performers and traditions.

The histories of Argentina and Uruguay also shared numerous points of convergence and divergence in national and urban politics during the decades from 1910 to 1960 that impacted the development of their intertwined national cultural industries. Points of convergence included the democratic prosperity of each country during the 1910s and 1920s and also extended experiences with right-wing nationalism beginning in the 1930s. The countries were also transformed by transatlantic immigration from Europe during the period lasting from the 1860s to the 1920s. According to historian Michael Goebel, the rate of immigration to Uruguay and its impact on the country's population actually exceeded immigration to Argentina.[33] The migration patterns to both countries

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[32] Mirta Varela, *La televisión criolla: desde sus inicios hasta la llegada del hombre a la luna, 1951- 1969* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2005)

[33] Michael Goebel, "Gauchos, Gringos and Gallegos: The Assimilation of Italian and Spanish Immigrants in the Making of Modern Uruguay 1880-1930," *Past and Present*, Vol. 208, No. 1 (2010), 191-229.

included many immigrants from Spain, while Argentina also received proportionally larger numbers of Italians, Eastern Europeans, and Middle Easterners. According to demographers, Argentina increased in net immigration by 3.6 million immigrants from 1870 to 1930 and Uruguay received anywhere between 273,000 and 500,000.[34] The majority of these immigrants settled in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, where the urban populations became overwhelmingly foreign-born before World War One.

In 1910, Argentina celebrated its centennial during a moment of economic prosperity and political stability, albeit with elite domination of the political order that lasted from 1880 to 1916. The city of Buenos Aires was transformed in the years around 1910 with widespread urban reforms including the widening of avenues, the construction of sidewalks, the installation of electricity throughout the city center, and the construction of Latin America's first subway that opened in 1913 with six kilometers of track.[35] In addition to the widespread construction of theaters and new commercial spaces, city residents also enjoyed the benefits of a new waterworks and sewage system. The beautification of downtown also included a concern for improving living conditions throughout the city. The Buenos Aires city government paid increased attention to concerns in public health and housing conditions, especially the city's conventillo housing, which were akin to New York's tenement housing in terms of overcrowding by immigrants and the urban poor in the downtown areas. Starting in the 1920s, the

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[34] David Cook-Martin, *The Scramble for Citizens: Dual Nationality and State Competition for Immigrants* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 32.
[35] Richard J. Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires: 1910–1942* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Margarita Gutman, *Buenos Aires 1910: Memoria del Porvenir* (Buenos Aires: Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 1999)

consumption of mass culture became an increasing aspect of everyday life for different classes.

In the election of 1916, Argentina's voters elected Hipolito Yrigoyen from the Radical Party and his election marked the first mass participation in secret ballot elections in Argentina.[36] Yrigoyen served his first term as president from 1916 to 1922. His discursive appeal to the working class and middle was crucial to his first presidency and again when he was successfully won a second term 1928. Following the global economic crisis of 1929, Yrigoyen's second presidential term was unceremoniously truncated by the coup d'etat of 1930 led by a faction of the Argentine army that included Generla Jose Uriburu. The 1930s were notable for a political climate of right-wing nationalism and censorship in Argentina, a political climate that was also mirrored in Uruguay during the decade. The previously vibrant public sphere of Buenos Aires was detrimentally impacted by the xenophobic and anti-liberal policies of the Argentine governments of the 1930s.[37] In the 1930s, political elections were marked by the exclusion of opposition parties, abstention, and electoral fraud. During these years, Buenos Aires continued to develop its modern urban cultural effervescence in the fields of theater and film despite the stifling political climate and censorship in the press.

In Uruguay, early twentieth century social transformations in society were heavily shaped by the modernizing agenda of President José Batlle y Ordóñez, who was the country's most important politician during the twentieth century and the leader of the

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[36] Joel Horowitz, *Argentina's Radical Party and Popular Mobilization, 1916–1930* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008)
[37] Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010)

Colorado Party.[38] Batlle served two terms in office from 1903-1907 and 1911-1915. From 1907 to 1911, his political ally Claudio Williman was in power during a brief interregnum that still advanced the goals of Batllismo to have an interventionist state. During the period from 1903 to 1915, the successive governments furthered the aims of Battlismo. These aims included the democratization of Uruguay's political institutions, the expansion of state policies for public welfare, increased secularization, and an expansion of an economic model that balanced limited state-led industrialization and a primarily export-based economy.[39] The government also created a nine-member leadership committee known as the colegiado to create a less powerful chief executive. Between 1916 and 1930, Batllismo and the Colorado Party remained as a dominant political force but its emphasis on expanding the role of the state slowed from its earlier pace.

In 1923, Uruguay celebrated its national centennial with major festivities in Montevideo that included the construction of a major monument to the nation's founding father Jose Artigas in the city center. During this time, Montevideo's government also implemented major urban reforms, just like Buenos Aires had been a decade earlier. Among the most important constructions that spatially transformed Montevideo were the Rambla Sur, which was built as a pathway along the coast between 1923 and 1935. The construction of the Rambla more closely connected Montevideo to the coast of the Río de la Plata, and the city's development along the river's banks would be much more closely aligned than how Buenos Aires turned its back to the water. Other major urban reforms in

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[38] Milton Vanger, *Uruguay's José Batlle y Ordoñez: The Determined Visionary, 1915-17* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2009)
[39] Gerardo Caetano y José Rilla), *Historia contemporánea del Uruguay: de la Colonia al Mercosur* (Montevideo: Fin de Siglo, 1999)

Montevideo included the electrification of the city's British owned tram system, the construction of major municipal and government buildings, and the modernization of the city's port. Montevideo became an increasingly modern capital city in the early twentieth century, even if residents and visitors continually compared it to Buenos Aires.

The death of José Batlle y Ordóñez in October 1929 was a crucial event in Uruguay's history that coincided with the Great Depression. The economic downturn also resulted in the end of export-led growth for Uruguay. From 1930 to 1933, Batllismo again sought to expand the role of the state to combat the impact of the global economic crisis but with limited success since exports had fallen by over 20 percent in 1931 and 1932. The Uruguayan government's previously strong support for employment and social programs was reduced by this turn of events. The country's president during this time was Gabriel Terra, a politician who had taken office as a Batllista in 1931. In March 1933, Terra staged a coup d'etat to remove the colegiado and justified his move by claiming the political system was inefficient. Historians have argued that Terra was most interested in finding any reasoning for consolidating his political control to aid the landowning elite and British-owned public utilities in Uruguay that supported him and were opposed to the government policies of Batllismo.[40]

During Terra's regime, the government deployed censorship and mild levels of repression. Following the coup, the Batllista leader Baltasar Brum infamously committed suicide in a crowd in downtown Montevideo in March 1933. The tragedy would haunt many Uruguayans as the nadir of the period. The repression by Terra included the closure of Uruguayan newspapers and the exiled included the Batllista Uruguayan politician and

[40] Jose P. Barran and Benjamin Nahum, *El nacimiento del batllismo* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 1982), 116-17, 129.

dramatist Justino Zavala Muniz, who headed to Porto Alegre, Brazil. According to historian Henry Finch, the opposition to the regime became relatively muted and the government enhanced its appeal by increasing public employment like its predecessors. Terra's government also publicly supported the needs to favor landowners and workers in the rural economy, but the urban industrialization of the previous decades made the industrial sectors more dynamic and competitive. Uruguay continued to become an increasingly urban nation with half of the country's population in Montevideo. Terra's government ended in 1938 with the election of the more liberal candidate Alfredo Baldomir.

While Uruguay's undemocratic interlude in the early twentieth century was primarily limited to the five years of the Terra regime between 1933 and 1938, Argentina's governments remained undemocratically elected through the 1930s. The primary beneficiary of the political climate was President Agustin P. Justo, who emerged as the nation's leading politician during his presidency from 1932 to 1938 that was backed by an alliance of anti-Yrigoyen forces.[41] After his election in 1938, Argentina's newly elected president, Roberto Ortiz, sought to reintroduce democratic elections but was thwarted in his efforts. Ortiz was forced to relinquish his powers due to health problems in July 1940 and ultimately resigned in June 1942. His vice president, Ramón Castillo, took office and had to deal with the delicate positioning of Argentina with regard to its maintaining neutrality during the outbreak of World War II. Castillo was forced from office by a coup d'etat in June 1943 by nationalist military officers that

[41] Jorge Nallim, *Transformations and Crisis of Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1955* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012)

included Colonel Juan Perón. Working as the Secretary of Labor, Perón began his political ascent towards becoming Vice President and then President of Argentina.

The rise of Perón would produce Argentina's dominant political movement of Peronism, which became a leading variant of Latin American populism. Perón reoriented the relationship between the Argentine state and organized labor and his government also redefined the social understandings of citizenship. As one example, Peronist supporters invaded elite neighborhoods of Buenos Aires that were previously segregated by class distinctions. In the formulation of historian Daniel James, "Buenos Aires was hallowed territory, defined as the old established residential and administrative centers where political power resided and where, by extension, socially and culturally relevant activity occurred."[42] In the dissertation, I explore several manifestations of how mass culture reflected these spatial and cultural conflicts in Buenos Aires during the 1940s and 1950s and the Peronist period. My concern is how Peronism was lived by cultural producers of theater and film in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, and I specifically focus on several instances of how Peronism reoriented the relationship in cultural production between the two cities.

Peron's government lasted for two terms from 1946 to 1955 and relied on the appeal of his heterodox political projects and the vociferous political discourse that he practiced along with his wife, Eva Perón. Their partnership was a powerful force and Eva Perón's death in 1952 from cancer reduced the government's political energies. In 1955, another coup d'etat ended the first Peronist government. After the coup, Argentina would alternate between military and democratically elected politicians from 1955 until 1983. In

[42] Daniel James, "October 17th and 18th, 1945: Mass Protest, Peronism and the Argentine Working Class," *Journal of Social History* (Spring 1988): 441-461.

1958, with Peronism proscribed from the elections, the Radical leader Arturo Frondizi took office until his government was ended by televised military intervention in 1962.

In Uruguay, the political climate from 1938 until 1960 was far less turbulent than in Argentina and this stability also manifested itself in a political environment free from censorship and the polarized public sphere in Montevideo of the 1930s. In the 1940s, Uruguay enjoyed normal political transitions despite a brief autocratic period under Baldomir. In 1947, Colorado politician Luis Batlle Berres, the nephew of José Batlle y Ordóñez, became president of Uruguay after the death of President Tómas Berreta. From 1947 to 1958, Batlle's government pursued populist policies to expand the post-war welfare state. As Uruguayan sociologist Fernando Lopez Alves has argued, Neobatllismo pursued "industrial development under state tutelage (which) represented a new instrument to develop public education and the welfare state, to promote the interest of the middle class, and to widen the channels of social mobility."[43] Batlle Berres promoted import substitution and large subsidies across different sectors of the economy during the late 1940s and 1950s. Neobatllismo remained the dominant political ideology until 1958, when the party suffered its first-ever electoral defeat to the Nationalists, who were backed by landed elites. The late 1950s and 1960s continued an expansion of the state as a principal employer, but Uruguay's economic competitive continued to wane in the global economy.

During the decades from 1910 to 1930, both Buenos Aires and Montevideo had grown at a rapid pace due to transatlantic immigration and also the beginning waves of

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[43] Fernando Lopez Alves, "Why not Corporatism? Collective Bargaining and Interest Intermediation in the 1940," in *Latin America in the 1940s,* edited by David Rock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 187-206.

mass rural to urban migrations. The population of Buenos Aires in 1910 was around 1.2 million, and it exploded to nearly three million by 1950. The metropolitan area numbered eight million by the late 1960s.[44] Montevideo's population in 1908 was 309,231 and the population doubled to 655,389 in 1930 and nearly doubled once more to 1.2 million in 1960, close to the 1.3 million that the city maintains today. The rapid growth of Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the twentieth century also marked rapid expansion in consumption that coincided with high levels of employment. Around the middle of the century in 1950, Uruguayans went to the movies an average of nine times per year in Montevideo, a much higher rate than later in the century, and they also went to the theater at record levels into the early 1960s when an average of 786,104 spectators attended theater productions between 1960 and 1962.[45] Buenos Aires's cultural consumption per capita was similar to Montevideo's albeit slightly lower. However, the bigger population of Buenos Aires meant a larger marketplace. In the early 1950s, Argentina's own national cinema continued to captivated audiences, Argentines headed to the cinema at an average of 4,851,000 times per a month, an impressive rate in a country of 17.5 million people. Domestic productions were especially popular for their cross-class appeal during the so-called Golden Age of Argentine cinema in the 1930s through 1950s.[46]

As a study of mass urban culture in the River Plate, "Symbiotic Cities" argues that theatrical productions and Argentine films provided narratives and experiences that

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[44] James R. Scobie, *Buenos Aires: Plaza to Suburb, 1870-1910*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.
[45] Osvaldo Saratsola, *Función completa, por favor: un siglo de cine en Montevideo.* Montevideo, Uruguay: Ediciones Trilce, 2005; Roger Mirza, "Signos contradictories en el sistema teatral, uruguayo contemporaneo," in Osvaldo Pellettieri, ed. *El teatro y su crítica*, Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1998, 91-104.
[46] Matthew Karush, *Culture of Class: Radio and Cinema in the Making of a Divided Argentina, 1920–1946* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012)

emphasized issues related to everyday transformations in urban life in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The dissertation also examines how the downtown theaters of Buenos Aires and Montevideo provided spaces for cultural politics that were connected to both national and global issues. Simultaneously, the dissertation studies how mass culture industries in Argentina and Uruguay aided the development of Buenos Aires and Montevideo as cosmopolitan cities that shared parallel development of modern spaces in their downtowns. Theaters functioned as sites of global modernity in the River Plate in which important narratives about Buenos Aires and Montevideo were treated. These included migration, technological advances, and urban/rural dichotomies that were important themes in theater and film. As historians continue to debate the merit of modernity as a historical category of analysis, my work seeks to engage its continuing value by considering how modernity highlights the mutual construction of hybrid culture by often competing actors. *Symbiotic Cities* looks at the evolution of mass culture to understand the role of performers in these processes.

Historians have shown that the societal transformations such as urbanization and industrialization, caused by dynamic capitalism in the River Plate in the early twentieth century, fomented new cultural practices and spaces of consumption. As a lens to understand the resultant practices of consumption and the transnational connections of cosmopolitanism, theatrical culture and Argentine and Uruguayan plays and films written and performed from 1910 to 1960 provide a useful window to explore understandings about shared regional and national identities between Argentina and Uruguay.

In Buenos Aires and Montevideo, like in Madrid and New York, theater culture earned its place as the dominant form of mass culture at the beginning of the twentieth

century. Between Broadway, the West End, and Avenida Corrientes in Buenos Aires, out of the world of theater in the 1920s emerged the actors, producers, genres, and narratives that would be utilized in motion pictures, radio, popular fiction, and several decades later, television. [47] During these transformations and the expansion of the cultural markets in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, local and itinerant theatrical performers in Argentina and Uruguay worked out the languages of everyday life and also elevated the global reputation of Buenos Aires as a metropolitan center for transnational urban culture. The importance of mass culture in the Rio de la Plata also rested on Buenos Aires and Montevideo's theatrical markets as centers for discourses about ethnicity, immigration, cosmopolitanism, populism, and nationalism. As Argentine and Uruguayan mass culture developed in theater and later in film and radio, and eventually in television productions, discourses about national identities incorporated the disparate ethnic mosaics of the nations into their stories and humor. This study argues that Buenos Aires's role in the making of mass culture in the Río de la Plata dramatically gained in prominence between 1910 and 1960 and this cultural hegemony in the Río de la Plata and South America can carefully be traced by exploring how a once symbiotic relationship with Montevideo was transformed by a growing asymmetry. "Symbiotic Cities" pursues a transnational history of theater culture in the River Plate and its connections to the growth of mass culture in the Argentina and Uruguay allows for a new take on how global flows shaped local cultural practices and national cultures as much as local cultural traditions.

Historical Background

[47]Carolina González Velasco, *Gente de Teatro. Ocio y espectáculo en la. Buenos Aires de los años veinte* (Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2011); Mirta Varela, *La televisión criolla. Desde sus inicioshasta la llegada del hombre a la Luna 1951-1969* (Buenos Aires, Edhasa, 2005)

The dynamics of the intertwined urban cultural production between Buenos Aires and Montevideo had extensive roots in the nineteenth century. During the formative decades of nation-state consolidation, the expansion of print culture in Buenos Aires and Montevideo strengthened the formation of a regional cultural market exhibiting local national cultural inflections. As literary scholar William Acree has argued in an important corollary to the work of Benedict Anderson, the expansion of print culture in the River Plate in the nineteenth century mattered not only to the elite literate classes but also to illiterate and semi-literate members of society as printed images powerfully created ideas about national identity that circulated back and forth across the River Plate.[48] In the realms of print culture as well as theater culture, Buenos Aires functioned as competing and complementary metropolitan centers in the making of a regional River Plate culture that connected to the global flows of burgeoning nineteenth-century modern urban culture. In the twentieth century, the primacy of urban print culture and the "lettered city" in Latin America, as formulated by Uruguayan literary critic Angel Rama, was gradually eclipsed by the mass cultural forms of theater, film, and television. Using a cultural studies approach to understand Buenos Aires as a cultural capital from the late nineteenth century through the 1990s, David William Foster has explored Buenos Aires as a lettered city remade by popular voices and the increasing power of visual culture. In particular, Foster's work on theater has argued that cosmopolitan Buenos Aires encouraged first-generation Argentine performers to embrace different identities to appeal to the multiple publics, with some performers choosing the dictions of immigrant dreamers and others

[48] William Garrett Acree Jr., *Everyday Reading: Print Culture and Collective Identity in the Río de la Plata, 1780–1910* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011).

the speech patterns and appearance of stylish Latin American icons.[49] In a similar vein, my study explores how theatrical performers and dramatists in the River Plate shaped both national and global mass culture through their offerings from 1910 to 1960 to explain the development of Buenos Aires and Montevideo as capitals of national mass culture industries.

In the transformative period from 1910 to 1960, Buenos Aires and Montevideo participated in shaping global and transnational urban culture by serving as important urban centers in the South Atlantic and Iberian world as global mass entertainment transitioned from the principal dominance of the stage performance to the supremacy of motion pictures in the 1930s to 1950s and then to television beginning in the late 1950s. Although the market share, profitability, and celebrity of the dramatic stage would be eclipsed by these other cultural venues, theater remained a key proving ground for innumerable actors and directors who sought out the limelight of mass culture appeal. Dramatic performers emerged most prominently from the Spanish, Italian, and Jewish immigrant communities in the regions. The Argentine actor Luis Sandrini (1905-1980) typified the appeal of the Italian comedic malapropisms in his early films and his career as an Argentine move star would ultimately include films made in Argentina, Chile, and Mexico before returning to Argentina where he once again become a leading film and television star.

In the Río de la Plata, I argue that urban space was remade by the changing forms of mass culture and transnational flows that made theaters into key sites of modernity during the period from 1910 to 1960 when theater and cinema were the two main forms

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[49] David William Foster, *Buenos Aires: Perspectives on the City and Cultural Production* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998)

of urban mass culture. To date, historians comparing urban culture in Buenos Aires and Montevideo have paid little attention to the regional and transnational cultural flows that connected the two cities. My dissertation seeks to contribute to our understanding of the global and local forces that shaped theaters as urban spaces where mass culture was produced and performed for immigrant and native publics. Theaters maintained a sustained importance in Buenos Aires and Montevideo during the whole period under study and important theaters were built in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s in the respective downtowns. These changes were part of theater-owners attempts to attract bigger audiences, to increase revenues, and to grow the entertainment markets.

Following the era of mass migration, the heterogeneous Argentine and Uruguayan publics developed their appreciations for the major River Plate theatrical genres of the first half of the twentieth century that included sainetes, zarzuelas, *teatro de revista*, and musicals. Major actors and comic performers like Pepe Arias (1900-1967), Luis Sandrini (1905-1980), Tita Merello (1904-2002), and musical performers like Carlos Gardel (1890-1935) all developed their crafts on downtown stages before all transitioning into film. From behind the curtain and the camera, the Argentine playwright/director Manuel Romero (1891-1954) and the Argentine dramatist Armando Discépolo (1887-1971) and his brother Enrique Santos Discépolo (1901-1951) all participated in the transitions from stage to screen. As some of the main actors in the study, these performers were also all transnational actors in the construction of mass culture in the River Plate and South America. My study seeks to examine the importance of the theater and stage in their careers, as well as considering the transnational nature of their careers in the context of national cultural industries and also the impact of politics.

From the 1930s to 1950s, the expansion of the film industries in Argentina and to a much smaller scale in Uruguay— as well as rising discretionary incomes, entrepreneurial risk-takings, and audience tastes — drove the increase in the number of exhibition houses oriented towards film screenings rather than stage performances. In Argentina, the burgeoning film industry was a draw for theatrical performers seeking employment and stardom. The ascendancy of the Uruguayan film industry was much more attenuated, where theater received extensive state backing and film producers lacked the capital to compete with Argentine productions. The Uruguayan film industry, for what it was, made little attempt to compete with the powerful studio systems in Argentina, Mexico, and Hollywood. One result was that North American and European movies found a continually strong market share in Uruguay, while Uruguayan actors were forced to try to further their careers in Buenos Aires since it was the only cultural capital in South America that could compete in the expanding mass media landscape. The expanding state apparatus in Argentina during the 1940s and 1950s provided uneven but expanded state support for cultural endeavors in film and also television. By the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, film and television would begin to define the cultural landscape at the expense of theater. In turn, theater traditions still enabled Uruguayan television to have another chance at competing in the local and regional marketplace since Uruguayan television sought to compete in its local marketplace with Argentine television in its first decade although taped Argentine programming was important from the dawn of Uruguayan television. Throughout the period from 1910 to 1960 that witnessed the transformations in the dominant forms of mass culture, Uruguayan performers shared the stage with Argentine performers and Buenos Aires's mass cultural

productions in theater, film, and television drew on its privileged place as an important metropolitan node in the Atlantic world.

In this study, global mass culture includes the flows of transnational performers that attracted mass publics to support theater, film, radio, and television. The definition of mass culture is focuses on forms of mass entertainment such as theater, film, and television that featured the leading performers of each era. The study also considers the relationship between theater and the built environment. The study does not focus on radio in Argentina and Uruguay, since radio was inherently less transnational than theater or film due to the limitations of the technology of broadcasting in the first half of the twentieth century. The histories of radio in Argentina and Uruguay have also been well explored in recent studies by Andrea Matallana and Christine Ehrick that reflect similarities in the importance of immigrant entrepreneurs and also actors and actresses crossing borders.[50] Argentine and Uruguayan radio performers made important contributions to the transnational making of national mass culture in Argentina and Uruguay, but that process was also expanded by virtue many performances taking place on stage and also examples of radio performers taking their characters onto the screen. On the other hand, the popularization of tango music through radio and film was also the work of transnational mass media that evolved from commercial interests in Argentina, Uruguay, and the wider Atlantic world. The reception of tango on theater and film is thus included in the dissertation within the contexts of theater and film. Finally, in the 1950s

[50] 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* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

and 1960s, the rise of television was a major factor in the deterritorialization of urban consumption away from central urban entertainment districts in Buenos Aires and Montevideo to domestic spheres. Nevertheless, theater culture and stage performers provide a script for tracing how culture diffused across national borders between the two major urban centers in the Río de la Plata and beyond into their hinterlands. "Symbiotic Cities" examines the transition from theater to film and the growth of mass cultural industries as barometers of the changing forms of mass media from the 1910s to the 1960s.

Chapter Organization

The first chapter of the dissertation, "Mirrored Cities: Mass Culture in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, 1910-1936" explores the urban imaginaries of Buenos Aires and Montevideo, arguing that the two were mutually constitutive in this key period begins at the tail end of the era of mass migration and closes during the Great Depression. I examine how flaneurs, journalists, and travelers in both cities understood urban modernity as being defined by sites of consumption that connected the two cities to the mass cultural forms of the wider Atlantic world. Drawing on memoirs, essays, poetry, advertisements, catalogs, periodical press, and visual representations of urban space, I follow in the footsteps of previous scholars like Beatriz Sarlo while also seeking to create a single frame for tracing the urban cultural histories of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. In both capitals of the Río de la Plata, there was a true synchronicity in the rise of skyscrapers, the opening of department stores, the promotion of urban reforms that impacted the streetscape and also shaped cultural production such as poetry and tango music, and the visual representations of urban modernity in both cities. The rise of

skyscrapers, department stores, and theaters were all modern venues for consumption that created cosmopolitan urban culture and linked Buenos Aires and Montevideo.

In Chapter Two, I study the careers of Max Glucksmann and his brother Bernardo Glucksmann and their seminal role in the development of mass culture in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo from the 1910s into the 1950s. After immigrating to Argentina from Eastern Europe, Max Glucksmann became a titan of the film exhibition circuit in South America and a leading businessman in Buenos Aires's Jewish community. While charting Max Gluckmann's career through the mainstream press in Argentina and the international press of the cinema industry, my analysis probes more deeply into the connections between Max Glucksmann and his brother Bernardo Glucksmann in his cinematic exhibition business in Uruguay. Using a comparative and transnational approach than differs from previous scholarship about the Glucksmanns, I explore their combined impact on the downtown spaces of mass culture in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Empirically, the chapter traces the rise and fall of the business interests of both brothers after achieving great financial successes. The sources draw on a wide swath of periodicals and professional trade press from Argentina, Uruguay, and the United States to understand the global machinations of the Glucksmann brothers' lives. The chapter also weighs how the intertwined Argentine and Uruguayan histories of film culture and exhibition have been under-explored in the scholarship about the film culture in South America.

Chapter Three focuses on the rise of the Argentine film industry in the 1930s and 1940s and what this meant for the uneven relationship between Buenos Aires and Montevideo as well as growth of film culture in neighboring Santiago del Chile. The

chapter charts the competition between the Argentine film industry and the Mexican film industry and Hollywood during the late 1930s and 1940s in various Latin American urban centers including Santiago del Chile. It also explores Buenos Aires's film industry in a transnational context amidst the changing contours of mass culture and the gradual but emergent hegemony of Argentine film in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo in relationship to Hollywood. However, Hollywood film studios were able to retake the lion's share of the market from Argentina across all of Latin America by the late 1940s. The Mexican film industry was also more globally competitive than the Argentine film industry because of the support of the Mexican state and also the relationship between Mexican and Hollywood film studios. In this hemispheric history of Buenos Aires as a capital of film production, the chapter also considers the unique situations in Uruguay and Chile wherein Argentine film was a model for strategies by Uruguayan and Chilean entrepreneurs to contribute to their smaller national cinemas. The chapter draws on first-hand accounts of spectatorship and production, including several different magazines devoted to covering mass culture in Latin America. For the chapter, I also sought to create an archival base that reflects the possibilities and challenges of transnational history. In particular, the chapter draws its empirical evidence from the digital archives of the Chilean film magazine *Ecrán* and also my own digitization of the Uruguayan magazine *Cine Radio Actualidad*.

Chapter Four turns the focus back to the careers of performers and dramatists affiliated with commercial and state-backed theater in Buenos Aires and Montevideo during the transformative decades of the 1940s and 1950s. The careers of Uruguayan dramatists such as Angel Curotto and Justino Zavala Muniz and the Spanish actress

Margarita Xirgu provide the principal case studies for understanding how there was an opening for mass culture in Uruguay at this time. Additionally, the careers of other performers and dramatists such as the Argentine actor and director Orestes Caviglia and the Uruguayan author Enrique Amorim in Buenos Aires and Montevideo offer insights into the enhanced importance of Uruguayan theater and the smaller possibilities for Uruguayan film in the 1940s and 1950s. The chapter draws from archival materials from the correspondence of Angel Curotto and Enrique Amorim at the Uruguyan Biblioteca Nacional, correspondence from Curotto and Margarita Xirgu held at the Asociación General de Autores del Uruguay, and the institutional archives of the Teatro Solis.

Advancing the narrative to the ending point of the period under study, the Conclusion places the world of theater and film in dialogue while also contextualizing the emergence of television in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the 1950s and 1960s. It tracks the decline of the Argentine film industry and how television impacted the spatial landscape of performance and exhibition in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The conclusion also considers the lasting manifestations of the worlds of Argentine/Uruguayan/River Plate theater culture and their contributions to national cultures of River Plate film and television in the 1950s and the 1960s.

The organization of the dissertation includes interlinking case studies that collectively point toward the possibilities for writing urban cultural histories about two cities. The goal of the dissertation is to inspire other studies that examine urban cultural production in transnational contexts while also pursuing them through different questions and sources. The urban cultural history of Buenos Aires remains a fertile topic for study despite the hundreds of research projects that have tackled aspects of the city's cultural

life. My dissertation seeks to contribute to this topic while also helping to build enthusiasm for future historical studies of Montevideo's mass culture and its connections to Buenos Aires.

Chapter One
Mirrored Cities: Mass Culture in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, 1910-1936

In the early morning of November 21, 1933, the Mexican writer and diplomat Salvador Novo (1904-1974) arrived by boat to the harbor of Montevideo from Santos, Brazil. In his 1935 travel memoir *Continente Vacío*, the Mexico City resident recounted being unimpressed by his chosen lodgings in Montevideo at the downtown Gran Hotel and generally by what he saw of the city during his initial explorations.[1] Novo found Montevideo to be surprisingly "poor and small." At half past nine o'clock on a weekday morning, the city streets in the Ciudad Vieja neighborhood were near empty and the nearly all of the local shops were still closed. Novo went to a nearby café for breakfast and wound up eating horrible bread and lukewarm coffee. He then walked to the Plaza Constitution for a shoeshine and asked if there were prettier streets anywhere in the city. The shoeshine man said that he did not know. The Mexican traveler returned to his hotel. At noon, Novo was surprised to see from his hotel window that the depressing café had become a bustling restaurant with beautiful women and elegant men eating lunch. At dinnertime, the same restaurant had been transformed once again and waiters were serving steaks at tables covered in blue tablecloths. In the following days, as the Mexican poet visited different parts of the city, Novo found himself increasingly taken with Montevideo's bourgeois charms. There were well-organized "armies of taxis, streetcars, and buses" for transportation and Montevideo's downtown was a bustling site of mass consumption.[2]

[1] Salvador Novo, *Continente vacío (viaje a Sudamérica)* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1935)
[2] Novo, *Continente vacío*, 141.

Novo's principal guide to the urban culture of Montevideo was Enrique Diez Canedo, the Spanish ambassador to Uruguay and an old friend.[3] Diez Canedo introduced Novo to Uruguayan friends such as the poet and Socialist politician Emilio Frugoni. Novo also discovered that Montevideo's principal avenue, Avenida 18 de Julio, and its various cafes, theaters, and cabarets all excited him. Novo concluded that the reason the city was so deserted in the morning was the inhabitants were still sleeping after going out to partake in the "populous nighttime" where the earliest shows at the theaters began at 10 o'clock.

While exploring Montevideo's streets, Novo used the towering spire of Montevideo's signature skyscraper, the Palacio Salvo, as his beacon to orient his walks through the city. The cultural connections between Montevideo and neighboring Buenos Aires were present in Novo's mind. He remarked how mass entertainment in Montevideo was closely tied to Buenos Aires and how even a mediocre Argentine theater troupe was prominently advertised at Montevideo's Teatro Solis. Novo's Uruguayan friends also fervently expressed that it was a true shame that the Argentine tango star Carlos Gardel was not currently performing in Montevideo. As a consolation, Gardel's songs were constantly heard in Montevideo cafes. Novo also wrote how he began to feel the penetration of tango into his soul while he spent time in Uruguay's metropolis. During his brief stay of several weeks in Montevideo Novo became a habitué of Café Tupi on Avenida 18 de Julio where he liked to go at two o'clock in the morning to drink coffee and listen to tango. Novo also was amazed by the quantity of cheap movie theaters that

[3] Novo, Continente vacio, 137.

occupied the downtown and also advertised as places for trysts, which made him feel shameful for all their patrons. [4]

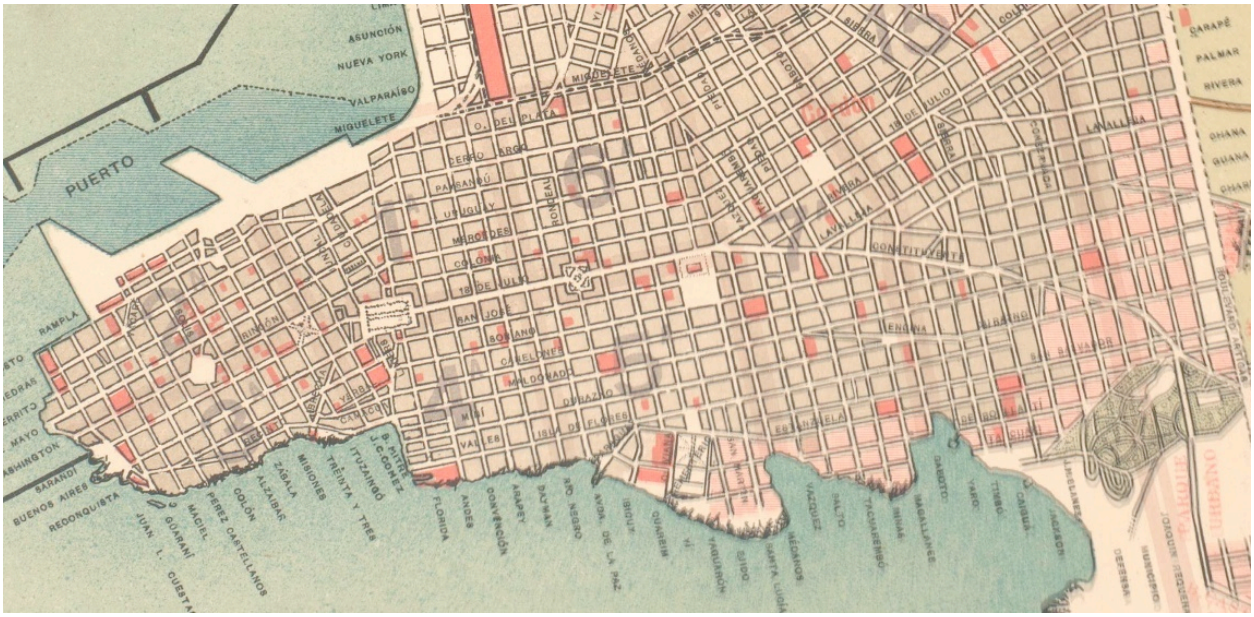

Figure 1

1906 Map of Downtown Montevideo (Library of Congress Geography and Map Reading Room)

Novo imagined that the equestrian statue of Uruguayan national hero José Gervasio Artigas that occupied the city's eponymous Plaza Artigas was riding towards Buenos Aires. According to Novo, many Uruguayans considered "Buenos Aires as a city of legend, being so close, and it was a veritable tragedy if they could not go there." Novo also learned that for Uruguayan intellectuals, Buenos Aires had been a refuge during moments of political turmoil and civil unrest in Montevideo and remained the place where Uruguayans had gone into exile from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Novo also noted that the inverse was also true and that there was a historical phenomenon

[4] Novo, *Continente vacio*, 149.

of exchanging political exiles between the two cities. Argentine political exiles had chosen to live in Montevideo during the reign of Juan Manuel Rosas in Buenos Aires in the 1840s and had continued to do so until the 1930s.

Traveling to Buenos Aires after his stay in Montevideo, Novo compared Buenos Aires to Montevideo as well as to other global cities. Novo noted that the streets of Buenos Aires were "longer, and more of the big city than those in Montevideo."[5] Novo compared the downtown street Diagonal Roque Saenz Pena to Broadway in New York and Market Street in San Francisco, all, he felt, built to disorient pedestrians. He also walked along Buenos Aires's Calle Florida where the French influences were bountiful and excessive. Novo repeated the witticism that "if all of the store signs in French had been changed into signs in English, it would have looked like a street in Paris."[6] Novo took pleasure in walking in downtown Buenos Aires and also spent several evenings at downtown theaters where the dramas of his friend Federico Garcia Lorca were being performed to packed houses and "all of Buenos Aires" was in attendance.[7]

The travel writing of Salvador Novo illustrates the connections and importance of comparison in the urban imaginaries between Buenos Aires and Montevideo. For many travelers, their urban imaginaries reflected the importance of comparing the cities in their similarities and differences. The mirrored aspects of Buenos Aires and Montevideo functioned in the imaginaries of travelers and natives, and also showed the importance of regional and broader global flows of mass culture that connected the two cities. Scholar Andreas Huyssen has argued, "an urban imaginary marks first and foremost the way city

[5] Novo, *Continente vacio*, 176.
[6] Novo, *Continente vacio, 183.*
[7] Novo, *Continente vacio*, 188-189.

dwellers imagine their own city as the place of everyday life, the site of inspiring traditions and continuities as well as the scene of histories of destruction, crime, and conflicts in all kind."[8] In this chapter, I focus on how city dwellers and travelers in Buenos Aires and Montevideo have imagined the cities and particularly thought about everyday life.

The historical evolution of mass culture in Argentina and Uruguay also reflected the shared national histories in different cultural fields, as William Acree has lucidly explored in his study of nineteenth print culture in the Río de la Plata.[9] Acree shows how practices of "everyday reading" in places such as taverns in Argentina and Uruguay helped to create highly literate populations through publications ranging from newspapers to political manifestos to school textbooks. Building on Acree's work that examines shared national literary traditions, I explore the continued evolution of cultural connections between Buenos Aires and Montevideo during the first half of the twentieth century through the lens of mass culture. This chapter explores how urban space evolved and inspired cultural production by urban chroniclers in Buenos Aires and Montevideo between 1910 and 1936. I trace the overlapping historical processes related to the rise of mass culture and growth of modern urban spaces like skyscrapers, department stores, and theaters. Drawing on the urban imaginaries of both residents and travelers to the Río de la Plata, I examine how Buenos Aires and Montevideo developed as mirrored cities and

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[8] Andreas Huyssen, "World Cities, World Cultures," in *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing World*, edited by Andreas Huyssen (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 1-26.

[9] William Acree, *Everyday Reading: Print Culture and Collective Identity in the Río de la Plata, 1780–1910* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011)

created interconnected urban marketplaces for mass culture and new spaces of modern urban sociability.

The connections in the urban landscape between Buenos Aires and Montevideo also provide examples of the changing relationship between the two capitals during the early twentieth century. I approach the cultural histories of Buenos Aires and Montevideo as shared histories that can best be comprehended through the interlinking methods of comparative and transnational urban histories. In this chapter, I trace the cultural connections between the two cities in a wider transnational context while also comparing their spatial transformations in the construction of modern urban spaces such as skyscrapers, theaters, and department stores. This method employs a dialogical model for writing about the urban culture of Latin American cities. There exist such dialogical relationships between neighboring or competing metropolises across the globe ranging from the relationship between London and Paris, New York and Los Angeles, Beijing and Shanghai, and São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.[10] During the increasing urbanization of the twentieth century, modern cities have also proven to be the preeminent spaces for intellectual framings of modern life. The range of polyphonic intellectual and cultural connections across porous national borders between Buenos Aires and Montevideo resulted in transformed urban landscapes in both cities.

