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By

Juan Sebastián Ospina León

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Committee in charge:

Professor Natalia Brizuela, Chair
Professor Francine Masiello
Professor Linda Williams

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines how melodrama in early twentieth century Argentina and Colombia shaped sites of intelligibility to record multiple processes of modernization—including but not limited to massive immigration, the import of new technologies, and the (gendered) reshuffling of social orders. This dissertation also analyzes the ways in which melodrama recast different senses of community. With an archival perspective, it traces how diverse social actors appropriated melodrama for individual and group agendas, as they entered the modern political pact, the pact of representation. More specifically, and by bridging Latin American and Euro-American theories of melodrama, this dissertation traces key narrative conventions and argues that, across the social spectrum, actors recast the dynamics of representation during the period by visualizing classed, raced, and gendered anxieties vis-à-vis change through the interrelated media of literature, illustrated periodicals, and film.

The first chapter addresses how the national imagination and state formations in Latin America were shaped through melodrama, correlatively determining dominant narrative tropes across media. I focus on José Mármol's *Amalia* (1851-1855) and Jorge Isaacs' *María* (1867) and the cross-media iterations of both works engendered around the Argentine and Colombian centennial celebrations. The second chapter turns to 1920s tabloid newspapers and weekly novels. These served as platforms for emergent writers, many of them immigrants, who harnessed melodramatic narratives in periodicals to denounce social problems and inequity, particularly regarding destitute subjects who were marginalized in rapid urbanization processes. Turning the focus to early cinema, the third chapter examines the tense relations between material progress, tradition, and social change/immobility visualized in three filmic genres—the Argentine *cine de ambiente campero*, the *porteño cinedrama*, and the Colombian patriarchal family melodrama. These genres told contrasting tales of modernization: Argentine cinema capitalized on modernity's changes, its thrills and anxieties, while Colombian cinema depicted tradition and religiosity as compulsory conditions for material progress. This dissertation ultimately proposes that melodrama was not an escapist form, as it is commonly defamed. Rather, it

visualized the present moment, unbarred the public sphere, and pointed to an inclusive future.

A Muna y Alí

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INTRODUCTION

"De cien proletarios noventa ignoran quién es Carlos Marx,
pero noventa pueden contestarle en qué estilo daba besos Rodolfo Valentino."
Roberto Arlt[1]

"Melodramatic Modernities: Latin American Serial Fiction and Silent Film Culture, 1914-1929" argues that melodrama in two related media—the emergent mass-medium of the illustrated press and the then novel medium of film—shaped sites of intelligibility to record multiple processes of modernization and recast different senses of community. Based on archival finds, I propose that melodrama was a dominant mode to register and process radical transformations in Latin America during the teens and twenties. Melodrama functioned on multiple levels. At its most basic, it was a narrative and heuristic form; but it was far more than that. In this study, melodrama will be a shorthand to refer to *the melodramatic regime*—a system of historically specific narrative conventions, reading proficiencies, and practices, determining (and determined by) historically specific contested sites of representation. These sites, in turn, affected the practice of everyday life, as seen through the (in)visibilities the melodramatic regime confered. In other words, the melodramatic regime brokered relations between politics and aesthetics, apportioning what could be narrated and visualized by different social actors. I call this process "the logic of the excluded middle," which determines *who* has a *place* in narrative and *how*—i.e., a reshuffling of inclusions and exclusions, within the diegesis as well as in multiple levels of narrative production and consumption.[2]

Product and producer of relations between politics and aesthetics, melodrama deployed narratives of change during the teens and twenties. In text and film, thrilling stories visualized modern transformations, narrating and making visible unprecedented social processes: from horse-riding gauchos defeated by the automobile to young seamstresses tricked into prostitution, to families broken apart when new and old values collided. Changes in what could—or could not—be visualized affected the mechanics of public participation, rearranging the (highbrow) monopoly on representation. Harnessing melodrama, emergent writers and filmmakers, many of them migrants from rural areas or foreign nations, found in the press and in film ways to denounce social problems and injustice. In this sense, melodrama offered "a location for laying out the emotional landscapes of the public sphere" (Staiger 4) while at the same time (re)organizing (old and) new political subjects. Rather than simply an escapist narrative form—a common

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[1] Quoted in Sylvia Saítta's *El escritor en el bosque de ladrillos: una biografía de Roberto Arlt*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2000. 125. Print.

[2] For Peter Brooks, the "logic of the excluded middle" proper to melodramatic narratives depicts worlds in which opposite moral forces collide (168). I use his expression in a broader sense. In the face of expanding public spheres and access to mass-cultural media across the social spectrum in Latin America, the "logic of the excluded middle" encompasses different modes of access to representation beyond moral questions at the diegetic level. The logic determined who had a place narratively, but also which social actors had a place in telling the tales of modernization through the cinema and the press.

vilification of melodrama—melodrama visualized the present moment, unbarred the public sphere, and pointed to an inclusive future.

This reading of melodrama, attentive to its conventions, uses, and political stakes, does not anticipate a happy ending, however. At the hands of higher social circles, melodrama also reproduced social hierarchies and inequity through stratified tales of urbanization, social change, and the advent of new technologies. In order to examine the melodramatic regime's hold on Latin American communities and community building, this dissertation looks at multiple stories and socially diverse uses of melodrama.

"Melodramatic Modernities" contributes to recent scholarship that traces the relations between melodrama and the experience of modernity, by exploring the interconnections between the two in the Latin American context. Six months of archival research in Argentina and Colombia unearthed silent film footage and various documents that shape this dissertation—serialized narratives, opinion columns, film synopses, film publicity, and traces of film reception in popular magazines and film trade journals. Based on these findings, and in a comparative framework, I trace different narrative forms of melodrama and the ways multiple social actors used melodrama for their own purposes. An initial question may come to the reader's mind: why Argentina and Colombia? This dissertation first began as a comparative study of Latin American silent feature-length film production, distribution, and exhibition. Addressing a gap in similar studies that focus on the "main" production and distribution circuits—namely Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico[3]—I ventured to compare a "major" circuit (Argentina's) with a "minor" circuit that still remains understudied. Centered in Bogota, Colombia, two Italian immigrants, Francesco and Vincenzo Di Domenico, controlled film production, exhibition, and distribution across the Minor Antilles, Central America, and the North of South America (the very expanse of their circuit demands further scholarly attention). In both circuits, the Argentine and the Colombian, remarkable interconnections with the illustrated press at the level of production and exhibition pointed to a larger project, drawing connections between and across media. Illustrated periodicals and local films shared many narratives as well as a certain ethos, which this dissertation aims to examine through the lens of the melodramatic regime.