The interlinked histories of the two cities influenced urban imaginaries that evolved during the first half of the twentieth century for residents and visitors in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. In his transnational history of Dominican migrants in New York and Santo Domingo, Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof has illustrated how the development of

[10] David Halle, ed., *New York and Los Angeles*: *Politics, Society, and Culture-A Comparative View* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

urban life and consumption in both cities became interconnected.[11] Dominicans in New York were imagined as modern by relatives in the Dominican Republic. A similar dynamic existed between Buenos Aires and Montevideo, as exemplified by Salvador Novo's chronicles. In Buenos Aires and Montevideo, downtown areas were transformed by intellectual and commercial exchanges between residents as well as the wider global flows of modern urban culture. In another comparative study of connected cities, the architectural historian Sheila Crane has studied the architectural histories of modernist design between Marseilles and Algiers in the mid-twentieth century as inseparable due to the circulation of architects and their ideas that traveled cross the borders of French colonial policies.[12] Despite the differences in the size of the cities, urban chroniclers and cultural producers who traveled to and resided in Buenos Aires and Montevideo explored similar ideas related to modern urban culture. Mass migration from Europe, especially from Spain and Italy, also resulted in ethnic contributions to urban space in both cities and the creation of interconnected urban imaginaries that included shared theatrical and literary cultures.

The cultural production of travelers and native urban chroniclers offers a gateway for understanding how Buenos Aires served as a model for urban culture in Montevideo. Urban hierarchies in the writings of different chroniclers showed how city planners in Buenos Aires and Montevideo looked to Paris as a model for urban planning during the nineteenth century. While studying the first half of the twentieth century, I explore how

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[11] Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).
[12] Sheila Crane, "Architecture at the End of Empire: Urban Reflections between Algiers and Marseille," in *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life*, edited by Gyan Prakash and Kevin Kruse (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 99-143.

this hierarchy became reordered and regionalized within Latin America while New York also became a reference point for the modern city. From a more symbiotic relationship in terms of urban cultural flows, Buenos Aires also increasingly occupied the urban imaginary of the modern city for Montevideo in modern urban culture.

The Argentine and Uruguayan capitals mirrored and paralleled one another in material form and the development of modern urban spaces in their downtown districts. Architects, planners, industrialists, and cultural impresarios such as performers and theatrical directors in Buenos Aires and Montevideo were all important social actors in the transformation of urban life through the construction of cultural commerce present in skyscrapers, theaters, department stores, and the expanding world of mass culture in downtown districts. The cities also were tightly connected by their shared histories of regional culture in the established realm of theater and the evolving world of film culture during the 1910s and 1920s. During these decades, the urban imaginaries of downtown Buenos Aires and Montevideo became defined by the vertical built environment, the bustle of consumerism, and the spectacle of the illuminated theater marquees.

The comparisons and connections that Salvador Novo traced between Montevideo and Buenos Aires were common currency among urban chroniclers of the two cities in the early twentieth century. These chroniclers included travelers and residents who traveled between the two cities on the same overnight boats that transported Novo between them. Novo's observations about Montevideo and Buenos Aires belonged to the genres of travel writings and also drew on his background as a author of urban cronicas. In Mexico City, Novo was arguably the foremost early twentieth century flaneur and a

well-regarded Mexican poet by literary figures in South America.[13] I would argue that Novo's work was akin to a "flaneur in exile" and also an urban chronicler who engaged with the tradition of Latin American urban chronicles.[14] The strength of Novo's writings as a historical source rests in the role of the twentieth-century flaneur in observing the expanding presence of mass culture on daily urban life from the altitude of the streetscape in cities throughout Latin America and the wider Atlantic world.[15]

During the early twentieth century, the link between Buenos Aires and Montevideo was drawn in various literary genres, ranging from poetry to tango to journalism. Each contributed to urban imaginaries and showed how capitalism was changing the spatial character of the downtown areas in the two capital cities. In 1922, eleven years before Salvador Novo's arrival in the Río de la Plata, the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges returned to his native Buenos Aires after having studied abroad in Switzerland. Borges found a city that had changed dramatically from the time of his departure for Europe. At the age of 22, Borges quickly immersed himself in the cosmopolitan intellectual life of the city and frequented downtown Buenos Aires cafes such as Café La Perla. In these bohemian haunts, Borges befriended Argentina writers such as Macedonio Fernandez and Evaristo Carriego who were fellow flaneurs of the

[13] On Salvador Novo, see Viviane Mahieux, *Urban Chroniclers in Modern Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 93-125.
[14] Stacey Burton, *Travel Narratives and the End of Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Anke Gleber, *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flanerie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992)
[15] Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City," *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 1984): 91-96.

Argentine metropolis.[16] The works of these literary figures influenced many of Borges's poems and essays published in the 1920s. Additionally, the popularity of tango music in Buenos Aires also shaped the city as it figured in Borges's work. Interested in the changing character of the whole of Buenos Aires, Borges spent considerable time walking in the city's *arrabales*, the outer neighborhoods that had become increasingly settled by immigrants and other residents. In these peregrinations, Borges encountered streets that inspired the writing of tangos, and he became critical of tango lyricists whom he deemed inauthentic. Borges viewed tango as needing to address the city's true character and Borges's literary production reflected the dialogical relationship between the periphery and the center within the city Buenos Aires. Historian Adrián Gorelik has shown how Borges and other members of the Buenos Aires avant-garde contributed to the invention of a modern urban culture that prominently featured the arrabales in popular plays and tango music.[17] Gorelik has also argued that mass cultural production in 1930s such as tango and drama was increasingly influenced by more commercially minded producers who operated in downtown than it had been during the 1920s.

In the poem "Montevideo," appearing in *Luna de enfrente* (1925), Borges contributed to the transnational urban imaginary about Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Like Novo, Borges believed that comparing the cities would enable one to more fully comprehend each. In his imagining of Montevideo as Buenos Aires in the past, Borges pointed to a particular understanding of the dialogical relationship between Buenos Aires

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[16] On Macedonio Fernandez, see Mónica Bueno, *Macedonio Fernández, un escritor de fin de siglo* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2000); on Carriego, see Brian Bockelman, "Evaristo Carriego: An Argentine Bohemian Discovers the Urban Fringe," *Brújula*: *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Latin American Studies* (2006), 114-1242.

[17] Adrián Gorelik, "El color del barrio. Mitología barrial y conflicto culturalen la Buenos Aires de los años veinte," *Variaciones Borges* 8 (1999), 36-68.

and Montevideo. For Borges, Buenos Aires was at the center and Montevideo at the periphery of urban modernity. This was a common trope in the work of travelers and also Argentine and Uruguayan urban chroniclers during this era. Borges joined their ranks with his poem about Montevideo where he wrote:

Resbalo por tu tarde como el cansancio por la piedad de un declive.
La noche nueva es como un ala sobre tus azoteas.
Eres el Buenos Aires que tuvimos, el que en los años se alejó quietamente.
Eres nuestra y fiestera, como la estrella que duplican las aguas.
Puerta falsa en el tiempo, tus calles miran al pasado más leve.
Claror de donde la mañana nos llega, sobre las dulces aguas turbias.
Antes de iluminar mi celosía tu bajo sol bienaventura tus quintas.
Ciudad que se oye como un verso.
Calles con luz de patio.

I slip into your evening as tiredness by the piety of a decline.
The new night is like a wing upon your rooftops.
You're the Buenos Aires we had, which went away quietly over the years.
You are ours and fun-loving, like the star duplicated in water.
False door in time, your streets look towards the lighter past.
Brightness from where the morning comes to us over the sweet murky waters.
Before it lights up my lattice your low sun blesses your cottages.
City that sounds like a verse.
Streets with patio light.[18]

In his verses emphasizing nostalgia as an emotion to understand Buenos Aires and Montevideo, Borges's imagery was also in consonance with the tropes of tango that shaped urban cultural production and transnational urban imaginaries. The scholar Beatriz Sarlo has noted how Borges used nostalgia to highlight modern urban changes within Buenos Aires such as the slow disappearance of gaucho types from parts of the city.[19] For Borges, this was an aspect of destruction to the character of his imagined Buenos Aires. Borges's poem about Montevideo also showed how nostalgia was

[18] Author's translation from Jorge Luis Borges, *Luna de enfrente. Versos de Jorge Luis Borges*. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Proa, 1925)
[19] Beatriz Sarlo, *Borges: A Writer on the Edge* (London: Verso, 1993)

commonly understood in the transnational and regional context of the Río de la Plata due to the importance of tango. Montevideo was an idealized representative of the Buenos Aires of the past before the Argentine capital's rapid transformation during the 1920s. Modernization had transformed Buenos Aires into a metropolis in continual tumult that Borges observed while upon returning to native city. Borges's poems about Buenos Aires dealt with everyday life and the local color of the city, and his verses about Montevideo can be analyzed as overlooking the similar conditions of urban change in the Argentine and Uruguayan capitals in the moment.

By the 1920s, the spatial landscapes of Buenos Aires and Montevideo were both remade by the forces of urban capitalism and technological advancement. In the two downtowns, mass production and consumption resulted in an ever-increasing number of larger and more modern spaces including the theaters that Salvador Novo observed in Montevideo and then enjoyed when he visited Buenos Aires. New theaters and larger stores in Buenos Aires and Montevideo were built and renovated to meet the demands of mass consumers following the First World War. Major urban projects in Buenos Aires during the 1920s included the continued improvements to the port and the expansion of the city's underground subway. At the same time, Montevideo expanded its transportation system with the additional influx of British capital into the tramway system. The transformations in Buenos Aires were more massive in scale than those Montevideo, but the cities thoroughly mirrored each other in how they were changing into more vertical and accelerated sites of urban modernity. The cities both witnessed the construction of the twin skyscrapers of the Palacio Barolo in Buenos Aires and the Palacio Salvo in Montevideo during the 1920s. In his poem about Montevideo, Jorge

Luis Borges's nostalgic view of the Uruguayan capital underestimated how urban capitalism was bringing about similar and dramatic changes in the urban landscapes of both South American capitals, not just in Buenos Aires.

The observations of Salvador Novo and Jorge Luis Borges and the development of modern architecture in both cities collectively show how Buenos Aires and Montevideo were mirrored cities in the relationship between mass culture and urban space. Borges memorably drew on the trope of nostalgia popularized by tango to explore the uneven development of both cities at a moment when both cities were modernizing. During the 1920s and 1930s, the rise of mass urban culture fueled by Argentine and global mass cultural industries shaped elite, middle-class, and popular class consumption in both cities and the spatial manifestations of modern urban capitalism also redefined the urban landscapes in both cities.

The substantive urban transformations in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the early twentieth century were the result of numerous historical factors. The two capitals were cities of immigrants in the early twentieth century due to the mass migration from across the Atlantic Ocean that began to accelerate in the 1880s and also internal migration from the interior regions of Argentina and Uruguay.[20] In the 1910s and 1920s, global trade circuits continued to favor both Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Argentina's export economy was based on cattle and wheat and its abundance of land while Uruguayan agriculture also remained globally competitive into the 1920s.[21] In the 1910s

[20] Samuel L. Baily and Eduardo José Míguez, *Mass Migration to Modern Latin America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Books, 2003)
[21] Luis Bértola and Gabriel Porcile, "Cambio institucional, tecnología y convergencia divergencia económica: Argentina, Brasil y Uruguay 1870-1990," *Investigación Económica,* Vol. 58, No. 224 (abril-junio 1998), pp. 137-184; Luis Bertola, "An

and 1920s, Buenos Aires and Montevideo were closely linked in the flow of information and physically separated by an overnight boat ride of approximately 12 hours. The majority of transatlantic travelers made an initial stop in Montevideo before their arrival in Buenos Aires and there was daily overnight service between the cities. The American traveler Frederick Augustus Sherwood wrote in 1920 that river traffic between Buenos Aires and Montevideo was always heavy since the "two places are quite closely related socially, and there is a constant stream of Bonarensians coming over to the Uruguayan beaches in summer or for some other reason in winter, or Montevidians going over to take in the whiter lights of the giddier city, or for business reasons."[22] He also explained how "formerly the trip wasn't thought anything of, just an overnight jaunt and back on the second or third morning. There were no formalities in spite of the fact that the trip was from one country into another—curious, both countries, in company with all others in South America, were always quite "red tapish." But all you had to do was to buy your ticket, hail a taxi, jump on the boat at the last moment, and tumble into bed."[23] In Sherwood's formulation, a wide river separated the two cities, but the international border between was porous.

As historian Richard Walter has argued for Buenos Aires, foreign visitors in the 1920s and 1930s were generally smitten with the urban transformations they observed in Buenos Aires when compared to the more nuanced and critical views of locals.[24] In 1922,

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Overview of the Economic History of Uruguay since the 1870s," accessed at eh.net/encyclopedia/bertola-uruguay-final/

[22] Frederick Augustus Sherwood, *Glimpses of South America* (New York: Century Company, 1920), 358-359.

[23] Sherwood, *Glimpses of South America*, 359.

[24] Richard Walter, *Politics and Urban Growth in Buenos Aires, 1910-1942* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 250.

the American travel writer and adventurer Annie Smith Peck conveyed her favorable impressions about Buenos Aires:

"Buenos Aires, the metropolis of South America, the largest city on that continent, and fourth in all America, has also a wide reputation as the second Latin city in the world. Its population is well towards 2,000,000, its area is more than double that of Paris. All its splendors may not here be rehearsed. The attractions of its 74 beautiful parks and plazas, its fine avenues, its magnificent Capitol and other public buildings, its beautiful opera house, almost the finest in the world, the many artistic and sumptuous residences, the excellent hotels, with many other admirable features make it a city delightsome to tourist and resident."[25]

Smith Peck also noted that "the two leading department stores in Buenos Aires, equal to our best in character, are both British owned; there are many other shops of every kind of the highest class."[26] Such positive views about Buenos Aires as a modern commercial city were also in dialogue with the hemispheric discourse of Pan Americanism that promoted increased economic and tourism connections between Latin America and the United States during the 1910s and 1920s. She also employed the oft-used comparison between Buenos Aires and Paris by explaining Buenos Aires's place as the second Latin city in the world after Paris. Buenos Aires's modern character was increased by its place as a center of mass production and consumption of goods. Skyscrapers, department stores, and theaters were the most important trio of urban spaces for the representations and consumption of mass culture in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the 1910s and 1920s. The expansion of spaces of mass culture in both cities also inserted the cities into the wider Atlantic world of urban modernity and showed how urban modernity was increasingly tied to urban imaginaries and visual representations that could be easily reproduced.

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[25] Annie Smith Peck, *Industrial and Commercial South America* (New York, Dutton & Co., 1922), 291.
[26] Smith Peck, *Industrial and Commercial South America*, 327.

The Rise of Skyscapers in Buenos Aires and Montevideo

In 1929, the Swiss-born, Paris-based architect Le Corbusier visited Buenos Aires and Montevideo during an extended trip to Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil where he gave numerous conferences that dealt with urban themes and emphasized his fervent belief in skyscrapers. Throughout South America, Le Corbusier critically observed widespread transformations taking place in the region's major cities. In an article in the Uruguayan magazine *La Cruz del Sur* in 1930, Le Corbusier was quoted that Buenos Aires was an "undoubtedly great city" but also remarked that the South America metropolis faced numerous urban problems that still required complex solutions.[27] In comparison, the celebrated European visitor felt that the residents of Montevideo did not have any urgent problems to fix in their city. At this time, Buenos Aires was a city of three million inhabitants and Montevideo's population was close to 500,000 residents. Both cities had rapidly grown in population and expanded their topographical boundaries since the latter part of the nineteenth century.

A more critical view of Buenos Aires also came from Le Corbusier when he shared his view in 1929 that Buenos Aires was severely lacking in its ability to provide "beauty and welfare" for its inhabitants.[28] The Swiss architect called the Argentine capital "The City Without Hopes" while also developing other comparisons that reflected existing and evolving urban imaginaries related to Buenos Aires and Montevideo. During his visit to Montevideo, Le Corbusier stated that Montevideo was fortunate to not face such as fate. The architect felt that Montevideo's city council had wisely invested in

[27] Gervavio y Alvaro Guillot Muñoz, "Le Corbusier en Montevideo," *La cruz del sur* 27 (February 1930), 14.
[28] "Le Corbusier en Montevideo," *La cruz del sur* 27 (February 1930), 14.

paving its streets and advancing the use of buses while phasing out the use of trams, a mode of transport he believed belonged to the past. Le Corbusier also made clear that Buenos Aires had functioned as a continual reference point for Montevideo's planners cautioned Uruguayans that Buenos Aires faced major problems. Argentine architects had yet to perform the "urban surgery" that was urgently required to improve the state of affairs in a city.[29] The argued that Buenos Aires's residents needed to widen the city streets to avoid the paralysis of the city's commerce and other aspects of daily life. In character with his ardent philosophy favoring modernist approaches to urban planning and despite his approval of Montevideo's urban design, Le Corbusier developed a future plan for Montevideo from the sky above in a plane piloted by the French aviator and author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Le Corbusier's plan proposed to remake the city's downtown area bordering the river by building a highway over the central business district and the city's colonial core.

Le Corbusier's dramatic plans for Montevideo were fortunately never instituted since they would have largely demolished the city's colonial core. Le Corbusier's explicitly modernist visions for South America's most lasting impact remained in the urban imaginaries.[30] His plans went unrealized including his later plan for Buenos Aires that included an airport and the construction of skyscrapers on an island connected to the city by a highway. Still, Le Corbusier influenced a generation of urban planners that

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[29] Idem.

[30] Le Corbusier's drawing for Montevideo is held by the Museum of Modern Art and can be seen at: http://www.moma.org/collection/works/558?locale=en. His drawing of giant skyscrapers by the river for Buenos Aires is available online at http://www.modernabuenosaires.org/proyectosurbanos/anteproyecto-y-estudios-preliminares-de-urbanizacion-para-la-ciudad-de-buenos-aires

would follow his ideas in South America. The drawing on the right above was included as part of a city plan developed in 1938 by Le Corbusier and the Argentine architects Jorge Hardoy and Juan Kurchan who were living in Paris.[31] Their proposal for Buenos Aires did place the skyscrapers of downtown in closer proximity to the river, which proved to be a chronic shortcoming of Buenos Aires's urban development during the early twentieth century. The visual representation of skyscrapers in the Le Corbusier plan also matched his vision for urban density that would have reoriented Buenos Aires into a city for automobiles without creating more movement for pedestrians. Le Corbusier's visit resonated in South American urban planning in the following decades as his disciples in Argentina and Uruguay continued to pursue major urban projects. In Montevideo, Le Corbusier's disciple Carlos Gomez Gavasso won a city competition in 1937 for the plan for designing the urban reforms of the Avenida Agraciada in central Montevideo.

Le Corbusier's trip to Buenos Aires and Montevideo acutely illustrates how the two metropolises were closely paired in the urban imaginaries of visitors and residents during the early twentieth century. The representations of architects, travelers, and urban chroniclers from Buenos Aires and Montevideo all pointed toward how the cities functioned as imagined mirrors of each in urban space and urban culture. Beginning in the 1910s, distinct forms of modern urban culture flowed back and forth across the estuary between the two cities in addition to the wider global circulation of ideas. The flow of people and ideas from creative fields such as architecture and mass culture

[31] The plan was prepared and presented in 1937 and 1938 but not published for a decade. Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, Jorge Ferrari Hardoy, Juan Kurchan, *Plan director para Buenes Aires* (Buenos Aires: La Arquitectura de Hoy, 1947).

industries such as theater and film helped to define the possible uses of urban space in both South American metropolises during the first half of the twentieth century. In order to understand the lasting impact of the relationship between Buenos Aires and Montevideo in this period, I explore how local and global cultural flows from the wider Atlantic world privileged Buenos Aires in shaping Montevideo's urban culture. This historical process was largely due to the greater size of Buenos Aires, but there were also numerous examples of the ebb and flow of modern urban culture that reflected how the cities maintained a symbiotic connection.

Following the construction of the Woolworth Building in New York in 1916 as the world's tallest building, the late 1910s and the 1920s were a decisive decade for the rise of the skyscraper in global urban culture and transnational urban imaginaries. This was especially true in South America's metropolitan centers. The period also marked tangible connections in the urban imaginaries between Buenos Aires and Montevideo with the transformation of their skylines. These connections in modern urban culture resonated from the Hudson River to the Río de la Plata and ultimately across the Atlantic Ocean to Rome. In the late 1920s and early 1930s in New York City, the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building were built in what seemed like a steel-framed race to the top of the Manhattan skyline.[32] The skylines of Montevideo and Buenos Aires did not achieve dazzling heights in steel but did become recognized by international technical experts for advancing the use of concrete in skyscrapers.

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[32] On the use of the term cathedral to describe the Woolworth building, see Edwin A. Cochrane, *The Cathedral of Commerce: the highest building in the world* (New York: Broadway Park Place Co., 1920). On skyscraper construction in New York from the 1910s through the completion of the Empire State building in 1931, see John Tauranac, *The Empire State Building: The Making of a Landmark* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014)

The skylines of the two cities became intertwined during the 1920s due to the completion of fraternal twin skyscrapers that were designed by the Italian-Argentine architect Mario Palanti. First, the Palacio Barolo in Buenos Aires was built between 1919 and 1923 and the construction of the taller Palacio Salvo occurred in Montevideo between 1922 and its completion in 1928. In the 1920s and 1930s, architectural and construction industry publications in New York remarked upon South America as the focal point of global construction for concrete skyscrapers.[33] In the words of the North American construction industry press, "South America is the most sensational adapter of the concrete building idea, the Hotel Palacio Salvo at Montevideo, Uruguay, being the highest building of its type in the world."[34]

Even before the completion of the Palacio Salvo, travelers and residents of Montevideo began to write about the building as the city's most remarkable architectural landmark. Not everyone felt positively about the building. As a renowned modernist who fervently believed in the importance of skyscrapers, Le Corbusier was aesthetically horrified by the unsightliness of the baroque Palacio Salvo during his visit to Montevideo, which had been completed the year before it became the tallest building in South America. In November 1929, Le Corbusier called the Palacio Salvo a "dwarf with a bowler hat" and also explained that he was only not more shocked by the structure's ugliness since he had already seen the Palacio Barolo, its twin, in Buenos Aires before arriving in Montevideo. In another telling, Le Corbusier also walked along Montevideo's

[33] Francis S. Onderdonk, *The Ferro-concrete Style: Reinforced Concrete in Modern Architecture* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing, 1928),
[34] The Chicago trade journal *Pit & Quarry* included this quote in April 1928. *Pit & Quarry*, April 25, 1928, p. 65.

main thoroughfare, Avenida 18 de Julio, and upon seeing the Palacio Salvo, remarked to the dozen architects following him that the building was quite comical and that he was looking for the best angle from which to use a canon to shoot it down.[35]

The Palacio Salvo was designed by Palanti, a native of Milan, who had immigrated to Argentina to work in Buenos Aires in the construction of the Italian pavilion for the Argentina's centennial celebrations in 1910. Palanti considered his architecture as representative of Italian architectural traditions mixed with local materials. The Salvo brothers, Italian-Uruguayan businessmen residing in Montevideo, commissioned Palanti based on his work in Argentina after a competition that ended unsuccessfully and included approximately 19 proposals from Uruguayan and Argentine architects.[36] The Salvos were a family of wealthy industrialists that had forged extensive business ties in Uruguay and Argentina. In the early 1920s, they wanted to construct a skyscraper at a corner of the Plaza Independencia in the heart of the downtown district. The site they purchased for construction was used by the famous Uruguayan café La Giralda, one of the traditional cafes in the city dating from the mid-1800s. The café was demolished to make way for their skyscraper and the brothers sought to renegotiate the terms of their purchase before beginning the construction. The Salvo brothers initially planned to have the building to serve as a hotel, but the Italian-Uruguayan industrialists also believed their industrial enterprises would be well-represented by the building. The historian Virginia Bonicatto has argued that they were following the global model of

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[35] Heidi Weber, *Le Corbusier: El Artista* (Maldonado, Uruguay: Fundación Pablo Atchugarry: Heidi Weber Museum Centre Le Corbusier, 2009), 160.
[36] Virginia Bonicatto, "Imaginarios de "modernidad" y negocio inmobiliario: dos faros urbanos en el Río de la Plata," in *Buenos Aires italiana*, edited by Leticia Maronese (Buenos Aires: Comisión para la Preservación del Patrimonio Cultural de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, 2009), 351-366.

building a skyscraper as a "cathedral of industry" that had been promoted by the Woolworth Building.[37] The Palacio Salvo also became a twin to the Palacio Barolo in Buenos Aires, which had commissioned by Luis Barolo, an Italian immigrant to Argentina. The Palacio Barolo had been completed in 1923 to reach 22 stories and 94 meters. To link the buildings through rays of light, Palanti placed high-luminescent mirrors in the cupolas atop both buildings that would attempt to connect the towers through beacons of light across the Río de la Plata and the 120 miles that separated them.[38]

The race to the sky continued in Buenos Aires after the completion of the Palacio Salvo in Montevideo. Yet Mario Palanti sought to capitalize on his portfolio of concrete skyscrapers by submitting a plan for the tallest skyscraper in the world to be built in Rome for the Fascist government of Benito Mussolini. In the early era of skyscraper construction in the wider Atlantic context, Palanti proposed an 88-story skyscraper called the Mole Littoria, which the *New York Times* covered on the front page of its September 30, 1924 edition. The article cited Palanti's background designing skyscrapers in South America and compared the architectural plan to the vertical straight lines of the Woolworth Building. On October 26, 1924, the *New York Times* published a drawing of Palanti's proposal and deemed the building as "Mussolini's plans to outdo the dreams of the Caesars."[39] Despite repeated attempts by Palanti to refine and even dramatically

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[37] Virginia Bonicatto, "Una catedral para la industria: el Palacio Salvo como materialización de la modernidad en Uruguay, in *Encuentros Latinoamericanos*, no. 3-4,, junio-septiembre, 2008, 43-66.
[38] Idem.
[39] "Mussolini Building the Highest Skyscraper: To Rise 88 Floors, 1,100 Feet, Above Rome," September 30, 1924, 1.; "Mussolini's Plans to Outdo the Dreams of the Caesars," *New York Times*, October 24, 1924, 3.

reduce the height of his design in the following years during the zenith of Italian Fascism, his skyscraper in Rome was never built.[40] Palanti abandoned his successful career in Argentina as well as extensive work in Uruguay to move to Italy to pursue his crazed ambition. The urban imaginaries of Buenos Aires and Montevideo dominated Argentina and Uruguay, but for Palanti that was not enough.

In 1934, the Edifico Kavanagh was completed in Buenos Aires, surpassing the Palacio Barolo as the tallest building in the city. Commissioned by the wealthy Argentine heiress Cora Kavanagh, the building was designed by Argentine architects to also use concrete. The building was prominently located in the downtown neighborhood of Retiro, a couple of blocks from the downtown commercial shopping pedestrian area of Florida Street. Along with the Edificio Comega on Corrientes Avenue, which was completed in 1932, the two buildings helped transform the city's skyline.[41] The Argentine magazines *Caras y Caretas* visually represented the vertical transformation in the urban landscape in a "fantasy photograph" published in October 10, 1936.[42]

[40] Dietrich Neumann, "A Skyscraper for Mussolini," *AA Files*, No. 68 (2014), 141-153.
[41] Sandro Borghini, Hugo Salama, and Justo Solsona, *1930-1950: arquitectura moderna en Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1987), 19-22.
[42] "A cuatro siglo de su fundacion cuenta", *Caras y Caretas*, October 10, 1936, 82.

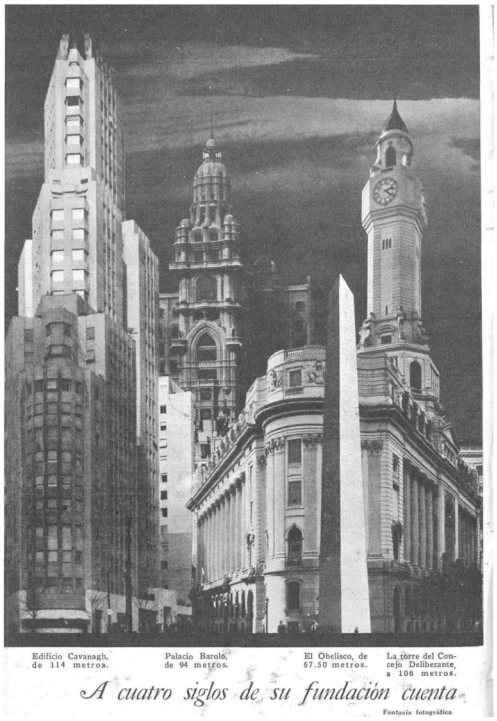

Figure 2
Photograph comparing the tallest buildings in Buenos Aires in 1936 from *Caras y Caretas*.

In comparison to Buenos Aires, the Palacio Salvo was the sole building that defined Montevideo's downtown skyline and urban imaginary during the 1930s. Like other global urban landmarks such as the Empire State Building, the Palacio Salvo inspired artistic works that reflected its importance to the urban imaginaries of Montevideo's flaneurs. In a book by 18 year-old Uruguayan poet Juvenal Ortiz Saralegui titled *Palacio Salvo: poemas*, Montevideo's skyscraper was called the building the "unequivocal symbol of the metropolis."[43] The Uruguayan poet and writer Alfredo Mario Ferreiro wrote in his 1927 book of poetry *El hombre que se comió un autobús* that "The skyscraper Salvo is the cement giraffe that completes the zoological building of

[43] Juvenal Ortiz Saralegui, *Palacio salvo: poemas* (Montevideo, A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1928)

Montevideo."[44] [El rascacielos de Salvo es la jirafa de cemento que completa el zoologico edificio de Montevideo.] Ferreiro's journalism from the era also reflected this tension about the modernization of Montevideo. In an essay in 1927 about his fellow poet Emilio Frugoni's *La epopeya de la ciudad*, Ferreiro wrote in *La Cruz del Sur* how "from the skyscaper of his inspiration, Frugoni contemplates anew Montevideo. Montevideo is always the same little girl. It has been put on the great activity of the New Yorker and nothing else." [43] Ferreiro continued writing that "Today the city is a terrible mix of all nationalities. We become Yankeeized to escape. We suffer from the anguish of stores opening on set schedule. We live exploring cables. We fly in waves of 25 meters. We exchange each moment a used automobile for a new one."[45] His commentary about the rise of consumerism in Montevideo was supported by the development of the Palacio Salvo as both an architectural landmark and a commercial space.

Upon inaugurating their skyscraper, the Salvo Brothers had planned to operate the Palacio Salvo as an important commercial space at the ground level and as a hotel in the stories above. They negotiated with the department store Harrods to open another flagship branch in Montevideo from its Buenos Aires location across the river. Harrods considered moving into the ground floor of the Palacio Salvo until the economic crisis of 1930 put a stop to their plans. Despite Harrods never opening its doors in Montevideo, the thwarted plan still illustrated the possibilities for commercial connections between the

[44] Alfredo Mario Ferreiro, *El hombre que se comió un autobús*: (poemas con olor a nafta) (Montevideo: "La Cruz del sur", 1927)
[43] Alfredo Mario Ferreiro, "La Epopeya de la ciudad: nuevos poemas montevideanos," *La Cruz del Sur* (julio y agosto de 1927) Nº 18, Año III, 24.
[45] Ferreiro, "La Epopeya de la ciudad," 24.

two cities and how Buenos Aires elites continued to view Montevideo as an important marketplace for expansion.

The cultural histories of the principal skyscrapers in Buenos Aires and Montevideo from 1920 through the mid-1930s also illustrated the importance of each downtown district to shaping urban imaginaries in the other city. In both cities, skyscrapers were the sites of elite projects to reshape the city's landscape and were constructed to occupy prominent locations on major plazas and streets. At the level of the streetscape, there were also important similarities between the downtown districts. The abortive plans to include a mass commercial space such as the proposed Harrods in the Palacio Salvo also reflected the global phenomenon of the 1910s and 1920s when department stores and movie theaters began to remake urban spaces around the globe.

Department Stores in Buenos Aires and Montevideo

While the construction of skyscrapers in Buenos Aires and Montevideo created mass spaces for everyday living and work, for many residents of both cities, an important experience of mass consumption was purchasing modern goods from department stores. On the eve of World War One in April 1914, Harrods opened its branch in Buenos Aires to considerable fanfare. The store was opened and operated by Woodman Burbridge, an aristocratic Englishman whose father was the managing director of Harrods in London.[46] The store quickly expanded in its early months and went to great lengths to publicize its unique services and wares such as a children's barbershop and an English tearoom. Harrods took out a full-page advertisement from the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Prensa* on September 12, 1914:

[46] On Burbridge, see "Made in Argentina," *The South American: A Journal for All Interested in Latin America*, January 1921 (Volume 10), 33-35.

LA PRENSA — Sábado 12 de Septiembre de 1914

Harrods y sus progresos

HOY

SÁBADO 12

HARRODS abre al Buenos Aires de la elegáncia y del confort los nuevos suntuosos salones que completan el frente de su Palacio por la calle Florida y en los que, en lujosas instalaciones y con artículos de primer orden, están instalados los departamentos de reciente creación que a continuación detallamos:

HARRODS Y LOS NIÑOS

Las espaciosas salas destinadas a la exposición y venta de cuanto hay de más notable en vestidos, trajes y artículos en general para señoritas, niñas, jóvenes y niños, pueden dar una idea, en una sola rápida visita, del surtido, valioso por todo concepto, de lo que en estos Departamentos exponemos, para llenar los gustos y las exigencias menos comunes.

HARRODS Y EL HOMBRE ELEGANTE

El vasto salón de la planta baja, destinado a exposición de artículos para caballeros, atesora es la palabra la más cuidadosa selección en toda prenda para el vestido y para la elegancia, llevando hasta el detalle el sello de lo chic. Son de mencionar los sombreros de las marcas mundiales más acreditadas, las corbatas de los gustos más exquisitos, la camisería, la bonetería, carteras, guantes, bastones, etc.

HARRODS Y SU NUEVA SECCION CALZADO

Para significar la importancia de este Departamento, bastaría decir que las fábricas de más renombre universal son las únicas que nos surten del mejor calzado para todos los usos. Sin exageración podemos afirmar que, desde el zapato para baile, para paseo, etc., hasta el calzado para entre casa, reunen en sus formas más variadas la elegancia y la solidez.

EL TEA ROOM DE HARRODS - Sin vacilaciones podemos afirmar que es éste un salón único en Buenos Aires por su lujo, su confort y su servicio esmerado y completo. Nada falta en é; y una orquesta formada por un sexteto de profesores de prestigio abonado en los principales conciertos en la Capital, amenizará con números de la música más selecta, las horas del te, que serán a la vez horas de verdadero esparcimiento.

UNA BOMBONERIA MODELO EN HARRODS - Harrods instala también su fábrica y expendio de bombones. Con las condiciones insuperables de elaboración, nuestros visitantes podrán hallar, en los diferentes gustos que deseen, los bombones más finos recién fabricados.

EL SALON DE REUNION Y DESCANSO PARA SEÑORAS - Entre las novedades de confort que desde hoy ofrecemos, consignamos una más. El salón de descanso para señoras está destinado a ser el punto de reunión de las familias y a reemplazar las visitas de casa.

Sus comodidades permiten las reuniones a toda hora; de suerte que ha de ser útil a las relaciones citarse en este lugar; ofrece además servicio de teléfono, escritorios, periódicos, etc., etc.

PELUQUERIA PARA NIÑOS - He aquí otra innovación que señalamos a la comodidad de nuestros visitantes. Harrods ha instalado en su segundo piso un lujoso salón de Peluquería para niños, atendido por especialistas en el ramo. Su utilidad es evidente, y sin duda ha de ser visitado por numerosa concurrencia infantil

VENTAS AL INTERIOR - Extendiendo su radio de acción a toda la República, Harrods inaugura también un Departamento especial para los pedidos del Interior. Sean ellos por carta o telegráficamente merecerán en todos los casos nuestra preferente atención.

SERVICIO NACIONAL DE CORREOS - Trátase de una novedad muy práctica, cuyas ventajas se reconocen de antemano.

En uno de nuestros salones de planta baja, la Dirección de Correos ha instalado una oficina para el servicio de los visitantes de Harrods. En ella pueden adquirirse estampillas y cartas postales en las condiciones de cualquier otra oficina nacional. La recolección de la correspondencia se hace en la misma forma y horas que en las oficinas centrales.

Nuestra Invitación HARRODS invita al mundo elegante de Buenos Aires a visitar los salones que se inauguran hoy, con cuyo confort y esplendidez deseamos hacerle grata su permanencia en ellos.

BUENOS AIRES — FLORIDA 877

Figure 3
Advertisement from *La Prensa* on September 12, 1914.

In 1922, Harrods in Buenos Aires merged with its major competitor, Gath & Chaves, which had been founded in the late 1880s by English and Chilean business

partners. After the fusion of the two stores in the 1920s, Harrods continued to increase the scale of its imports from the United States and also expand its production of local manufactured goods.[47] Harrods in Buenos Aires became increasingly recognized in commercial trade journals published in the United States for the magnitude of its imports and the modern charms of the store including its barbershop and large candy store with a large multitude of confections. The mass production of goods for elite Argentine consumers of different ages and genders reinforced the creation of the urban imaginary of Buenos Aires as a being a cosmopolitan city that was the capital of mass consumption in South America. In 1916, the English traveler John Alexander Hammerton traveled to Argentina and saw Harrods as an impressive locale that required ingenuity from the owners and also Italian immigrant workers to constantly dodge trams and pedestrians to move wardrobes, desks, and sofas into the store.[48]

Harrods grew as a leading elite space of consumption in Buenos Aires in the latter part of the 1910s. In 1918, the American commercial attaché Lew Clark explained how the Buenos Aires store engaged with various other urban centers of global consumer culture. Clark wrote:

> The store is appointed and stocked for catering to the most exclusive trade. Much of its stock is imported from Europe, mostly from England and France, but buyers are maintained in the United States. In addition, the firm, in common with most of the other large department stores in Argentina, operates a separate factory on its own account, where all kinds of white goods and wearing apparel are manufactured. The ground floor of the store is given over to men's wear, perfumery and toilet articles, and piece goods of silk, cotton, linen, and other materials. Other floors are

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[47] Eugene Morris, "How Harrods Buys in the United States," *American Exporter*, January 1922, 50-54.

[48] John Alexander Hammerton, *The Argentine through English eyes, and a summer in Uruguay*
(London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), 35.

> devoted to women's gowns and other ready-made wearing apparel, children's wear, a shoe department, millinery, boys' and youths' ready-made clothing, etc.
>
> The third story contains the tea and refreshment salon. It is easily the finest in Buenos Aires and no other approaches it in popularity. Ices and cold drinks of a nonalcoholic nature are served, as well as tea, and an American soda fountain is a pleasing feature.[49]

Clark also highlighted how the majority of the workforce was female and that the total number of employees was approximately 2000. The Harrods advertisements in the local press also reflected a shift toward the reordering of gender norms in downtown spaces by making a direct appeal to female shoppers. The store strengthened the attraction toward downtown as a shopping district for those who might live further away. The historian Fernando Rocchi has studied how during this period Buenos Aires became a space of new forms of mass consumption that were observed by local elites as differing from previous forms of elite consumption. Rocchi has explained that at Harrods, store employees did not immediately seek to attend to all the clients, but rather gave them space to browse, which was a new and "cutting-edge" practice in consumer culture in Buenos Aires.[50]

While Harrods of Buenos Aires was a British import that extensively sold American goods, Montevideo's major department store was the locally owned department store Tienda London-Paris, which had opened in 1908. The store was located on Avenue 18 de Julio and the corner of Rio Negro. London-Paris thrived in the following decades, especially during the interwar period. The store was opened and operated by Pedro Casteres y Juan Pedro Tapie, French Basque immigrants to Uruguay.

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[49] Lew Clark, *Wearing Apparel in Argentina* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1918), 40-41.
[50] Rocchi, *Chimneys in the Desert*, 72.

Over the next three decades, the store expanded to become a five-story operation that had over 1100 employees. The department store's name of London-Paris sought to appeal to Uruguayans interested in European sophistication, but the store was entirely a Uruguayan operation that emerged from the urban imagination of its owners. London-Paris became well known for its various floors and special departments for tailored suits and imported toys for children. With its attempts to offer similar products to Harrods and Gath & Chaves available at London-Paris, it seems likely that Uruguayans were able to easily forget Harrods's failed expansion into the Palacio Salvo. The 1932 London-Paris catalog reflected the store's slogan that "London-Paris has everything" and the catalog's back cover especially showcased the building's appeal to passerby.

Figure 4

Tienda London-Paris, Spring Catalog 1932-1933, back cover

Figure 5
Tienda London-Paris spring-summer catalog 1932-1933, Page 5

Like Harrods advertisements, the London-Paris catalog was marketed to the different sectors of consumers including men, women, and children. With the rise of mass consumption, the downtowns of Buenos Aires and Montevideo became filled with larger spaces of consumption such as department stores and movie theaters. The downtowns also functioned increasingly as spaces of sociability for different classes of men and women. In 1926, the Argentine writer Alfonsina Storni published in the newspaper *La Nación* a short story titled "Cuca" that provided insights into the gendered world of consumer culture in downtown Buenos Aires. For Storni, the habit of going shopping in the center of Buenos Aires meant that a unique female friend of the story's main character could become essentially like everyone else through the shopping bags she carried and purchasing a new handbag. In the 1919, a popular play was titled "La vendedora de Harrods" and written by Josué Quesada. The play's storyline focused on an elite male customer who falls in love with a working-class girl working at the store. The story could have just as easily taken place in Montevideo

and London-Paris. In both Río de la Plata capitals, producers and consumers of modern culture turned downtowns into streetscapes for culture and commerce where city dwellers could occupy themselves with commerce during the day and more carefree consumption and romance at the night. In Buenos Aires and Montevideo, the department stores functioned as spaces for mass publics where there was more to do than just purchase items to occupy one's time.

Chronicling Urban Transformations in Buenos Aires and Montevideo

The 1920s were a crucial period when Buenos Aires's inhabitants, both native and immigrant, transformed Buenos Aires into a modern cultural capital in neighborhoods throughout the metropolis. Between 1910 and 1930, the population of Buenos Aires jumped from 1,231,000 to more than two million inhabitants and the population continued to expand throughout the city.[51] Among the most important changes in urban culture during this period was the rise of new forms of sociability in different parts of the city.[52] In this context, Jorge Luis Borges was among the many porteño flaneurs that sought to understand the syncretism of urban culture between immigrants and native-born residents. As Peter Fritzsche has argued for fin-de-siècle Berlin, the presence of the mass media and especially daily newspapers were essential for the making of metropolitan culture.[53] In Buenos Aires, immigrants and native-born polyglots could read about news about local urban culture in various tongues. In addition to the numerous daily Spanish-language newspapers, there were daily and weekly newspapers in Italian, English, German, Russian, Yiddish, Basque, Galician,

[51] Charles Sargent, *The Spatial Evolution of Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina*, 1870-1930 (Tempe: Center for Latin American Studies, Arizona State University, 1974), 94.
[52] Leandro H Gutiérrez and Luis Alberto Romero, *Sectores populares, cultura y política: Buenos Aires en la entreguerra* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores Argentina, 2007)
[53] Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 2.

and Serbo-Croatian.[54] Like Buenos Aires, Montevideo also rapidly transformed during these years as the city population jumped from 321,000 to approximately 600,000 by 1930 due in large part to the final major waves of transatlantic immigration. In Montevideo, the city's neighborhoods also were also transformed by the need for urban reforms. The Uruguayan tango lyricist Victor Solino shared his emotional pains that his beloved Barrio Sur was in danger of disappearing due to urban transformations.[55] Solino wrote:

"Old neighborhood you are leaving	"Viejo barrio que te vas
I give you a last goodbye	te doy mi último adiós
I will not see you again	ya no te veré más.
With your black wall	Con tu negro murallón,
A whole tradition will disappear"	Desaparecerá toda una tradición"

In particular, Solino was referring to the major construction projects of the Rambla Sur promenade along the city's port that transpired between 1923 and 1935. Montevideo's government had authorized the project in response to the rising presence of automobiles in the city and the damage caused to the coast by a tropical storm in 1923. The photograph below shows the construction of the Rambla as a major construction project that drew on the young male workforce in Montevideo populated by a mix of native-born and European immigrants.

[54] A useful and lively analysis of the Babel of daily newspapers in Buenos Aires can be found in G.LD. Jones, "The Press in Argentina," *The Pan-American Magazine* (March 1919), 240-241,

[55] On Solino and his tango "Barrio Sur", see Ana Ribeiro, *Montevideo, la malbienquerida*
(Montevideo: Planeta, 2007), 155.

Figure 6
"Construction of the Rambla Sur, 1923-1925", photograph from the Centro de Fotografia, Intendencia de Montevideo

Solino's career as a tango lyricist and performer took him across the river from Montevideo to Buenos Aires in 1923 when his tango troupe Los Atenienses performed at the Teatro Casino in downtown Buenos Aires. Solino's principal collaborator in the group was the tango composer Ramon Collazo. Both Solino and Collazo were actually Galician immigrants to Montevideo who represented the diasporic contributions to tango music. The authors wrote several popular tangos in the 1920s including songs recorded by Carlos Gardel in France.

Tango music also provided context for understanding how urban reforms in both cities were understood in the urban imaginaries. In a similar vein to Solino, Enrique Cadicamo's famous tango "Anclado en Paris" pondered how Corrientes Street must have changed in Buenos Aires since he had seen it last. With a heightened emphasis on urban reforms in both cities that coincided with the centennial celebration in both countries, the period from 1910 to 1936 produced lasting

connections and similarities as well as differences between the two national capitals. These changes affected the symbiotic relationship between Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Buenos Aires continued to offer tremendous opportunities for producing mass culture for tango lyricists such in Montevideo such as Solino and Collazo. On the other hand, certain differences became the two cities became more pronounced due to increasing differences in size and scope with regard to their places as centers of modern urban culture.

Travelers to both cities also provided new and older frames of reference to compare Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The American traveler Anna Wentworth Sears wrote in 1913:

"Suppose New York and Brooklyn with the river between them a night's journey wide— "and it's like Buenos Aires and Montevideo!" So they will tell you. Not a bit of it. Perhaps there is some similarity to our own big cities in Buenos Aires, sophisticated, flamboyant with its "parlor-car soul," but the other! Oh, altogether different is this from anything anywhere in our New World; this happy, drowsy capital of Uruguay, with its little winding streets showing water at the ends, and no great obtruding docks, with its three hundred thousand inhabitants, the most contented of any South American city, more native-born, fewer poor, the healthiest city of the east coast, clean to perfection, with compulsory education for all and for all peace and good government."[56] Like other travelers, Wentworth Sears noted the differences in size and scope between the two cities and also highlighted how mass immigration and urban reforms were quickly transforming Buenos Aires into a more modern city than Montevideo in the early 1910s.

[56] Anna Wentworth Sears, *Two on a Tour of South America* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1913), 269.

Urban chroniclers such as travelers and residents in Buenos Aires and Montevideo produced overlapping forms of flanerie in the forms of essay, poetry, and fiction that provided crucial interpretations to understand modern life and the creative processes of transformation and destruction related to urban space that was fomented by capitalism. In a wide array of chronicles of these decades, Río de la Plata natives such as Borges and Solino helped to confirm Walter Benjamin's arguments in the essay "The Return of the Flaneur." In an essay about a memoir about Berlin, Benjamin wrote that natives write about cities largely through deep memories such as those formed by their childhood while non-natives emphasize the urban characteristics that are most present and also those that are in the process of changing.[57] In Buenos Aires and Montevideo, flaneurs concerned with the evolving forms and similarities between Buenos Aires and Montevideo included leading scribes such as the Argentine writers Jorge Luis Borges, Roberto Arlt, and Edmundo Guiboirg, and the Uruguayan writer Emilio Frugoni. These writers functioned as urban chroniclers whose works showed the similarities and changes taking place in their native cities based on deeper experiences.

During the late 1920s, Roberto Arlt was Buenos Aires's most widely read urban chronicler through his newspaper column, "Aguafuertes portenos," which appeared in the newspaper *El Mundo* starting in 1928. As a journalist, novelist, and

[57] In 1929, Benjamin wrote, "If we were to divide all the existing descriptions of cities into two groups according to the birthplace of the authors, we would certainly find that those written by natives of the cities concerned are greatly in the minority. The superficial pretext-the exotic and the picturesque – appeals only to the outsider. To depict a city as a native would calls for other, deeper motives — the motives of the person who journeys into the past, rather than to foreign parts. The account of a city given by a native will always have something in common with memoirs; it is no accident that the writer has spent his childhood there. Walter Benjamin, "The Return of the Flaneur," in Walter Benjamin. *Selected Writings II 1927-1934*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. Eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith. Cambridge, MA: Harvard,

playwright, Roberto Arlt filled various roles as an urban chronicler. Arlt has been defined by the literary critic Sylvia Saitta as a prototype of the modern writer whose craft as a novelist and playwright was influenced by his work as a journalist.[58] While Arlt was most famous as belonging to the Boedo group that included Leonidas Barletta, the playwright and founder of the left-wing theater group, Teatro del Pueblo, Arlt also maintained a primal link with the other intellectuals whose work was significantly determined by their relationship with the downtown life of Corrientes Avenue. Arlt was arguably the most prolific author among the urban intellectuals whose base for activity was the Calle Corrientes in the 1920s and 1930s with his hundreds of newspaper columns and also flurry of fiction. Yet Arlt was not unique in that his work was influenced by the café culture that included Corrientes, Boedo, and Florida, with Florida being where Borges most famously spent his time.

Arlt's immensely popular newspaper column *Aguafuertes porteñas* reflected his understanding about how the individual neighborhoods of the city contributed to the collective urban imaginary and the pulse of the modern city. In a column published on March 26, 1929, in the newspaper *El Mundo*, Arlt provided a highly descriptive yet crude popular ethnography of the Calle Corrientes.[59] Between the street's two ends, Arlt defined Corrientes as a street with opposing characteristics between the downtown theater district and the neighborhood 25 blocks from the city center where the Mercado de Abasto was located. Just like his fiction would argue for the particular characteristics of different neighborhoods like Boedo as his own terrain, Arlt provided a precise narration of Corrientes's characteristics from the location where he thought that it took on a definable character over thirty blocks from

[58] Sylvia Saitta, *El escritor en el bosque de ladrillos: Una biografia de Roberto Arlt*, (Buenos Aires, Sudamericana, 2000).
[59] Roberto Arlt, "El espíritu de la calle Corrientes no cambiará con el ensanche", in Roberto Arlt, *Aguafuertes Vol. 2* (Buenos Aires, Losada, 1998), 169-170.

downtown. For Arlt, the street increasingly gained in mass cultural significance while becoming the site of various theaters, cafes, cabarets, and bookstores that were all public spaces for nighttime entertainment.

Beginning in the primarily residential neighborhood of Villa Crespo, Arlt walked the street toward the downtown area to take in what he saw. He started his description of Corrientes Avenue when the street was between its 4700 and 3700 blocks, marked by the streets Rio de Janeiro and Medrano. To Arlt, the stretch was unique for its commercial offerings of industry that included the "manufacturers of wind fans and bronze plating." Arlt invited the column's readers to guess why the makers of fans had all congregated there in the area between Villa Crespo and the Abasto neighborhood. Then he explains how after Abasto, the street lost any discernable personality until it came to its intersection with Pueyrredón, at the 3000 block. Then along Corrientes from Pueyrredon to Callao at the 1900 block, "a miracle happens" and the street undergoes a transformation.

This part of Corrientes was the heart of the commerce of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Buenos Aires that had settled in the city starting since the late nineteenth century. To Arlt, the area's character was like "Israel" with Jewish cafes, synagogues, Jewish banks, Jewish mutual aid associations, and Jewish theaters with their respective signs in Yiddish lining the street for numerous blocks. Then, Arlt explains how for a lifelong resident of Buenos Aires, "the true Corrientes begins for us at Callao and ends at Esmeralda." In this stretch between the 1900 block and 700 block, the downtown area of Corrientes became known in Buenos Aires and beyond for the theater plays produced and tango songs sung: the downtown stretch of Corrientes which porteños "loved and truly loved." Arlt also discusses the significance of an anonymous apartment building at 348 Corrientes that was famous

for being the physical landmark in the legendary tango, “A Media Luz,” or “In Half Light”, by Argentine composer Edgardo Donato and Uruguayan lyricist and playwright Carlos Cesar Lenzi, whose verses are:

3-4-8 Corrientes Street,
second floor, elevator.
There are no doormen or neighbors,
inside, cocktails and love...
A little flat furnished in maple,
A piano, a mat and a nightstand;
a telephone to answer,
a victrola that cries
old tangos of my youth,
and a cat that's made of porcelain
so it won't meow at love.

And all in half light...
For love is a wizard!
In half light the kisses,
In half light the two of us.
And all in half light,
twilight inside...
What soft velvet,
the half light of love!

12-24 Juncal Street,
call without fear;
In the afternoon, tea with pastries;
at night, tango and song. and like a drugstore... coke!
The little house has everything
Cushions and sofas
Carpets that make no sound
and a table set for love.
On Sundays, a tea dance;
on Mondays, desolation.

Corrientes, 3-4-8,
segundo piso ascensor.
No hay porteros, ni vecinos,
adentro, cocktail y amor...
Pisito que puso Maple,
piano, estera y velador;
un telefón que contesta,
una fonola que llora
viejos tangos de mi flor,
y un gato de porcelana
pa’ que no maúlle al amor.

Y todo a media luz,
que es un brujo el amor...
a media luz los besos,
a media luz los dos...
Y todo a media luz,
crepúsculo interior,
que suave terciopelo
la media luz de amor.

Juncal 12-24.
Telefoneá sin temor;
de tarde, té con masitas,
de noche, tango y amor;

Hay de todo en la casita:
almohadones y divanes
como en botica... cocó!
Alfombras que no hacen ruido
y mesa puesta al amor.;
los domingos, té danzante,
los lunes, desolación.

Lenzi's famous song about a love nest in downtown Buenos Aires reflected the transnational world of tango in the twentieth century. The tango was first performed in the cabaret-style show of the teatro de revista *Su majestad la revista* that was performed in Montevideo in 1925. According to music scholars, Lenzi was not certain the address even existed when he wrote the tango in Montevideo but imagined the building in the downtown of Buenos Aires.[60] The tango became famous throughout Latin America including performances by a Chicano tango singer in San Antonio, Texas in 1940.[61] At its apex in the 1920s, tangos provided connections between Buenos Aires and Montevideo as lyricists like Victor Solino and Lenzi enjoyed significant successes on both sides of the Río de la Plata. Carlos Gardel and other famous tango singers from the era also achieved considerable boosts to their careers by performing at theaters like the Teatro Solis in Montevideo during the 1910s and 1920s. In the case of Lenzi, his own career as a dramatist thoroughly spanned Buenos Aires and Montevideo in this era, an important pattern of career advancement drawing on Buenos Aires and Montevideo that I explore in greater detail in Chapter Four.

Arlt's journalism about Buenos Aires also exemplifies how many Argentine journalists in the early twentieth century developed their careers while writing extensively about urban culture. In competition with readers of Arlt's *Aguafuertes portenas*, the Argentine journalist Edmundo Guibourg wrote a newspaper column titled "Calle Corrientes" in Buenos Aires's popular daily *Critica* beginning in 1932. Guibourg's column focused on Buenos Aires's theatrical industry and especially

[60] César Evaristo, *100 tangos de oro* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones LEA, 2006),
[61] Peter C. Haney, "Solo, Sombra, y Media Luz: History, Parody, and Identity Formation in the Mexican American Carpa," *Pragmatics* 10:1 (2000), 99-123.

Calle Corrientes's place as the epicenter of Argentine theater. As a critic, dramatist, theatrical producer, and occasional director, Guibourg became an important figure in the interchange of dramatists and performers between Buenos Aires and Montevideo that increased in scale and also encompassed different cultural industries in the 1920s and 1930s.[62] Guibourg's columns frequently drew on nostalgia to emphasize the changing character of downtown Buenos Aires. In his columns about the widening of Calle Corrientes, he pondered the loss of the street's older character. For Guibourg, Buenos Aires's streets each had their own character and Corrientes's renovation had dressed up the street like Avenida de Mayo while also losing its past with the renovation of the Teatro Opera.[63]

The attitude of nostalgia toward urban life was also evident for most notable Uruguayan flaneurs of this era included Emilio Frugoni whose books of poetry included *Poemas Montevideanos* in 1923 and *La epopeya de la ciudad* in 1927. Both offered an exploration of changing urban life in Montevideo during the 1920s while also drawing on nostalgia for the city of his youth. The Uruguayan critic Fernando Ainsa has argued how between the two works in 1923 and 1927, Frugoni increasingly embraced the impact of modernity on Montevideo.[64] His 1927 poem "Canto a la multitud" embraced "the city as a river" that included the "fluid circulations of its people."[65] In these images, Frugoni reflected how Montevideo's urban transformations could easily alter the perspectives that previous visitors had held about the city that did not apprehend its modern charms and rapid pace of daily life.

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[62] Edmundo Guiborg, *Calle Corrientes* (Buenos Aires: Plus Ultra, 1978); Edmundo Guiborg, *El último bohemio: conversaciones con Edmundo Guibourg: entrevistas de Mona Moncalvillo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Celtia, 1983)
[63] Guiborg, *Calle Corrientes,* 26-27.
[64] Fernando Ainsa, *Espacios de la memoria: lugares y paisajes de la cultura uruguaya*(Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce, 2008), 39.
[65] Emilio Frugoni, *La epopeya de la* ciudad (*nuevos poemas montevideanos)* (Montevideo: M. García, 1927)

Theaters, Theatrical Culture, and Downtown Entertainment Districts

In the world of theater, the connections between Buenos Aires and Montevideo also transpired in both everyday and exceptional manners during the 1910s and 1920s. On June 1, 1921, the downtown theater district of Buenos Aires was in the midst of a tumultuous moment whose impact was soon felt across borders. Many of Argentina's professional actors had staged periodic strikes for two years to force theater owners to pay better salaries. The company of the leading Argentine performer Florencio Parravicini canceled its scheduled show on May 31 due to the supposed illness of a performer, but the lack of a public was also a factor according to the local press.[66] The federation of theater performers conveyed to Buenos Aires's most popular daily newspaper, *Critica*, "We are not seeking charity!" while asserting that they were just fighting for what they deserved.[67] The actors argued that half of their salaries were used to prepare their wardrobes while Buenos Aires's theater owners and playwrights earned fabulous sums. Some performing companies had switched theaters in the city in order to gain a better share of the ticket receipts and also in order to assert their rights to better working conditions. The number of theaters and performances was arguably among the largest factors in creating an oversupply of theater.

The strike by theater workers in Buenos Aires had begun on May 1 and on June 1, the demands of theater performers crossed national borders into Uruguay. The theatrical community of Montevideo agreed to hold its own demonstration in solidarity with the "Confederation of Theater People" that had organized the protests in Buenos Aires. The imagined community of theatrical workers in the River Plate also reflected the importance of urban imaginaries. The theatrical communities

[66] "La lucha contra empresarios y amarillos," *Critica*, June 1, 1921, 3.
[67] Idem.

overlapped and identified with one another, reflecting how the performers and dramatists from both cities understood regional culture. The politicization of the theater community in Buenos Aires would continue in the subsequent months and the theatrical performers sought to secure the support of the local government. Under the banner of "Gente de Teatro" (Theater People), the performers even created a political party to compete in Buenos Aires's municipal elections in 1926.[68]

In the transnational theatrical marketplace of the Río de la Plata, performing spaces and dramatic content in Buenos Aires and Montevideo were continuously intertwined by theater performers who built on the regional culture that had developed in the nineteenth century. The Uruguayan-Argentine performing family of the Podestas and the Uruguayan playwrights Florencio Sanchez and Ernesto Herrera were among the crucial figures in connecting Montevideo to Buenos Aires. From the late nineteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth century, the Podestas were a Uruguayan family who popularized circus and theatrical performance in Argentina and Uruguay. The performers traveled between Buenos Aires and Montevideo while also stopping and performing in the interior of both Argentina and Uruguay. Foreign performers would also follow similar circuits but the Podestas were the most influential and longest-lasting attractions.[69] From their origins as circus performers, Podestas incorporated dramatic elements into their performances by including an adaptation of the famous late nineteenth century Argentine novel about the gaucho Juan Moreira that spoke to national identity in both Argentina and Uruguay. From initially performing in tents, the Podesta brothers began to perform at

[68] On the politicization of theater professionals in Buenos Aires, Carolina Gonzalez Velasco, *Gente de teatro: ocio y espectaculos en la Buenos Aires de los anos viente* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2012), 103-158.
[69] William Acree, "Hemispheric Travelers on the Rioplatense Stage", *Latin American Theatre Review*, Volume 47, Number 2, Spring 2014, 5-24.

increasing numbers of new theaters built in Montevideo and Buenos Aires during the fin-de-siecle and into the early twentieth century.[70] Through their movements, the Podestas reflected how the history of downtown mass entertainment in both cities also included historic routes that ran through the countryside and small towns of both rural Argentina and Uruguay. The Podesta family's most famous member during the early twentieth century was Jose "Pepe" Podesta (1858-1937), who had a lengthy career performing in circus and theater. His children and other relatives continued the family's work into the mass culture of the twentieth century, becoming leading dramatic actors on stage and also on screen beginning during the era of silent film in the 1910s.[71]

The Uruguayan dramatist Florencio Sanchez also connected the two cities through his remarkable output during the first decade of the twentieth century. Sanchez became the leading playwright in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo before his tragic and shocking death in Italy in 1910 at the age of 35. From the 1910s through the 1930s and onwards, Sanchez's plays about working-class and immigrant families in urban settings similar to Buenos Aires and Montevideo became foundational works for new theatrical companies and also helped to popularize the melodramatic traditions on the Argentine and Uruguayan stages.[72] The memorialization of Sanchez also gave sustenance to Montevideo's theater community during rituals such as the celebration of the return of Sanchez's ashes to Uruguay in January 1921, with plaques honoring his memory and annual ceremonies

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[70] On the role of the Podestas, also see Jorge Dubatti, "Después de Florencio Sánchez, la declinación. Sobre el mito de la época de oro en la historiografía del teatro argentino," *Episkenion* 1 (junio 2013).
[71] José J Podestá, *Medio siglo de farándula: memorias by José J Podestá* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Nacional del Teatro, 2003).
[72] *Florencio Sanchez entre las dos orillas*, Osvaldo Pelletieri and Roger Mirza, eds (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1998), 16.

commemorating his death.[73] After his death, Sanchez connected the two cities together through his considerable artistic output of plays but also through the building of imagined communities through his memory.

Following in Sanchez's footsteps, the Uruguayan playwright Ernesto Herrera also enjoyed critical success for his dramas in Montevideo and Buenos Aires during the 1910s in a period when Uruguayan theater was still flourishing in Montevideo. Herrera's career also paralleled the decline of Montevideo's theaters accelerated in the late 1910s through the 1930s. This resulted in continued migration by Uruguayan performers and dramatists like Herrera to Buenos Aires. On June 7, 1912, Herrera's three-act dramatic play *El leon ciego* opened at the Teatro Nuevo in downtown Buenos Aires a year after its opening in Montevideo. The play dealt with the recently ended Uruguayan civil war and the theme of *caudillismo* being a bane on rural and urban life in South America that maintained great relevance in both Uruguay and Argentina in the early twentieth century. Herrera's plays reflected how political themes also resonated easily between the two cities.

In the 1910s and 1920s, multiple aspects of Buenos Aires's theatrical culture resonated across the urban imaginaries of Río de la Plata into Montevideo. Theater performers were increasingly competing in a mass market of plays and theatrical venues in both cities. The theatrical district in Buenos Aires rapidly expanded its number of theaters in the previous two decades, with the number of downtown theaters growing from 13 in 1906 to 25 in 1911, before jumping to 32 in 1925 and 48 theaters in 1928. Many theater performers earned their livelihood by traveling widely around the cities and towns of Argentina to perform as well as to Montevideo. Local

[73] The return of Florencio Sanchez's mortal remains to Montevideo was widely covered in both Uruguayan and Argentine newspapers. See "Homenaje a Florencio Sanchez," *La Prensa,* January 23, 1921, 11.

theater performers also constantly competed with the arrival of renowned itinerant theater performers that arrived to Buenos Aires and Montevideo throughout the year from Spain, Italy, and France and there was also the presence of Yiddish-theater troupes that came from New York in a global star system that complicated the pursuits of local Argentine Yiddish theater performers.[74]

The construction of new theaters from late 1910s through the 1930s in Buenos Aires and Montevideo was also part of a larger process of urban development that occurred with the increased importance of theatrical performance and cinema on urban space. During the interwar period between World War One and World War Two, global film exhibition expanded throughout Latin America while theatrical business benefited from the easier circulation of performers during peacetime. In Montevideo, the city's most prominent theater remained its opera house, Teatro Solis. The Teatro Solis was founded in 1856 and reflected the evolution of mass culture in Montevideo. In the early twentieth century, the Solis continued to be used for productions such as opera and plays while it also became one of the many sites where Montevideo businessman Bernardo Glucksmann and other local cultural impresarios arranged for film showings. Carlos Gardel and other leading tango performers also performed in the Solis during the late 1910s and 1920s during the period marked by tango's rise to prominence in mass culture. The largest venues constructed for theater in Montevideo were usually in close proximity to Avenida 18 de Julio and many of the movie palaces built in the 1920s and 1930s were also spatially oriented around the construction of a downtown entertainment district.

[74] Pesach Burstein, Lillian Lux Burstein, Gershon Freidlin, *What a Life!: The Autobiography of Pesach'ke Burstein, Yiddish Matinee Idol* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 142-143.

In Montevideo during the 1920s and 1930s, the downtown Avenue 18 de Julio continued developing as the dominant space for modern urban cultural commerce in the city due to its theaters and shopping options. In the downtown district of Buenos Aires, theaters and urban space were oriented around a wider area that was still defined by a handful of streets in downtown. In 1922, a reader of Buenos Aires's *La Nación* newspaper could get a sense of the urban geography of entertainment in downtown. There were myriad theaters to choose from to see dramatic plays and films, especially along Buenos Aires's Corrientes Street. Before and after being widened into an avenue in 1930, Corrientes was at the epicenter of this regional and transnational world of mass culture. For Buenos Aires's residents and many travelers to the city, the twenty-block stretch of Corrientes that started near the industrial port earned the street the impressive moniker of the "Broadway of South America" during the early decades of the twentieth century. In the urban imaginary of porteños, the urban imaginary of downtown Buenos Aires was largely represented by Avenida Corrientes. By the mid-1930s, this was due to the high concentration of about 40 different theaters along the street that was unparalleled anywhere else in the hemisphere other than in New York. In this respect, Buenos Aires became a global destination for performers from around the Atlantic world who sought to perform in the cultural capital of South America. Calle Corrientes, as the street was called until the mid-1930s when it was widened, was a major thoroughfare for cultural commerce and also for descriptions of modernity in Buenos Aires. In 1927, the Argentine writer Julio Aramburu proclaimed that Corrientes was the street where the city "concentrated the psychology of public sentiments, of defeated sadness and

triumphant happiness."[75] Echoing Huyssen, the urban imaginary of Buenos Aires was defined by the connections between streets and emotions.

During these decades, film exhibition became an increasingly important industry in both cities after the introduction of sound to films in the late 1920s, but in Buenos Aires, the world of theater remained extremely vibrant. For many porteño residents of Buenos Aires, theater culture was what made the city center so special. Early Argentine films drew heavily on the theatrical genres of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Starting in the 1930s, directors like Manuel Romero who had previously worked in theater made an array of films dealing with tango and cultural commerce focused on life along Corrientes Avenue and the center of the city.[76]

From before the turn of the twentieth century, Río de la Plata theater culture had drawn heavily on theatrical traditions of Spain and Italy such as Spanish zarzuela and the political commitments of anarchism. Buenos Aires and Montevideo attracted visiting performances by leading European performers like the Spanish actress Margarita Xirgu and the Italian actress Emma Gramatica. The early world of film in the region drew on the genres and popular performers that emerged from the milieu of Buenos Aires's theaters. In the Río de la Plata, the Argentine film industry was able to become the dominant local culture industry that sought to compete with North American and European films. Argentine films during the 1910s and 1920s depended on the contributions of leading theater directors, playwrights, performers, and producers whose careers had blossomed in downtown Buenos Aires and usually included extensive work in Montevideo as well. The histories and career trajectories

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[75] Julio Aramburu, *Buenos Aires: ciudad, mujeres, hombres, teatros, elogio de la Avenida de mayo y las calles Florida y Corrientes, muestrario urbano* (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1927), 24.

[76] On Romero, see Alicia Aisemberg, "Prácticas de cruce en las obras de Manuel Romero: tango, teatro, cine y deporte", *Cuadernos de Cine Argentino* 6, INCAA, marzo 2005.

of both Argentine and Uruguayan "gente de teatro" or "theater people" collectively help to elucidate how the theater and film industry propelled Buenos Aires into becoming the cultural capital of South America during these decades. These transformations had a spatial manifestation that included Avenida Corrientes and the other parts of downtown Buenos Aires.

As Argentine historian Carolina Gonzalez Velasco has shown in her excellent study on theater and urban space in Buenos Aires during the 1920s, Argentine playwrights and actors during the era transformed urban public culture.[77] Drawing on life in the city, they helped to create dramatic forms of mass culture that appealed to different segments of a rapidly transforming society that was incorporating immigrants, children of immigrants, rural migrants, and the increasingly literate urban popular and middle classes. The theater industry also inspired more Argentine writers to produce dramas that became successful mass entertainment. Buenos Aires's downtown was an epicenter of creativity and inspiration during the day and especially at night. The prolific Argentine writer and screenwriter Ulyses Petit de Murat was among many who felt that "Corrientes was the street that was alive all the night".[78] He also opined that it was the nighttime activities of the city that inspired playwrights like Samuel Eichelbaum to write popular plays and films during the 1920s and 1930s. The extensive scholarship about Argentine theater has focused on Buenos Aires as the cauldron of this activity during this transformative decade. Focusing on theater as a gateway to understand popular culture in Buenos Aires, Gonzalez Velasco and Osvaldo Pelletieri have shown how the 1920s was a economically vibrant decade in Argentine theater with the popularity of one-act plays known as the "género chico" or

[77] Carolina González Velasco, *Gente de Teatro. Ocio y espectáculo en la. Buenos Aires de los años veinte* (Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2011)
[78] Ulyses Petit de Murat, *La noche de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 1963), 69.

sainetes and also musical revues known as "teatro de revista".[79] During this period, Argentine and Uruguayan dramatists and actors increasingly worked together in downtown Buenos Aires and Montevideo. A large number of actors and directors from Uruguay also collaborated closely with Buenos Aires-based theater performers and nascent film producers to foment the expansion of mass culture in Buenos Aires.

Figure 7
Horacio Coppola, photograph of Avenida Corrientes Avenue at night in Leopoldo Marechal, *Historia de la Calle Corrientes*, 1937.

[79] Gonzalez Velasco, *Gente de teatro*; Osvaldo Pellettieri, *Historia del teatro argentino en Buenos Aires: La emancipación cultural (1884-1930)* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 2002)

Figure 8
Horacio Coppola, photograph of Avenida Corrientes in the heart of the theater district, in Leopoldo Marechal, *Historia de la Calle Corrientes*, 1937.

The downtown entertainment district of Buenos Aires took on a more modern character at nighttime that was largely due to the concentration of approximately forty different theaters along Corrientes Street. In the black and white images of the Argentine photographer Horacio Coppola from 1936, the street of theaters appears as a feverish urban corridor of mass entertainment unmatched anywhere else in the hemisphere except New York. Coppola's portraits of Buenos Aires also speak to the work of the photographer as a flaneur of mass culture and producer of urban imaginaries. Scholars have examined how Coppola's photographs capture the urban transformations of the city and also reflect the rise of downtown entertainment.[80] Coppola's work most eloquently shows how Corrientes became an avenue and center

[80] David William Foster, "Horacio Coppola: The Photographer's Urban Fervor," in *Spectacle and Topofilia: Reading Early Modern and Postmodern Hispanic Cultures*, edited by David R. Castillo and Bradley J. Nelson (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012), 137-53.

of mass culture, while inspiring tangos, literature, and visual culture in the realm of photographs, plays, and films. Coppola's images of Buenos Aires as a modern metropolis were also in dialogue with his training as a photographer at the Bauhaus school in Germany. His visions of Buenos Aires also addressed the increased possibilities for visual representations of urban modernity during the 1930s, a process that would be accelerated by the growth of Buenos Aires's film industry during the same years and discussed in Chapter Three of the dissertation.

From the 1910s to the mid-1930s, Buenos Aires had produced an urban imaginary at home and abroad that its bustling downtown was a global destination for popular entertainers from around the Atlantic world that had come to perform in the cultural capital of South America. In this process, Corrientes Avenue evolved as the quintessential space in Buenos Aires for theatrical commerce and also a landmark for visual representations of modernity. In 1930, the Uruguayan-Argentine artist Facio Hebequer created a lithograph of a phantasmagorical Calle Corrientes as the center of nightlife in the city. Facio Hebequer's print represented Corrientes as an urban thoroughfare lined by entertainment venues such as the Broadway and the Nacional theaters and also a locale for people to eat and drink at a downtown parrilla restaurant. Cars and streetcars are traveling along the downtown street and there is movement everywhere. In the background of the lithograph, a billboard for a theater or cabaret reads that "Hay Cien Mujeres Desnudas" or "There Are One Hundred Naked Woman. In Facio Hebequer's visual representation of Calle Corrientes and also his other lithographs like one of the train station at Retiro, he emphasized his view that Buenos Aires was a city overflowing with people and cultural commerce.

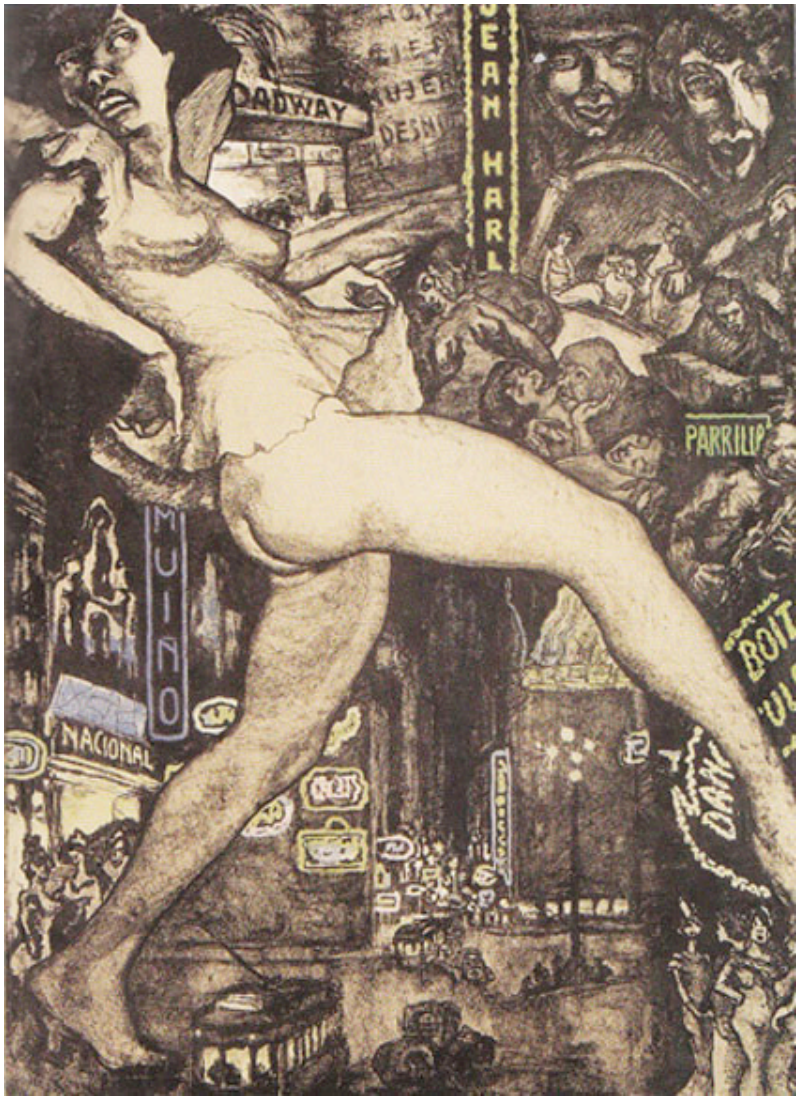

Figure 9
Guillermo Facio Hebequer, “Calle Corrientes”, circa 1930
Galeria Vermeer, Buenos Aires

In addition to the constant visual stimuli of reading signs in Buenos Aires during the 1920s and 1930s, walking in the city was an opportunity to compare the scenes of the city with what appeared in daily newspaper advertisements. For a pedestrian in downtown Buenos Aires or a casual newspaper reader in the 1910s and 1920s, it was clear that the leading film exhibitor in the city was the Argentine Jewish immigrant Max Glucksmann. In Buenos Aires’s newspapers, Glucksmann’s downtown theaters were advertised prominently. In comparison, the massification of urban society in Montevideo during this period also experienced the growth in the

number of theaters that offered various forms of mass culture including those owned by Glucksmann and his brother Bernardo Glucksmann. Montevideo's theaters featured plays and frequent music performances by itinerant performers, especially traveling theater companies from Argentina and Europe. For theatergoers, Buenos Aires was still seen as the global metropolis of mass culture that was closest. These forms of mass culture increasingly competed with theaters showing films, especially after the increasing quantity and quality of silent films featuring movie stars like Chaplin and Buster Keaton and also the arrival of sound films in the late 1920s.