Meeting points mostly revolved around two axes. Argentine and Colombian illustrated periodicals and films revealed an almost obsessive interest in pondering what it meant "to be modern." In the cases that this question was formulated in narrative, recurrent cross-media themes—as the ones mentioned above—pointed at considering melodramatic tropes a dominant form of storytelling during the period. It is no easy task, however, to relate melodrama and modernity. For in scholarly debate the relation between the two is a complex one. As film historian Ben Singer suggests, both terms "[belong] high

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[3] Recent examples include: Laura Serna's *Making Cinelandia: American Films and Mexican Film Culture before the Golden Age*. Durham: Duke UP, 2014. Rielle Navitski's *Sensationalism, Cinema and the Popular Press in Mexico and Brazil, 1905-1920*. Diss. University of California, Berkeley, 2013. Matthew B. Karush's *Culture of Class: Radio and Cinema in the Making of a Divided Argentina, 1920-1946.* Durham: Duke UP, 2012. María Luisa Amador and Jorge Ayala Blanco's *Cartelera Cinematofráfica 1912-1919.* Mexico: UNAM 2009. And Leonardo Maldonado's *Surgimiento y configuración de la c´ritica cinematográfica en la prensa argentina, 1896-1920*. Buenos Aires: iRojo, 2006.

up on any list of big, vague concepts that despite their semantic sprawl, or perhaps because of it, continually reward critical inquiry" (1). The following sections outline the main theoretical tenets of the dissertation. In particular, they trace the meanings of modernity in Latin American scholarship and the meanings of melodrama in Latin American and Euro-American scholarship. Finally, building upon the first two sections, the third section forwards my theoretical contribution to the study of melodrama across media. It proposes melodrama in terms of a visual regime, the *melodramatic regime*, and addresses the theoretical implications this understanding entails for the historically specific study of Latin American melodrama.

Meanings of (Latin American) Modernity

Seemingly, modernity is a temporal concept that sets the boundaries of a historical period, located between a pre-modern time and a contemporary (or, more problematically, postmodern) time. This temporal understanding assumes a teleological, centrifugal development with Europe located at its core. The periodization presents further complications for there is little agreement on the span of modern times. Scholars have stressed the slipperiness of the terms "modern" and "modernity" in the literature aiming at historically situating modernity—typically dividing world history into three epochs: Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Modern Era.[4] In early twentieth century Latin America, the term "modern" was too a fraught term, flaunted by diverse social actors in public lectures, the press, and moving images in the service of diverse agendas. The term *modernidad* [modernity], according to Nicola Miller, was not widely used in Latin America until the late twentieth century, when it became current in debates about postmodernity. *Moderno*, on the contrary, "often occurred in the works of intellectuals throughout the nineteenth century and became ubiquitous in the printed media (at least in urban areas) from the early twentieth century onward" (5). My archival research yields similar results. For instance, as early as 1900 and 1916, *Caras y Caretas* and *Revista Cromos* introduced photographic sections on infrastructural progress in "Buenos Aires Moderno" and "Bogotá moderno," respectively (for a detailed analysis on urban change and melodrama in print media see chapter two). In this section I will examine modernity through contentions in scholarly approaches to Latin American modernity. Rather than considering it a historical period, borrowing from philosopher Peter Osborne, I will argue that "modernity is a qualitative, not a chronological, category" (65). This paradigm shift aims to question the tendency in Latin American scholarship to conjoin modernity and modernization, a rhetorical move that, for Miller, sustains a "metanarrative of the deficient … whereby Latin America is continually found to be lacking or tardy or otherwise inadequate" (4).[5]

The sense of inadequacy, tardiness, or lack inherent to Latin American modernity arises from the nominalizations Latin American scholars have coined to describe its unique

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[4] See Singer's (17-20) and Osborne's (69-72) reviews of the literature.

[5] Film scholarship on early cinema is also fraught with this metanarrative as I will later suggest. These assumptions spatially divide film history between Euro-American production and distribution centers and so-called "peripheral markets." For a critique, see Bean, Jennifer, Anupama Kapse, and Laura Horak. Eds. *Silent Cinema and the Politics of Space*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2014. Print.

character. Expressions such as "peripheral modernity" (Sarlo), "uneven modernity" (Ramos), "anachronistic" modernity (Martín-Barbero, Herlinghaus), or the rather verbose "multi-temporal heterogeneity" (García Canclini),[6] assume non-adjectival modernity to happen elsewhere, in Europe or the US, a modernity to which Latin American modernity can only problematically aspire. In response to this tendency, recent early modern studies have questioned this approach by stressing how then new ways of living and circuits for objects (bodies, commodities, and raw materials) came about as a result of colonial enterprises. With colonialism, Europe entered in circulation with Asia and Latin America. Latin America was, therefore, a fundamental vector of modernity, not an actor tardily trying to catch up with modern change during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Castro-Gómez, ii). To further question this approach, one may remember, as Adam Sharman repeatedly does, that "not everything in the modern age is modern" ("Latin American" 493). What Latin American scholars have taken as a homogenous process of European modernization was in fact an uneven process where few leading urban centers epitomized the qualities of modern change.[7] In this vein, for Osborne such irregularity developed in Europe the idea of "*non-contemporaneousness* of *geographically diverse* but *chronologically simultaneous* times" as the basis for "universal histories with a cosmopolitan intent" that presented certain European centers spearheading "civilization" or "progress." This basis was first established in colonial discourse, later transferred to comparisons between "different European countries themselves, and thereafter, once again, globally, in an expanding dialectic of differentiation and homogenization" (75, emphasis in original). It would not be farfetched to consider Latin American scholarship on Latin American modernity a continuation of such discourse, premised on simultaneity, geographical difference, and a centrifugal conception of modern progress with Europe at its center.

The fraught approach to modernity springs from subsuming the latter to modernization in Latin American scholarship, as Miller suggests. Put in other words, the idea of Latin American modernity as a tardy or incomplete model vis-à-vis Euro-American modernity originates in including the *experience* of modernity in other historically specific

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[6] I am referring to Beatriz Sarlo's *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930*, Julio Ramos' *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina: literatura y política en el siglo XIX*, Jesús Martín-Barbero's and Herman Herlinghaus pieces in Herlinghaus' anthology *Narraciones anacrónicas de la modernidad: melodrama a intermedialidad en América Latina*, and Néstor García Canclini's *Cultural híbridas: estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*. See full references in the bibliography. I will go back to Martín-Barbero and Herlinghaus' work in the following section. Unless noted otherwise, all translations form Spanish and Portuguese to English are my own.

[7] For instance, Julio Ramos' study on the autonomy of the Latin American literary field during the nineteenth century, ripe with the metanarrative of the deficient, asserts: "in Europe literary modernization, which entailed the autonomization of art and the professionalization of writers, was a *primary* social process, *distinctive* of those societies on the threshold of *advanced* capitalism. *Yet* in Latin America, modernization in all respects was—*and continues to be*—an extremely *uneven* phenomenon. In *these* societies, 'modern' literature (if not the modern state itself) *was not able to* rely on institutional bases that would guarantee its autonomy" (xl, my emphasis).

social and economic processes that purportedly first occurred in (parts of) Europe, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and only later were experienced in Latin America. Bound together in the term *modernization*, these processes include the emergence of capitalist relations of production, industrialization, urbanization, state bureaucratization, secularization, the privileging of empirical sciences and technology as the primary source of knowledge, the promotion of individualism, and the separation of public and private spheres (Miller 4). Latin American scholars' obsession with pinpointing the moment modernity arrives to the region further reproduces this sense of modernity as an achievable state yet always deferred (e.g. see Ramos in note 7).

Sharman has noted how "nuances apart, all the work on Latin American modernity by Sarlo, García Canclini, Jesús Martín-Barbero, Carlos Monsiváis, [José Joaquín] Brunner, and Julio Ramos binds the region's modernity to the Second Industrial Revolution (*Tradition* 11). Eurocentric chronology apart, Sharman keenly notices how Latin American scholars concur in locating Latin American modernity as a historical period roughly centered on Latin America's most rapid modernization processes, which took place between 1880 and 1930. This is not surprising. During this period, some countries, particularly Argentina, "underwent one of the fastest processes of modernization in the world." In 1900, Buenos Aires had a larger population than many European cities (one million inhabitants) and in 1914 Argentina had 30% of its inhabitants born elsewhere, a higher percentage "than was ever reached in the United States" (Miller 6). Other countries and cities underwent very different processes that did not yield such awe-inspiring statistics, yet also constituted important modernization processes as my comparison between Buenos Aires and Bogotá modernization in chapter two will suggest.

Particularly relevant for this study, Beatriz Sarlo's analysis of 1920s and 1930s Buenos Aires offers a fertile starting point to delimit the notion of Latin American modernity in the first decades of the twentieth century. Sarlo famously defines Buenos Aires modernity as a *modernidad periférica*, a "peripheral modernity" (28). Attentive to the rapid expansion of urban space and its representation by key *porteño* intellectuals, Sarlo proposes a twofold notion of modernity—an (aesthetic) experience[8] and also a historically specific, social and economic reality. Drawing on Raymond Williams' concept of structures of feeling,[9] Sarlo considers *modernidad* as an "ideological-cultural configuration [articulating] reactions to and experiences of change" (31). Importantly, Sarlo stresses the emotionally tense relation of this experience of the present with the past: "men and women can remember a different city than the one they are living in. And, furthermore, this different city was the setting for childhood and adolescence: the biographical past underlines what has been lost (or what has been gained) in the present of the modern city" (17). In the following section I will point to certain melodramatic themes that closely

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[8] Because Sarlo highlights appreciations of "the spirit of the new" in several vanguard publications—including *Martin Fierro*, the work of vanguard poets, and even the pictorial oeuvre of Xul Solar—I consider to a certain extent Sarlo's conception of modernity an aesthetic experience of modernity.

[9] Raymond Williams considers a structure of feeling the "actively lived and felt" set of perceptions and values shared by a classed group or generation, which is most clearly articulated in artistic forms and conventions. See his *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. Print. 132-4.

resonate with Sarlo's definition. For the time being, however, what is important to highlight in her account is this understanding of modernity as both felt experience and reaction to rapid change, located on a critical threshold between present and past.

Sarlo's adjectival definition of modernity, as mentioned above, suffers from assuming a harmonious modernity model elsewhere. Regarding the responses of the popular press and intellectuals to modernity, she states: "during the period, the density [of these responses] weaves contradictory elements that ultimately do not unify in a hegemonic line" (28). Unification is impossible, Sarlo argues, for these multiple responses spring from the "culture of mixture" [*cultura de mezcla*] comprising "Argentine culture," a mix "where defensive and residual elements coexist with renovating programs; *criollo* cultural traits[10] [coexist] at the same time with the colossal import process of goods, discourses and symbolic practices … 'the new' fastened Buenos Aires culture, but [this culture] also lamented the inevitable process of change" (28-9). *Pace* Sarlo, and recalling Sharman's mantra that not everything in modernity is modern, this dissertation does not consider the tense coexistence of the new with forms of tradition and with the past as an alternative exemplar of modernity. On the contrary, it considers this coexistence as the kernel of the experience of modernity, made visible in the *uses* of melodrama by diverse social actors in text and moving images, to both register and process modernization's changes. With an archival perspective and comparing Argentine and Colombian melodramatic texts and moving images, this dissertation adopts a "multiple modernities perspective" (Miller 4)[11] to highlight how different—and at times contrasting—experiences of modernization resulted in equally different conceptions of modernity, present in and circulated through melodramatic narratives.

Néstor García Canclini's definition of modernity further highlights the analytical potential of a multiple modernities approach. Unlike Sarlo's notion of modernity, his conception favors social and economic aspects over the sense of a felt experience. García Canclini identifies four constitutive "movements" of modernity: "an *emancipating* project, an *expansive* project, a *renovating* project and a *democratizing* project" (12, emphasis in original). Even though García Canclini considers that modernity only takes hold in Latin America in the 1950s,[12] he shares Sarlo's focus on the historical processes beginning at the end of the nineteenth century (*Tradition* 12). He also shares with Sarlo a narrative of the deficient premised on impossible uniformity; García Canclini problematically recognizes the role of diverse social actors in constructing a Latin American modernization marked by

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[10] See chapter three for an analysis of *criollismo* and its relation to modernization in gaucho films and film culture.