In the 1930s, Corrientes retained its character as the street for the Buenos Aires public to enjoy theaters for plays and both Argentine and Hollywood films. Across the river, Montevideo's Avenida 18 de Julio was dotted by theaters that featured plays from Uruguayan and Argentine performers and also the increasing presence of Argentine and Hollywood cinema. In the 1930s, the geography of entertainment in Buenos Aires began to shift due to the increasing number of movie palaces downtown on Lavalle Street. A few blocks away from Corrientes, Lavalle was in the process of becoming the most vibrant street in Buenos Aires for filmgoers by the 1930s. While explaining his admiration for the Argentine film *La Fuga*, Jorge Luis Borges explained his initial skepticism about the charms of Argentine films largely because he had been spoiled by Hollywood. He felt "to enter a cinema in Lavalle and find myself (not without surprise), in the Gulf of Bengal or Wabash Avenue seems preferable to entering the same cinema and finding myself (not without surprise) in Lavalle Street."[81] Despite initial hesitance, Borges was pleased that he would able to enjoy Argentine contributions to cinema and this would also be true for other theater-goers to movie theaters in downtown Buenos Aires.

[81] Edgardo Cozarinsky, *Borges in/and/on film* (New York: Lumen Books, 1992).

The urban imaginary of cinema and its connections to Buenos Aires also resonated with Montevideo native Juan Carlos Onetti when he published his first short story during an extended visit to the Argentine capital in 1932. In the story "Avenida de Mayo-Diagonal Norte-Avenida de Mayo" published in the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Prensa* on January 1, 1933, Onetti narrated walking around the well-known streets of downtown Buenos Aires and seeing "posters showing Clark Gable's shoulders and the hips of Joan Crawford".[82] The imagined possibilities of attending the cinema in Buenos Aires were also magnified in Onetti's story as the narrator listened to a newsreel detailing record-breaking automobile racing in Miami and the political machinations of Stalin. In his tale of Buenos Aires as an archetypal modern metropolis, Onetti's construction of the urban imaginary connected Buenos Aires to global flow of mass culture, where life moved faster than in his native Montevideo.

In conclusion, the overlapping connections and comparative urban cultural histories of Buenos Aires and Montevideo were instrumental in shaping the realities and the urban imaginaries of *porteños* and *montevideanos* during the early twentieth century. Buenos Aires's magnetic pull for producers of mass urban culture from Montevideo continued to strengthen during this period of the interwar decades, even if the cities competed in a wider-reaching hierarchy of urban culture that included cities like New York, Paris, and Rome. In their spatial landscapes and cultural fields, Buenos Aires and Montevideo functioned as mirrored cities in various fields during the 1910s through the mid-1930s. Many cultural connections developed in this period of urban transformation and urban chronicles from various genres helpfully illuminate the uneven growth of mass culture and modern urban spaces in the Río de la Plata's metropolitan centers. The movements of leading cultural producers between Buenos

[82] Juan Carlos Onetti, "Avenida de Mayo-Diagonal Norte-Avenida de Mayo," *La Prensa*, January 1, 1933.

Aires and Montevideo during the interwar period also set the stage for countless collaborations that would embrace and intertwine the mass cultural forms of theater and film in the following decades.

Chapter Two

"The Brothers Glucksmann and Mass Culture in the Río de la Plata"

On October 17, 1946, Uruguay's leading film exhibitor Bernardo Glucksmann was feted during a gala attended by 600 people at the luxurious Parque Hotel in Montevideo to celebrate four decades of success in the film industry in Argentina and Uruguay.[1] The celebration resembled a similar event that his older brother Max Glucksmann had enjoyed in 1919 in Buenos Aires when he was preparing to undertake a much-publicized trip to Europe as Argentina's leading film distributor. The gala for Bernardo Glucksmann included a banquet and speeches that congratulated him on helping transform film into "entertainment that had attained perfection." [2] The attendees included political and business leaders such as Uruguay's foreign minister, health minister, and Montevideo's chief of police. The Uruguayan manager of 20th Century Fox's operations, Jose M. Sanchez, gave a speech to commemorate the event. The Uruguayan theater producer and dramatist Angel Curotto also spoke about Glucksmann's accomplishments on behalf of the Centro Cinematografico de Uruguay. Lastly, the Argentine film critic and screenwriter Chaz de Cruz also spoke at the event as the representative of Argentina's film community, adding to the regional Río de la Plata flavor of the occasion.

An Eastern European Jewish immigrant to the Río de la Plata, Bernardo Glucksmann became Uruguay's most prominent cultural impresario during the first half of the twentieth century. Between the 1910s and the 1950s, Glucksmann succeeded in remaking the urban landscape of Montevideo and helped to foment the massification of film spectatorship in Uruguay. Glucksmann's successful career as the "Cinema King of Uruguay" came about through his attempts to dominate both distribution and exhibition of foreign films in

[1] "Fue homenajeado el Señor Bernardo Glucksmann por sus cuarenta años de actividades cinematograficos," *El Dia*, 18 October 1946, 8.
[2] Idem

Montevideo after arriving there in 1913 as the representative of his older brother Max's company, the Buenos Aires-based "Casa Lepage, de Max Glucksmann". Bernardo's arrival in Montevideo took place because of the regional market strategies of Max Glucksmann, who had already become both the dominant film exhibitor and music producer in Buenos Aires in the 1910s while establishing a family business that became a global player in the expanding world of mass media.

By exploring the careers of the Glucksmann brothers, this chapter argues that the rise of national mass culture industries, especially film exhibition and recorded music, in Argentina and Uruguay developed symbiotically and within a unique context of several overlapping geographical frames. The Glucksmann brothers' business interests developed within the regional context of the Río de la Plata that was shaped by the two connected marketplaces, and also reflected the processes by which mass culture influenced everyday life and urban space in the region. Buenos Aires became the cultural capital of South America in the early decades of the twentieth century through the work of cultural impresarios like the Glucksmanns while shaping the development of cultural production throughout Argentina and also in the neighboring capital city of Montevideo. The intertwined mass culture industries in Buenos Aires and Montevideo developed as the byproducts of the transnational flow of global mass culture into South America from the United States and Europe. My work builds on scholarship by other historians who have worked primarily on the transnational construction of mass culture in Argentina. Scholars have yet to examine how national mass cultures in the comparative frames of Argentina and Uruguay symbiotically developed within the larger global flows of transnational mass culture into the region.

This chapter also explores a different vantage point to examine how the rise of mass culture in both Argentina and Uruguay was a predominantly urban-based process that emerged between Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Back and forth across the estuary of the Río

de la Plata, cultural producers acted transnationally within several different contexts. The careers of Bernardo and Max Glucksmann provide telling case studies about how the regionally oriented marketplace within the Río de la Plata was equally important to the development of mass culture in South America as the larger national and global marketplaces. While exploring the rise of mass culture in Buenos Aires and Montevideo and other cities in Latin America, historians have focused on the separate local contexts of cultural production in these cities. Interrogating these historiographies, there is a clear imperative to explore how the realms of cultural production were closely linked in the two cities. Bernardo Glucksmann and Max Glucksmann were the most influential figures in creating exhibition spaces for mass culture on their respective sides of the Río de la Plata from the 1910s through 1930s before Max Glucksmann's business declined and Bernardo Glucksmann's continued to thrive independently.[3] Their business ventures had important ramifications in the urban landscapes of Buenos Aires and Montevideo that were closely aligned with regional theater culture and the rise of film culture in early twentieth century Latin America.

Max Glucksmann has understandably drawn far more scholarly attention than his brother Bernardo. This focus has been due to the former's foundational role in the rise of film production and mass culture in the larger marketplace of Argentina. Additionally, Max Glucksmann created lasting legacies through his involvement in the early and rapid expansion of the commercial music industry in South America. Still, essentially all of the studies exploring Max Glucksmann's career have focused on the national context of his

[3] On Max Glucksmann, see Matthew Karush, *Culture of Class: Radio and Cinema in the Making of a Divided Argentina, 1920–1946* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 45-47; Mollie Lewis Nouwen, *Oy, My Buenos Aires*, *Jewish Immigrants and the Creation of Argentine National Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), 54-62; Irene Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico: identidades y representaciones en el noticiero y el documental en el cine mudo argentino* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblios, 2003), 29-37. On Bernardo Glucksmann, see Osvaldo Sarastola, *Función completa, por favor: un siglo de cine en Montevideo* (Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce, 2005), 29-33.

successes rather than tracing his business ventures across national borders. Drawing on newspapers and magazines in Argentina and Uruguay and the international film industry trade press that was distributed throughout the Atlantic world in Spanish and English, I study how Max Glucksmann worked with his brother Bernardo Glucksmann to collectively leave lasting marks on the cityscapes of Buenos Aires and Montevideo from the early 1900s until the 1950s through their regional and also more global business strategies.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, theatrical productions and film exhibitions remade downtown districts across the globe. In Walter Benjamin's formulation, mechanically reproduced images of film stars like Charlie Chaplin crossed time and space to create global urban imaginaries.[4] In Montevideo and Buenos Aires, movie theaters were among the many new spaces of consumption that reflected the construction of new imaginaries and also marked the expansion of the middle classes. Scholars have provided excellent case studies that demonstrate how such consumption and popular culture in Latin American cities like Buenos Aires and Montevideo were representative of the transnational flows of global culture.[5] Across class lines, city residents enjoyed going to the movies in the Río de la Plata and movie stars became celebrated figures in the urban imaginaries of everyday life. Spectators in Buenos Aires and Montevideo were able to attend an assortment of North American, European, and Latin American films. The Latin American offerings in

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[4] Thomas J. Saunders, *Hollywood in Berlin: American Cinema and Weimar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Paul S. Moore, "Movie palaces on Canadian downtown main streets: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver," *Urban History Review* 32 (2) (2004): 3-20; Ana M. López, "Early Cinema and Modernity in Latin America," *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Autumn, 2000), pp. 48-78; Philip Swanson, "Going Down on Good Neighbours: Imagining América in Hollywood Movies of the 1930s and 1940s (Flying Down to Rio and Down Argentine Way)," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* Vol. 29, No.1 (January 2010), 71-84; Adrián Pérez Melgosa, *Cinema and Inter-American Relations: Tracking Transnational Affect* (London: Routledge, 2012.)

[5] Matthew B. Karush, *Culture of Class: Radio and Cinema in the Making of a Divided Argentina, 1920–1946* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012). Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Jason Borge, *Latin American writers and the rise of Hollywood cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

the theater grew to consist of Argentine and Mexican movies during the expansion of cinema culture that occurred during the 1930s. The promotion of Argentine films benefited from their connections with journalists and impresarios in print media in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo that heavily publicized the openings of Argentine films. Film magazines in both cities were also devoted to capturing the zeitgeist of matinee idols and their work in films made in Argentina. The film magazines also reflected the competition and market overlap between the Argentine film industry and the Hollywood market.[6]

While examining the rise of film culture in Latin America, historians have focused on the global expansion of Hollywood and the local conditions in the development of national cinemas, but often have overlooked how local actors such as directors and producers operated at both the national and regional levels. The historiography on foreign cultural influence in Latin America has emphasized Hollywood's reception in national contexts and the local responses. However, this dialectical approach to the construction of North American cultural hegemony in Western Hemisphere has overlooked the potential for commercially viable regional cultural markets between urban spaces within Latin America to influence global cultural flows and also remake national and local urban cultures.[7] The capital cities of the Río de la Plata reflected an important mixture of these global, regional, and local processes that were more nuanced and also more dynamic in the realms of mass cultural production. As brothers and business partners, Bernardo Glucksmann and Max Glucksmann acted regionally to transform local urban spaces across national borders while also participating in a global market for mass culture. The interconnected histories of the brothers in Buenos Aires and

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[6] Andrea Matallana, *'Locos por la radio': Una historia social de la radiofonía en la Argentina, 1923–1947* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2006); Florencia Calzon Flores, "Hacia una reconstruccion de las revistas del espectaculo: El caso de Radiolandia en los cuarenta y cincuenta," *Historia Argentina y Americana* (enero 2012), 41-64; Fernando Purcell, *¡De película!: Hollywood y su impacto en Chile, 1910-1950* (Santiago de Chile: Taurus, 2012).

[7] Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore, eds. *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of US-Latin American Relations (*Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1998).

Montevideo provide a case study of how mass culture flowed across borders in early twentieth century Latin America.

The first decades of the twentieth century were extremely important for the development of mass culture in the Río de la Plata as the populations of Buenos Aires and Montevideo greatly expanded. In 1914, the population of Buenos Aires was approximately 1,575,000 residents and the population of Montevideo was close to 380,000. By the 1930s, Buenos Aires had reached a population of 2,415,00 and Montevideo had grown to 682,000.[8] In Montevideo and Buenos Aires, theaters were concentrated in the downtown districts and were profitable spaces for theatrical productions and films especially in the period from the 1910s to the 1940s. In Montevideo, there were 33 theaters that showed films in 1910, 63 in the 1920, and 80 in 1930. After the arrival of sound to cinema in late 1920s and the mass arrival of the 1930s, there was a boom period in which 30 newly built theaters opened in Montevideo between 1936 and 1953 in the downtown district.[9] This included Bernardo Glucksmann's prized downtown theater, the Trocadero, which opened to great fanfare in 1940. The new theaters in Montevideo sought to utilize modern technologies to attract audiences and brought the total number of theaters in the city over 100 theaters. During roughly the same time period, approximately 150 theaters opened in Buenos Aires, reflecting the Argentine capital's larger population and also much larger world of cultural commerce.[10]

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[8] On the population of Buenos Aires, see Jose C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 149. For Montevideo, see *The Daily news almanac and political register for 1915* (Chicago: Chicago Daily News Co., 1915) and Saratsola, *Función completa*, 12.

[9] Saratsola, *Función completa, por favor*; Ministerio de Industrias y Trabajo, *Cine en el Uruguay: breve reseña histórica y guía general de salas de Montevideo e Interior.* Montevideo: Ministerio del Trabajo, 1955

[10] Jorge Finkielstein; Julio Cacciatore, Marta García Falcó, and Patricia Mendez, *Cines de Buenos Aires: patrimonio del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: CEDODAL and Junta de Andalucía, 2010).

According to one estimate, there were 174 theaters in Buenos Aires in 1940.[11] In the downtown of Buenos Aires, Lavalle Street had over 14 theaters crowded together in two blocks. Max Glucksmann's operations on Lavalle Street included the Electric Palace that he had launched by exhibiting silent films during the 1910s before being transformed to show sound films. There was also an important relationship between content and the spatial distribution of film exhibition in Buenos Aires during this period. In 1939, the downtown theaters in Buenos Aires emphasized a mix of global and national cinema while showing Argentine films about 30 percent of the time. However, the theaters outside of the center in the city's outer neighborhoods (the *barrios*) showed Argentine films approximately 53 percent of the time and often showed two national films at the same time.

In Uruguay, Argentine films were also popular in the theaters throughout the city since they often featured actors familiar to Montevideo audiences from previous touring theater productions. The themes of the films also could connect the two cities. In 1939, the leading Argentine actors Nini Marshall and Enrique Serrano starred in the film *Divorcio in Montevideo* (*Divorce in Montevideo*). The film successfully played in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo while dealing with the subject matter about Argentines needing to go to Montevideo to end a marriage. The film screened in Montevideo on August 10, 1939 at Bernardo Gluckmann's *Radio City* cinema. During the 1930s and 1940s, the interlinking world of mass entertainment in Buenos Aires and Montevideo was crucial in defining the practices of modern consumption in both cities. As the Uruguayan film historian Osvaldo

[11] Joaquín Calvagno, "El primer cine industrial y las masas en Argentina: la sección "Cinematografía" del semanario "CGT"(1934-1943)," *A Contracorriente* Vol. 7, No.3 (Spring 2010), 38-81, www.ncsu.edu/project/acontracorriente

Saratsola has documented, movie theater attendance increased during the 1930s and 1940s in Montevideo before reaching an all-time high in 1953 of over 19 million tickets sold.

Film Attendance in Montevideo, 1930-1953

Year	Theaters	Tickets Sold	City Population
1930	80	4,381,896	481,725
1931	73	3,756,112	489,685
1932	70	3,401,180	496,938
1933	69	3,145,582	500,877
1934	71	3,978,000	666,734
1935	69	4,377,460	672,243
1936	77	5,583,940	682,524
1937	85	6,066,895	692,726
1938	81	6,273,194	704,549
1939	79	6,380,381	709,530
1940	78	6,248,733	708,852
1941	78	7,121,920	710,895
1942	75	8,370,000	714,039
1943	77	8,186,151	714,285
1944	81	9,756,742	717,236
1945	84	10,608,507	719,774
1946	87	12,443,087	722,024
1947	89	14,181,734	729,734
1948	95	15,099,360	743,254
1949	96	15,387,784	763,575
1950	98	16,687,709	795,875
1951	99	18,231,130	806,305
1952	102	18,032,109	814,561
1953	105	19,152,019	826,405

Source: Osvaldo Saratsola, *Funcion completa*, por favor, 299.

Bernardo Glucksmann's commitment to building new theaters in the downtown district of the Uruguayan capital also reflected the larger global process whereby theaters were modern spaces of air-conditioned and aural technologies and became easily identifiable spatial landmarks for city residents. In Montevideo and Buenos Aires, film going was a major activity for the working classes and the emerging middle classes. In the case of the middle classes, they were growing faster in Argentina and Uruguay than in other Latin American countries during this period.[12] While explaining his admiration for the Argentine film *La*

[12] A. Ricardo López and Barbara Weinstein, *The Making of the Middle Class: Toward a Transnational History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); David S. Parker and Louise Walker, *Latin America's Middle Class: Unsettled Debates and New Histories* (Lanham, MD:

Fuga, Jorge Luis Borges explained his initial skepticism about the charms of Argentine films largely because he had been spoiled by Hollywood. He felt "to enter a cinema in Lavalle Street and find myself (not without surprise), in the Gulf of Bengal or Wabash Avenue seems preferable to entering the same cinema and finding myself (not without surprise) in Lavalle Street."[13] Despite initial hesitance, Borges was surprised that he now believed that Argentine cinema was able to create worthwhile contributions to the seventh art.

In Buenos Aires and Montevideo, myriad theaters dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth century were converted into movie palaces from their previous use for stage performances. In Buenos Aires, Max Glucksmann competed with other immigrants like the Spanish immigrant Augusto Alvarez and the Italian immigrant Clemente Lococo as the city's primary film exhibitors. In Montevideo, Bernardo Glucksmann, the brothers José and Luis Crodara, and the brothers Mariano and Juan Oliver were the principal entrepreneurs involved in transforming older theaters into movie theaters. At the same time, some new theaters were built just for theater or for film. In Buenos Aires, the majestic Teatro Cervantes was inaugurated in 1921 solely for the production of Spanish drama. In Montevideo, the newer movie palaces like Bernardo Glucksmann's Radio City and Trocadero theaters were usually built along 18 de Julio Avenue. The remaking of the downtown district in Montevideo during the first decades of the twentieth century was highly similar to the spatial transformation in downtown Buenos Aires where both new constructions and renovated theaters remade the spatial landscape.

Bernardo Glucksmann became the leading operator of movie theaters in Uruguay starting in the 1910s and 1920s. According to the American journalist and historian Robert Alexander, Bernardo Glucksmann was like the hero of a Horatio Alger story set in Uruguay.

Lexington Books, 2013); Theo R. Crevenna, *La clase media en Argentina y Uruguay: cuatro colaboraciones* (Washington, DC: Organization of American States, 1950)

[13] Edgardo Cozarinsky, *Borges in/and/on film* (New York, NY: Lumen Books, 1988), 47.

Describing the entrepreneur's four decades of work in the film business in Montevideo, Alexander's 1946 article deemed Glucksmann to be worthy of the moniker "The Cinema King of Uruguay."[14] In fact, Bernardo Gluckmann's initial success was as much due to familial connections and crucial business networks as it was to hard work. Alexander's biographical sketch detailed his double immigration from Austria to Argentina to Uruguay but glossed over how he had first established his career in Buenos Aires by working with his brother Max Glucksmann. Alexander's brief narrative failed to analyze the integral role that Max Glucksmann had played in the development of his brother's career and their shared financial interests in their film distribution businesses that lasted from the 1910s to the mid-1930s. The brothers' businesses were separated over time due to a familial squabble that culminated around 1936 and it is likely that Bernardo Glucksmann sought to convey his own life story in 1946 without it remaining intertwined with his older brother's career.

A more precise accounting of the key events in Bernardo Glucksmann's career has been traced by Uruguayan film scholar Osvaldo Saratsola, who describes Max Glucksmann's leadership role in expanding the Glucksmann family business but primarily focuses on Bernardo Glucksmann's own activities.[15] Saratsola has shown how certain business decisions and misfortunes led to Bernardo Glucksmann's rise and fall as the leading figure of mass culture in Montevideo during the period from the 1910s to the 1940s. Throughout most of this period, the rise of the Glucksmanns' business in Montevideo was heavily linked to the expansion of the family businesses in Buenos Aires. However, Saratsola argues that the opposite was true as well, in that the Buenos Aires-based theaters depended heavily on the company's Uruguayan revenues. The discussion below of Max and Bernardo Glucksmann's careers expands the previous treatments that focus on the brothers' histories as national

[14] Robert Alexander, "The Cinema King of Uruguay," *The Pan American* 7 (1946), 13.
[15] Saratsola, *Función completa*, 29.

histories. My analysis seeks to examine how mass culture in Buenos Aires and Montevideo was remade in a regional and more transnational and global context.

The transatlantic flow of immigrants to the Río de la Plata accelerated in the late nineteenth century when increasing numbers of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe began considering Argentina as a destination across the Atlantic. Both Max Glucksmann and Bernardo Glucksmann participated in the waves of chain migration. The brothers were both born in the largely Jewish city of Czernowitz in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As the eldest of eleven siblings, Max was born in 1876 and immigrated to Buenos Aires from Eastern Europe in 1890.[16] In 1890, Bernardo Glucksmann was born and became the youngest of all the siblings. Among the other siblings in between Max and Bernardo was Jacobo Glucksmann. He would become Max Glucksmann's representative in New York and worked to help acquire film distribution contracts in the United States and Europe for the family business during the 1910s and 1920s. Jacobo Glucksmann's work as the family representative in the United States dated to the mid-1910s and his presence in the film industry was increasingly noted by the film trade periodical *Cine Mundial* for his negotiations to secure contracts for the Glucksmanns' exclusive distribution of all Charlie Chaplin movies in Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile from 1917.[17]

Shortly after arriving in Buenos Aires at age 14, around the time his youngest brother was born, Max Glucksmann began working at the downtown business of Casa Lepage, a firm dedicated to film distribution and photography owned by an aristocratic Belgian immigrant, Henri Lepage.[18] During the first decade of the 1900s, Max Glucksmann began to develop his own extensive strategies to become involved in the emerging business world of film and other forms of mass culture. Max Gluckmann was the driving force behind the expansion of

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[16] Idem
[17] "Exportacion a la América Latina", *Cine Mundial* (Junio 1917), 283.
[18] "El primer sueldo de Max Glücksmann: cincuenta pesos mensuales," *Atlántida*, July 16, 1931.

Casa Lepage's operations into becoming more involved with film equipment, recording Argentine musicians, and also operating theaters.[19] In 1908, Max Glucksmann bought the Casa Lepage business when its owner Henri Lepage wanted to end his involvement and move back to his native Europe. In the same year, Max Glucksmann began operating his first movie theater in Buenos Aires, the Buckingham Palace, located on Avenida de Mayo. By the mid-1910s, Max Glucksmann had established himself as Argentina's leading film and music businessman.

Glucksmann's businesses included a commercial presence that occupied numerous buildings throughout Buenos Aires that helped him to develop a well-known and well-regarded brand. Max Gluckmann primarily focused on his operations in film and music distribution and in the public eye, he was known for his community involvement in Buenos Aires's business and Jewish community. Max Glucksmann's theater holdings also spanned across South America from its base in Buenos Aires to Santiago del Chile to Montevideo. At the business's apex in the 1920s and 1930s, Max Glucksmann owned 50 theaters in Argentina. Along with Bernardo Glucksmann, he also was able to operate approximately 40 more cinemas throughout Uruguay.[20] Max Glucksmann's business interests in Chile included the operation of Santiago de Chile's largest downtown theater, Politema, after he had first signed a long-term contract in 1918.

Bernardo Glucksmann followed his brother to Argentina in 1905 from Eastern Europe, arriving at the same age that Max had come to Buenos Aires. In 1906, Bernardo Glucksmann began working for his brother at Casa Lepage. During the 1910s, Max Glucksmann became the leading distributor of musical recordings in Argentina and also opened his own record label that focused on popularizing tango recordings under the name

[19] Karush, *Culture of Class*, 45-47.
[20] Saratsola, *Función Completa.*

Discos-Nacional Odeon.[21] Max Glucksmann's work as a pioneering music mogul took off during the 1910s when he arranged to record the work of leading Argentine musicians, including Carlos Gardel. Glucksmann's main headquarters was located on Florida Street in the heart of downtown Buenos Aires. The building held a state of the art studio and also operated as a store for the distribution his records and music reproduction equipment.[22] In advertisements from 1919 in the major Buenos Aires newspaper *La Prensa*, Glucksmann publicized his two stores specializing in music in Buenos Aires, another in the Argentine industrial city of Rosario, and a fourth on Avenida 18 de Julio in Montevideo.[23] By the 1920s, Max Glucksmann had developed his multi-tiered approach to business in mass media. In his glossy publications devoted to his transnational music business, he also advertised radios and phonographs for sale in his different stores. He also continued to maintain a leading role in the recording and distribution of music of leading tango musicians in both Argentina and Uruguay.

Max Glucksmann became involved with the exhibition and production of silent films during the 1910s.[24] This reflected his contribution to the growth of the film business and the resulting theaters that became important major spaces for all forms of mass culture in Buenos Aires. On the exhibition side, Glucksmann exhibited the 1912 Italian silent film *Quo Vadis?* in June 1913 at the Palace theater that he operated on Corrientes Street in the heart of the city's theater district.[25] As a producer, Glucksmann was involved in the editing and exhibition of numerous historical dramas that were seminal in the history of Argentine film. Among his first efforts was a filmed version of *Amalia*, based on the important Argentine historical romance written by Jose Marmol (1818-1871). Directed by the Argentine dramatist

[21] Karush, *Culture of Class*, 46-53.
[22] Simon Collier, *The Life, Music, and Times of Carlos Gardel* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986*), 94.*
[23] *La Prensa,* December 19, 1922, 16.
[24] Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico*. 29-37.
[25] The advertisement for "Quo Vadis?" appeared in *La Prensa* on June 16, 1913, 17.

and director Enrique Garcia Veloso, the film employed Argentine elites rather than actors during the filming process. The actors used the clothing of their grandparents to recreate the setting of nineteenth setting Buenos Aires.[26]

The filming of *Amalia* also spoke to the importance of visual mass culture in building on national cultural traditions. The literary scholar Doris Sommer has analyzed how *Amalia* was a key "foundational fiction" that advanced the cause of nation-building during the nineteenth century.[27] The transposition of the film onto the screen sought to massify the appeal of the foundational text and show how it could be reappropriated into a national culture that included film. The history of Marmol's novel about Argentina during the Rosas regime also reflected the transnational character of Argentine literary culture. The novel had actually been written when the author was in exile in Montevideo in 1851 and serialized in the Uruguayan newspaper *La Semana* the same year. Decades later, the drama filmed in Argentina marked the first filmed collaboration between Glucksmann and Garcia Veloso, one of Buenos Aires's prominent dramatists and a leading figure in Argentina's writer's guild. After this success, the duo teamed up for the more elaborate historical drama *Mariano Moreno y la Revolución de Mayo* that was written and directed by Garcia Veloso.

The historic film about Moreno, one of Argentina's founding fathers, was an epic that involved a cast and crew of several hundred. The performers notably included accomplished professional performers such as the Uruguayan-Argentine actors Pablo Podesta and Jose Maria Podesta, and the Argentine actress Camila Quiroga. An April 16, 1915, a full page advertisement in *La Nación* newspapers publicized the film's screening that would take place

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[26] Estela Dos Santos, *El cine nacional* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1972), 16.

[27] John King, *Magical Reels: a history of cinema in Latin America* (New York: Verso, 2000), 11; on the idea of foundational fictions and the discussion of *Amalia*, see Doris Sommer, *Foundational fictions: the national romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 81.

on April 20, 1915 at the Palace Theatre. The advertisement showed different scenes from the film and highlighted the multitudinous character of its plot and production.

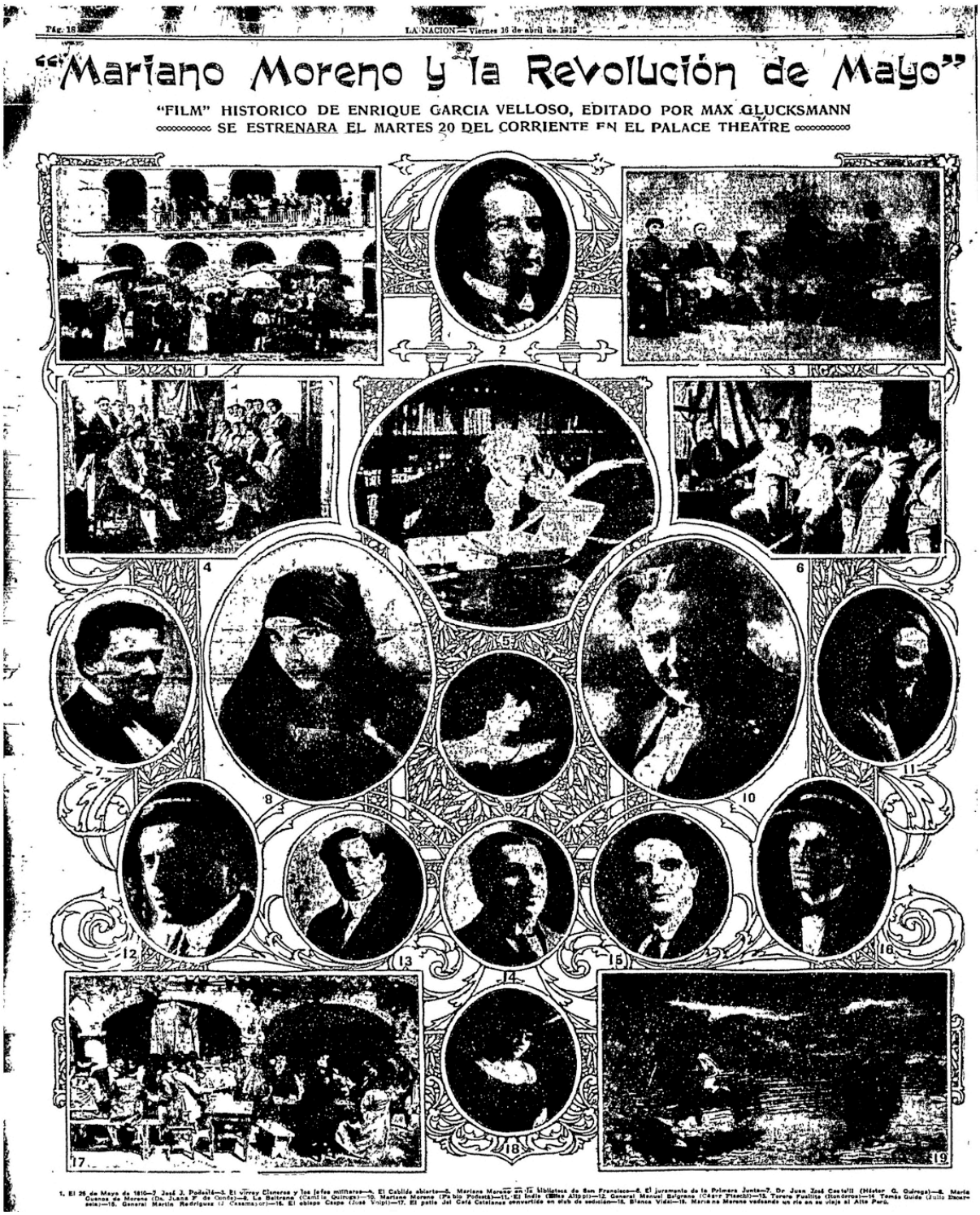

Figure 10
Advertisement for the film *Mariano Moreno y la Revolución de Mayo* produced by Max Glucksmann in La Nación on April 16, 1915 on page 8

Mariano Moreno was well-reviewed by film critics in Argentina, including the prominent Uruguayan writer Horacio Quiroga, who wrote about films for the leading Buenos Aires weekly magazine *Caras y Caretas* under the pseudonym Leon de Aldacoa.[28] Like other leading critics and dramatists from Uruguay in the early twentieth century, Quiroga had relocated to Buenos Aires due to the much larger opportunities for his career. As a film critic, Quiroga was ecstatic about *Mariano Moreno's* promise for Argentine film and especially about the film's novelty. He emphasized that Glucksmann had brought films to Argentina when no one else considered it to be a serious business and that the fruits of his important labors had begun to pay dividends. Quiroga wrote that "Max Glucksmann as an editor, technician, capitalist, has successfully undertaken an enterprise that anyone else would have failed at."[29] Quiroga also argued that "the commercial part was a secondary question and that 70,000 pesos had been invested in a work that was more than a historical vulgarization, more than a lively demonstration, more than propaganda for a new Argentine industry, but that belonged to a better form art than just business." The film's success encouraged Glucksmann to make more films in the 1910s, but he did not shift his business focus away from distribution.

Max Glucksmann was also involved in the production of arguably Argentina's first crime movie, *El Conde Orsini* (1917). Like *Mariano Moreno*, the film reflected the collaborative worlds of Argentine theater and filmmaking that ran from the silent film era to the era of Argentine sound films in the 1930s and 1940s. *El Conde Orsini* was based on a screenplay by Belisario Roldan, an Argentine dramatist and politician, whose career ranged across several fields of cultural production. Glucksmann also released in 1917 a documentary film titled *El Negro Johnson* that dealt with the visit of American boxing champion Jack

[28] Leon de Aldacoa, "Películas nacionales, al fin!—Mariano Moreno y la Revolución de Mayo. — Un grandioso esfuerzo argentino, " *Caras y Caretas*, April 17, 1915, 3.
[29] Idem

Johnson to Buenos Aires in 1914.[30] Glucksmann's filmmaking operations slowed and ultimately ended in the late 1910s and the 1920s as he focused his energies on the more lucrative aspects of distribution. In May 1919, Glucksmann completed the construction of the Grand Splendid Theater on Avenida Santa Fe away from the more traditional theater district of Corrientes Street and Lavalle Street which were both located further downtown. Glucksmann's Gran Splendid became an important theater for film showings and also tango concerts, but it did not create the rise of a new entertainment district outside of the center. Very quickly, the theater became one of the great venues for popular entertainment in Buenos Aires and was the site of many premieres that Glucksmann held during the 1920s.

The international film industry trade press from the period helps to understand the extent of Max Glucksmann's attempts to dominate the local and regional market in Argentina. According to the January 1920 issue of *Cine Mundial* magazine:

"Max Glucksmann has struck out to conquer every movie theater that he could find available in Montevideo. At the present date and according to their reports, there are, under Glucksmann's control, the following theaters: "Cine Rex," "Cinema Mundial," "Cine Uruguayo", and "Cine Defensa". In all of these there will be extensive reforms made during the summer season, to convert them into interesting theaters that can compete with the best of the Río de la Plata.
Mr. Bernardo Glucksmann occupies the leadership of the business and due to his devoted labors, there exist the triumphs that we have detailed."[31]

In the same issue, *Cine Mundial* detailed the operations of Max Glucksmann in Chile, but the main focus of the business remained focused on expanding in Argentina and Uruguay.[32] Glucksmann's advertisements in *Cine Mundial* also emphasized its strong presence in Montevideo and highlighted its office located in the heart of downtown on Avenida 18 de Julio.

[30] Jorge Finkielman, *The film industry in Argentina: an illustrated cultural history* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004).
[31] "Max Glucksmann", *Cine Mundial* (enero 1920), 115.
[32] Idem

Figure 11

Advertisement from Cine-Mundial, January 1920

During the 1920s, Max Glucksmann sought to achieve the goal of controlling more than the 65 percent of the distribution market than he already did in Argentina and he began looking for other opportunities. First, Max Glucksmann and Jacobo Glucksmann negotiated an exclusive rights deal with the Pathé film studio in 1920. They then followed that up with an even more important partnership with Paramount Pictures in early 1922.[33] The terms of the Pathe deal involved the exclusive rights for the showing of the studio's films for the list of countries that read "Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, Peru, and Bolivia." The films would include films by the leading American silent film actor Harold Lloyd, whose films were garnering similar attention as those of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton.[34] With the creation of this distribution network based in Buenos Aires, Max Glucksmann's business strategies would also shape the development of film culture in the various capital cities of South America.

[33] "Max Glucksmann se queda con la 'Paramount'", *Cine mundial* (febrero 1922), 92.
[34] Idem

In early 1922, Max Glucksmann's distribution deal with Paramount was a major subject of discussion in the trade press and the national press in Argentina. The British trade press publication *The Film Daily* highlighted the deal in an article and explained how Jacobo Glucksmann had signed a contract on Max Glucksmann's behalf that gave him the rights to all of Paramount's films from 1921 and 1922.[35] The Paramount deal was major news in Argentina and also received newspaper coverage in Uruguay.[36] In her research about Max Glucksmann and the silent film industry in the Río de la Plata, the Uruguayan scholar Georgia Torello has shown that Uruguayan journalists were hopeful that the deal with Paramount could accelerate the process by which North American films arrived in Montevideo. In other words, Uruguayans viewed Max Glucksmann as the most important international businessman in deciding how quickly films would come to their screens. In the early 1920s, North American films steadily passed through Buenos Aires and then Montevideo functioned as a secondary distribution point. The Glucksmann business was arguably better in speedily getting films to Montevideo than the other distributors in Uruguay like Oliver y Cía., Fox, Sud Americana and Natalini who all struggled to import and screen films in a timely fashion. The Argentine newspaper *La Razon* interviewed Max Glucksmann about the agreement on January 14, 1922 and focused on the significance of his business partnership with Paramount. According to the article, "The acquisition of the famous North American brand, the most powerful producer in the world, was the most important

[35] "Big Foreign Deal: Glucksmann Closes for Paramount Product for Six South American Countries", *The Film Daily*, January 9, 1922.
[36] On the response to Max Glucksmann's business expansion in Argentina and Uruguay, see Georgina Torello, "Por ese terrible pulpo que todo quiere abarcar y dominar: Debate entre revistas especializadas rioplatenses a propósito de Max Glucksmann," in *Actas del II Simposio Iberoamericano de Estudios Comparados sobre Cine y Audiovisual: perspectivas interdisciplinarias*, edited by Ana Laura Lusnich y Javier Cossalter (Buenos Aires: Editorial de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2013.)

commercial event of the year that had just begun."[37] *La Razon* also quite unabashedly claimed that no country in the world offered a more varied array of cinematic entertainment than Argentina after the contract with Paramount. From this hyperbolic view, the Argentine most responsible for this effervescence of mass culture was Max Glucksmann. Glucksmann's distribution for Paramount included over 250 films that the studio had produced since 1918.[38]

During the 1920s, Max Glucksmann's business expanded across borders from Argentina to Uruguay and Chile and Peru while focusing on both the distribution and exhibition of films. In Chile, Glucksmann's operations even included the publication of a local magazine dealing with films. Max Glucksmann's transnational impact on the development of mass culture in South America was felt across the Andes, but most acutely in the Río de la Plata. Glucksmann's distribution strategies were reflective of the larger importance of regional systems in the making of mass culture industries in South America.