[11] See also Roniger Luis and Carlos H. Waisman. Eds. *Globality and Multiple Modernities: Comparative North American and Latin American Perspectives*. Brighton: Sussex UP, 2002. Print.

[12] Brunner chronologically concurs with García Canclini, while reproducing the narrative of the deficient: "Enlightenment comes to us by the hand of undersupplied schools, with underpaid teachers … Television, in its turn, brings us the critique of tradition; of every traditionalism: religious, of good taste, ethical, parochialism, even of religion and aristocratic culture" (71). Regarding the narrative of the deficient, García Canclini is no different. Talking about the late 1980s, he describes Latin America as a place where "traditions … have not yet gone and a modernity … has not yet arrived (xi).

"the *multitemporal heterogeneity* of each nation" (3, emphasis in original). Although García Canclini acknowledges important tensions between modernity and different traditions at the national level, his four-movement definition ultimately posits a homogenizing framework that obfuscates processes only visible through a multiple modernities approach.

Briefly, García Canclini's four movements consist of several processes mentioned above under the category modernization—respectively, 1) rationalization and growing individualism; 2) expanding capitalism and knowledge of nature; 3) technical innovation and renovation of class markers; and 4) entrusting education, the arts, and specialized knowledge with "realizing rational and moral evolution" (12-3). Interestingly, the first and third movements—the "emancipating project" and the "renovating project"— through repetition stress a break with the traditional Sacred. The first project preaches "the secularization of cultural fields," which finds its echo in the third project regarding "innovation proper to a relation to nature and society that is liberated from all sacred prescription over how the world must be" (12). The very titles of these projects convey a sense of throwing off the shackles of a purported pre-modern "tradition" premised on religious worldviews and everyday practices. Such definition of modernity, in which everything is modern, finds its impasse in the Colombian experience. During the period of study, Colombia underwent modernization hand in hand with a "sacralization of society" (Urrego 277), consequently yielding a very different conception of modernity—materially progressive and socially conservative. Colombian silents such as *Bajo el cielo antioqueño* (Under the Antioquia sky, Arturo Acevedo, 1925) capitalized on this perspective, as I will explore in chapter three. This is just one, but very telling, example of the necessity to break with teleological approaches to Latin American modernity and invest in analyzing Latin American *modernities* in their own right.

Rather than considering Latin American modernity a delayed experience of modernization, this dissertation analyzes in literature, print culture, and early cinema diverse visualizations of modern changes in Latin America during the first decades of the twentieth century. Attentive to the social actors who produced and consumed melodramatic narratives, and drawing on a comparative framework, this study will trace connections and contrasts in narratives across media that amount to two melodramatic modernities, Argentina's and Colombia's. Taking into consideration the aforementioned contentions on Latin American modernity—or better yet, modernities—we can proceed with pinpointing the meanings of melodrama this study proposes. Premised on one of the bases for Euro-American and Latin American theories of melodrama, "recognizing" melodrama as "a central fact of modern sensibility" (Brooks 21), the following section lays the theoretical ground to understand melodrama and its uses in early twentieth century Latin America as a means to register and process modernization.

Meanings of Melodrama

In both Latin America and Euro-America, melodrama studies find in Peter Brook's influential book *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976) a starting point to consider melodrama in two ways—as a dominant narrative mode across time and media as well as a mode of modern culture. Brooks' contributions to the field include positing melodrama as a "central fact of modern sensibility" as quoted above; recognizing melodrama's broad appeal across social classes (xvi); pinpointing melodrama's concern with "moral" legibility

through the "recognition of virtue" (83); and defining melodrama as a mode of "excess" (viii-ix), albeit leaving ample room for interpretation on how exactly melodrama exceeds a presumed norm of storytelling. Pushing the limits of Brooks' work, scholars in Latin America, Europe, and the US have evaluated what it means to inhabit a world suffused with melodrama, rather than only considering melodrama a set of narrative conventions or a specific genre. The different fields from which scholars have tackled melodrama have shaped their definitions of and theoretical approaches to this protean form.

Since the early 1980s, Latin American scholars have mainly studied melodrama from the field of communications, thus focusing on the mass media *uses* of melodrama at the levels of production, distribution, and consumption. The volume and role of mass media as well as the melodrama in them has elicited overarching (mostly Marxist, Althusserian, and Gramscian) approaches rather than formalist concerns.[13] In their turn, Euro-American scholars—representing different yet interconnected disciplines such as literary, theatre, and film studies—have ventured to define the *form* of melodrama, grounding their studies on the theoretical frameworks that have dominated their respective fields at different historical junctures (structuralism, psychoanalysis, feminism, archival perspectives, and most recently seriality).[14] Still to be bridged in scholarly debate, both Latin American and Euro-American branches of melodrama studies find the origin of melodrama in the eighteenth century French stage and the sociocultural aftermath of the French Revolution, again following Peter Brooks. In this section I will trace different scholarly approaches to defining melodrama and its uses. I will also point to a recurrent aporia I find in these approaches—the tendency to formulate melodrama as a set of static melodramatic conventions despite acknowledging their dynamism across time—to ultimately propose my own theoretical approach to melodrama, which borrowing from Jacques Rancière's theory of shifting regimes of relationships between politics and aesthetics I term the *melodramatic regime*. In this way, I purpose to bridge seemingly contradictory qualities of melodrama—a centuries-old, pervasive narrative/cultural mode—and a historically specific set of narrative conventions. Further, emphasizing the form's historical specificity will undermine the centrifugal narrative according to which melodrama comprises epiphenomena of Euro-American capitalist expansion yielding peripheral melodramas for, or reflecting qualities of, peripheral markets.

Herman Herlinghaus and Jesús Martín-Barbero have spearheaded the study of melodrama in Latin America. Both have stressed the effects and uses of melodrama at social, cultural, and political levels. For these scholars, melodrama is "not a set of themes or a genre, but a … *matrix that aids sense-making within the everyday experiences* of individuals and diverse social groups" (Herlinghaus 23, emphasis in original).

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[13] See Nora Mazziotti's (comp.) *El espectáculo de la pasión: telenovelas latinoamericanas*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Colihue, 1993. Print. See also Herlinghaus, Martín-Barbero, and Karush in the bibliography.