As a regional representative of Max Glucksmann's business, Bernardo Gluckmann's role as a cultural impresario in Montevideo began in the 1910s when he agreed to serve as the Glucksmann business representative in Uruguay. In 1912, there were approximately 30 theaters operating in Montevideo and Bernardo Glucksmann identified an opening to enter into the marketplace after an initial visit where he scouted opportunities for expansion. Bernardo Glucksmann relocated to Montevideo in 1913 and began his long career as a leading figure in the shaping of mass culture in Uruguay. Shortly after his arrival, Glucksmann arranged for a silent film to be shown at the opera house Teatro Solis with large-scale musical accompaniment. This was seen as a major event in the history of Uruguayan film exhibition by the authors of the government history of the Uruguayan film industry

[37] "La produccíon mundial, representada por una empresa argentina," *La Razon,* January 14 1922.
[38] "Max Glucksmann se queda con la 'Paramount'"

written in the 1950s.[39] In 1917, the Buenos Aires trade magazine *La Pelicula* highlighted that there were myriad biograph theaters during this period that showed films in Montevideo, but there was still complete disorganization about distribution.[40] Into this void, Bernardo Glucksmann sought to expand his family's business. According to a story retold in the 1950s by Uruguayan author Jacinto Duarte, Bernardo Glucksmann's hunger for publicity led him to use creative ideas for film promotion.[41] To publicize a 1915 film starring the popular American actress Pearl White and her role as an ingénue on the run from a villain, Gluckmann distributed a flier under people's doors that scared scores of people in Montevideo. The promotional flier read:

"Soon you will fall too
Under the pressure of my muscles
There won't be anyone to save you
From the hand that grips you."[42]

According to Duarte, many Montevideo residents fell into a panic after seeing these fliers by their doors. Some residents went to the police to report the threatening notes and the authorities were supposedly overwhelmed by the complaints and inquiries. A few days later, an announcement in a newspaper announced the arrival of the film about the hand "that grips you." A policeman acquainted with Bernardo Glucksmann approached the businessman to ask him if he was responsible for the panic and he acknowledged that he was. The film had a highly successful debut at the Teatro Politema in downtown Montevideo. The policœ were required to help contain the hundreds of spectators that wanted to buy tickets to the film. In the view of Duarte, the film was Glucksmann's first major box office success in Uruguay.

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[39] Ministerio de Industrias y Trabajo. *Cine en el Uruguay: breve reseña histórica y guía general de salas de Montevideo e Interior* (Montevideo: M.I.T., 1955), 10.
[40] Saratsola, *Función completa*, 26.
[41] Jacinto A. Duarte, *Dos siglos de la publicdad en la historia del Uruguay* (Montevideo: Talleres Graficos Sur S.A., 1952).
[42] Duarte, *Dos siglos de la publicidad en la historia del Uruguay*, 159-160.

The story reflects a popular vision among Uruguayans of Bernardo Glucksmann as an immigrant entrepreneur and savvy businessman in Montevideo whose acumen enabled him to achieve success. It also shows how his willingness to act as a huckster would shape his business decisions throughout his career. Starting in the 1910s, he attained a great deal of commercial and personal accolades in Montevideo and other Uruguayan cities like the industrial city of Paysandu and the city of Salto. During the 1910s and 1920s, Max and Bernardo Glucksmann had developed a strong presence in Uruguay through a variety of business ventures. On the commercial level, the Casa Glucksmann in Montevideo sold and distributed motion picture equipment such as 35-millimeter projectors. By 1929, the Glucksmanns were operating 15 movie theaters in Uruguay according to a report by the United States government.[43] The Glucksmanns' main theaters in Uruguay included the Montevideo version of the Grand Splendid and which opened in 1924. Max Glucksmann came especially from Buenos Aires for the inauguration of the new theater that was advertised as being the most modern in all of South America.[44]

The Gluckmanns' next big theater ventures in Montevideo were the Cine Rex, inaugurated in August 1928, and Radio City, which was built in the mid-1930s. From 1929 to 1935, the Glucksmanns were able to dominate the distribution of sound films in Uruguay despite the Wall Street crash that reduced Max Glucksmann's assets. In Montevideo, the Cine Rex showed 22 of the first 24 sound films in Uruguay in 1929 and also showed over half of the 172 sound films shown in Uruguay in 1930. During the rest of the 1930s, their market share diminished but the Cine Rex was still the leading theater for important premieres in Montevideo during the decade.[45] In 1936, the magazine *Cine Radio Actualidad* highlighted how the business of Uruguayan film exhibition was "growing and growing" and

[43] Nathan Daniel Golden, *Latin American and Canadian markets for American motion-picture equipment.* Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1929.
[44] Osvaldo Saratsola, "Los cines de ayer," *El Pais Anuario* 2002.
[45] Saratsola, *Función completa*, 142.

that every time a new theater was opened, a bigger one seemed to be on the way.[46] Bernardo Glucksmann was among the leading operators and also continued to be the most important distributor of newsreels that were created by the Emelco business in Buenos Aires. This was another business in which Max Glucksmann had thrived in both cities. The Glucksmann *noticieros* dated from around 1915, when Max Glucksmann had begun producing them in Buenos Aires and distributing them throughout Argentina and also to Uruguay.[47]

As a prominent figure in Montevideo, Bernardo Glucksmann excelled in numerous roles in public life ranging from his activities in business community and also as a leader in public life by attaining the office of the president of Montevideo's most popular soccer club, Penarol. As a businessman, Glucksmann held a variety of positions representing his family interests and also his fellow film distributors. In 1913, he was initially the representative of the family business when it was called Casa Lepage, de Max Glucksmann, then the representative of the firm Max Glucksmann, and finally the president of Cinematográfica Glucksmann SA, which was his longest lasting title from 1936 until his death in 1973.

The downfall of the Glucksmann entertainment empires occurred due to a confluence of local and global factors as well as a fair share of misfortune. The decline of Max Glucksmann and Bernardo Glucksmann's businesses were connected to events that occurred on both sides of the Río de la Plata beginning throughout the 1930s. First, Max Glucksmann's competition had increased in the realms of exhibition in Argentina. Among the leading figures that began to compete in Buenos Aires with Gluckmann were the Spanish-born Augusto Alvarez and the Italian-Argentine immigrant Clemente Lococo. Lococo built the Teatro Cine Opera on Avenida Corrientes to great fanfare in 1935. Lococo's 2500 seat theater immediately earned renown from both domestic and foreign trade press, and it became a very popular site for premieres while usurping the preeminence of Max

[46] "El cine crece y crece," *Cine Radio Actualidad*, October 2, 1936.
[47] Marrone, *Imágenes del mundo histórico,* 30.

Glucksmann's theaters such as the Gran Splendid.[48] Lococo also became an important distributor for Paramount who traveled to Hollywood for meetings at the Paramount film studio and followed in the footsteps of Max Glucksmann. Lococo's business acumen showed as the North American trade press reported on his time in the United States and his business continued to expand while Max Glucksmann's fortunes were sinking.[49]

For his part, Augusto Alvarez had first entered into the mass culture industry as a successful publisher of the movie magazine *Excelsior* in Buenos Aires in 1914.[50] In a photo from the Museo del Cine in Buenos Aires, Alvarez appeared with Max Glucksmann and his brothers to discuss their business interests.

Figure 12

Augusto Alvarez and Max Glucksmann from the photographic collection of the *Museo del Cine*

[48] "Atmospheric Design Set in Modern Forms," *Motion Picture Herald*, December 12, 1936, 4.
[49] "Exhibitors in Hollywood," *Motion Picture Herald*, July 1939.
[50] Alberto N. Manfredi, *Augusto Alvarez: pionero de la cinematografía argentina* (Buenos Aires: A.N. Manfredi, 1989)

Starting in 1920, Augusto Alvarez moved into the realm of exhibition by purchasing three different theaters throughout the city from one of Glucksmann's competing firms, the Sociedad Biografica Americana. For 200,000 pesos, Alvarez purchased a cinema on Lavalle Street in the downtown area and he also purchased the Cine Rivadavia and the Universal Palace. In all three theaters, he made substantial renovations and the theaters all became increasingly profitable. In its first year, Alvarez's Select Lavalle theater became the most profitable theater in South America, according to the international film trade press.[51] Like the Glucksmanns, Alvarez also traveled to the United States and Europe where he was able to forge important partnerships with leading cinema production companies. During the 1920s, Alvarez also became a leading partner for distribution from MGM in South America. Like the Glucksmanns, Alvarez also aspired to become in the distribution of films across the national borders within South America. In his unpublished memoirs, Alvarez wrote:

> After the Great War, I undertook a trip to my native Europe to acquire material. I scanned the major labels of the continent that were still recovering from the catastrophe of war but none met my interest. However, on this trip I met Dr. Romulo S. Naón, former foreign minister, mayor of the city of Buenos Aires and Argentine ambassador to the United States, with whom I formed a great friendship. He was also passionate about cinema and on our return, we founded the Argentine American Film Corporation SA, a film distribution company in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, which finished absorbing the CAP. Its board consisted of great personalities in Argentina's history including former Interior Minister Dr. Manuel Augusto Montes de Oca, former Minister of Finance and National Bank President, Dr. Manuel de Iriondo and the editor of the newspaper *La Nacion,* Dr. Jorge Mitre, among others. Our firm opened offices in New York, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, Santiago de Chile and Sao Paulo and started a very intense activity. Shortly after founded the company name, Dr. Naón and I traveled to New York and that is where I met Dr. Lee De Forest, creator of the talkies, with whom I signed the contract for introduction of them in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay. Without planning, I became the introducer in 1921 of this development in South America.[52]

In his history of bringing sound films to Argentina, Alvarez's alliances with the Argentine elite also spoke to the increasing importance of mass culture as an industry that the

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[51] "Se encuentra en Nueva York el señor Augusto Alvarez," *Cine mundial* (June 1921), 432.
[52] Augusto Álvarez, *Cincuenta Años Vendiendo Ilusione*s, accessed online at http://posteandohistoria.com.ar/cincuenta-anos-vendiendo-ilusiones-augusto-alvarez-empresario-y-amante-del-cine-argentino/

elites wanted to contribute to shaping. The immigrant entrepreneurs such as Glucksmann, Lococo, and Alvarez had been among the first to recognize the importance of mass culture and they would continue to remain the most innovative cultural impresarios. After having been the leading figure in Argentine film culture in the 1910s and into the early 1920s, it was clear that Max Glucksmann would receive increased competition from equally savvy businessmen such as Lococo and Alvarez.[53] In 1929, Alvarez built the Gran Cine Teatro "Broadway" on Avenida Corrientes. The new theater earned the nickname "The Palace of the Spectacular" and become a primary space for important premieres for films from Metro Goldwin Mayer, Columbia, 20th Century Fox, Paramount, and Universal. The recognition of Augusto Alvarez in the local Argentine press in the 1930s also echoed earlier sentiments about Glucksmann's dominance from the 1920s. In an interview in the Argentine magazine *Mundo Argentino* in 1930, Alvarez explained his humble origins and how he moved from the realm of journalism to the business of cinematic exhibition.[54]

While competing with Glucksmann for distribution rights and in the realm of exhibition, Alvarez also pursued other avenues for his success. Another key strategy for Augusto Alvarez to make his theaters into popular spaces for mass entertainment was his ability to diversity between film and theatrical performances. In the 1920s and 1930s, Alvarez was more successful than Glucksmann at working with leading Argentine performers to produce stage plays at his theater. After having invested heavily in music and film, this was another important diversification that Glucksmann had not focused upon. In 1939, Augusto Alvarez became the general manager of the Argentine film production company Estudios San Miguel. The production company had some successful releases during the

[53] "Crónica de Argentina," *Cine Mundial* (November 1920).
[54] Arturo Silvestre, "Tinterillo, vendedor de tierras, periodista," *Mundo Argentino,* May 14, 1930.

1940s, but it was a more challenging road than Alvarez's previous endeavors as a film journalist and exhibitor.

At the same time as this increased rivalry in Buenos Aires for films, Max Glucksmann also encountered significant business setbacks. Argentina's leading film and music impresario found his financial position incredibly strained due to major losses connected to his sizable investments that became heavily devalued after the Wall Street crash of 1929. Max Glucksmann also requested access to the capital from the Uruguayan branch of the family business that Bernardo Glucksmann did not wish to either provide or even loan.[55] On unfavorable terms, the formal partnership between the family businesses in Argentina and Uruguay was quietly dissolved somewhere around 1936. Carlos Glucksmann, another of Max and Bernardo's brothers, was involved in the painful negotiations. At a financial nadir, Max Glucksmann began renting out the Gran Splendid to other operators and during the 1930s he had to sell off the remaining movie theaters he had owned. His assets became mainly concentrated in his music business. Max Glucksmann died in 1946 and his children inherited his remaining assets. They quickly sold the diminished parts of the business since it was a shell of its former empire and the most lasting legacy of Max Glucksmann's contribution to mass entertainment in Argentina was the wide-reaching accolades he had received at the height of his successes.[56]

During the 1940s, Bernardo Glucksmann continued to try to expand his business in Uruguay by forging different partnerships with local and foreign investors. He aggressively sought to capitalize on possible opportunities. At the zenith of his business around 1946, Glucksmann operated 52 movie theaters in Montevideo and also helped program an even larger number of 87 movie theaters across all of Uruguay, in many of country's smaller cities and towns. The theaters that Glucksmann helped to operate had a combined capacity of over

[55] Saratsola, *Función completa*, 18.
[56] Maronne, *Imágenes del mundo histórico*, 103-104.

5000 seats in downtown Montevideo and another 14,000 seats in the *barrios* around Montevideo.

At this high point of his career in the mid-1940s, Bernardo Glucksmann considered selling his business interests but decided that he was not quite ready to retire from his work. In 1948, Glucksmann formed a business partnership with the owners of CINESA, Spanish immigrants to Uruguay. The new partnership offered an increase of capital into the business and allowed Bernardo Glucksmann to continue focusing on trying to maintain his hold on distribution and exhibition of films. During the 1940s and early 1950s, there was increased competition in exhibition from the rival Uruguayan firms CENSA and SAUDEC. This competition adversely impacted the Glucksmann business after the other companies opened new theaters in downtown and also competed extensively the outer neighborhoods of Montevideo where Glucksmann had continually operated profitable theaters.[57] As well, the distribution company Ariston International Films SA joined with CENSA to become the primary distributor of films from Paramount, Warner Brothers, 20th Century Fox, and the trio of major Argentine film studios that included Argentina Sono Film, Artistas Argentinas Asociados, and Lumiton. These types of distribution deals were a major advantage for the competition and a sizable blow for Bernardo Glucksmann's own interests. Glucksmann no longer maintained his privileged relationship with Hollywood studios and he also was unable to capitalize on the distribution of Argentine films that were profitable in the post-war era.

An even more dramatic and damaging blow to Bernardo Glucksmann's Uruguayan cinematic business enterprise occurred on December 6, 1954, when his offices caught fire. The damage from the tremendous inferno included the destruction of the entire offices of the Cinematográfica Glucksmann business, the explosion of canisters of over 1000 films, a variety of film exhibition equipment, and also about 40 recently arrived electric stoves that

[57] Saratsola, *Función completa, por favor*, 19-21.

were soon to be sold. The stoves were meant to be a profitable endeavor to help recoup losses from the exhibition of films. Compounding the disaster, the business had been behind in paying its insurance payments and there was no coverage to help rebuild. The fire was front-page news in the majority Uruguay's various daily newspapers. The headline in *El Debate* read "Impressive Fire in the Heart of the City: The Flames Ended the Glucksmann Movie House." The headline of *El Plata* read "Casa Glucksmann On Fire" while providing extensive details about the damages caused by the fire.[58] *Justicia*, the local Communist daily, was most concerned by the lack of water for 50 minutes in order that the firefighters could extinguish the blaze.[59] After this tremendous destruction to his business, Bernardo Glucksmann placed several newspaper advertisements in the following days to publicize that his theaters remained in business. But the business would suffer tremendously in the coming years. During the 1950s and 1960s, Bernardo Glucksmann slowly lost the control of his remaining second-run theaters in Montevideo. His numerous former employees watched him grew old in the 1960s as a nostalgic businessman who witnessed the dramatic decline of his cinematic empire and his family's long-standing place as pillars of the mass entertainment industry in Montevideo and Buenos Aires.

Both the rise and fall of Max Glucksmann and Bernardo Glucksmann's business empires were caused by a combination of factors related to the expansion of Hollywood into Latin America. The Glucksmanns benefited in the 1910s and 1920s from their ability to secure contracts with Hollywood and European studios for distribution but they also were unable to create their own sustainable model of production in either Buenos Aires or Uruguay. In the 1920s and the 1930s, Augusto Alvarez and Clemente Lococo became increasingly successful at working with foreign capital as well as with leading Argentine and

[58] "Impresionante incendio en plena ciudad," *El Debate*, October 18, 1946, 6; "Se incendio la Casa Glucksmann, *El Plata*, October 18, 1946, 2-3.
[59] "Durante 50 minutos no hubo agua para apagar el incendio de Glucksmann," *Justicia*, October 18, 1946, 1.

itinerant performers to fill their theaters in the 1930s. Alvarez was able to secure several important partnerships and he also became involved with film production in the late 1930s after selling off his primary interests in theaters. Ultimately, it is fair to argue that the regional networks of mass culture in Buenos Aires enabled the expansion of cultural impresarios like the Glucksmanns, but that their operations suffered and declined over time due to the rise of national competition in Buenos Aires.

Largely due to the emergence of film culture in the 1920s and 1930s, the Glucksmanns helped to remake downtown urban space in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The downtown entertainment districts in both cities were shaped by an array of historical actors who were part of the creative workforce during the early twentieth century. Performers and urban intellectuals converged around theaters and cafes in the city center, building alliances that reflected the important of urban space to cultural producers. Mass cultural production in the early twentieth century in Buenos Aires and Montevideo was driven by these historical actors whose work related to creative production and commerce that was most often inspired in everyday urban life.

As Jessica Stites-Mor and I have argued in a co-authored article, early film culture in the Río de la Plata during the decades from the 1910s to 1940s reflected both class-consciousness and an immigrant cosmopolitanism that was a formidable source of social capital for cultural impresarios, filmmakers, performers, politicians, critics, and spectators.[60] Max Glucksmann's career provided a key example of our analysis about how immigrants to Argentina were central to building national film culture along with other Argentine performers and directors. This chapter builds on that analysis to focus on the connections between historical actors in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the regional construction of

[60] Jessica Stites Mor and Daniel Richter, "Immigrant Cosmopolitanism: The Political Culture of Argentine Early Sound Cinema of the 1930s" *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 9, no. 3 (2014): 65-88.

national mass culture industries. The Glucksmann brothers were Eastern European Jewish immigrant entrepreneurs in Argentina and Uruguay whose rapidly gained familiarity with market conditions in the region enabled them to conduct business across porous national borders. Both brothers developed crucial local ties in their communities in Argentina and Uruguay and also built more global connections to the film industry through the work of Jacobo Glucksmann in New York. As evidenced by market competition, the Glucksmann brothers also helped pave the way for other cultural impresarios to transform the downtown districts in Buenos Aires and Montevideo into entertainment districts that were part of a transnational circuit for the global flow of mass culture. The regional and transnational connections in the histories of film exhibition in Buenos Aires and Montevideo provide one of the major examples in this study of how mass culture and modern urban culture developed in both local and national contexts while flowing across national borders within South America.

Ultimately, writing the histories of cultural impresarios in the transnational remaking of downtown districts in global cities in the early twentieth century offers crucial lessons for understanding the needed layers of transnational and comparative study. In other hemispheric global cities like Toronto and Rio de Janeiro, the expansion of film exhibition was accelerated by ethnic entrepreneurs such as the American-Jewish businessman Nathan L. Nathanson in Canada and the Spanish immigrant Francisco Serrador in Brazil.[61] Both of these film exhibition impresarios encountered fierce competition and Nathanson had the benefit and additional challenge of dealing with the issue of proximity and competition from major figures in the production and exhibition of films like Paramount's founder, Adolph

[61] On Nathanson, see Gerald Pratley, *Torn Sprockets: The Uncertain Projection of the Canadian Film* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987), 19-21. On Serrador, see Paulo Antonio Paranaguá, "La Cinelandia carioca: una utopía ciudadana", *Amérique Latine Histoire et Mémoire. Les Cahiers ALHIM* [Online], 6 | 2003, Online since 21 March 2006, connection on 19 November 2015.

Zukor. In comparison, the careers of Max Glucksmann and Bernardo Glucksmann attested to the realities of becoming cultural impresarios in the South Atlantic, in Spanish-speaking countries where their ability to navigate business cultures allowed them to thrive until facing other external factors. The histories of the Glucksmann brothers also speaks to an imperative for historians to study the spread of mass culture in newer frames and also to try to explain how the global travels of businessmen strengthened the velocity for the circulation and distribution of films throughout the Atlantic world.

Chapter Three

"A Creole Hollywood: Buenos Aires as the Cinematic Capital of South America in the 1930s and 1940s"

Throughout his life, the great Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes (1928-2012) loved watching Argentine films. In a poignant essay published after Fuentes died in May 2012, his widow Silvia Lemus detailed how they had enjoyed his final afternoon at their home in Mexico City.[1] The couple watched the 1943 Argentine film *La guerra la gano yo* starring Pepe Arias, which was a comic critique of Argentina's ill-advised policy of neutrality during the Second World War. The film's running sight gag was a two-sided portrait that featured Adolph Hitler or Winston Churchill, depending on which character was in the room. It was likely that Fuentes had seen the movie many years before his death, when it was first released in Buenos Aires where the future novelist spent part of his adolescence between 1943 and 1944. While living for a year in Buenos Aires when his father was a Mexican diplomat, the teenage Fuentes was enamored of Argentine cinema and especially beautiful Argentine actresses. In particular, Fuentes became an admirer of Argentine ingénues of the 1940s such as Tita Merello and Mirtha Legrand by going to the movie theater as often as possible. Fuentes later described this moment of his life as a transformational experience in Buenos Aires in different essays and interviews.[2] He explained how his father allowed him to withdraw from public high school that the young Fuentes perceived to suffer from overt fascist influences in the daily educational curriculum.

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[1] Silvia Lemus, "Carlos Fuentes, su amor por el cine," *El País*, October 13, 2014.
[2] Carlos Fuentes, "Santa Evita by Tomás Eloy Martinez" *Transition*, No. 70 (1996), 44-51; Carlos Fuentes and Saúl Sosnowski, "Entrevista a Carlos Fuentes," *Hispamérica*
Año 9, No. 27 (December 1980), 69-97.

Released from the discipline of school, Fuentes pursued his daily passions at home and throughout Buenos Aires while seeking a different type of education than that which he had been receiving in the traditional secondary school classroom. Fuentes's most memorable hobbies — books and film, music and dance — covered a variety of urban cultural and entertainment options. The activities included reading stories by Jorge Luis Borges, going to the movies almost every afternoon in downtown Buenos Aires at theaters located on Lavalle Street or other cinemas such as the Hindu, the Suipacha, or Sarmiento, attending tango concerts by the bandleader Anibal Troilo, and listening to entertaining yet often mediocre radio soap operas such as "Heroines of History" during the afternoons that starred the young Argentine actress Eva Duarte, soon to become the first lady of Argentina after a whirlwind romance with Juan Perón. Through these experiences, Fuentes became devoted to Argentine mass culture and these feelings lasted for nearly seven decades. In an interview in 1980, Fuentes said, "I know all of Argentine cinema. I am an encyclopedia of Argentine cinema."[3] Over his lifetime, Fuentes made it abundantly clear to personal and professional interlocutors that tango music and Argentine cinema ranked among his preferred entertainments alongside Hollywood films. Fuentes's decades of romance with Argentine cinema reflect the vibrancy of Buenos Aires's mass culture during the first half of the twentieth century and also how Buenos Aires's mass cultural industry had the ability to capture the imagination of a multinational Latin American public. Although at a clear disadvantage to Hollywood in international markets, Argentine cinema during the 1930s and 1940s successfully competed with Hollywood and Mexican films for screen time.

[3] Carlos Fuentes and Saúl Sosnowski, "Entrevista a Carlos Fuentes," 71.

Filmgoers like the Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez shared youthful memories of Argentine cinema similar to Carlos Fuentes. Garcia Marquez wrote in his autobiography about he initially he was smitten with Hollywood disaster movies but that soon "Argentine cinema, with the films of Carlos Gardel and Libertad Lamarque, ended up beating out all other films" in his youthful enthusiasm for going to the movie theaters in the small Colombian city of Sucre.[4] Representing the perspective of the cosmopolitan Latin American urban consumers who came of age in the 1940s, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Carlos Fuentes's fondness for Argentine films also helps the historian to trace how Buenos Aires became a center for the production of mass cultural forms that were consumed across borders within Latin America beginning in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

This chapter examines the golden age of Argentine cinema from 1936 to 1950 to argue that Buenos Aires's reputation as a cosmopolitan urban center within Latin America and the wider Hispanic Atlantic was strengthened by its continual growth as a continental cultural capital. By focusing on the regional context as the frame of analysis for my contribution to the methodology of transnational history, I explore how Buenos Aires developed as a cultural capital at the regional level of the Rio de la Plata and decisively shaped the mass cultural marketplaces of both Argentina and Uruguay. Across the wider Southern Cone that included Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, Buenos Aires was understood to be the regional metropolis that most influenced the development of mass culture industries in Montevideo and Santiago del Chile. In this chapter, I explore the transnational histories of Buenos Aires's film industry across the Southern Cone to include both Montevideo and Santiago. This transnational impact was exemplified by different manifestations of Buenos Aires's

[4] Gabriel García Márquez, *Living to tell the tale,* trans. Edith Grossman (New York : A.A. Knopf, 2003), 153.

mass cultural industries in the hemispheric realms of film production, distribution, and exhibition. The most telling example of film distribution and film exhibition was the Argentine cultural impresario Max Glucksmann's expansion of his business interests from Buenos Aires to Montevideo, as previously examined in Chapter Two. Glucksmann also expanded into Santiago by becoming the leading cinema operator in Chile during the 1920s. During the 1930s and 1940s, Buenos Aires grew in its decisive role in the cultural flows of mass culture in Latin America. This chapter argues that the period from 1935 to 1950 was when Buenos Aires's film industry was most influential in South America and throughout Latin America. In these pre-war and post-war years, the mass culture industry of Buenos Aires was able to significantly extend its influence in the development of mass culture across national borders in Latin America.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the Argentine film industry was initially well positioned as a hemispheric and regional force that attracted international talent to Buenos Aires and was influential in shaping film culture in various Latin American marketplaces. Argentine films held certain competitive advantages for Spanish-language productions to compete with Hollywood films throughout Latin America during the 1930s.[5] This was due to the star talent from Argentina and the also the authenticity of national films that used local argot. Histories of Argentina cinema have expansively focused on the 1930s and 1940s years as being crucial in the development of the classic industrial film system but almost all have concentrated on the national context of the industry.[6] In turn, the reception of the Buenos Aires-based

[5] Lisa Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-Language Filmmaking. Out from Hollywood's Shadow, 1929-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 12.
[6] The best study of Argentine film remains Claudio Espana, *Cine argentino: industria y clasicismo*/ 1933-1956 (Buenos Aires: Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 2000). The most synthetic English-language study is Jorge Finkielman, *The Film Industry in*

mass cultural industry across Latin America's borders and the extent of its impact on film culture in national markets such as Uruguay as well Chile have not been adequately traced.[7] During the 1930s and 1940s, the rise of film culture and spectatorship continued its rapid development in similar, symbiotic, overlapping and competing ways in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Santiago del Chile. Consumers in these major urban centers could go to films in modern theaters and also read about Hollywood and the vicissitudes of Latin American film in local magazines such as *Radiolandia* (published in Buenos Aires, starting in 1934) *Cine Radio Actualidad* (Montevideo, 1936) and *Ecran* (Santiago de Chile, first published in 1930).

Amidst this expansion of cinematic production and the popular consumption of film culture, the golden age of Argentine film transpired during 15 years when Hollywood competed primarily with Argentina and Mexico in its aim to expand its audience in Spanish-speaking markets. Hollywood's global strategies produced an array of contemporary interpretations about opportunities and market competition in Latin America. In the early 1940s, Hollywood studios continued to expand distribution of American films dubbed into Spanish. The strategy was met with mixed results because national audiences did not find the productions appealing since they lacked local dialects and often utilized slang and humor that was less accessible or appealing.

Argentina: An Illustrated Cultural History (Jefferson, North Carolina: Mcfarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2003).

[7] Matthew B. Karush, *Culture of Class: Radio and Cinema in the Making of a Divided Argentina, 1920-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012) explores the transnational dimensions of North American technology on Argentine mass culture. However, the impact of Argentine mass culture across borders within Latin America remains thoroughly under-explored by historians and film scholar. On the transnational impact of Mexican film during its golden age, see Robert Irwin and Maricruz Ricalde, *Global Mexican Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 2013).

The competition between Latin American cinemas and Hollywood were also reflected in the diplomatic analysis of the United States govemment during this period. At the direction of Nelson Rockefeller's Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, American diplomats during the 1940s evaluated the possible competition for Hollywood from the local film industries in Latin America. On June 30, 1945, the American commercial attaché in Panama City wrote a memorandum to his superiors in Washington about an article recently published in the Panamanian press regarding the local market for Hollywood films dubbed into Spanish. The attaché, Ashley Sowell, summarized the article and also added his interpretation about the market potential of Mexican and Argentine films, although neither was actually mentioned by name in the original Spanish-language article attached to his correspondence. Sowell wrote, "It is not believed that a "dubbed" American film compares favorably with a Spanish film enacted by Mexican or Argentine artists and produced in those countries as realism is lost in the process of "dubbing". It might be mentioned that Argentine and Mexican films are growing in popularity in Panama and might, at some future time, constitute competition for American producers."[8] In February 1948, Garth P. Jones, the public affairs officer at the American embassy in La Paz, Bolivia, filed a report that examined the competition in the cinemas of La Paz during the month of January 1948. He was pleased to report that Hollywood films were shown 463 times, but it was also noteworthy to him that films produced by Mexican studios were shown 116 times and Argentine films were screened 70 times.[9] These two examples show how Hollywood films dominated the marketplace in Latin

[8] Ashley Sowell to Secretary of State on June 30, 1945, "Spanish Dubbing of American Films," Record Group 59, National Archives, Department of State 1945-49, Decimal File 811.406/1-145, Motion Pictures, 12-3147, Box 4689.
[9] Garth P. James to Secretary of State, February 3, 1948, "Information on American Motion Pictures," Record Group 59, National Archives, Department of State 1945-49, Decimal File 811.406/1-145, Motion Pictures, 12-3147, Box 4689.

American cities, but that the Argentine and Mexican film industries also made substantial contributions to film exhibition at a hemispheric level.

In the global competition of film, the late 1930s and early 1940s formed a largely positive period for the growth of the Argentine film industry, especially in comparison to other Latin American cinemas. By my calculations from the database www.cinenacional.com, Argentine studios released over 300 films between 1936 and 1943, and 1942 alone featuring a high water mark of 57 cinematic releases.[10] Argentina's film studios like Argentina Sono Film became large successful operations that were modeled on Hollywood film studios but expanded without state support. In comparison, Mexico produced approximately 180 films during this period before becoming an even larger producer during the latter part of the 1940s larger through state intervention. During the same seven-year window, Chilean studios produced approximately 20 films, and Uruguay produced a paltry six national films.[11]

The history of mass culture in Buenos Aires necessitates an explanation of the continued evolution of film culture in the city. Buenos Aires included a remarkable number of cinemas where viewers could see both domestic and international films during the late 1930s and 1940s. Born in 1932, the Argentine writer Manuel Puig was essentially a contemporary of Carlos Fuentes and Gabriel Garcia Marquez who also fell in love with Argentine cinema. In 1946, Puig moved to the capital from his small hometown of General Villegas in Buenos Aires province. Over the course of his life, Puig's intellectual journeys followed an extremely similar trajectory to Carlos Fuentes in travels from Argentina to Europe to Mexico while watching movies. Like the

[10] I drew on the data from www.cinenacional.com and compared it to
[11] These figures were calculated for Argentina from the database cinenacional.com, for Mexico from María Luisa Amador y Jorge Ayala Blanco, *Cartelera cinematográfica,* Vols. 1-3 (Mexico City: Centro (Mexico City: Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematograficos, 1980, 1982, 1985), for Chile from cinechile.com, and for Uruguay from Osvaldo Saratsola's http://www.uruguaytotal.com/estrenos.

Mexican writer, Puig spent much of his youth in movie houses. Puig's tastes for film favored Hollywood films and he was a tremendous fan of actresses like Bette Davis and Rita Hayworth, but the young Argentine author also developed a deep affinity for the Argentine actress Mecha Ortiz. Like the Hollywood leading ladies that Puig famously wrote about in *The Betrayal of Rita Hayworth* (1968) and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1976), Ortiz became the only Argentine movie star to merit extended treatment in any of his novels.[12] Puig's stated admiration of Ortiz derived from his admiration of her background as a high-class Argentine woman who had only decided to work in film in order to support herself through the profession of acting. Ortiz's work in the 1940s that attracted Puig's attention included her leading role of a woman engaged in a forbidden affair in the 1943 film *Safo, historia de una passion*, which was a highly successful and controversial feature film directed by Carlos Hugo Christensen.

Argentine film producers were very conscious of the profit potential for the expanding domestic market during the 1940s. Argentine film studios invested heavily in increased production and film exhibitors opened more modern downtown theaters where premieres of Hollywood and Argentine films could take place. State support for Argentina's film industry existed largely at the level of nationalist discourse during the 1930s, while the rise of the Argentine film industry came about due to commercial ventures such as the film studios like Argentina Sono Film, Lumiton, and Pampa Film during the 1930s. Argentina's film studios were operations that were run by businessmen with international perspectives on production and distribution. The studio, Argentina Sono Film, was founded by the Italian-Argentine businessman Atilio Mentasti and imported equipment from the United States with the help of the

[12] Jorgelina Corbatta, "A Conversation with Manuel Puig" (Translated and adapted by Ilan Stavans), *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Fall 1991, Vol. 11.3

local representatives of RCA Victor. The other major Argentine studio founded in the early 1930s was Lumiton. Setting up its operation in the suburbs outside of Buenos Aires, Lumiton was founded by Argentina radio pioneers and based their studio on the Hollywood model of production. Lumiton also recruited Hollywood technicians John Alton for his expertise in photography and Lazslo Kish as a sound designer.[13] These operations reflected the cosmopolitan character of the Argentine film industry that would continue through the 1940s.

The period from 1934 to 1943 were the primary years of major expansion for the national film industry and it was during this period that increasing numbers of performers, directors, and technical expertise became attracted to the burgeoning Argentine film industry. In 1943, Argentina's film industry encountered its first major challenge and was adversely impacted by rising political tensions between Argentina and the United States during World War Two due to Argentina's attempt to stay neutral while maintaining numerous pro-Axis policies. From 1944 to 1946, film stock was embargoed by the United States from being sold to Buenos Aires and Argentina's film production reduced.[14] The film stock that previously was sold to Argentina largely went to Mexico and Chile as preferred buyers. After the end of the war, the Argentine film industry recovered relatively well from this conflict through the late 1940s while encountering increased competition from Hollywood and Mexican films in its domestic marketplace. As well, Argentina also faced increased competition from Hollywood, European, and Mexican cinema in other Latin American markets during the post-war period. The rise of Mexican cinema was

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[13] Tamara Falicov, *The Cinematic Tango: Contemporary Argentine Film.* London: Wallflower Press, 2007, 12.
[14] Tamara L. Falicov, "Hollywood's Rogue Neighbor: The Argentine Film Industry During the Good Neighbor Policy, 1939-1945," *The Americas*, Vol. 63, No. 2, October 2006, 245-260

facilitated by state support from the revolutionary nationalist governments beginning with the Cardenas regime in the 1930s and then the Mexican state further strengthened its film industry while pursuing political alliances with the United States during World War Two. Rapidly moving past Argentine films in terms of production budgets and distribution opportunities, Mexican cinema even became more popular than Hollywood films in certain countries in Latin America such as Venezuela.[15] Mexican cinema was also able to recruit numerous Argentine directors actors and actresses to work in the Mexican industry for greater salaries and without the political turmoil of Argentina during the Peronist years of the 1940s. After the election of Juan Perón in 1946, the relationship between the Argentine state and public sphere during the Peronist period was marked by polemics about national cultural production. In pursuit of its populist agenda, the Peronist state also became involved in supporting production through legislation in 1947 to financially support the national cinema industry through cheaper access to credit and also the supported the role of the national Banco Industrial in producing films. As Valeria Manzano has shown, the emphasis on class-conscious filmmaking in Argentina produced heavy-handed attempts at showing how consumption was everyone as part of the discourse of Argentina's comedic films during Peronism. The films made under Peronism in the late 1940s glorified common heroes and incorporated established Argentine film stars to pursue these policies.[16]

During the 1930s and 1940s, the Buenos Aires-based film industry had expanded to become a viable producer of high-quality films with commercial appeal across national orders. The Argentine films from 1933 to 1945 cultivated major Latin

[15] Seth Fein, "Hollywood, U.S.-Mexican Relations and the Devolution of the "Golden Age" of Mexican Cinema," *Film-Historia*, Vol IV, No 2 (1994), 103-135.
[16] Valeria Manzano, "Cine argentino y Peronismo: cultura, política y propoganda, 1946-1955," *Film-Historia* No. 14 (October 2001)

American film stars like Carlos Gardel, Pepe Arias, Luis Sandrini, Libertad Lamarque, and Tita Merello, as well as talented and versatile directors like Mario Soffici, Lucas Demare, Luis Moglia Barth, Luis Saslavsky, Manuel Romero.[17] These major figures shaped Buenos Aires's film industry through the 1930s and the 1940s by creating certain archetypal film genres led by melodramas, tango films, and romantic comedies. The earliest Argentine box office successes fell into these categories, including *Tango!* (1933), *Los tres berretines* (1933), *Riachuelo* (1934), and *Kilómetro 111*(1938). During the 1940s, the international reputation of Argentine performers like Sandrini and Lamarque also meant that both performers were recruited to work in Mexican cinema as well. In Argentina, directors from other South American countries like the Chilean director Carlos Borcosque and the Uruguayan director Roman Vinoly Barreto became highly prolific in the national cinema as well.