[14] See for instance, and respectively, Gerould, Daniel "Russian Formalist Theories of Melodrama" Marcia Landy. Ed. *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film & Television Melodrama*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991. 118-134; Brook's *The Melodramatic Imagination*; Laura Mulvey's "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama" *Movie* 25 (1977-78): Ben Singer's *Melodrama and Modernity*; and Linda Williams' *On the Wire* (see Works Cited for full references of Brooks, Singer, and Williams).

Foregrounding melodrama's mediating role as heuristics of everyday life, these scholars hint at a crucial aspect of Latin American melodrama—blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction, which I will return to later. Both Herlinghaus and Martín-Barbero have promoted the notion of melodrama as a cultural form that shapes—and gives meaning to—social relationships and practices in Latin America. In this sense, melodrama does not only consist of particular subject matter; it is an interpretative tool that users exercise as a way of interpretation. Particularly relevant for this study, both scholars also find in melodrama the cultural form that best describes and renders understandable Latin American modernity and the processes of modernization.

Martín-Barbero considers melodrama the "drama of recognitions" (68), alluding to the Brooksian substratum of his mass-media-use theoretical framework. Martín-Barbero, however, recasts Brooks' analysis—the recognition of virtue as the premise of melodramatic storytelling—to relocate recognition *outside* of narrative and *among* melodrama consumers. As a mediation for recognition, Martín-Barbero argues, melodrama permits different forms of identification and consequently brings about different forms of community building in mass-media environments: through melodrama "not only individual subjects, but collective subjects, be it social classes or political actors, make and remake themselves in the symbolic weave of interpellations and recognitions" (68).[15] This occurs by virtue of a specific form of temporality proper to melodrama. Born in the nineteenth century *feuilleton* and still operative in the contemporary *telenovela*, melodrama activates with its serialized structure a "sense of duration" that through different media platforms[16] and the uses of diverse mass-media narratives "blends [melodrama] with life" (72).[17] Readers and spectators consume, comment, and actively contribute in producing these "open structures," or narratives "day by day written under a plan, but permeable to the reactions of readers [as well as spectators] and porous to current events" (72). Importantly, another aspect of this form of seriality lies in developing a reading proficiency among melodrama consumers that for Martín-Barbero, quoting Sarlo, consists of "recognizing [narrative conventions] as an important part in enjoying [these narratives] and,

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[15] Even though Martín-Barbero refers several times to melodrama as a form of interpellation, this term should not be confused with Althusser's concept of top-down subject formation (the metaphor of the passerby and the policeman). On the contrary, Martín-Barbero sees in melodrama a locus for the emergence of individual as well as group agencies at grass-roots levels. Likewise, with a Gramscian perspective, he sees in melodrama a way to develop different forms of hegemony. For Althusser's theory of interpellation, see "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Ben Brewster. Trans. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971. Print. 127-187. For the concept of hegemony as a form of consensus, see Antonio Gramsci's "Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc." David Forgas. Ed. *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1914-1935.* New York: NYU Press, 2000. Print. 189-221.

[16] Besides *telenovela*, Martín-Barbero also considers the *radionovela*, the cinema, and musical genres such as *tango* and *ranchera*.

[17] In a similar way, Nora Mazziotti considers melodrama in her study of Argentine *telenovelas* a "hypergenre that contaminates different practices—even everyday practices." See her edited volume *El espectáculo de la pasión: las telenovelas latinoamericanas*. Buenos Aires: Colihue, 1993. 154. Print.

consequently, in establishing their value as symbolic goods" (67).[18] Melodrama, therefore, is located within narrative as well as outside of it. It is in life. Allowing life to be "read" or "understood," melodrama functions as a heuristics, a language, a form of translation from things or situations (narrative or real life experiences) into the body and the sensible of those bodies encountering those situations.

Despite Martín-Barbero's efforts to foreground the cultural importance of melodrama in Latin America, his analysis reproduces the narrative of the deficient that Nicola Miller pinpoints in scholarship on Latin American modernity (see previous section). First, Martín-Barbero traces the advent of melodrama to colonial America, considering it another foreign import that followed the networks of European expansion and raw material extraction. He locates the earliest collective readings of European *feuilleton* in Cuban tobacco factories, and later attributes the appropriation of the form, rather belatedly, to Eduardo Gutiérrez and his serialized *Juan Moreira*, published in the Argentine newspaper *La Patria Argentina* (1870-1871) (74).[19] Second, and most importantly, Martín-Barbero's melodramatic framework allows him to deploy a rather elusive concept: "anachronism," which shapes melodrama and its mediating role in understanding Latin America's (still unachieved) modernization.[20] In this vein, Martín-Barbero describes, problematically, a Latin America suffused with melodrama:

> Melodrama touches everyday life, plugs into it not only as its counterpart or its substitute but also as something [life] is made out of. For [melodrama] such as [everyday life] lives from the time of recurrence and anachronism and it is the space for constituting primordial identities … Is [it] not here that the secret connection between melodrama and the history of the Latin American subcontinent [can be found]? … Melodrama delves into a profound vein of the collective imagination, and there is no possible access to historic memory than through this very imagination. (68-9)

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[18] Martín-Barbero alludes to Sarlo's essay "Lo popular como dimensión: tópica, retórica y problemática de la recepción." Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales. *Comunicación y culturas populares en Latinoamérica*. México: FELAFACS, 1987.

[19] Previous, important serialized texts written in the Southern Cone include Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo Civilización y Barbarie* (1845) and José Mármol's *Amalia* (1851-852). I will analyze the latter in the first chapter. Further scholarship is needed regarding *Facundo*'s *feuilleton* qualities (Roberto Yahni has already called attention to its often overlooked serialized structure in his 1997 Editorial Cátedra edition, see "El folletín y las cuatro primeras ediciones" (18-22). Published in installments during Sarmiento's political exile in Chile, *Facundo* invests in thrills, violence, and spectacles of physical peril, key elements of sensational melodrama (Singer 48). Particularly in the chapters centered on Juan Facundo Quiroga's life, *Facundo* presents an episodic structure bent on thrilling the reader (Facundo first appears fending off a *pampas* tiger, for instance) and on constructing Facundo as a viciously barbaric, super villain (I am thinking of the episode in chapter 12 where Facundo tricks innocent Tucumán girls into thinking he will spare the lives of the townsmen. While listening to their pleas, Facundo guffaws at them when he and the girls hear the firing squad carry out the execution in the distance).