By exploring the transnational careers of these prominent figures involved in Argentine film during the 1930s and 1940s, the history of golden age Argentine cinema provides a case study for understanding Buenos Aires's place as a cultural capital shaped by its transnational interactions with other cities in South America and the wider Atlantic world. Buenos Aires's preeminence in South American film culture during the crucial decades of the 1930s and 1940s developed because of the Argentine film industry's ability to garner widespread publics and popular reception across borders. Buenos Aires's film industry developed in a regional and transnational context that enabled Argentine cinema to compete with Hollywood in Spanish-speaking Latin American markets from 1935 to 1950. While regional and transnational in their talent, Argentine film studios were largely privately owned and financed by Buenos Aires businessmen, which was also a key difference from the

[17] Espana, *Cine argentino: industria y clasicismo/1933-1956.*

Mexican film studios that benefited directly from alliances and collaboration with Hollywood and national governmental underwriting.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the making of Buenos Aires as the cinema capital of South America provides a history of Latin American film culture across borders. Argentine films were national and global in their outlook in that they engaged with relevant social questions and also global cinematic genres during the middle decades of the twentieth century. The historiography about national film cultures in Latin America has too heavily focused on the national contexts of production, and the transnational contexts of Latin American filmmaking have also focused on connections and comparisons with the United States. Argentina's mass culture developed its own transnational dimensions and the production and consumption of Latin American film culture developed through artistic exchanges between Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Santiago, as well as exiles from the Spanish Civil War and war-torn Europe. In its open doors for many émigrés and exiles, Buenos Aires was very much like the Hollywood studios that opened their doors to great European directors like Fritz Lang, Ernst Lubitsch, and Billy Wilder.[18] Buenos Aires's film industry did not receive the first-rate directors like those aforementioned, but it received technically proficient directors who contributed to the evolution and growth of South America's largest film industry. Vibrant film cultures developed in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Santiago over the period from the 1920s to the 1940s during a period that was also marked by the end of the era of mass transatlantic migration. The capital cities of the Southern Cone, as well as industrial cities like Rosario in Argentina and Valparaiso in Chile, all possessed sizable immigrant communities from Spain and Italy that had received the opportunity to develop their

[18] Saverio Giovachinni, *Hollywood Modernism: Film and Politics in the Age of the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 27-34.

initial taste for film during their early lives in Europe. In turn, the period of expansion of the middle classes of Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile during the 1930s and 1940s also coincided with the arrival of sound films and this technological advancement resulted in the widespread construction of larger cinemas in these cities.

The Argentine film industry was extremely transnational during its formative years of the 1930s and this was especially the case on the side of film production. The cosmopolitan character of its personnel was similar to Hollywood, as well as European film capitals like London and Berlin.[19] Notable figures in the development of the Buenos Aires film industry included the Austrian-American cinematographer John Alton, who helped Argentina's first film studios Argentina Sono Films and Lumiton to establish themselves, and the Belgian director Pierre Chenal, who wound up having an unplanned and very extended sojourn in South America during World War II.[20] In May 1936, John Alton wrote in the Hollywood trade journal *International Photographer* that 1936 would be crucial year in the development of the Argentine film industry. Alton explained that "(l)ocal production is still in the hands of so called private capitalists, with a limited sum at their disposal, hence a product suitable only for the local market. But in the background serious capitalists are eagerly waiting and watching every step. If the coming releases are only fairly successful they expect to take the field. Great capital will be invested, new studios built, more technicians imported, resulting in better pictures, to be sold, not only to the local market, but to the entire motion picture industry of Spanish films." Alton also opined that the

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[19] On London, see *Destination London: German-speaking emigrés and British cinema, 1925-1950* edited by Tim Bergfelder and Christian Cargnelli (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008); On Berlin, see Thomas J. Saunders, *Hollywood in Berlin: American Cinema and Weimar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994)

[20] John Alton, "News Letter from South America," *International Photographer* (May 1936), 16.

country's "motion picture production business as yet cannot be called an industry. It is still in its experimental stage, but judgeing (sic) by the talent of its pioneers and the enormous progress it has made in such a short time, it may soon turn out to be one." Alton went on to explain how the industry had drawn on the established world of theater performers and Argentine performers were among "the few box office names known throughout South America."[21] Within the next few years, Alton's optimistic hopes for the Argentine film industry would prove largely true. In 1937, the leading Hollywood trade journal *Motion Picture Herald* also highlighted how the year's Argentine films were enjoying a positive reception in foreign markets within Latin America, but that distribution of the films was a large issue and that Argentine film producers lacked the distribution networks of Hollywood films. The 1937 film *El Canonero de Giles* starring Luis Sandrini was a noteworthy film in the *Motion Picture Herald's* analysis of the Argentine film industry in that the comedy "opened in 46 Buenos Aires theaters simultaneously."[22]

In addition to the technological knowledge of Alton during its formative years, Argentine film culture benefited from the talents of other émigrés and exiled figures like the director Pierre Chenal during the 1940s. Born in Belgium as Pierre Cohen to a Jewish family in 1904, Chenal had changed his name from Cohen to avoid anti-Semitism in the French film industry. Based in Paris, Chenal directed a number of films in France in the 1930s before abandoning Europe with his Czechoslovakian born-wife Florence Mally with a visa for Bolivia. Their boat departed from Marseilles and arrived in Buenos Aires and through contacts with Luis Saslavsky, Chenal and Mally were able arrange and stay in Buenos Aires. Thus began their long exile in

[21] Alton, "News Letter from South America," 16.
[22] "Argentina Takes 360 U.S. Films Annually," *Motion Picture Herald*, April 24, 1937, 56.

South America during World War Two. During the mid-1940s, Chenal directed several well-received Argentine studio films such as his first Argentine film *A Real Man* (*Todo un hombre*) in 1943 and the well regarded and commercially successful film noir *The Corpse Breaks a Date* (*El muerto falta a la cita)* in 1944. Drawing on the financial backing of the Argentine film industry, Chenal also negotiated and directed a highly flawed cinematic adaptation of African-American writer Richard Wright's famous novel *Native Son* at the end of the 1940s. With Wright heavily involved in the script and also acting in the film as the protagonist, Chenal filmed *Native Son* in Buenos Aires and Chicago in 1949 and 1950.[23] The movie was released in Argentina and the United States to more considerable curiosity from critics than ticket buyers. As a historical document, it also reflects the transnational nature of filmmaking in Buenos Aires during this period. With an eclectic mélange of local, South American, and foreign talent during its golden era, Argentina's film industry developed more quickly and robustly than any other film industry in Latin America except for Mexico from the latter part of the 1930s through the 1940s. After finishing with the making of *Native Son*, Chenal was also recruited to make a film noir in Chile in 1951 that was titled *The Idol* (*El Idolo*) and this also reflected the importance of exiled actors to film culture in the Chilean film industry. The film's cast included Chenal's wife Florence Mally and the participation of the Spanish-Chilean actor Alberto Closas, who had had already performed in theater and film in Buenos Aires during the late 1940. Additionally, Closas's family included prominent leaders in the Spanish Republican community in Santiago, reflecting shared political connections with Chenal.

[23] "The Screen in Review; Richard Wright Plays Hero in Movie Adaptation of His Novel, 'Native Son'", *New York Times*, June 18, 1951.

With the global context of fascism and anti-fascism as a backdrop for filmmakers, actors, and especially audience members during the 1940s, Buenos Aires became an increasingly cosmopolitan city during this period. Arguably, this was because the city had offered ample space to both ends of the ideological spectrum during the Second World War just as in Buenos Aires there had been the development of Nationalist and Republican spaces of sociability during the Spanish Civil War. When Carlos Fuentes returned to the modern metropolis of Mexico City in 1944, he claimed that he felt that he had left behind a Buenos Aires that was the most cosmopolitan city in Latin America. As a marker of its mass culture industries, Argentine movies were distributed to audiences throughout Latin American major urban centers where they competed for screen time with Hollywood and Mexican films. In 1941, more Argentine movies were shown in Mexico City than Mexican releases, although Hollywood still dominated the screens. In the early 1940s, the Mexican film industry quickly increased its output with the help of North American technological assistance and also financial capital. In Mexico, Argentine and Mexican films together combined to occupy between 15 and 20 percent of the showings at the theaters during different years in the 1940s.[24] Daily newspapers in Latin American cities ranging from Mexico City to San Juan, Puerto Rico during the 1930s and 1940s reflected the mass consumption of Argentina films alongside Hollywood and Mexican films.

Advertisements for the Mario Soffici-directed film *Kilómetro 111* that appeared in the Puerto Rican newspaper *El Mundo* in December 1938 were illustrative of how Argentine movies appealed to Latin American by emphasizing the

[24] The details about Argentine films in the 1940s in Mexico are compiled from Amador and Blanco, *Cartelera cinematográfica (1940-1949)* (Mexico City: Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematograficos, 1982), 11, 380.

star qualities of the Argentine actor Pepe Arias throughout Spanish-speaking Latin America.[25] From the 1930s through the 1960s, Arias's most famous roles had him as a protagonist whose humorous malapropisms helped to lighten the sobemess of dramas like *La Guerra la gano yo* and *Kilómetro 111*. Arias's fame extended throughout Latin America and was only shared by other actors from Mexican and Argentine cinemas.

Figure 13

Advertisement from *El Mundo* in San Juan, Puerto Rico on December 21, 1938.

Argentine movies had an even more distinct advantage in the marketplace when competing against other Latin American national cinemas closer to home in South America during the 1930s and 1940s. Hollywood was the 800-pound gorilla in global cinema but Argentine cinema proved equally important for the development of various South American cinemas. The increased appeal of Argentine movies versus Mexican films was most noteworthy in South American neighbors like Uruguay and

[25] *El Mundo* (Puerto Rico), December 21, 1938, 6.

Chile. In these neighboring countries, the national film industries were far less developed than Argentina's film industry but vibrant film culture had already developed around Hollywood stars during the 1920s and early 1930s. After falling in love with the films of Charlie Chaplin, many Latin American film-goers developed deep affinity for Argentine movie stars like Luis Sandrini who came to be considered an Argentine Chaplin and to fame with a handful of comic films during the second half of the 1930s. Argentine films like *Kilómetro 111* in 1938 and *Prisioneros de la tierra* in 1939 also dealt with themes of urban versus rural divides in society that resonated in various national contexts. Argentine tropes of mass culture were also made more familiar by the itinerant performances of Argentine tango singers dressed like gauchos who went to perform in Santiago del Chile and Montevideo. As one example, the 1942 movie *La guerra gaucha* was a major commercial success in Buenos Aires for 19 weeks and also spent four weeks playing for packed houses in the Trocadero theater in downtown Montevideo after its opening, which was the longest a South American film had ever opened for in Uruguay.[26] The film was notable for being the most successful film, domestic or foreign, to open in Argentina in 1942.[27] *La guerra gaucha* was also among the first Argentine films to be widely distributed in Brazil after being screened in Rio de Janeiro for Brazilian president-dictator Getulio Vargas.

The transnational circulation of Argentine cinema during the 1930s and 1940s produced cultural exchanges that connected Latin America's major urban centers in terms of remaking their downtown landscapes. For transnational history, the local, regional, and global contexts each offer useful insights into thematic questions about

[26] Osvaldo Saratsola, *Función completa, por favor: un siglo de cine en Montevideo* (Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce, 2005), 91.
[27] "La Guerra Gaucha: La pelicula de los 21 premios," *Mascara*, February 1943, 22.

the different possible frames for writing transnational histories about Latin America and possible connections to more global histories. I look at these different frames through the lens of the transnational diffusion and reception of Argentine mass culture. For example, I would argue that the importance of studying Latin American mass culture in a transnational context contributes to Atlantic, hemispheric, and global histories. The global hierarchy of film culture had initially developed in the Atlantic world largely through the technological, distribution, and artistic innovations of Hollywood and European filmmakers in the 1920s and 1930s. This process expanded quickly through the reception of film culture in the major port cities of the Atlantic world such as Buenos Aires and Montevideo. In the principal metropolitan centers of Latin America that included both Atlantic and Pacific world cities, the development of Hollywood culture would soon give rise to hemispheric and regional hierarchies in the realms of Latin American mass culture. Argentina and Mexico, and to a lesser extent Brazil, were the first and only countries in the 1930s that were truly able to develop established national film industries. This created hemispheric and regional hierarchies that also conditioned the consumption and production of cinema in Latin American countries, especially in the major metropolises where film culture developed.

In the recent study *¡De Pelicula! Hollywood y su impacto en Chile, 1910-1950*, the Chilean historian Fernando Purcell has explored the relationship between Hollywood and Chile in the early twentieth century.[28] Purcell shows how Hollywood developed its market in Chile in various ways such as the visits of major Hollywood figures like Clark Gable and Walt Disney, the role of Chilean mass media promoting film throughout the country's urban centers, and the work of local distributors to

[28] Fernando Purcell, *¡De película! Hollywood y su impacto en Chile 1910-1950* (Santiago: Editorial Taurus, 2012).

appeal to audiences. My examination of Argentine film culture builds on the work of Purcell and Argentine film scholars like Ana Maria Lusnich and Clara Kriger to pursue a different comparative and transnational history that considers how Argentina's film industry served as a model for both Chile and Uruguay.[29] During the late 1930s and the 1940s, Chilean film producers wanted to model their own film industry on Argentina since Hollywood was not a realistic model. Chileans heavily consumed Argentine cinema during the 1940s and Argentina's film industry also supplied talent for the development of the Chilean film industry. In the Chilean film magazine *Ecran*, it is evident that after 1940 Argentine cinema became a focal point of comparison for the consumption of mass culture and also the development of film culture in Chile. For Chilean film journalists, Buenos Aires earned its moniker as the "Hollywood of South America" while *Ecran* called the Latin American film industry as a whole "Our Creole Hollywood".[30] Over the course of the 1940s, *Ecran* traced the Chilean film industry's progress by considering how local films were being increasingly financed at more generous levels. In an article titled "How much does a Chilean film cost?" the author expressed happiness that the film included more sizable investment, but still did "not have the same opulence as films from the cinematic industries of Hollywood, Mexico, and Argentina."[31]

The career of the Chilean film director Carlos Borcosque also reflected how numerous South American film directors were influenced by Argentine film industry. On May 21, 1945, *Ecran* provided its readers one of its regular dispatches about

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[29] Ana Maria Lusnich, "Del comparatismo al transnacionalismo. Bases para un estudio del cine argentino y mexicano del período clásico-industrial," *Revista Toma Uno* (No. 3, 2014), 99-110, Clara Kriger, "Gestión estatal en el ámbito de la cinematografía argentina (1933-1943), *Anuario del Centro de Estudios Históricos "Prof. Carlos S. A. Segreti"* (Vol. 10, No. 1, 2010), 261-282.
[30] Pepe Grillo, "En Nuestro Hollywood Criollo," *Ecran*, January 1, 1946, 22.
[31] Dino Landi, "Cuando cuesta una pelicula chilena?" *Ecran*, May 13, 1941, 20.

Argentine films by providing news about the Borcosque's latest endeavors in Buenos Aires. At this time, Borcosque was among the leading directors in Argentina and was in the process of directing the sizeable total of 18 films between 1939 and 1945. The vast majority of these films were produced for film studios in Argentina while a few of the films were produced in Chile with Argentine collaborators such as the actor Carlos Cores. In May 1945, Borcosque proudly proclaimed that he was in the process of filming the best movie that he had ever made, *Cuando en el cielo pasan listas*, a biographical film about the Anglo-Argentine educator William Morris, a renowned teacher in Argentina during the nineteenth century. According to the magazine, "the most brilliant part of the director's career had been in Buenos Aires" and this film was emblematic of Borcosque's work on historical dramas in Argentina.[32] Borcosque's role as a major director of Argentine studio films during the 1940s followed a similar transnational path to other performers and directors who became involved in the golden age of Buenos Aires's cinematic industry. The making of *Cuando en el cielo pasen lista* followed Borcosque's earlier work as a director of silent films in Chile during the 1920s, a brief flurry of Hollywood-produced Spanish-language films made in North America in the 1930s, and then several sound films made in Chile during the 1940s amidst his much more extensive work in Argentina. In addition to his work behind the camera, there was Borcosque worked as a journalist and was the founding editor of *Ecran* in 1935. *Ecran* started as a magazine devoted to Hollywood film and consumer culture. Beginning in late 1939 and especially after 1940, it became a magazine that heavily reported on Hollywood alongside extensive coverage of the Argentine film industry by utilizing Argentine correspondents like the Argentine journalist and screenwriter Manuel Sofovich. *Ecran* also presented its own articles

[32] "Control de Estrenos," *Ecran*, May 26, 1946, 12.

about the evolution of the Chilean film industry, which slowly developed to a much smaller size than neighboring Argentina.

Borcosque's extensive experience in film included work in Hollywood during the late 1920s and early 1930s as a consultant on Latin-themed films for Paramount. At this time, Paramount had begun to devote extensive resources to making movies to appeal to Latin American audiences. During the 1930s, Paramount produced and filmed large-scale Spanish-language films in the United States and Borcosque directed the 1931 film *La Mujer X.* As the film historian Lisa Jarvinen has shown, Hollywood's strategy for success in Latin America was to bring a number of leading Spanish-language performers like the Argentine tango singer Carlos Gardel and the Mexican actor Tito Guizar to film studios in New York and Hollywood.[33] The result of bringing leading Spanish-language talent to the United States was the professionalization of numerous Latin Americans who acted in front of the camera and also those who worked behind the camera. Borcosque was among the South America filmmakers and performers whose tenure in the Spanish-language world of Hollywood cinema would provide crucial experience in careers that would develop first in South America, then in the United States, and then later on back to South America during the expansion of Latin American national film industry.

The trajectory of Borcosque's career as a film director in Buenos Aires during the 1940s also reflects the array of transnational processes that resulted in Buenos Aires becoming the Hollywood of South America according to the South American journalists and audiences. For a generation of young handsome actors and pretty ingénues from Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, Buenos Aires's film studios became synonymous with Hollywood for glamour and on the path to fame from the mid-

[33] Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-Language Filmmaking,* 53-57.

1930s to mid-1940s. Chilean actors and actresses all shared that their next step to stardom was to head to Buenos Aires. This was true for the young Chilean ingénue Maria Eugenia Guzman who won an acting competition and headed to Buenos Aires and also for the young Chilean actress Alicia Barrie who insisted her career could best develop in Argentina, even though she did not want to turn her back on Chile.[34] The reputation of Buenos Aires in South America also reflected the ways by which Argentina's national film culture was constructed by an array of local and international actors. During this era, magazines in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay juxtaposed articles about the latest developments of Hollywood with news of Argentine and Mexican film productions. Magazines like Chile's *Ecran*, Argentina's *Radiolandia*, and the Uruguayan weekly *Cine Radio Actualidad* were all publications that reflected the interplay of Hollywood and Latin America's mass culture industry. These magazines also printed regular articles and images that can be interrogated as historical sources for understanding the strategies of production, distribution, promotion, and also the everyday practices of consumption. The imaginary hierarchy of cinematic performers in Buenos Aires and Montevideo was visible in these magazines that initially placed Hollywood stars like Charlie Chaplin and Deanna Durbin as the leading figures for these magazines, but Argentine and Mexican film stars like Luis Sandrini, Libertad Lamarque, and Dolores del Rio also became increasingly romanticized by the South American newspapers and magazines during the late 1930s and 1940s. As a transnational entertainer, Sandrini starred in films in Argentina, Chile, and Mexico during the 1930s and 1940s. Lamarque featured in dozens of films in Argentina and Mexico during the same period before she spent the majority of her career in Mexico after first heading to Mexico in the 1940s. Her

[34] "M. Eugenia Guzman triunfa en Buenos Aires," *Ecran*, May 23, 1941, 19.

departure from Argentina in 1946 was the source of great speculation about whether it was due to a feud with Eva Perón. However, various sources make clear it was also plausibly just because Lamarque's career could be much more successful in Mexico, where the film industry was more profitable and gave her even more global exposure. Lamarque also preferred to present this narrative about the decision to advance her career in Mexico as being her own choice made on her own terms. Like other Argentine performers, Lamarque helped to stimulate the transnational diffusion of Argentina mass culture with her singing of tangos in films such as the 1950 Mexican box office hit *Huellas del pasado.*

The added attraction of Argentine stars for audiences throughout South America was that they were more likely to have already performed at local theaters during stage productions or were able to attend the premieres of their films by crossing the Andes to Santiago del Chile or over to Montevideo across the Rio de la Plata in a day's journey. A visit by a figure like Luis Sandrini, Tita Merello, or Pepe Arias to perform in a play in a theater or attend a premiere was a big deal in Santiago del Chile.[35] Luis Sandrini shared his opinion during an interview with *Ecran* in 1946 that the development of Chilean film was also considerably stunted by its proximity to Buenos Aires where the good ideas headed to Argentine film studios. In this formulation, Argentina was crowding out other potential movie industries in South America. In the same article, the Chilean journalist writing under the pseudonym Pepe Grillo also compared the situation to Mexican film's proximity to Hollywood, where the Mexican films remained more likely to be made due to nationalism.[36]

Starting in the mid-1930s with the creation of Argentina's different film studios, Buenos Aires's film industry attracted performers and directors from

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[36] "En Nuestro Hollywood Criollo", *Ecran*, May 28, 1946, 20.

throughout Latin America and the Hispanic world. Argentine film culture in turn developed and diffused its influence across national borders, especially within the countries of the Southern Cone during these decades when national film cultures were barren and struggling in neighboring countries like Uruguay and Chile.

The Montevideo-based magazine *Cine Radio Actualidad* appealed to its readers with extensive coverage of Argentine films and Argentine film stars in the magazine in the late 1930s and 1940s. The magazine covers would include glossy photographs of Argentine actors and actresses like Pepe Arias, Luis Sandrini and Jose Gola and actresses like Amanda Ledezma. Completed and future productions of Argentine studio films were written about and analyzed with great anticipation for their prompt arrival in Montevideo. For the major Argentine studio films of the late 1930s and 1940s, they would debut on average within one to three months of their initial cinematic release in Buenos Aires.

Figure 14

Jose Gola on cover of *Cine Radio Actualidad*

The magazine's cover on January 28, 1938 featured the Argentine leading man Jose Gola, who had just starred in the Argentine films *Nace un amor* and *Mateo*. Gola's career trajectory was in ascendance in the late 1930s as he worked with leading directors like Luis Saslavsky, Daniel Tinayre, and Manuel Romero. The Argentine film historian Ricardo Manetti has argued that for many aficionados of Argentina cinema Jose Gola represented a masculine and gallant film star where no other similar leading men existed. In particular, Gola filled a void that had not been

occupied by the more comedic performances of Pepe Arias and Luis Sandrini. Jose Gola's consolidation as an Argentine movie star in Buenos Aires and Montevideo was also established due to the mass distribution of the film *Mateo* and the transnational connections between the recently inaugurated Argentine film studio Baires Film and Paramount. As the trade journal *Mensajero Paramount* explained in 1937, "Mateo, the remarkable Argentine production, will be distributed triumphantly in theaters across Spanish-speaking America, in which they will receive no doubt the film with equal applause that it received in Buenos Aires and other cities of the great South American republics. And it will be under the auspices of the Paramount and its film stars in all other Latin American republics that the film so eloquently testifies to the high degree of advancement that reach and cinematography of Argentina, for Paramount is responsible for the distribution of "Mateo."[37] With this bombastic pronouncement, the Paramount publicity machined explained that *Mateo* would be distributed in Lima, Caracas, Bogota, Panama City, and all the capitals and cities of Latin America.

Montevideo's reception of Argentine film during this period was strengthened by the local expertise of its film critics and audiences. In *Cine Radio Actualidad*, the magazine's well-written articles were filled with additional photographs of film scenes and the emerging genres of Argentine cinema were discussed at length. Film reviews most often associated the different performers and directors with Argentine genres such as tango films, comedies, and dramas such as film noirs. *Cine Radio Actualidad's* editors were Emilio Dominoni Font and René Arturo Despouey, who both wrote extensive film criticism for their magazine. In February 14, 1938, Dominoni Font's review of the Argentine film "Sol de primavera" reflected the

[37] "*Mateo* destinado a nuevos triunfos," *Mensajero Paramount* (October 1937), 12.

opinion that Argentine film trafficked in a variety of stock characters and settings from film noir, little cafes, confidence men, murders with gunshots, and comics who use bad words to make tasteless jokes. By 1938, the Uruguayan audience had already associated this wide array of character representations of Buenos Aires and porteños in Argentine film as both a source of backbone and a severely common spot of weakness.

In issues of *Cine Radio Actualidad* during the late 1930s, the careers of Argentine film stars like Jose Gola were publicized in the same way as Hollywood actors. Argentine theater's continual presence in Montevideo was also addressed with magazine profiles that heightened the profile of performers who worked in both stage and screen. The staging of new Argentine plays to the Teatro Solis was addressed with the same familiarity as the emerging world of Argentine cinema. In October 1937, the Buenos Aires-based acting company of Muino-Alippi performed the Argentine playwright Cesar Tiempo's play "Pan Criollo" in the Teatro Solis. *Cine Radio Actualidad* detailed how Tiempo had spoken with the magazine about the play having universal appeal while it dealt with a story about Jewish community of Buenos Aires. For the Uruguayan magazine, this story was easily relatable for Uruguayan theatergoers who were able to compare the sizable community of Jewish immigrants to Montevideo with those in Buenos Aires.

In March 1938, *Cine Radio Actualidad* reviewed the Argentine tango film *Tres anclados en Paris* which had already broken records for ticket sales at its opening at the Radio City movie theater which was owned by Bernardo Glucksmann in Montevideo. The Uruguayan magazine's review of *Tres Anclados en Paris* discussed the effective ways in which the film created a credible setting in Paris in a manner that was reminiscent of the best of Hollywood productions. In this regard, the

production of *Tres Anclados* exceeded the cinematographic skill of earlier Argentine films. The review also emphasized the professionalism of the Argentine film director Manuel Romero, who was "the cinema director who best knew his profession, of all those work in Buenos Aires."[38] The article complimented Romero's remarkable output, but also criticized him for celebrating immorality and immoral characters in his films.

In the early 1940s, the consumption of Argentine films in Uruguay also offered a useful lens to understand contemporary views about hemispheric diplomacy. The film criticism published in *Cine Radio Actualidad* provided an unconventional outlet for Uruguayans to critique Argentina's place in the wartime hierarchy of international relations.[39] In the 1941 Argentine film *Peluqueria de señoras*, the comic actor Luis Sandrini played a lady's hairdresser and aspiring boxer who falls for a femme fatale played by the American actress June Marlowe. (At the time, Marlowe lived in Buenos Aires and was married to the Chilean director Tito Davison, and was easily confused with the famous Hollywood actress of the same name.) In the film, Marlowe's character explains how Franklin D. Roosevelt would have been pleased about her romantic entanglements with Sandrini's Argentine boxing champ, amusingly named Discepolo Mixton. Discepolo asked about Roosevelt "Who is that? An actor?" He explains his confusion about Roosevelt since he always saw him on the screen at the cinema. On one hand, the film makes a crucial point about the power of affective ties in the relationship between Latin America and the United States.[40] On the other hand, the film's distribution throughout South America as a star vehicle for

[38] "Tres anclados en Paris," *Cine Radio Actualidad*, March 11, 1938.
[39] "*Peluqueria de señoras,"Cine Radio Actualidad,* May 8, 1942.
[40] On affective ties in Latin American comedies in this era, see Nilo Fernando Couret, "Peripheral Humor, Critical Realism: Latin American Film Comedy, 1930-1960" Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 2013.

Luis Sandrini also meant that viewers could understand the film as a light-hearted political satire. Many Argentines and Uruguayans were quite clear on their countries' uneven relationships with the United States, and did not need films to explain Argentina's ongoing neutrality. Yet Argentine films were compellingly able to argue in their storylines that going to the cinema provided a more powerful source of representation and measure of symbolic power than other forms of media like newspapers that were more devoted to explaining global affairs.

The early productions of Argentina's Estudios San Miguel operated by the impresario Augusto Alvarez would also receive extensive coverage in *Cine Radio Actualidad*. In 1942, the films *Sendas cruzadas* and *Veinte años y una noche* included the participation of leading Argentine performers like Blanca Podesta and Delia Garcia. The film's releases in Buenos Aires and Montevideo were detailed, as was the frenetic production of Alvarez's new studio. The studio had several films in the pipeline and included the participation of experienced directors, performers, and screenwriting by the exiled Spanish playwright Alejandro Casona.[41]

Given the widespread success of Argentine releases in the exhibition circuits of Montevideo, Santiago del Chile, and other Latin American cities, the attempts within Latin American capitals to create their own national cinemas to compete with the Argentine film industry was just a matter of time. In the 1940s, the Chilean film industry arguably made the biggest push toward creating a viable national film industry with film studios. The Chilean film studios were able to make several dozen films and these productions were noteworthy in how they recruited Argentine performers and directors who were persuaded to film in Chile by Chilean film producers. The Chilean director Carlos Borcosque, who had perfected his craft as a

[41] "Cosas y casos del cine argentino," *Cine Radio Actualidad*, May 8, 1942.

filmmaker in Argentina, made the best-financed film in Chile during this period with *Amarga verdad* produced in 1945. The film's reviewers in Chile highlighted the influence of Buenos Aires on the development of the film as well as the obvious influence of Hollywood. The film critic from the Santiago daily newspaper *La Nacion* explained how the future of Chilean film would be shaped by Buenos Aires-based directors and performers:

> "Until now the best national film was called *Hollywood es asi* (Hollywood is like this.) Without being incredible, it came close to the truth, and some of its scenes would have honored the best North American filmmaker.
> We looked forward to *Amarga verdad*, given Chile Films's hiring of the admired and tested director Borcosque. The fact that the director had matured in the filmmaking climate of Buenos Aires had also caused us to think positively. In truth, from Argentina we receive beautiful and entertaining films like *El inglés de los guesos*; *Los martes orquídeas*; *Su mejor alumno*, and many others.
> But el señor Borcosque is not the same. They have changed him. It seems to us that arriving here he got away from his artistic tutelage, not well known to the public, and that in Argentine workshops there are providential men, that in the countries influence others without using a bombo drum, and they are called Ministers without Portfolios."[42]

This extended critique by the Chilean press emphasized several positives about Argentine film while expressing its lacking appraisal for Chilean film. Chileans had become accustomed to the artistry of Argentine cinema and Carlos Borcosque's career as a director was recognized as having benefited immensely from time in Buenos Aires before he stumbled badly when making his first major studio film in Chile. *Amarga verdad* was also reviewed negatively by other Chilean critics upon its release for lacking the polish and originality of other films of the era made in Buenos Aires. The harsh critique of the film seemed largely motivated by the expectation that the film would be a more authentic representation of contemporary Chilean reality but that it came up short in being an authentic national film or equivalent in dramatic intrigue to similar Argentine films of the era. Ironically, the film possessed most of

[42] Joaquín Edwards Bello, "Amarga verdad," *La Nación*, February 23, 1945.

the elements of Buenos Aires's leading film productions, as it included an Argentine actor as its protagonist, was written by the prominent Argentine screenwriter and director Tulio Demicheli, and directed by Borcosque. In the view of Chilean film critics, Argentine films occupied a privileged place in a regional hierarchy within the hemispheric worlds of cinema in Latin America and also the cultural market of South America. A similar process where Argentine film culture influenced the history of another national cinema occurred with the few Uruguayan films made during this era.

The 1949 Uruguayan slapstick comedy *Detective al contramano* (Detective On The Wrong Track), was inspired by Argentine films of the era, which had been inspired by Hollywood noirs from the 1940s. The 1949 Uruguayan film starred the well-known comedic actor Juan Carlos Mareco, who had already developed a successful career on the radio in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo. *Detective* was commercially successful in Uruguay with a highly publicized opening. The film was released in Montevideo in October 1949 and was essentially a slapstick comedy inspired by Argentine films of the 1940s. The film did not receive particularly favorable local criticism, but it broke even in the domestic market.[43] *Detective* featured scenes filmed along the Montevideo coast and also included several scenes involving radio broadcasts, the form of mass media that Mareco was most famous for as a radio comedian in Montevideo and Buenos Aires. However, the film was not screened in Buenos Aires as planned due to a dispute with Argentina's custom authorities during a deep freeze of Uruguayan-Argentina relations during Peronism.[44] The Peronist government had ceased diplomatic relations with Uruguay, since Uruguay had given refuge to a number of vocal anti-Peronists. In the parlance of Peronist Argentina, Montevideo was synonymous with anti-Peronism, like it had been

[43] *Cinemateca* (No. 1), July 1977
[44] Idem

associated with anti-Rosismo during the governments of Argentine caudillo Juan Manuel de Rosas during the 1840s. The Uruguayan film producers of *Detective al contramano* had hoped to break into positive column through profits from the Argentine market and this commercial setback led to their pulling back from financing more Uruguayan films.

At the same time, the planning and production of the 1949 Uruguayan film *El Ladron de los sueños* was covered extensively in the Uruguayan press in publications such as the weekly magazine *Cine Radio Actualidad*.[45] The article explained how the initial planning meeting for the Uruguayan film, which sought to be an authentically national production, took place in Buenos Aires. The Uruguayan film also included Uruguayan and Argentine performers, and was to be directed by the Austrian émigré Kurt Land. Originally a film editor during the 1940s, Land would make several commercially successful films in Buenos Aires during the following years, including the Pepe Arias film *Estrellas de Buenos Aires* in 1956. In *Cine Radio Actualidad*, the leading Uruguayan magazine about film culture, the article emphasized that the nationalistic aims of the Uruguayan film industry reflected the problematic nature of such an integrated regional cultural marketplace in the Rio de la Plata. In contrast to the Chilean film industry, Uruguay's film industry could not entirely consider Argentine industry as a viable model. Montevideo and Uruguay were too small and lacked the market to copy Buenos Aires's cultural industries. Still, the mere handful of Uruguayan movies made in the 1940s and 1950s almost frequently drew on employing directors and casting protagonists whose careers were largely taking place in Buenos Aires. The sole exceptions in Uruguayan cinema represented the small scale of the national industry.

[45] "Como nace una pelicula uruguaya," *Cine Radio Actualidad*, June 23, 1949.

In 1946, the Argentine director Julio Saraceni filmed an adaptation of *The Three Muskateers* in Montevideo's Parque Rodo with Argentine actors Roberto Airaldi, Armando Bo, and Augusto Codecá. The film was an Argentine-Uruguayan co-production and enjoyed moderate commercial success in both national markets. In 1950, the Uruguayan director Adolfo Fabregat made another film after *Detective al contramano* when he helmed *Uruguayos campeones (Uruguayan Champions)*, a documentary about Uruguay's World Cup championship football team in 1950 that was also a national commercial success. However, Fabregat's subsequent cinematic directing work in the 1950s and 1960s was focused on documentary films for the Uruguayan state on such as national beer production and historical interest topics such at the tomb of national hero José Gervasio Artigas.[46]

Like the Uruguayan film industry, the history of the Chilean film industry was also shaped by its connections to Argentine cinema. However, the key difference was that Chilean film producers and directors had more access to private capital than in Uruguay and could solicit experienced directors who wanted to promote a national cinema that could rival and be modeled on Argentina's. In Uruguay, the most significant development of mass culture during the 1940s would focus on state support for theater in Uruguay as the state's main form of mass culture. This meant that the state opera house, Teatro Solis, received support from the Uruguayan state and the Montevideo municipal government to recruit Argentine performers, directors, and producers from the world of Buenos Aires theater culture to work in Montevideo.[47] The Uruguayan actor Santiago Gomez Cou was a major presence in

[46] "Entrevista a Adolfo Fabregat," available online at http://33cines.uy/entrevista-a-adolfo-fabregat

[47] I discuss the efforts of the Uruguayan dramatist and politician Justino Zavala Muniz and the Argentine dramatist Angel Curotto to create Uruguay's Comedia Nacional in Chapter Four. On Zavala Muniz and Curotto, see Daniela Bouret and Gonzalo Vicci, "Relaciones creativas y conflictivas entre el Teatro y la Política. La institucionalidad de las artes escénicas en Uruguay en la Comisión de Teatros Municipales," *Telon de Fondo*, Vol. 14 (2011), 123-143.

Uruguayan theater during the 1940s but his main film roles remained Argentine films where he had established as a both a leading dramatic actor.

In addition to Carlos Borcosque and Kurt Land, the career of the Argentine director Luis Moglia Barth displayed the under-explored and symbiotic relationships between film culture in Buenos Aires and the neighboring capitals of Montevideo and Santiago during the 1930s and 1940s. Luis Moglia Barth was a major Argentine director who directed the first Argentine sound film *Tango!* in 1933 and was commissioned to direct the Chilean studio Chile Films's inaugural effort in 1944, a film titled *Romance de medio siglo*. Despite being the director, Moglia Barth was not intimately involved in all aspects of the production and *Ecran* noted that technical aspect of the film included various Argentineans. The magazine pointed out:

"The issue of the nationality of the collaborators in the business makes it seem like it is necessary to think about reorganizing the Chile Films that we were excited about. The company hired foreigners because they began with the idea that national residents would be inefficient, and it seems like they got less than they bargained for. The imported technical experts haven't been better, and it is important not to underestimate the technical work done by the independent producers, through effort and sacrifice, that Chile Films will need to hire soon if they have their future production reach the level that the public has a right to ask for."[48]

Despite the criticism by the local press, Chile Films continued to draw on the world of cinematic expertise from Buenos Aires in its subsequent productions. The studio hired Carlos Borcosque, the Chilean filmmaker trained in Hollywood and Buenos Aires, to direct its next studio film, *Amarga verdad.*

As a corollary to the careers of Kurt Land, Luis Moglia Barth and Carlos Borcosque, the trajectory of the Uruguayan-Argentine film director Roman Vinoly Barreto helps explain how the Argentine cinema industry incorporated important figures from neighboring countries. Vinoly Barreto had first come to Argentina from his native Montevideo to work as an opera director at Buenos Aires's Teatro Colón.

[48] "Control de Estrenos: Romance de medio siglo," *Ecran*, October 17, 1944.

From his position at the Colon, Vinoly Barreto was recruited into filmmaking by a wealthy Argentine landowner who wanted to makes movies during the early 1940s. After a brief period of being an assistant director on Argentine studio films, Vinoly Barreto began his career as a director in 1947. Vinoly Barreto directed a number of successful films in Buenos Aires during the 1940s and 1950s without ever returning to his native Uruguay and becoming involved with the smaller scales of the film industry there. His body of work in Argentina included commercially successful tango films like the 1949 release *Corrientes, calle de ensueños,* which drew on the script by Luis Saslavsky and musical compositions by the tango bandleader Homero Manzi. Vinoly Barreto also directed a film about the Argentine Formula One racer Juan Manuel Fangio, the noir *La bestia debe morir* in 1952, and the drama *Vampiro Negro* in 1953, a Spanish-language remake of Fritz Lang's classic German film *M* from 1931. Through the 1950s and 1960s, Vinoly Barreto remained a commercially viable director who was considered a pioneer in the aesthetics of Argentine film. Even as the Argentine film industry suffered its relative decline in the late 1950s, the Uruguayan maintained his international reputation as a major Latin American director based in Buenos Aires and participated in film festivals in Europe.[49]

After consolidating its place as the capital of South American film culture, Buenos Aires's film industry began its decline in the 1950s. There were many causal factors for the decline. Historians have emphasized that the rise of national television in Argentina and other Latin American countries but the impact of television was not immediate. Argentina's economic instability during the era also made it considerably more difficult for national films to make money. At the same time, consumer tastes continued to change and the older genres of Argentine films like tango films and

[49] Luis Trelles Plazaola, *Cine Sudamericano: Diccionario de Directores* (University of Puerto Rico Press, 1986), 354.

melodramas were no longer quite in vogue. The politicization of the Peronist years in Argentina from 1945 to 1955 resulted in the extended instability of the cultural marketplace amidst conditions of censorship and also the emphasis on pro-government or apolitical filmmaking. After Peron's fall in 1955 with the military coup known as the Revolución Libertadora, the backlash against the regime post-1955 in Argentine came quickly from prominent Argentine filmmakers. The most noteworthy example was the filmmaking of Lucas Demare, who had been sympathetic to Peronism during Peron's two presidential terms while making the film *Los isleros* about the plight of working-class people in Northeastern Argentina. Demare's post-Peronist film *Despues del silencio* (*After the Silence*) dealt with the issue of police torture during the Peronist regime and the film was considered by some critics to have documentary value as an accurate representation of police violence. The tradition of Argentine social realism in Argentine studio films was continued despite the increased commercial difficulty for such films to be made.