[20] Many scholars have quickly appropriated Martín-Barbero's notion of anachronism as the anthology *Narraciones anacrónicas de la modernidad* epitomizes. See Works Cited.

For Martín-Barbero, melodrama is a necessary mediator between present and past. And as a form of recognition, connecting present with past, melodrama opens multiple possibilities for a more socially cohesive future—fostering numerous identity formations. Nevertheless, Martín-Barbero's apparently felicitous melodramatic mediations suffer from classed presuppositions, which divide the Latin American social landscape between haves and have-nots (media networks and lower class media consumers) and attribute to the latter communicational abilities proper to a remote past. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's "Storyteller" essay (1936), which is concerned with the incommunicability of experiences in the modern world, Martín-Barbero draws parallels between two sets of dichotomies. He contrasts the storyteller and the novel—community-based storytelling versus "the solitary individual" reading experience, according to Benjamin (87)—and the productive time of capitalism and its corollary time of leisure. He respectively labels these times the "time of history" and the "time of life." The latter, he argues, by means of melodrama (re)produces alternative forms of sociability, in his terms "primordial sociability" (69). Based on extended familial structures and other forms of extra-economic relations such as reciprocity, primordial sociability forges grass-roots networks through ritualistic practices, including the iterative consumption and discussion of melodramatic narratives (68-9). Under this theoretical model, the "popular classes" would consist of a social group that, despite capitalist expansion, "anachronically" interacts through residual, pre-modern forms of association and identification in the contemporary, mass-media world.

The divide between the "time of history" and the "time of life" aims to instill agency in melodrama users borne out of underprivileged material conditions, yet only manages to reproduce social immobility and inequity. The time of life, marked by uneven modernization—"constant migration, uprootedness [desarraigo], and economic scarcity [as well as] the failure of social and political institutions that have developed misrecognizing [desconociendo] the weight of this other form of sociability" (69-70)—would appropriate melodrama as a form of resistance: "anachronism is precious. [It] gives meaning to melodrama in Latin America [.] Melodramatizing everything [melodramatizando todo], [anachronism] secretly and in its own way takes revenge on the abstraction imposed by the commercialization [mercantilización] of life and cultural dispossession" (71). Despite his rhetorically bombastic, and for many rhetorically alluring, defense of melodrama, Martín-Barbero relegates melodrama and its users to an ultimately static, secondary status, reproducing preterit practices in a constantly deferred democratization process. Notwithstanding the limits of Martín-Barbero's theoretical model, it is important to highlight his notion of melodramatic *use*. In this potential for social actors to "melodramatize everything" we can read a crucial quality of melodrama. Transcending the limits of the printed page, the moving image (or later on radio waves and network television), melodrama serves a key heuristic function for understanding the present. In the same vein, melodrama serves a performative function, allowing readers and spectators to actively read and live life—melodramatically. I will return later to this notion of lived experience, regarding the melodramatic regime.

If Martín-Barbero and other Latin American scholars have tackled melodrama in broad theoretical frameworks centered in mass-media use and identity formation, Euro-American scholars have delved into melodrama's narrative minutiae to distinguish its

distinctive conventions.[21] Building upon the melodramatic qualities identified by Peter Brooks (see above) and Thomas Elsaesser in his influential essay on 1950s American family melodramas,[22] the Euro-American "Melodramatic Field" has focused on identifying melodrama with bourgeois ideology, with the founding cinematic language of Hollywood cinema, with a (gendered) genre specializing in family relations, and with issues of pleasure and fantasy and their role in popular culture (Gledhill 13), among other topics. Even though this long-lasting scholarly debate has focused on formal qualities of melodrama, the aforementioned "areas," Gledhill argues from her own field, "cannot be examined within the parameters of film studies alone because they pose pressing questions of a wider history of cultural institutions" (13). Thus, as Linda Williams observes, rather than only a genre, Euro-American scholars have "increasingly come to [understand melodrama] as a mode of modern culture" (*On the Wire* 229).

Particularly influential for this study, Ben Singer and Linda Williams have differentiated conventions proper to melodrama that reflect and are the product of social and cultural issues. For Singer, in *Melodrama and Modernity* (2001), early twentieth century sensational film and stage melodrama reflect a (Euro-American) hyperstimulating industrial modernity. Williams, in *Playing the Race Card* (2001), proposes melodrama as the narrative and cultural mode that best expresses anxieties about racial inequities (black and white) in the US. Both scholars ultimately propose melodrama as a cultural mode, but one that has very specific narrative forms at its core.

Coincidentally, both Singer and Williams distinguish five key elements proper to melodrama. For both scholars, these elements revolve around three aspects: narrative conventions, the affective effects these conventions elicit from the reader or spectator, and the ability to incorporate conventions from other narrative modes, particularly realism.[23]

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[21] Latin American exceptions would include Martín-Barbero himself, who proposes an abstract melodrama model with little applicability, and Silvia Oroz' seminal book *O cinema de lagrimas*, which I examine below. Martín-Barbero's melodrama model heavily relies on Bakhtin's concept of carnival to deploy a four-element taxonomy. Under his account, melodrama takes four "basic emotions—fear, enthusiasm, pity, and laughter—" related to "four types of situations and sensations—frightening, exciting, tender and burlesque—" that are "further linked with four types of characters—the traitor, the hero who imposes justice, the victim, and the fool." However, he does not exemplify how his model would operate in specific narratives, let alone does he elaborate on the consequences such elements would have on melodramatic storytelling. See his *Communication, Culture, and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations*. Elizabeth Fox. Trans. New York: SAGE Publications, 1993. Print. 116.

[22] "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observation on the Family Melodrama," originally published in *Monogram* 4 (1972): 2-15.

[23] Singer defines melodrama as a "cluster concept" (44), comprised of 1) pathos, 2) overwrought emotion, 3) moral polarization, 4) "nonclassical narrative structure," and 5) sensationalism (44-49). Williams distinguishes as "key features" of melodrama 1) the construction of a "space of innocence" (28) related to the desire to return home, 2) recognizing the virtue of victim-heroes bringing about the moral legibility of melodrama, 3) dialectics of pathos and action related to two temporalities—the "too late" and "in the nick

Focused on narrative minutiae and their related cultural functions, these pointillist approaches—i.e. centered on the minute in the service of a larger picture—shed light on Latin American melodrama conventions and their broader functions and uses. I will not compare in detail Singer and William's compound concepts of melodrama. Such an exercise would only reveal the inevitable arbitrariness and difficulties in categorizing this protean form, difficulties of which both scholars are well aware. Further, such comparison would yield overlaps and contradictions reminiscent of Borges' Chinese encyclopedia—for Foucault, a "monstrous" list that denies any possibility of a classificatory common ground.[24] Instead, I will highlight important elements in both accounts that foreground some of melodrama's historically specific qualities on the overlapping levels of narrative, reception, and cultural use.

Both Singer and Williams meet in stressing polarization as a fundamental core of melodrama (Singer 48, *Playing* 29).[25] Polarization renders characters ethically legible and, in doing so, elicits in the readers a process of identification between moral opposites. In this process, pathos determines the *type* of emotional identification melodrama establishes, which crosses the physical boundaries of the melodramatic text. Singer labels this process emotional "association," "whereby spectators superimpose their own life (melo)dramas onto the ones being represented in the narrative" (45). Polarization will prove particularly important in Latin American melodrama, for it defines the ways by which melodramatic narratives delimit their narrative worlds, premised on dividing social landscapes and expelling classed and raced social actors. José Mármol's *Amalia* (1851) epitomizes the power of polarization in shaping the contours of collectivities (see chapter one).

Borrowing from Peter Brooks, I term this process of world-apportioning the "logic of the excluded middle" (168), which determines *who* has a *place* in narrative and *how*. As I will later explain, the play between exclusions and inclusions points to the political uses of melodrama. Singer and Williams also point to this logic, but they do so under the premise that melodrama ultimately consists of a narrative of justice. For Singer, melodrama triggers "the agitation that comes from observing extreme moral injustice" (40). Indeed, we identify with a suffering character when we recognize he or she has been treated unfairly. This does not mean that melodrama always divides its worlds between extreme good and evil. Recently in her study on network serials, Williams has nuanced the role of justice in melodrama recognizing that "melodrama's commitment to justice is … not in any way

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of time"—, 4) borrowings from realism in the service of pathos and action, and 5) the presentation of characters organized in Manichean encounters of good and evil (28-42)

[24] In the preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault alludes to Borges' short story "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins", which refers to the contents of a fictional Chinese animal encyclopedia. Foucault locates the "monstrous quality" of Borges' enumeration on its very impossibility: "What is impossible is not the propinquity of the things listed, but the very site of which their propinquity would be impossible." New York: Vintage Books, 1994. Print. xvi.

[25] Singer highlights "moral polarization," while Williams points to several oppositional elements—Manichean opposites between good and evil (40), the dialectis of pathos and action, and the temporalities of the "too late" and "in the nick of time" (30)—centered around "victimization," whose "key function [is] to orchestrate the moral legibility crucial to the [melodramatic] mode" (29).

objectively just. Nevertheless, an audience's ability to recognize good requires the manifest suffering of an oppressed innocence" (*On the Wire* 114). This observation challenges simplistic readings of melodrama, allowing for more elaborate analyses of complex characters who recur to evil deeds in the service of (what they see as) a greater good, such as Daniel Bello does in *Amalia*. As I will propose with Bello's and other examples, what is at stake in narrativizing polarization in Latin American melodrama presupposes a relative notion of justice, which amounts to reshuffling the place of social actors in a given community, and ultimately amounts to reshuffling the hold of the means of representation. In my analysis, I will comparatively explore how shifts in narrative and filmic visibilities—making certain social actors visible or invisible—respond to a competing, expanding access to media platforms and, therefore, (re)presentation of "empathically imagined communities" (*Playing* 21) in the press and the cinema.

Both Singer and Williams examine another important aspect of melodrama—its relation to, and appropriation of, realism. Singer highlights early twentieth century sensational melodrama's investment in combining spectacular sights with diegetic realism (49). Williams, drawing from Gledhill, argues that melodrama "borrows from realism," for melodrama is a "perpetually modernizing form" (12, 38). In other words, usually vilified as patently unrealistic, melodrama capitalizes on both depicting ordinary quotidian reality and appropriating current forms of storytelling to stay up to date and address current concerns. This is not to say that melodrama is always accurate to "real life," whatever that may be. As Singer explains of late nineteenth century stage melodrama, "melodrama's sensation scenes of course surpassed those of ordinary experience … but the events portrayed nevertheless correlated, even if only loosely, with certain qualities of corporeality, peril, and vulnerability associated with working-class life" (53). Melodrama proposes a bond with the real that has to do with appropriating narrative conventions, including the conventions of realism, and with a dimension of feeling that breaches the gap between the narrative and the non-narrative.

Singer suggests that melodrama, even if "surpass[ing]" ordinary experience, somehow *feels like* ordinary experience, by correlating the emotions melodramatic theatre produces with every day emotions—"peril," "vulnerability." Singer in particular is concerned with the "hyperstimulus" modernity and melodrama elicit, the latter being a reflection of the former. However, the scholars discussed above also point to the ways in which melodrama, through narrative conventions, resonates with the reader's or spectator's emotions or feelings, how the reader or spectator identifies or sympathizes with melodramatic heroes and victims—what I termed above affective effects.

The affective bond bridging gaps between fictional and non-fictional subjects calls for a consideration of affect, emotion, and the subject in and through melodrama. It also invites us to consider what types of (affective) Self / Other relations melodrama establishes. Recently, Latin American scholars coming from fields as diverse as political theory and film studies have turned to affect theories, particularly Brian Massumi's and Deleuze's, to account for social orders and cultural productions proper to an era rife with anxieties regarding present and past traumas. Theoretically innovating as these approaches intend to be, they stumble upon an impasse when striving to read novel subject formations or the production of novel feelings elicited through cinema by summoning nonsubjectivistic and

non-emotional strands of affect theory.[26] A study of melodrama attentive to the "affective turn" would find fertile theoretical ground in critical discourses of emotion that have left behind the interiorized self or subjectivity, but in order to consider shifting positions for emotion other than subject-object presuppositions. Rei Terada's study on emotion in post-structuralist thought, for instance, conceives emotion (e.g. pathos) as vicarious; a feeling one generates in attributing it to another figure (169) and in this sense requiring "a certain nonidentification" (34).