In the wider currents of Latin American filmmaking, the late 1950s and 1960s were also marked by the rise of politically minded young filmmakers in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Some of these filmmakers gave credit to the earlier social realism for shaping their own filmmaking and this brought more and more young filmmakers into cinema with a defined creative and political vision. To different degrees, Argentina's comic actors like Pepe Arias and Luis Sandrini were also able to remain commercially successful in films in the 1960s, although they spent more of their time performing on television where comic fare was highly successful and provided escapist pleasures for Argentine viewers dealing with the chaos and political disorder of Argentine society.

In conclusion, this chapter traces the development of Buenos Aires as the cinematic capital of South America from the 1930s and 1940s and also how this process overlapped with the emergence of other cultural industries in the city during the late 1940s and 1950s. Buenos Aires became a center of Latin American intellectual life in the realms of publishing, advertising, and higher education in the post-war era.[50] Argentina's cultural industries fueled one another, especially in the relationship between publishing and cinema as many of Argentina's leading authors like Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares wrote extensive film criticism and also produced numerous screenplays. The Argentine film industry played a significant role in the development of cosmopolitan character of the city in the middle decades of the twentieth century with Argentine film's presence in downtown theaters and also its cultural contributions to the world of mass media. In the 1950s, many bourgeois residents in Argentina sought to preserve Buenos Aires's air of cosmopolitanism by becoming vociferously opposed to the populist policies associated with the Peronist government while also pursuing new cultural pursuits such as psychoanalysis.[51] At the same time, Latin America entered into a post-war environment where mass culture was consumed more widely than ever outside of urban centers, and film was only one of many cultural products being consumed. The lasting hemispheric significance of Buenos Aires as a cultural capital continued beyond the 1950s. This was aided by the rapid urbanization of the surrounding area of Buenos Aires and the resulting demographical transformations that resulted in new residents in the city. The

[50] On advertising and consumption in the post-Peronist period from 1955, see Laura Podalsky, *Specular City, Transforming Culture, Consumption, and Space in Buenos Aires, 1955-1973* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004).
[51] For this interpretation about the relationship between politics and consumption during the 1950s, Alejandro Grimson and Gabriel Kessler, *On Argentina and the Southern Cone: neoliberalism and national imaginations* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 15-16.

population of Buenos Aires and its metropolitan area reached close to 7 million people in 1960. These transformations increased the country's population in and around Buenos Aires to 40 percent of the total national population.[52] As Buenos Aires became a megalopolis, its urban cultural market also remained differentiated from those in neighboring countries in the size and scope of mass culture, even as Argentina continued its cyclical process of political and economic crises during the twentieth century.

[52] Aldo Ferrer, "Growth and Distribution of the Population," in Ferrer, *The Argentine Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 177-190.

Chapter Four

"Migration, Networks, Censorship: Theater and Film Culture in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, 1940-1960"

On May 27, 1949, the exiled Spanish actress Margarita Xirgu encountered censorship from the Peronist government while performing an adaptation of Albert Camus's play "Le Malentendu" ("The Misunderstanding"). The municipal authorities closed down the play on its third day and the censorship meant that Xirgu would choose to head to Santiago del Chile to resume her work as a theater director and drama school founder there.[1] However, the Uruguayan statesman Justino Zavala Muniz had other ideas. Zavala quickly moved to offer Xirgu the opportunity to come to Uruguay and become involved in the recently founded Comedia Nacional.[2]

Due to the political conditions of Peronism, Margarita Xirgu was one of several theatrical performers in the 1940s that were starring on the stages of Buenos Aires and would choose to relocate to Uruguay. Despite her love for performing in Buenos Aires, Xirgu felt compelled to take on a leading creative force in Uruguay's Comedia Nacional starting in 1949 and also accepted the directorship of the Escuela Municipal de Arte Dramático in Montevideo in the same year. Xirgu had left Spain in 1936 while traveling with her company in Cuba. As the Spanish Civil War continued to intensify, she followed her previous routes of traveling throughout Latin America from Cuba to Mexico and Peru with her company before making her way to Chile and Argentina. In a sense, Xirgu's tour

[1] Antonina Rodrigo, *Margarita Xirgu* (Madrid: Flor del Viento Ediciones, 2005), 344.
[2] Cecilia Pérez Mondino, "Patrimonio cultural de la Segunda República en América: al aporte de Margarita Xirgu al teatro uruguayo," in *Patrimonio, Guerra Civil y posguerra, edited by Arturo Colorado Castellary* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 2010), 433-442.

that began in 1936 never ended. Her sojourn in South America continued from the 1930s into the 1940s even after the Spanish Civil War concluded with the defeat of the Republican cause that she supported. In the early 1940s, Xirgu alternated her time between Buenos Aires and Santiago del Chile and contributed to the Spanish theatrical world in Buenos Aires. However, Xirgu's primary work of performing for the large Spanish immigrant audiences in downtown Buenos Aires was interrupted by the political conditions in Peronist Argentina.

The period from the early 1940s to the late 1950s included both continuity and change in the relationship between theatrical performers and dramatists in Argentina and Uruguay that extended back to the early twentieth century. These long-term collaborations meant that Argentina's mass cultural industries continued to employ hundreds of professionals in Buenos Aires while Uruguay's own mass cultural traditions remained largely fragmented from the 1910s into the 1940s. However, the post-war period marked a transformative period in the continual processes of mass cultural exchanges between Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The Argentine theatrical and film industries in the late 1940s and early 1950s remained commercially viable while facing challenges such as increased global film competition and the rise of television in the 1950s. In comparison, Uruguay's leading theatrical performers enjoyed new opportunities on Montevideo stages in the late 1940s and 1950s. In the post-war period, Montevideo's cultural producers benefited from a stable and prosperous economy and creative inspirations from dramatists and performers who ventured to Montevideo due to political upheaval and censorship in Argentina.

In the period from 1945 to 1960, the production and consumption of mass culture in Argentina and Uruguay were increasingly connected by political and economic circumstances and the practice of censorship in Argentina. There was a bit of role reversal in the relationship where Buenos Aires was the chosen destination for opportunity for numerous performers, directors, and dramatists. The interconnected worlds of theater in Buenos Aires and Montevideo during the period of the immediate post-war period also offered both potential expansion and also circumscribed possibilities for theater performance and national film industries in Uruguay during the 1950s. The case studies examined here focus on the interrelated histories of theater and film in Argentina and Uruguay during this period. This chapter explores the rise of state-sponsored culture in Uruguay in the 1940s and 1950s, concentrating on the history of Uruguay's Comedia Nacional, the theatrical company based at the Teatro Solis in Montevideo.

The Teatro Solis's international reputation as a first-tier opera house helped to solidify the efforts by the Uruguayan state to promote its place as a home to professional dramatic arts. The opera house had long hosted leading international performers and also been the site of an eclectic mix of programming ranging from silent film exhibitions in the 1910s to tango concerts in the 1920s. Focusing on different cultural producers in Argentina and Uruguay in the 1940s and 1950s, this chapter examines the importance of historical factors such as networks, migration, and exile in shaping the development of Uruguay's cultural industries and theatrical and film productions in the 1940s and 1950s.

The importance of migration in shaping theater and film culture in Argentina and Uruguay in the 1940s was influenced by the legacies of the Spanish Civil War in South

America, the Second World War, and the rise of Peronism in Argentina between 1945 and 1955. The victory of the Fascist forces in Spain was painful for many residents in the Spanish immigrant communities in Buenos Aires and Montevideo and this caused heightened interest in the work of exiled performers and dramatists. Additionally, the Peronist government of the 1940s combined state populism with a strong emphasis on remaking national culture. Before becoming the first lady of Argentina, Eva Perón had been a successful actress in Argentine radio, theater, and film and she felt a strong connection toward shaping the future of the arts in Argentina.[3] As discussed in the previous chapter, Eva Perón's antagonism helped to convince leading cinematic performers like Libertad Lamarque to depart Argentina for Mexico. In the realm of theater performers, short-term migration often included a choice to go to Uruguay.

In Uruguay, Margarita Xirgu formed a strong professional alliance with Angel Curotto and the Uruguayan politician and writer Justino Zavala Muniz that brought her to Montevideo in 1948 after the Comedia Nacional had concluded its first year of production under the auspices of formal state support. For Xirgu and other leading figures in the theatrical world, the stages of Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the late 1940s and 1950s were tied together by the politics of exile and diasporic cultures that were created by the post-war world.

In the view of the literary scholar Derek Gagen, Buenos Aires became the capital of Spanish theater culture by 1937 when Margarita Xirgu performed the play *Yerma* at

[3] On Eva Perón's efforts to remake Argentina's mass cultural industries, see Mariano Ben Plotkin, *Mañana es San Perón: A Cultural History of Perón's Argentina* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2003), 64-70.

the Teatro Smart on Avenida Corrientes.[4] Gagen argues that Buenos Aires maintained its place as the center of Spanish theater through 1945 due to work of Xirgu and Spanish dramatists like Alejandro Casona and Rafael Alberti who were exiled in South America. In particular, the 1944 and 1945 seasons in Buenos Aires were landmark years in the history of Spanish theater outside of Spain with Xirgu performing and directing major works in Argentina.

The career of Margarita Xirgu and the historical factors of migration, networks, and censorship reshaped possible routes for the traditions of Spanish theater and national mass cultures in Uruguay and Argentina during the 1940s and 1950s. The expansion of Uruguay's Comedia Nacional occurred when the Uruguayan government created cultural policies to enhance its place as a modern welfare state in South America. In twentieth-century Uruguay, theatrical culture had been largely defined by the cultural commerce that developed between Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The Comedia Nacional's backers drew on the unique cultural heritage of the region to assert equal footing for theatrical production in Montevideo in comparison with the larger Argentine capital.

This chapter also analyzes the importance of the Comedia Nacional in showing how state cultural policies became transnational cultural processes between Uruguay and Argentina. The Comedia incorporated itinerant performers, directors, and producers from Uruguay, Argentina, and Spain. The Comedia Nacional represented the most ambitious initiative of the post-war welfare state in Uruguay to contribute to mass cultural commerce across South America. Its development also reflected the possibilities for

[4] Derek Gagen, "Spanish Theatre in the Argentine: Margarita Xirgu's 1937 Tour and the Commemoration of Lorca," *Hispanic Research Journal* Vol. 11, No. 3 (May 2010): 210-226.

state-sponsored cultural initiatives in Latin America that emerged from urban municipalities after the Second World War. This history also provides insights into the place of short-term migration in the development of Latin American cultural production during the immediate post-war era when migration of artistic performers was caused by censorship in Argentina. While the Comedia Nacional attained reasonable critical success in the late 1940s and during the 1950s, it struggled to consistently attract a mass audience, thereby contributing to the uneven development of mass culture industries in Uruguay.

The histories of Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the 1940s and 1950s reflected the changing demographics of the two cities. In 1940, Buenos Aires was home to over 3 million people but the role of the Argentine state was limited in promoting culture except for the state's deployment of censorship. The Argentine government was not heavily involved in sponsoring theater or film productions with the exception of the theatrical productions at the state theater of the Teatro Cervantes, where Argentina's Comedia Nacional was founded in 1936. Meanwhile, in Uruguay, the role of the state in shaping Montevideo's place for the production of mass cultural forms was much larger. There were various attempts to found institutions like Uruguay's Comedia Nacional, with efforts in 1942 foundering before the potent interventions of the post-war Uruguayan welfare state enabled the 1947 attempts to become fruitful. The municipal government-backed Comedia Nacional enhanced the appeal of Montevideo's cultural market for a number of leading Argentine, Uruguayan, and Spanish theatrical figures in the late 1940s and 1950s, showing how the state could promote short-term labor migration in the artistic fields.

Within the world of Spanish-language theater culture in South America, the symbiotic relationship between the Argentine and Uruguayan theatrical worlds in the 1940s continued to be defined by ceaseless connections between the dramatic performers, directors, and producers based in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. After 1945, numerous forms of censorship from the Peronist regime influenced Argentina's theater and film industries and this created a new dynamic in the relationship between theater and film in the Río de la Plata. In 1950, Argentina's Secretaría de Informaciones de la Presidencia sought to shut down the Buenos Aires performance of the play "Antesala del infierno", which was a Spanish-language stage adaptation of the American play *Detective Story*. The order from the government asked for "spontaneous" adhesion to the Peron government by the play's cast. The Argentine actor Orestes Caviglia refused to sign the loyalty pledge and he also quickly went into exile in Uruguay while following Xirgu. In Montevideo, Caviglia was invited to direct the Comedia Nacional and he remained in Uruguay for five years.[5]

The paths that brought Xirgu and Caviglia to Uruguay's Comedia Nacional reflected how performers bounced between productions on stage and also the screen. However, Xirgu was always a stage actress first and foremost. In the late 1940s, the Uruguayan theatrical world attained a moment of international importance by attracting such major talents to the stages of Montevideo. In contrast to the increased importance of Buenos Aires in the realm of theater as part of its mass cultural industry, this development temporarily reordered the uneven relationship between mass entertainment in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The founding of the Comedia Nacional became an

[5] "El largo viaje de Caviglia", *Primera Plana*, November 26, 1968.

important cultural achievement of the Uruguayan welfare state in the immediate aftermath of World War Two and reflected how state policies could be used to promote cultural industries. The late 1940s also marked a brief period when Uruguayans could celebrate the exceptionalism of their political and economic fortunes and the urban realm of cultural production in Uruguay offered a more open-minded environment than in Argentina.

The principal underpinning for the expansion of cultural populism in Uruguay was tied to the country's post-war political stability. The leading political force in Uruguayan politics after World War Two was the faction of the Colorado Party known as neo-Battlismo. President Luis Batlle Berres was the nephew of José Batlle y Ordóñez, the leading Uruguayan political figure of the early twentieth century, whose lasting impact on his nation's politics was akin to the legacies of figures as varied as the Franklin D. Roosevelt, Juan Perón, and Getulio Vargas of Brazil.[6] Batlle Berres advocated strongly for Uruguay's expanded role of the state in the late 1940s and despite political similarities in their deployment of the populist state, Battle's government was antagonistic to the Peronist regime due to its pursuit of anti-democratic and anti-U.S. policies.[7]

During the period of neo-Battlismo that lasted from 1946 to 1958, the Uruguayan government placed an emphasis on expanding the role of the state and also specifically supporting cultural policies that could strengthen the symbolic power of the welfare state.

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[6] The Uruguayan historian Vivián Trias argues for parallels between Batlle Berres, Perón, and Vargas, despite the hostilities between the Uruguayan and Argentine populists; Vivián Trias, "Getulio Vargas, Juan Domingo Perón y Batlle Berres-Herrera. Tres rostros del populismo" *Nueva Sociedad* No. 34 (enero-febrero), 1978, 28-39. On Vargas's cultural policies, see Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

[7] Francisco Panizza, *Uruguay, batllismo y después: Pacheco, militares y tupamaros en la crisis del Uruguay batllista* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 1990), 78-79.

Uruguayan intellectuals felt that the immediate post-war era was a period when Uruguay was in a false "golden age" since it was benefiting from its place as a "Good Neighbor" of the United States after its earlier commercial connections to Great Britain.[8]

During the period of Neobattlismo, among the leading figures in the realm of supporting these cultural policies was Justino Zavala Muniz, the leading political force behind the Comedia Nacional. Zavala Muniz was also a national senator who enjoyed a prominent background as a writer and politician. Zavala had also become very personally acquainted with issues of censorship on both sides of the Río de la Plata. The staging of Zavala Muniz's play *La cruz del camino* was threatened by censorship in Montevideo in 1933 shortly after the military government of Gabriel Terra took power.[9] Terra had been elected president in 1931 of Uruguay but took further control of executive power through a coup d'etat in 1933 and held power until 1938. In his retelling of this encounter with censorship in Uruguay, Orestes Caviglia said that he had made it clear to the head of the Uruguayan government agency SODRE that he wished to perform the play by Zavala Muniz and used his status as a leading Argentine actor to bring about the play's opening on April 16, 1933. After the Uruguayan democratic opening in the 1940s, Zavala Muniz focused his political energies during neo-Battlismo to successfully push for state resources to support the arts and helped to support the Uruguayan national congress to pass legislation to promote national industries in film, radio, and theater. Zavala Muniz

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[8] For a critical view of how Uruguayan intellectuals recognized the 1950s and especially 1958 as a rupture point for the welfare state, see Ximena Espeche, "De una isla a otra: intelectuales uruguayos y América Latina," *Anclajes* 13, (diciembre 2010), 51-72.
[9] Cecilia Perez Mondino, "Orestes Caviglia," accessed at http://comedianacional.montevideo.gub.uy/node/93/la-institucion/historia/directores/orestes-caviglia

had actually written the original legislation in 1929 that reflected his interest in having the Uruguayan maintain clear state policies towards the arts.

In the mid-1940s, Zavala Muniz turned his attention to garnering state support for the Uruguayan theatrical productions and also enabled the creation of professional schools for the dramatic and visual arts. Zavala's goals included the support of the Uruguayan government for producing forms of national culture in Montevideo that would meet the needs of the small country and its small market. It was clear that Uruguay could not sustain create larger mass cultural industry like Argentina's, but the Uruguayan government could do more for the arts. While Buenos Aires's theatrical and film industries employed thousands, Argentina's government support only represented a small part of the financial investment for theater in Argentina. This was even the case with the statist policies of the Peronist regime when it did seek to encourage theatrical productions but where most Argentine performers also had to worry about censorship. With a democratic government in Uruguay, Zavala sought in particular to support the creation of a stable state theater troupe akin to what had existed at the Teatro Cervantes in Buenos Aires. Since the Teatro Solis had become a municipal operation, the Comedia Nacional required financial backing from the coffers of the Montevideo government. In 1947, Zavala Muniz helped persuade the newly elected mayor of Montevideo, Andres Martinez Trueba, to provide the necessary support for the new cultural endeavor. With this alliance, Zavala Muniz sought out the Uruguayan theater producer Angel Curotto to also become involved. At the time, Curotto was working in Buenos Aires and Zavala Muniz persuaded him to return to Montevideo in order to run the theater company along with his friend and collaborator Jose Blixen. In Curotto's view, the founding of the Comedia

Nacional in the late 1940s was a product of two crucial causes that were global and regional in scope.[10]

During the world war, Montevideo had not received its usual array of foreign performing companies from Europe due to German submarines in the Atlantic Ocean. Additionally, Curotto felt there was ample support among Uruguayan and Argentine performers for the endeavor due to the climate of censorship of the government of Juan Peron in Argentina. The Argentine theatrical producer Carlos A. Petit described the Peronist censorship as having a particular impact on the content of plays and also creating an absence of political humor:

"Between 1945 and 1955 censorship was complete, everything related to entertainment, film and television was rigorously controlled and zealously through the Department of Public Information Executive Power whose head was Raul Alejandro Apold. Consequently, the scene of any revue that showed Argentine political figures was prohibited without comment. The first theatrical magazine to appear again without censorship occurred in 1955 following the overthrow of the Peronist government by the Revolución Libertadora."[11]

In Uruguay, the Comedia Nacional's success was far from ensured at its launch in 1947 despite its strong state support and the political conditions for its growth. The first year of the Comedia Nacional met arguably with more enthusiastic response from the Uruguayans who witnessed its traveling performances in the interior of Uruguay than

[10] Daniela Bouret and Gonzalo Vicci, "Relaciones creativas y conflictivas entre el Teatro y la Política. La institucionalidad de las artes escénicas en Uruguay en la Comisión de Teatros Municipales", *Telon de Fondo* 14 (Diciembre 2011), 123-142

[11] The quote comes from Perla Zayas de Lima, "Teatro y censura en el primer peronismo," *Telon de fondo* (July 2014), 22-39.

from those who attended its normal run in Montevideo. In Uruguayan towns like San Jose, located about 100 miles from Montevideo, the theater troupe was well received and feted with praise by locals who were delighted to have Uruguayan national theater function as mass entertainment in the interior of Uruguay.[12] The Comedia Nacional's reception in Montevideo needed to improve and Zavala Muniz felt that more performers from Argentina would likely be needed. Theatrical performers in Montevideo had long struggled to have a stable theater company and the Comedia Nacional followed several of Curotto's previous efforts that had all failed. Zavala Muniz and Curotto sought to build the Comedia Nacional based on their wide-reaching networks of artistic collaborators in Montevideo and Buenos Aires. Curotto's efforts to found such a company in Montevideo reached back to 1928 when he had founded the Case del Arte with Lenzi. In the 1930s, Curotto and Blixen had also attempted to found a national theater company with the Uruguayan actor Santiago Arrieta and the Argentine actress Tita Merello.[13] Other failed attempts to found a stable Uruguayan theater company in the 1940s included two different companies, one of which was had even been spearheaded by Margarita Xirgu.

In April 1947, Zavala Muniz was designated as head of the Comisión de Teatros Municipales, a position he would hold for over a decade. Zavala Muniz was able to gain strong support from the mayor of Montevideo, Martinez Trueba, in his attempts to recruit Curotto and additional talent back to Uruguay. According to Curotto, he was persuaded to leave Buenos Aires even when he had two plays in production because of the

[12] A 1947 scrapbook from the Centro de Investigación, Documentación y Difusión de las Artes Escénicas in the archive of the Teatro Solis shows the emotional response in the Uruguayan city of San Jose to the Comedia Nacional's first tour in 1947.
[13] José Pedro Blixen Ramírez, *Treinta recuerdos de teatro* (Montevideo: Editorial Florensa & Lafon, 1946)

enthusiasm from Martínez Trueba, who also held the purse strings.[14] (In 1951, Martínez Trueba succeeded his ally Batlle Berres as president of Uruguay, showing his level of political clout at the time.) Curotto came aboard to the Comedia Nacional in 1947 to help make the preparations for the theater company to stage its first plays in short order, a process that led to the staging of *El leon ciego* by the Uruguayan playwright Ernesto Herrera on October 2, 1947. Herrera's play was directed by the Peruvian director Carlos Calderon de la Barca, who would go on to direct the Comedia's staging of plays by Uruguayan authors until his untimely death in 1949. The Comedia's choices in productions also sought to mix Uruguayan, Argentine, and other more universal plays from the dramatic canon.

In May 1948, the Comedia Nacional staged the play *Cuando aqui habia reyes* by the Argentine playwright Rodolfo González Pacheco. The play had won first prize at the municipal drama competition in Buenos Aires the year before. The play dealt with the life of Afro-Argentines during the Rosas regime in the 1840s and Zavala Muniz had enthusiastically chosen the play for production after encountering it. The play was directed by the Argentine playwright Enrique Gustavino and was noteworthy in opening up the Teatro Solis to a wider call for casting. The production incorporated the participation of many Afro-Uruguayans of different ages from Montevideo onto the stage while also drawing on Argentine theater talent. The Uruguayan musicologist Lauro Ayesteran was also recruited by Angel Curotto to create authentic music that could draw

[14] Interview of Ángel Curotto conducted by Rubén Castillo on May 14, 1987 on the Urugayan radio station Emisora del Palacio. The interview is transcribed in Cecilia Pérez Mondino, "Curotto, fundador de la Comedia Nacional", http://comedianacional.montevideo.gub.uy/node/150/angel-curotto

on the traditions of candombe and use drums to produce musical interludes.[15] The play thus incorporated rich elements of Afro-Uruguayan culture from Montevideo in the 1940s in order to create a convincing dramatic portrayal of blackness in Buenos Aires. The staging of *Cuando aqui habia reyes* occurred in the context whereby the Teatro Solis appealed to leading regional dramatists while also reflecting the more inclusive environment of the Uruguayan welfare state than the cultural politics of Argentina under Peronism.

In his study on Afro-Uruguay, George Reid Andrews discusses how Afro-Uruguayan cultural forms were consumed in Argentina and Uruguay during the 19th and 20th centuries while encountering local racism.[16] The Comedia Nacional in 1948 showed how Montevideo's state-sponsored mass culture could seemingly bring together different social groups into a large-scale production. Additionally, it is telling of race relations in Buenos Aires and Montevideo that a more culturally resonant production about Afro-Argentines in the nineteenth century first took place in twentieth century Uruguay. The production history of *Cuando aqui habia reyes* in Buenos Aires also reflected the multi-ethnic cultural flows of theatrical productions and personnel in the region. In Argentina, the play would finally be produced in Spanish in 1954 by the Peronist state-backed El Teatro Experimental de la Provincia de Buenos Aires with the actors primarily wearing blackface.[17] The play was staged in Ciudad Eva Peron, the renamed provincial capital of Buenos Aires known before and after as La Plata. In 1948, *Cuando aqui habia reyes* had

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[15] A newspaper article from Montevideo's daily press was written by Lauro Ayesteran the day before the play's opening and is located in the 1948 scrapbook at the CIDDAE.
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[17] Juan Bautista Devoto, "Un drama de Gonzalez Pacheco, en Ciudad Eva Peron," *Teatro*: *Revista internacional de la escena* (1954) 42-43.

earned the unique distinction of being the first Argentine play translated into Yiddish and performed at the Teatro IFT in Buenos Aires.[18] The director of the Yiddish version of the play was the Argentine playwright Armando Discepolo, who had suggesting the production of the play to the Yiddish theater's producers. Discipolo, who spoke Spanish and Italian, but little to no Yiddish, helped to create a successful two-month run where Yiddish speaking actors were wearing blackface to play Afro-Argentines.[19]

Despite its backing by the state and experienced personnel, the first two seasons for the Comedia Nacional did not impress many Uruguayan critics and this was an issue that Curotto sought to rectify by bringing in superior performers and directors from Argentina. Curotto's new collaborators included Armando Discepolo, who in his own extensive correspondence to Angel Curotto emphasized that he was quite happy to be able to work in Montevideo. In December 1950, Discepolo wrote to Curotto about the upcoming 1951 theatrical season for Uruguay's national theater company, the Comedia Nacional. Curotto continued as the Comedia Nacional's general director and Discepolo had collaborated with the company by directing plays in the 1949 and 1950 seasons at the Teatro Solis. Discepolo wrote that Curotto had promised during their last meeting at the Richmond Café in downtown Buenos Aires to send copies of a play titled *Cobarde*.[20] Discepolo also wanted Curotto to negotiate for him a good price at Montevideo's elegant Parque Hotel for his extended stays in Montevideo during the theatrical season.

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[18] Lucia Rud, "Persistencias del ídish en la escena porteña," *Diversidad* (Junio 2012), 42-56.
[19] Karina Wainschenker, "Genocidio. Memoria. Derechos Humanos. Antecedentes, surgimiento y desarrollo del teatro IFT," paper presented at Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani VII Jornadas de Jóvenes Investigadores, November 2013.
[20] This likely refers to the play *Cobarde* written by the Uruguayan playwright Victor Perez Petit and first published in 1894.

Discepolo wrote Curotto that he intended "to continue to tell him everything like I have always done, without calculated reticence…for the nobility of our never dampened friendship, for the good or betterment of the project at the Solis that is Zavala's and yours, and also mine- I cannot hide how I feel."[21] With these words about his "never dampened friendship" with Curotto and the Uruguayan writer and politician Justino Zavala Muniz, Discepolo also painted a larger truth about how theatrical culture was a crucial connection in the friendship between the cities of Buenos Aires and Montevideo.

Through the lens of the careers of dramatists and performers, it is possible to note how the traditional roles in theatrical commerce of Buenos Aires and Montevideo diverged and impacted career opportunities during the period of Peronism. In September 1951, Discepolo directed the play *Las voces de adentro* by the Italian playwright Eduardo de Fillipo for the Comedia Nacional. In November 1951, Discepolo again wrote to Curotto from Buenos Aires in Montevideo that he was glad the theatrical season had gone well for the Comedia Nacional and also asked if he could receive an advance of 1000 pesos. Discepolo wrote that "as usual, his numbers weren't squaring" and he needed some "national currency" to keep him afloat until his steady work in Montevideo in a few months in 1952.[22] According to Discepolo, the cultural environment of Peronist Argentina had also made it harder for him to find work as a director for plays in Argentina, despite many commercial successes between the 1920s and 1940s. Discepolo also subtly complained in his letters about fear of censorship in Argentina and how

[21] Armando Discepolo to Angel Curotto, December 28, 1950, Archivo Literario de la Biblioteca Nacional de Uruguay, Archivo Angel Curotto, Caja D, Expendiente Armando Discepolo.
[22] Armando Discepolo to Angel Curotto, November 19, 1951, Archivo Literario de la Biblioteca Nacional de Uruguay, Archivo Angel Curotto, Caja D, Expendiente Armando Discepolo.

theaters were in Argentina were unlikely to provide opportunities for him to cast and stage his own choices for theatrical plays.

It also seemed to be the case that Discepolo was covertly pleased that his artistic decisions would not be guided by the politics of Peronism. This was a political difference that contrasted with the very pro-Peronist politics of his brother Enrique Santos Discepolo. In the 1940s, Enrique Santos Discepolo was the most famous tango lyricist of the period and renowned for his compositions that emphasized class-conscious popular music and were staples of Peronist popular culture.[23] Armando Discepolo's emotional attachment to Uruguay's Comedia Nacional in 1950 and his deep interest in working in Montevideo rather than his native Buenos Aires was also a reversal of roles for Discepolo and Curotto. For decades, Buenos Aires had been the Río de la Plata cultural marketplace where Argentine and Uruguayan dramatists like Curotto went to pursue fame, fortune, or even a comfortable livelihood.

Discepolo's history of triumphs in Buenos Aires had included the long-running commercial success of his play *Mateo* following its premiere at the Teatro Nacional in downtown Buenos Aires in 1923. *Mateo* dealt with the challenges of an Italian immigrant in Buenos Aires and his aims to acquire upward mobility by resorting to crime. In 1937, the Argentine director Daniel Tinayre had adapted *Mateo* for the silver screen with the film starring Luis Arata. The film's opening credits clearly advertised how the film was based on the successful play written by Discepolo. For many older filmgoers, the play was well known and belonged to the "grotesque" genre that was popular in the early

[23] Yanina Andrea Leonardi, "Experiencias artístico-educativas para los obreros durante el primer peronismo," *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* (July 2012), accessed at: http://nuevomundo.revues.org/63699

twentieth century in Argentina and Uruguay. Arata starred in the film alongside Enrique Santos Discepolo.[24] The film version of *Mateo* became a commercial success. At the time, Armando Discepolo had stopped writing for the theater but agreed to write the screenplay for the film. He would write other screenplays from his work, such as his play *Giacomo* that was adapted for film in 1939 and again starred Luis Arata.

Luis Arata, the Buenos Aires-based actor and theater producer, also maintained a strong friendship with Curotto. On January 12, 1944, the Argentine actor Luis Arata (1895-1967) wrote a letter to Uruguayan dramatist Angel Curotto (1901-1990). Arata, writing from the Argentine capital city, expressed his great contentment at having successfully debuted a Brazilian play in Montevideo that Curotto had translated for him.[25] Arata had received heartfelt compliments from the Brazilian ambassador to Argentina. The actor was particularly happy at that moment to have another commercial success under his belt. Arata encouraged Curotto to send along any new translations of plays for use in forthcoming productions. Arata's acting companies often toured Argentina and Uruguay in the 1940s and he considered Buenos Aires and Montevideo as the comparable options for his theatrical companies. Arata also debuted new plays in Montevideo on a regular basis at different venues including the official state theatre, Teatro Solis.[26]

Going back to the 1920s, Arata and Curotto had been old friends and "hombres de teatro" whose separate and collective efforts resulted in the production of hundreds of

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[24] "Enrique Santos Discepolo," in Luis Trelles Plazaola, *South American cinema: dictionary of film makers* (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1989), 74-76.
[25] Letter from Luis Arata to Angel Curotto, April 12, 1944. Archivo Literario, Biblioteca Nacional de Uruguay, Archivo Angel Curotto, Caja "A", Carpeta Luis Arata.
[26] Jorge Nielsen, *Nuestros actores* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Del Jilguero, 2007), 23-24.

plays. Knowing very well the path he had chosen to live out of a suitcase for weeks on end, Arata had written to Curotto in October 1929 from a theatre in Argentina's major secondary city of Rosario. Arata wrote, "I don't have time for anything since I spend all my time in the theater."[27] Arata and Curotto's collaboration across the Rio de la Plata was also emblematic of the friendships that Curotto maintained with many prominent Argentine performers and directors such as the actress Delia Garces and the director Armando Discepolo.

In the 1940s, the middle-aged Arata was a legendary actor whose career spanned the stage and the screen with his performances in popular Argentine films such as *Los tres berretines* (1933) and dramas such as *Mateo* and *Fuera de la ley*, both released in 1937. Despite having had various successes on screen in seminal Argentine motion pictures, Arata considered himself to be first and foremost a theatrical performer, and this opinion was vocally shared by a number of critics.[28] While Arata was an inveterate performer on stage, Angel Curotto was a prolific presence in several other aspects of theater. Starting from a young age, Curotto was a successful theater impresario, producer, playwright, translator, and critic involved over his lifetime in efforts to strengthen professional theater in Uruguay. Arata and Curotto's correspondence also reflected both of their extensive travels through their writing to each other from different locales and referencing their comings and goings. Curotto's own extensive career spanning eight

[27] Letter from Luis Arata to Angel Curotto, October 1, 1929. Archivo Literario, Biblioteca Nacional de Uruguay, Archivo Angel Curotto, Caja "A", Carpeta Luis Arata.
[28] Liliana Lopez, "Luis Arata," *De Totó a Sandrini : del cómico italiano al "actor nacional" argentino*, ed. Osvaldo Pellettieri (Buenos Aires: Cuadernos del GETEA, 2001) 150.

decades was proof of his deep devotion to promoting universal theater and also solidifying the Uruguayan theater.

Arata's letters to Curotto provide a useful vantage point for situating Buenos Aires and Montevideo as key nodes in the cultural map for theatrical performers in the Rio de la Plata.[29] Dramatists and performers alternating between Buenos Aires and Montevideo in these decades were akin in their career choices to actors in Hollywood who shifted between the realms of theater and "talkie" films in the 1930s.[30] Additionally, the intertwined worlds of theater in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the 1940s were representative of an older form of mass culture like silent film, which was struggling to compete with the new world of "talkies" in Hollywood. In this analogy, the commercial film industry in Buenos Aires was akin to the "talkies."

In his long career in Montevideo and Buenos Aires, Angel Curotto was known as a man of the theater who was less involved in the film industry than many of his contemporaries. He was born in Montevideo in 1902 to a family of Italian immigrants and from his teenage years, he was active in the theatrical world in his native city. In the 1920s, Curotto lived for several years in Buenos Aires and became a successful young playwright in the downtown Buenos Aires theater circuit. His plays were published in the Argentine theater magazine, *Bambalinas*, and Curotto cut a dashing figure on the cover of the published plays. The December 30, 1922 edition of *Bambalinas* included an

[29] Arata wrote letters to Curotto and Cesar Carlos Lenzi from July 21, 1929 until June 5, 1965. Arata died in 1967 and his widow wrote a letter to Curotto notifying him about Arata's passing on August 24, 1967. Archivo Angel Curotto, Archivo Literario, Biblioteca Nacional de Uruguay, Caja "A", Carpeta Luis Arata.
[30] *The Jazz Singer* starring Al Jolson was the first talkie and released in 1927.

appraisal of Curotto by the Uruguayan writer Alberto Lasplaces that began "Curotto is the youngest of the successful Uruguayan theater authors."[31]

Figure 15

Angel Curotto on the cover of *Bambalinas*

In the 1920s, Curotto had various plays like *Uno de tantos*, *Guerra Conyugal*, and *La Gran Prueba* staged in Buenos Aires. In the 1930s, Curotto remained an active voting member of the Argentine writer's guild, Argentores, while living full-time in Montevideo. Curotto's career also illustrates the multi-layered roles of Buenos Aires as a cultural capital in South America and supports the dissertation's central claim that Buenos Aires and Montevideo functioned as symbiotic cities for several generations of cultural producers.

[31] *Bambalinas*, December 30, 1922.

During his career, Curotto was also an active translator of plays as diverse as Italian, French, and English dramas and comedies. His literary agent was Giuseppe Giamcopol, based in Buenos Aires, and their correspondence reflected the importance of Curotto to sell his translations to producers in Argentina. Curotto collaborated frequently on translations with his fellow Uruguayan playwrights Cesar Carlos Lenzi and later on, Jose Pedro Blixen Ramirez. With Blixen, Curotto maintained his friendship for decades and their extensive correspondence dated to the 1920s. The translations that Curotto undertook were lucrative work that he could complete while being based in Montevideo and having his literary agent work on his behalf in Buenos Aires. During the 1930s and 1940s, Curotto also participated in several attempts to create a more professional and stable theater company at the Casa de Teatro in Montevideo with his mentor, Carlos Brussa, a Uruguayan actor who traveled around Argentina and Uruguay for decades as a performer of classic and modern plays for audiences of all ages. In the 1950s, Curotto wrote an appreciation of Brussa published in Montevideo that placed Brussa as a fundamental figure in the development of theater in Uruguay. Brussa's travels through the interior of Uruguay performing different styles of plays such as children's theater drew on the older traditions of the Podestas in Argentina and Uruguay. Additionally, the travel patterns of older Uruguayan theater troupes through the smaller cities and towns of Uruguay with their local theaters would also influence those that the Comedia Nacional would follow.

The artistic and commercial zenith of the Comedia Nacional occurred between 1949 and 1958. This period was an extended interlude when Montevideo's theater market briefly yet decisively shaped the shared cultural histories of Buenos Aires and

Montevideo. Established actors like Xirgu, Orestes Caviglia, and the Uruguayan actors Santiago Gomez Cou and Luisa Vehil all focused on theater instead of film while a younger generation of Uruguayan actresses like China Zorrilla and Estela Medina came into their own while working with the Comedia Nacional.

Xirgu's impact on the professionalization of theater in Montevideo in the late 1940s and 1950s was the final stage of a long career filled with renown as arguably the greatest dramatic actress of twentieth-century Spanish theater. She had first become well known in South America in the 1910s and 1920s while touring as an actress with Spanish traveling companies. Xirgu was also a major artistic collaborator of the preeminent Spanish dramatist Federico Garcia Lorca and overlapped with Garcia Lorca during his own extended stays in Buenos Aires in 1933. Upon the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, Xirgu was on tour in South America and she became an involuntary exile in Buenos Aires, Santiago del Chile, and Montevideo until ultimately settling in Montevideo in 1949. As a devoted practitioner to the craft of theater, Xirgu filmed just one movie in the Río de la Plata after having filmed silent films in Spain. The Argentine film was an adaptation of Federico Garcia Lorca's *Bodas de Sangre* filmed in the province of Cordoba in 1938, and directed by the theater director and producer Edmundo Guibourg. The film appears to be a play that was just filmed, rather than a cinematic production. Xirgu's most lasting impact on the development of theater and film as mass culture in South America rested in her contributions to helping train actors in Uruguay, Argentina, and also Chile.

Following in Xirgu's footsteps and arriving to Uruguay due to his own aforementioned problems with censorship under Peronism, Orestes Caviglia became a

key director and performers in the development of the Comedia Nacional as a major force in theater culture on both sides of the Río de la Plata. On December 16, 1951, he wrote to Curotto:

"I received a letter and librettos which I discuss below…Undoubtedly, the inclusion of Jose Luis Zorrilla de San Martin by the producers would give a strong hierarchy to the show, but at the same time we would try to shy away from anything that was a concrete realism which is necessary knowledge and proven to use all the magic of the stage. Here there are two set designers who could design costumes and sets. Saulo Benavente is one of them, a big boy, an artist of great imagination and great knowledge of the stage, who you could understand very well and you know the other, Vanrelli, who can combine fantasy and color very well for our purposes. Naturally we would try to contain his excesses, but he has an advantage in that he knows very well the elements that can be counted on the stage of the Solis. The cast: Overall it should be good and successful, only opponents of Santos Vega will be a little diminished. Candeau will give a beautiful depiction, with his poise and authority, but Preve? His romantic rival. And Jones? Nothing less than elected by the Devil to stand face to face with Santos Vega... Librettos: I regret that Chekhov cannot be included in the repertoire. Just at this time we are seeing a renewal of his work and not only in Russia, where there could be other motives, but in London, New York, and Italy there all have been successfully represented. "The Inspector General" is an excellent book and I could interpret it as an actor, if it seems good to you. The work is a good choice for the cast of Comedy."[32]

[32]Orestes Caviglia to Angel Curotto, December 16, 1951. Archivo Literario, Biblioteca Nacional de Uruguay, Archivo Angel Curotto, Caja "C", Carpeta Orestes Caviglia. The original letter in the Angel Curotto archive reads: ""Recibi carta y librettos de lo que me ocupo a continuacion… Indudablemente que la inclusion de Jose Luis Zorrilla de San Martin entre los realizadores daria una gran jerarquia al espectaculo, pero por lo mismo que trataríamos de rehuir todo lo que fuera un realismo concreto es necesario una conocimiento y una practica probados para utilizar todo lo que la magia del escenario puede darnos….Aqui hay dos escenografos que podrian proyectar vestuarios y escenogragias. Saulo Benavente es unos de ellos, gran muchacho, artista de mucha imaginacion y gran conocimiento del escenario, con quien podria entenderme muy bien y el otro ya lo conocen ustedes, Vanrelli, cuya fantasia y color podrian conjugarse muy bien para nuestros propositos. Naturalmente que trataríamos de contener sus desbordes,

Caviglia's long-winded analysis of the personnel available to the Teatro Solis in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo provides numerous insights. By referencing the artist and set designer Saulo Benavente and listing numerous performers, Caviglia showed that he understood the theatrical community to occupy both sides of the river as a regional culture. Also, Cavilgia expressed how global figures of theater like Anton Chekov should always have a place in the theatrical vernacular. Prior to his exile in Montevideo, Caviglia had worked as the artistic director of Argentina's Comedia Nacional. In 1958, after the end of the first Peronist government, Caviglia wrote to Curotto about his happiness at being part of Argentina's Comedia Nacional once again.[33] Feeling unwelcome in Buenos Aires during the Peronist regime, Caviglia's film career subsided during this period. The actor had starred in ten Argentine films between 1945 and 1950,

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pero tiene una ventaja y es que conoce muy bien los elementos con que se puede contar en el escenario del Solis. Reparto: En general me parece bien y acertado, solo que los contrincantes de Santos Vega van a resultar un poco disminuidos.-Candeau va a dar una hermosa estampa, por su prestancia y autoridad, pero y Preve? Rival en amores y en los hecohos. Y Jones? Nada menos que el elejido por el Diablo para oponerselo y vencerlo de igual a igual a Santos Vega….Libretos: Lamento que Chetcov no puede ser incluida en el repertorio. Justo en estos momentos asistimos a una revision de su obra y no solo en Rusia, que alli por otros motives podria convenir, sino que en Londres, New York, e Italia han sido representados con exito. "El Inspector llega esta noche" es una excelente obra y podria ser la que yo interpretara como actor, si a ustedes les parece bien. La obra es para un buen reparto en el elenco de la Comedia."

[33] Letter from Orestes Caviglia to Angel Curotto, October 27, 1959. Archivo Literario, Biblioteca Nacional de Uruguay, Archivo Angel Curotto, Caja "C", Carpeta Orestes Caviligia. The letter discussed Caviglia's pride at how the 1958 season at the Teatro Nacional Cervantes included 258 performances, 114,662 paying spectators, 27,195 invited spectators, and 34, 950 who came by invitation to schools and other cultural institutions. The total was 176,806 attendees and an average of 682 spectators per performance.

but did not work in film again until 1958 due to being blacklisted through the fall of Peronism in 1955.[34]

In Montevideo, Caviglia seized the opportunity to become the leading director in the Comedia Nacional, only to return full-time to Argentina after the fall of Peronism in 1956 when he took the helm of the recreated Comedia Nacional Argentina at the Teatro Cervantes as the director.[35] He also returned to making movies in 1958 after an eight-year absence.[36] In 1960, Caviglia encountered another experience with censorship in post-Peronist Argentina when Argentina's Minister of Culture closed his production of the George Bernard Shaw play *Man and Superman*. The censorship was largely connected to the disapproval of the Argentine actress Inda Ledesma for her left-wing politics, but Caviglia quit his post as the director and created another theater troupe, independent of the Argentine state.

Like Caviglia, the Uruguayan actor Santiago Gomez Cou and the Uruguayan actress Luisa Vehil were two other Uruguayan actors whose careers included important film appearances in the 1940s. After having supported the Unión Democrática against the Juan Peron-led ticket in the 1945 presidential elections in Argentina, Luisa Vehil was attacked by Peronist supports and called a "Jew and a Communist".[37] Despite having made numerous films during the 1940s, Gomez Cou did not act in films in 1948 and 1949 while Vehil did not act in films between 1945 and 1958, despite her great success in the

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[34] "El largo viaje de Caviglia", *Primera Plana*, November 26, 1968.
[35] Cecelia Perez Mondino, "Orestes Caviglia," available online: http://comedianacional.montevideo.gub.uy/node/93/la-institucion/historia/directores/orestes-caviglia
[36] "El largo viaje de Caviglia", *Primera Plana*.
[37] Zayas de Lima, "Teatro y censura en el primer peronismo," *Telon de fondo*.

1945 film *Pampa Barbara*. While not facing persecution in the film industry in Argentina like Vehil, Gomez Cou was recruited to work in the Comedia Nacional by Armando Discepolo. With the option of returning to Montevideo, Gomez Cou performed with the Comedia Nacional and became one of the leading actors for the production of Discepolo's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*.

The overlapping careers and relationships of leading figures in the worlds of theater and film in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the 1940s and 1950s further explains the usefulness of analyzing the cultural histories of both cities in a single narrative. In Uruguay, it is understood by residents of Montevideo that the interlinked histories of Buenos Aires and Montevideo illustrate a close yet uneven relationship where Buenos Aires has attracted countless talented Uruguayans to pursue their ambitions in its large marketplace for mass culture. Between the 1940s and 1950s, the cultural encounters between Buenos Aires and Montevideo briefly diverged from the previous practice of Uruguayan performers flocking to Argentina. Rather, Uruguay's Comedia Nacional complicated the previous practices by training a younger generation of talented performers. The stability of the Comedia Nacional also showed how censorship could remain a major issue for Buenos Aires's cultural industries. The presence of censorship of mass culture in shaping the relationship between the cities would continue in the subsequent decades, especially during the political turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s in both countries.

In Montevideo, national policies and transnational cultural forces had helped to strengthen the Comedia Nacional starting in 1947. The Comedia's zenith lasted from 1947 and 1957 while Justino Zavala Muniz was the president of the Comisión de Teatros

Municipales and one of the main political figures in charge of the SODRE, the Uruguayan state cultural commission. In 1957, a new municipal government sought to remove autonomy from Zavala Muniz and Curotto's programming of the Comedia Nacional. They both resigned in protest and Xirgu also chose to retire from performing and directing while Curotto remained the most active of the three as a theater critic for Uruguay's *El Día* newspaper.

The importance of networks between Argentine and Uruguayan friends was also influential in shaping the landscape of Uruguayan contributions to Argentine mass culture and the reduced possibilities for commercial success for the Uruguayan film industry in the 1940s and 1950s. In the first months of 1944, the friendship between a pair of important Argentine and Uruguayan writers included a vociferous debate. The Argentine writer Ulyses Petit de Murat was the most prolific screenwriter in the history of Argentine cinema, writing more than sixty motion pictures between 1939 and 1980. From his home in Buenos Aires, Petit de Murat wrote to his friend and creative collaborator Enrique Amorim, living in Montevideo, to upbraid the Uruguayan writer.[38] In Petit's view, Amorim was characteristically uncooperative in a meeting with Argentine filmmakers Homero Manzi and Francisco Petrone to help write the script for the film "Pampa." Petit de Murat was particularly piqued since "this was the second time that you (Amorim) had liquidated my attempts to draw you closer to Artistas Argentinos Asociados," the film studio which the screenwriters were involved in founding. In his meeting with Manzi and Petrone, Amorim had questioned the originality of a proposed

[38] Letter from Ulyses Petit de Murat to Enrique Amorim, 1944. Archivo Literario de la Biblioteca Nacional de Uruguay, Coleccion Enrique Amorim: Correspondencia, Carpeta 45, Documento 1731.

idea for the movie as being wholly derivative and also failing taking into account Amorim's other important contributions to rural themes.

Petit de Murat wrote that it seemed that Amorim had focused excessively on certain angles of the potential collaboration. In Petit's view, Amorim was too dismissive of the proposed ideas for creating a film that dealt with the lives of Chinese prostitutes in Argentina. Amorim had made clear his distaste about a story focusing on a traveling carriage that was essentially a mobile whorehouse. Petit de Murat countered in his letter that the film would actually be more focused on Argentine women searching for better lives during the regime of the Argentine caudillo Juan Manuel de Rosas during the 1830s and 1840s. Murat also emphasized that the inspiration for the film was based on several studies about Rosas, including works by the Argentine writer Julio Irazuta and other memoirs about the period from military men. The film would seek to tell the historical importance of women who had historically settled at military forts in the frontier region of Buenos Aires province in towns like Dolores, Junin, and Azul during the Rosas period.

In the letter written by Petit de Murat to Amorim in Uruguay, it also was apparent that Amorim viewed much of the Argentine films of the period as robbing narrative elements from Hollywood movies. As a master storyteller about rural and urban life in the Rio de la Plata in the nineteenth and twentieth century, Amorim wrote numerous commercially successful screenplays about Argentina in rural and urban settings throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. In both his native Uruguay and Argentina, Amorim was renowned as a novelist and screenwriter who moved seamlessly between rural and urban themes. By the early 1940s, he had written his well-regarded novel *La Carreta* and also the screenplays for the critically and commercially successful

1938 Argentine film *Kilómetro 111* and the successful 1939 film, *El viejo doctor*. The plot of *Kilómetro 111* focused on the struggles of the proprietor of a country store to help those in his community and survive a falling out with the national railroad company. Starring the Argentine actor Pepe Arias, the film was screened in Montevideo in 1938 just a few weeks after opening in Buenos Aires. This was a more rapid arrival to the screens of Montevideo than many other Argentine films of the era. Arias and Amorim attended the premiere and received notable press coverage in the major Uruguayan weekly magazines *Cine Radio Actualidad and Mundo Uruguay*.[39]

With his recognition as a leading screenwriter in Argentina cinema, Amorim also became regarded in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo for his insights about the potential of the Argentine film industry. Amorim also remained a unique figure among the group of writers, actors, actresses, producers, filmmakers, and other cultural producers whose lives led them back and forth between Buenos Aires and Montevideo during the first half of the twentieth century. Amorim's origins were those of a country gentleman who did not need to work as a screenwriter to live comfortably. His contributions to Argentine and Uruguayan mass culture rested on his scriptwriting that advocated for a particular version of Argentine national identity that was rooted in the countryside and in the past of the nineteenth century that also had strong Uruguayan origins.

Born in Uruguay's agricultural city of Salto, Amorim came from a family of wealthy landowners and traveled widely throughout his life to Europe and the United States. In addition to writing novels at the beginning of his careers, he also wrote about

[39] *Cine Radio Actualidad.* September 18, 1938.

films for publications in Argentina. In 1927, he authored a collection of essays about Buenos Aires entitled *Tráfico* where he described his experiences in the bustling metropolis of the 1920s and the importance of film in shaping everyday life.[40] In an essay about going to the cinema in downtown Buenos Aires, he described the ticket sellers as mythical beings and explained how the experience of going to cinema was serious and spectators expected each other to behave and not talk during the film.

For a more mass public that included many female readers, Amorim also wrote a column titled "El Cine" in the popular Buenos Aires magazine *El Hogar* during the 1930s. His observations placed the impact of film on daily life. He wrote how "Katherine Hepburn is much admired in Buenos Aires. There is a girl that looks like her in each neighborhood" in his column in *El Hogar* on April 24, 1936. In a similar vein to Robert Arlt's observations about film stars impacting behavior among Argentines, Amorim showed how mass culture shaped the dress and acts of everyday performance in Buenos Aires.[41]

From the March 27, 1940, publication of the newspaper *El Pampero*, Amorim had clipped for his own scrapbook a mention of the salaries of the leading actors, actresses, and screenwriters in Argentina. The headline shared "some of the salaries of figures from national cinema" and established that the Argentine comic actor Luis Sandrini was among the industry's biggest earners at 75,000 pesos per film.[42] At the same time, the famed Argentine actress Libertad Lamarque was able to command between 70,000 and 80,000 pesos. The other leading Argentine actress of the era, Nini Marshall, known as

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[40] Enrique Amorim, *Tráfico. Buenos Aires; cuentos y notas y sus aspectos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Latina, 1927), 63-64.
[41] Karush, *Culture of Class*, 1-2.
[42] *El Pampero*, March 27, 1940.

Catita, was reported to receive 40,000 pesos. Hugo del Carril earned between 40,000 to 60,000 and the writers who Amorim worked with on his screenplay, Sixto Pondal Rios and Carlos Olivari, earned $10,000 for each of their collaborations. The Argentine screenwriter Conrado Nale Roxlo, known as "Chamico", earned 6000 pesos for each screenplay. Amorim, Pondal Rios, and Olivari were all useful references in this group given that their 1940 screenplay *Cita en la Frontera* starred Libertad Lamarque and was released on September 25, 1940.[43] In 1941, Amorim made his debut as a director with the comedy *Casi un sueño*, which he also wrote. It premiered on April 21 at the downtown Monumental theater in Buenos Aires. Amorim's reputation as a man of cinema also included a feature in the magazine *Cine* on August 20, 1943 where Jorge Luis Borges, the film director Mario Soffici, Amorim, and others were asked to name the three films they would take to a desert island. Enrique Amorim opted for the films, "Fueros humanos", "Y el Mundo Marcha" and "Tempestad".

While still writing screenplays for the Argentine film industry throughout the 1940s, Amorim increasingly spent more time in Uruguay where he had homes in Montevideo and back in Salto. In 1950, Amorim premiered his first play in Buenos Aires with the famous left-wing theater group, *Teatro del Pueblo,* during the period of Peronism. The play opened the 1950 season on March 19, 1950 and was called "La segunda sangre." The plot was about French resistance to the Vichy regime during World War Two and was well received although not a commercial success.

Returning to Uruguay, Amorim directed several short films in the 1950s, including films called *Pretexto* in 1952 and *21 dias* in 1953. In a moment when the

[43] *La Nacion*, Septiembre 26, 1940.

Uruguayan film industry was largely dormant, Amorim explored filmmaking on his own terms. His ideas for films did not aim to be commercially viable like his earlier and well-compensated screenplays, but Amorim viewed film as a medium where he could document everyday life in Uruguay. It also seems to important to note that Amorim's most successful screenplays sought to recreate a pastoral past that Argentina and Uruguay shared and resulted in Argentine films, but not Uruguayan ones.

In the 1950s, Amorim also worked on a handful of screenplays about Buenos Aires that he imagined in his personal documents as a genealogy of seven short or long films that would narrate the history of the city since colonial times to its present day. Amorim's body of screenplays reflected the breadth of his interest in screwball comedies and his deep familiarity with the many genres invented and perfected by Hollywood. His own journalism also placed British films during the late 1940s as emerging from the visual language and narrative techniques of Hollywood. Over his career, Amorim served as a representative of the development of the large Argentine film industry and also the more precarious attempts to make films in Montevideo in the 1950s.

Starting with his work as a film critic and his connections to major Argentine screenwriters and directors from the late 1930s through 1950s, Enrique Amorim's career reflected the importance of networks and short-term migrations between Buenos Aires and Montevideo during the post-war period. Like Angel Curotto, Amorim preferred to spend his latter life in Montevideo than in Buenos Aires and his life was largely immune to the forces of Peronism. Although Curotto and Amorim's careers followed different paths with their relationship to the Uruguayan state, with Curotto's drawing sustenance from government cultural policies and Amorim having little to no need for that. Both

dramatists made unique contributions to mass cultural forms in the Río de la Plata that were influenced by their respective experiences as Uruguayans having lived in both Argentina and Uruguay. On their own terms, Amorim and Curotto also defined the histories of Uruguayan and Argentine mass culture while remaining Uruguayan cultural producers.

Conclusion

In the 1940s and the 1950s, the marketplaces and politics of theater and film transformed possible trajectories for producers of mass culture in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. In 1953, the veteran performer Uruguayan theater and film critic Jose Maria Podesta wrote about the new trajectories for Uruguayan actors in the 1950s. In the magazine of the Sociedad Uruguaya de Actores, the Uruguayan acting guild, Podesta wrote that the Comedia Nacional was "a rebirth" for national theater. Additionally, Podesta highlighted how the genre radio theater in Uruguay was an alternative but still limited training for Uruguayans to work in Montevideo and perform.[44] Podesta's essay showed how the Comedia Nacional in Uruguay was understood as possibly having a major impact in making Montevideo less of a "cultural desert". Leading Argentine and Uruguayan actors discussed had more choice about whether to work in Uruguayan or Argentine theatrical production or Argentine films. These considerations shaped the interests and the potential livelihoods of writers, actors, actress, producers, literary agents, and theater owners. The increasingly transnational character of mass culture was evident in the everyday life of Buenos Aires and Montevideo and their downtown districts. Major Argentine and Uruguayan theatrical figures including Curotto, Discepolo,

[44] J.M. Podesta, "Actores en busca de Escenario," *Revista de la Sociedad Uruguaya de Actores* (Diciembre 1953).

Amorim, and Petit de Murat participated in perpetual exchanges of novels, plays, and screenplays that provided important contributions to mass cultural production primarily in Buenos Aires but also in Montevideo and with other connections for the shaping of theater in other Latin American capitals. Theater continued to be an important form of national culture since the Uruguayan film industry had to contend with technological and financial challenges that impeded a sustained development. In turn, I argue that the cultural histories of Buenos Aires and Montevideo were inevitably interlinked in the realms of theater and that film was a decisive force in creating a more hegemonic role for Buenos Aires until Peronist censorship limited the possibilities for Argentina and Uruguayan performers.

Within the cultural and visual turns in the historical field, scholars writing about twentieth-century Latin American history have highlighted the importance of mass culture form such as theater and film in contributing to popular discourses about national culture and national identity. In this chapter, I have sought to contribute to the historiography of mass culture while emphasizing that importance of the transnational flows of historical actors and writers between the two capital cities of the Rio de la Plata. In other words, to understand the cultural histories of Buenos Aires or Montevideo in the most transnational and global dimensions and in particular the place of Buenos Aires as the de facto cultural capital of South America, it is imperative to analyze the evolving relationship of Buenos Aires and Montevideo between the 1910s and the 1950s. The continual flow of performers and dramatists through Buenos Aires and Montevideo also was emblematic of the importance of the forces of transnational modernity that flowed through mass culture in reshaping the downtown cores of both cities. In the various forms

of ideas about each city presented in theater, film, and journalism, transnational modernity flowed back and forth through Buenos Aires and Montevideo.

By analyzing the places of Argentine and Uruguayan actors and dramatists amidst the increasing importance of Buenos Aires's film industry, the chapter also provides a more comparative urban and transnational frame for understanding the national narratives of mass culture in Argentina and Uruguay. Focusing on the interlinked history of Buenos Aires and Montevideo as largely symbiotic cities in the production of mass culture, the chapter concludes that dramatists and actors were transnational figures who continued to strengthen the ties of the two major cities of the Río de la Plata in the expanding field of mass cultural production in both the Argentine and Uruguayan national contexts. Buenos Aires and Montevideo were each other's most reciprocal cultural partners and the relationship was often uneven, but like in Discepolo's description of his friendship with Curotto, the relationship between the capital cities of the Rio de la Plata was never truly dampened for any period of time at all.

With these biographies and stories of migration and border crossings, this chapter analyzes to what degree did Uruguay's state theater troupe of the Comedia Nacional represent an alternative form of mass culture to Argentine theater and film during the Peronist period? Given the limited development of the Uruguayan film industry in the 1940s and 1950s, the alternative of the Comedia Nacional offered an important space in Uruguay and also a training ground for performers to transition or return to commercial theater and film in Argentina. The Comedia Nacional became a key part of the world of mass culture in the Rio de la Plata during the late 1940s and 1950s by virtue of its use of renowned actors and directors. The Comedia represented another well-built bridge

between the worlds of theater and film that existed in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in a similar character from the 1920s and 1930s where actors could develop their career in theater troupes that traveled between the cities. In large part, the development of Uruguayan theater and film was slowed by the porous relationship between Buenos Aires and Montevideo during these decades. Uruguayans were expected to make movies in Argentina, where there was a sizable industry in Buenos Aires with production and distribution operations at the ready.

Historians of Argentine cultural history understandably focus on the hegemonic place that Buenos Aires developed in shaping urban culture in Montevideo through its larger quantity of theater troupes and film productions. My contention is that it is also historically relevant to understand how Montevideo served as conduit for both Argentine and Uruguayan talent, especially for those coming and going to Buenos Aires due to political or personal projects. In the 1940s and 1950s, the roles were reversed from earlier periods when Buenos Aires attracted talented cultural producers to pursue their careers without inhibition. Under Peronism in the 1940s and 1950s, the dynamics of censorship in Argentina were a decisive factor along with the continued importance of artistic networks and the different possibilities of labor migration to Uruguay.

Conclusion

In the 1950s, the preeminence of theater and film culture as the dominant forms of mass culture in the Río de la Plata was challenged by the arrival of television broadcasting in Argentina and Uruguay. Television arrived in Argentina with the inaugural transmission of Canal 7 on October 17, 1951, broadcasting the public celebrations of Juan and Evita Perón in Buenos Aires's Plaza de Mayo on the sixth anniversary of the movement's rise to power.[1] As the historian Mirta Varela has shown, Argentines were noticeably troubled by the late arrival of television in Argentina compared to other developed countries, even though the country was actually the eighth nation in the world to have a television channel.[2] However, Argentina was behind the inaugural commercial broadcasts in Brazil (1950) and Cuba (1950). An affront to national pride, this meant that Argentina was the third most modern country in Latin America in terms of being exposed to television and that was an unwelcome development. Contemporary Argentine media observers from 1951 were highly alarmed that the country's television broadcasting equipment was imported from the United States. The malaise seemed to stem from a view that the country's reputation as a truly modern nation no longer reached the heights of the 1910s and 1920s. In that period, Argentine elites could perceive their country to still be among the world's most technologically advanced nations.

The arrival of television had an impact in changing the urban landscape of Buenos Aires just like the sound cinema had in the late 1920s. One result of the arrival of television in the 1950s was the sharp fall in box office revenues in Buenos

[1] Daniel James,"October 17th and 18th, 1945: Mass Protest, Peronism and the Argentine Working Class," *Journal of Social History* (Spring 1988): 441–61.
[2] Mirta Varela, "Media History in a 'Peripheric Modernity': Television in Argentina1951–1969," *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 4.4 (2007): 84–102.

Aires. The arrival of television caused similar phenomenon in closing movie theaters around the world during the years when television debuted. In Argentina, numerous movie theaters closed their doors in the 1950s, but Mirta Varela has also argued that the initial decade of after the arrival of television was less detrimental to public life than it was in the United States. While Argentine viewers enjoyed the domestic pleasures of watching television, they also continued to be involved in public culture during the politically charged years of the 1950s and 1960s.

One empirical sign of the decline of the film business was the rapid contraction of the number of new theaters that opened for new business in Argentina. In total, there were only four new movie theaters opened in Buenos Aires during the 1950s. This followed the 1940s when 41 theaters had been opened, the 1930s with 52 theaters debuting, the incredible fervor of the 1920s when 102 theaters opened their doors, and the 1910s when 51 theaters had first opened.[3] In 1949 and 1950, Buenos Aires had 181,000 cinema seats in the city.[4] The decline of commercial movie theaters in Buenos Aires accelerated after 1960 and meant that the downtown districts faced less nocturnal traffic and lost part of their nocturnal character as prominent spaces of mass entertainment.[5] The late 1950s and early 1960s were also a period when the public sphere in Argentina was highly contested following the end of the first Peronist regime. The rise of commercial advertising in Argentina also sought to create consumers who were interested in different forms of mass culture. Buenos Aires's cosmopolitan character in the 1950s was increasingly shaped by the global trends of the post-war period, with young culture patterns of consumption also

[3] Aída Quintari and José A. Borello "Evolución histórica de la exhibición y el consumo de cine en Buenos Aires," *H-industri@* Vol. 8, No. 14 (2014), 81-120.
[4] Quintari and Borello, "Evolución histórica," 15.
[5] The data from Quintari and Borello on the reduction of cinemas focuses on the period from 1960 to 1975, but I would argue the historical causes began to be shaped by 1960.

emerging in the 1960s with the rise of blue jeans, rock music, and more interest in going to theaters which showed independent films that were being made in Europe during the period.[6]

In Uruguay, television arrived in 1956, contributing to the decline of film spectatorship. The first television owner in Uruguay, Raúl Fontaina, had originally created his new business to launch a Uruguayan television channel in 1949 and worked for seven years to broadcast for the first time. During the late 1950s, the Uruguayan economy was also stagnating in a way that made it less and less possible for Uruguayans to continue going to theater like they had in the 1940s and 1950s. Due to technological advancement and the fluctuations of economic circumstances, the latter 1950s marked a demarcation point in the hierarchal place of theater and film in mass culture in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Fontaina's Canal SAETA TV Canal 10 began its broadcasting of live content on December 7, 1956. Sensing the potential for market competition, the Argentine cultural impresario and television station owner Alejandro Romay became the first foreign owner of a television channel in Uruguay and his Canal 4 Montecarlo TV broadcast for the first time in April 1961.[7] The content on Uruguayan television broadcast by Romay was almost entirely imported from the United States and Argentina. This was in direct contrast to the Argentine television channels, which quickly sought to create their own content in the 1950s in addition to using content from the United States. Most Uruguayans did not own television sets in the 1950s, but that did not mean they did not have

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[6] Valeria Manzano, *Age of Youth in Argentina. Culture, Politics, and Sexuality from Perón to Videla* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Laura Podalsky, *Specular City: Transforming Culture, Consumption, and Space in Buenos Aires, 1955-1973* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004).
[7] Elizabeth Fox, *Latin American broadcasting: from tango to telenovela* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 109-120.

occasional access to television broadcasts by visiting family or friends and finding public spaces where televisions were in use.

By concluding the dissertation with a discussion of the rise of television in the late 1950s, I am focusing on the moment when the consumption of mass culture began to decline in shaping the downtown landscapes of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. In the dissertation, I have attempted to trace the relationship between urban space and cultural production in Buenos Aires and Montevideo from the 1910s through the 1950s. The flow of mass culture in the Río de la Plata across borders created transformations in the transnational public sphere whereby performers could seek to avoid censorship and the rise of Buenos Aires's mass cultural industries also resulted in the vast expansion of the number of cultural producers.

From the worlds of theater and film in Argentina, there were extensive personnel who contributed to the rapid rise in the content building of television in Buenos Aires during the 1950s and the 1960s. The television industry drew on established figures from production in film and theater. Once again, there was a new medium that drew on older narratives of storytelling just like Argentine cinema drew on national and regional theatrical traditions. The actor Luis Arata gained new recognition from a young generation as one of Argentina's television stars in the late 1950s, starring in a television drama called *Don Camilo* about life in nineteenth-century Argentina. Additionally, among Argentina's earliest television stars was Dringue Farías, who was an experienced comic actor on stage and screen. From a family of circus performers who had collaborated with the Podestas in Argentina and Uruguay for decades, Farías represented the continuation of the picaresque traditions of mass culture in the Río de la Plata. During the 1930s and 1940s, he had worked with Argentina's leading directors like Mario Soffici and Luis Moglia Barth in film

productions. In 1957, Farias debuted the Argentina television show *La familia Gesa se divierte*, which became one of the most popular shows for mass consumption in Argentina. The show also introduced the great Argentine comic actor Tato Bores to television. Arguably Argentina's analog to Woody Allen, Bores had become well known in the previous years after the fall of Peronism for his theatrical monologues about politics and he brought his comic instincts to Argentine television in the 1950s and 1960s.[8] Bores was now able to command a mass audience through the medium of television that could outstrip the number of spectators that could fit into a theater in on Corrientes Avenue in downtown Buenos Aires.

Among the other comic actors on Argentina television that made a name for themselves in these years was the Uruguayan performer Juan Carlos Mareco. Mareco had established his career in radio and film in both Argentina and Uruguay as well as starring in the Uruguayan motion picture *Detective al contramano*. In 1954, Mareco debuted in Canal 7's variety show "Gran Hotel Panamá" before starring in other Argentine programs "La noche con amigos" and "Los amigos del tango" in the 1950s. In 1961, Mareco also helped to launch one of the first Uruguayan television shows when he became the host of Canal 13's "El show de Pinocho" in 1961. Other actors crossed back and forth from Argentina and Uruguay in this period, but Latin American television also created new opportunities for those whose talent was best suited to the smaller screen. Before the 1950s, mass culture in Buenos Aires and Montevideo had been represented in the city by the spatial distribution and visual manifestations of theaters, with the important exception of radio. Television combined the mediums and soon numerous television stars emerged from both Argentina and Uruguayan mass media.

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[8] On Bores, see Sylvia Saitta and Luis Alberto Romero, "Tato Bores," *Pagina 12*, January 10, 2006; "Bores", *Primera Plana*, April 30, 1963.

The study's end point at 1960 acknowledges the importance of television in reinforcing Buenos Aires's place as a mass media capital and also points to how theater and film culture both now lacked same primacy in everyday life. Performers gained increased credibility in shaping urban imaginaries by connecting with viewers of television, especially in an era when Argentine films focused on escapism rather than social realism. As Mirta Varela has illustrated, the Argentine public and the media quickly embraced television as the major form of mass media. In 1963, the Argentine cultural impresario Julio Korn began a weekly publication about television broadcasting, *TV Guia*. This followed Korn's previous publications from the 1930s and 1940s that focused on theater, radio, and film such as *Radiolandia* and *Antena*.[9] When reading mass publications like the newspaper *Critica* in the 1910s and 1920s, it is possible to trace how Buenos Aires developed as the cultural capital of South America in mass cultural fields including publishing, theater, film, and radio before the arrival of television. In the 1920s, Buenos Aires became a publishing capital and theater magazines like the weekly release *Bambalinas* were mass-marketed to the popular classes. In the 1930s, Argentina quickly developed its own national film industry and national films were marketed through publications like *Radiolandia* and the daily newspapers. In the years between 1933 and 1940, Argentine film studios produced 212 commercial films while Uruguayan studios struggled to make twenty commercial films in the 1930s and 1940s together. As discussed in Chapter Four, the support from the Uruguayan state for theater in Montevideo in the 1940s and 1950s was also evidence of the uneven relationship between mass culture industries in the two cities.

[9] Claudio España, Gonzalo Moisés Aguilar, and Ricardo Manetti, *Cine argentino: modernidad y vanguardias, 1957/1983*, *Volume 2* (Buenos Aires: Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 2005), 173

It seems important to emphasize that Buenos Aires's attraction for many Uruguayans involved in mass culture also evolved from its appeal as a metropolitan center for publishing. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the Uruguayan writers Florencio Sanchez, Horacio Quiroga, Juan Carlos Onetti, and Enrique Amorim all relocated to Buenos Aires to advance their careers as writers of fiction. Between the 1930s and 1950s, Buenos Aires was home to major literary magazines like Victoria Ocampo's Sur and the anti-Francoist publishing house Editorial Losada. Onetti's first published short story about Buenos Aires was titled "Avenida de Mayo-Diagonal-Avenida de Mayo" and narrated the life of a flaneur in the downtown bustle who saw cinematic images of glamour throughout the city. Quiroga and Amorim also both wrote fiction and journalism in Buenos Aires before they became increasingly occupied writing screenplays that were shaped by the similar social issues of agricultural hardship in Uruguay and Argentina. As discussed at different points in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, their work contributed to the larger narrative corpus of major River Plate literature in the first decades of the twentieth century and which remained fundamental storylines in the first several decades of the Argentine film industry.

Through the lens of theatre and film culture in the decades between the 1920s and 1950s, the careers of Armando Discepolo, Angel Curotto, and other dramatists and actors provide useful entry points for tracing the role of theatre culture in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the transnational construction of the world of mass culture in both of the capital cities of the Rio de la Plata. The fascinating story of how Buenos Aires became a global cultural capital in these decades was also largely due to the city's place as a destination for mass immigration and exiles from Spain, Italy, and Eastern Europe between the 1880s and 1930s. These migrations form the backdrop

for this story, but Buenos Aires's influence on the Atlantic world was not confined to its exchanges with immigrants from cities and villages including Madrid, Barcelona, Rome, Paris, New York, nor the small villages of northwestern Spain in Galicia and the shtels of Eastern Europe from Poland's Galicia. Buenos Aires's cultural development in a global context was also exemplified by its significant regional pull on Uruguayan actors, writers, and artists, many of whom were the children of immigrants.

The histories of many cities and national cultures in the Americas have been shaped by migrations and exchanges with other particular cities and regions. My study touches on labor migrations related to theater and film that brought performers into the mass cultural industry of Buenos Aires. As comparative large-scale examples, upper Manhattan neighborhoods in New York City were reshaped by the mass migrations of Dominicans from Santo Domingo and throughout the Dominican Republic since the 1950s. Miami's neighborhoods were remade by immigration from Havana and other parts of Cuba since the 1950s. Most recently, Haitian immigrants have remade, again, the spatial landscapes of Miami.[10] Los Angeles and San Antonio's mass culture has been remade by immigration from towns and cities throughout Mexico, with accelerated periods of immigration stemming from the Mexican Revolution and post-1965 migrations. My contribution to the transnational turn in Latin American history focuses on two Latin American cities within a regional context and offers a different approach to writing cultural and urban history within a transnational framing. Migration is part of the story, but my focus is on the transnational flows of mass culture as connecting everyday life in Buenos Aires and Montevideo.

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[10] Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick, *City on the edge: the transformation of Miami* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 54-55.

My dissertation follows the scholarship of Micol Seigel and her work on how cultural exchanges shaped understandings of race and national identity between Brazil and the United States. Seigel's brilliant study largely focuses on African-Americans, Afro-Brazilians, and their travels between New York, Paris, and Rio de Janeiro. Like Seigel, my work does not focus on mass migrations but on the movements of transnational actors whose cultural production was built upon hybrid cultural contexts. The dissertation analyzes the worlds of theater and film as appealing to the Spanish and Italian immigrant groups who most numerously populated Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Additionally, the argument focuses on analyzing how transnational modernity flowed through the changing genres of mass culture and between a pair of cosmopolitan cities that were different in size. The downtown urban landscapes of Buenos Aires and Montevideo were ultimately remade in these processes. When historians walk around the two cities thinking about the relationship between mass culture and space, I hope that they consider how the respective capitals have shaped one another even today in the early twenty-first century. Montevideo's theaters continue to be an important showplace for Argentine performers, especially comedians who take their talents from television shows to weekend revues in Montevideo. Additionally, the theaters and performance venues of both Buenos Aires and Montevideo throb year-round with the performances of musical acts like Argentina's myriad *rock nacional* groups. Among the most popular rock bands in Argentina in recent years has been the Uruguayan rock group No Te Va Gustar, who have performed sold-out shows at Buenos Aires's Luna Park for weeks at a time. My study points towards how the early twentieth century evolution of mass culture was more focused on the connections between theater and film performances, while musical performers did not command mass publics until the 1960s and 1970s.

As a historiographic intervention, my dissertation also argues for the importance of understanding regional culture and transnational processes in the development of national mass cultures. Utilizing a diverse array of primary sources, I have sought to trace Buenos Aires's mass culture industry's reception across national borders by looking at periodicals, correspondence, memoirs, films, plays, diplomatic archives, and film industry trade press. Drawing on research at twenty archives in Argentina, Uruguay, and the United States, the dissertation interrogates both Argentine and Uruguayan cultural histories and the interrelated but unequal development in their respective national culture industries to argue for a wider, transnational perspective on mass culture in twentieth-century Latin America. By examining the relationship between regional and national frames of cultural production, my dissertation contributes to the interdisciplinary fields of Latin American studies and cultural history while seeking to de-center the United States and Europe from the central framing of transnational history.

The urban cultural histories of Buenos Aires and Montevideo have been explored through various forms in this study. For residents of both cities in the first half of the twentieth century, living in a modern metropolis included myriad opportunities for mass consumption. By choice, many *porteños* and *montevideanos* made their livings while working in various forms of mass culture. This range included those performing and producing to those taking tickets and selling magazines to those who wrote and took pictures of ingénues and leading men. For many Argentines and Uruguayans in the decades from 1910 to 1960, there were many opportunities to see up close their favorite stars of stage and screen in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. For many in these generations, the performers' personal histories resonated with their own circumstances as immigrants or exiles. Mass culture also

created lasting spatial transformations that influenced everyday opportunities for men and women in theaters, department stores, and while waking on city streets. Whether singing a tango about urban reform or thinking about where in a city certain cinematic characters had found love, the expansion of mass culture in the Rio de la Plata reshaped the urban imaginaries of Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the first half of the twentieth century. As Buenos Aires became a cultural capital of South America, Montevideo's residents were able to follow that development closely in their own theaters, the magazines they read, and their awareness of how the regional culture of the two cities was tied together over time.

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