To return to Singer, quoted above, melodrama moves us not because it is like reality, but because it operates on the cusp of identification and nonidentification. Melodrama conceives the possibility of emotion transgressing the bounds of (fictional) subjects, since what moves characters on the diegetic side of the page, stage, or screen can move those who interpret the narrative on our side (the reader's and my own). In this sense, "the domain of emotion can be interpretive and nonsubjective," as Terada argues (118). This theoretical strand differs from Massumi's and Deleuze's in which affect and affection no longer bear the meanings we have grown familiar with. Without disengaging from a deconstruction of the subject, Terada's strand conceives affect as both to have an effect on (a body, whatever it may be) and also to touch the feelings of (an interpretive someone), to move him or her emotionally—something closer to what could be found in the OED, for instance. Returning to the dictionary definition does not respond to theoretical facileness, however. It springs, on the contrary, from a belief in the subject and his or her potential to change the social order of which he or she is a product. In this belief lies the political potential of the melodramatic regime, further explained below.

Before assessing the melodramatic regime, and to conclude this analysis on Latin American and Euro-American melodrama studies, it is important to discuss one final meeting point between both branches. Despite the fact that Martín-Barbero, Singer, and Williams stress the historical specificity of their melodrama concepts, they ultimately propose atemporally operative models. Martín-Barbero traces the route "from media to mediations" through *feuilleton*, theatre, cinema, *radionovela*, and *telenovela*—a media transfer narrative spanning over one hundred years. In his turn, Singer recognizes

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[26] I am particularly referring to Jon Beasley-Murray's *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America* (2011) and Laura Podalsky's *The Politics of Affect and Emotion in Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico* (2011), two studies that conveniently eschew nonsubjectivism in favor of their subject-centered analyses. Beasely-Murray proposes a theory of posthegemony, focusing on affect, habit, and the multitude. In order to forward a "politics of affect" (130), Beasely-Murray reads in Deleuze and Guattari a "subjection of affect"(128), when the latter two read affect from the standpoint of a Spinozean theory of nonsubjectivism—which observes the potential of "bodies" (not human or subjectified bodies) to affect and be affected by other (nonhuman) bodies. In a similar vein, Podalsky in her book aims to read "how" certain films "encourage spectators to feel in ways that acknowledge alternative ways of knowing (about) the recent traumatic past of the 1960s and 1970s" (8), drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, and Massumi. Yet, like Beasly-Murray, Podalsky oversees that the nonsubjectivist approach of these scholars precisely cannot equate affect with feeling—undisguisedly evident in the first entry of Massumi's "Notes on the Translation" of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*: "AFFECT/AFFECTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling" (xvi).

melodrama's specifity as it "varies from case to case in relation to different configurations of a range of basic features." This dynamic model, however, emphasizes atemporality. Pointing to difficulties in determining melodrama's genealogy, Singer asserts: "over the last two hundred years the genre's basic features have appeared in … many different combinations" (44). Likewise, Williams' analysis, which spans roughly 150 years—from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) to the O.J. Simpson murder trial (1994)—"isolates" five features of melodrama, paying attention to their "forms of revitalization" and the ways certain directors "modernize" these features (*Playing* 27-28). Thus, Williams suggests that these features persist across time and media, yet are malleable and reinvigorated. All of these approaches stress melodrama's pervasiveness, synchronically and diachronically. They suggest that melodramatic conventions vary, yet remain the same over time while expanding their reach—to such an extent that under these frameworks it becomes difficult to conceive a mainstream narrative that would *not* be melodrama. Scholarly approaches that posit the limits, rather than the seemingly infinite reach, of melodrama further shed light in understanding it as a historically specific but dominant narrative and cultural mode across time and media.

Silvia Oroz poses an interesting point of comparison for these historically specific yet atemporally valid models of melodrama. In her study of Latin American film melodramas, *Melodrama: o cinema de lágrimas da América Latina* (*Melodrama: Latin America's Cinema of Tears*, 1999), Oroz equates melodrama with a historically specific type of cinema—the Latin American 1940s "weepies"—as the title of her seminal work suggests. Most interestingly, and perhaps uniquely in melodrama studies, Oroz places a temporal limit to melodrama. Latin American filmic melodrama ends around 1950, she states (60), foregrounding the historical specificity of filmic language, film production conditions, and film consumption cultural conditions.

Oroz defines melodrama as a "macrogenre" [*macrogênero*] revolving around "the discourse of wretchedness" (40). Product of multiple origins and multi-media appropriations (hence the *macro-* in her definition), melodrama "requires a referential pattern of precise values to operate," she argues (60). Particular to the Latin American case, this referential pattern would consist of Judeo-Christian and Patriarchal myths—love, passion, incest, and the woman (73).[27] By the 1950s, shifts in this "body of values contribute[d] to the collapse of the original [melodrama] structure" (40), turning filmic melodrama obsolete, or at least risible for some, in the following decades.[28] In opposition to scholars that elevate melodrama's cultural importance by tracing its historical persistence, Oroz highlights melodrama's cultural importance by indicating its historical demise.

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[27] Oroz also finds in Latin American film melodrama popular music substratum its "most evident" distinctive trait (120). In a similar vein, Carlos Monsiváis will argue for Latin American melodrama specifity in the languages of *bolero*, *ranchera*, and *tango*. See his "El melodrama: no te vayas, mi amor, que es inmoral llorar a solas" in Herlinghaus' anthology. 105-123.

[28] Roughly one hundred pages later, Oroz does contemplate the possibility for "the rigid structure of melodrama" to survive the 1950s as a revitalizing form. Albeit rigid, melodrama is also "malleable and adapts to new market demands, which correspond to new socio-cultural situations" (129). Nevertheless, Oroz does not explore filmic melodramas posterior to the 1950s.

Regardless of agreeing or differing with her position, Oroz' notion of melodrama challenges our understanding of melodrama across time and media. And most importantly, it raises questions on universalizing melodrama as a dominant narrative mode across time (decades or even centuries), media, and national borders.

The Melodramatic Regime

By prioritizing historically and culturally specific moral values as the enablers of melodramatic storytelling, Oroz proposes a one-way model for melodrama. Cultural values shape melodrama and cinematic language, not the other way around. As we have seen, scholars such as Herlinghaus, Martín-Barbero, Singer, and Williams propose a different approach by ultimately considering melodrama a cultural mode (the first two use the term "cultural matrix"). As a narrative and cultural mode, these scholars see melodrama at least as a two-way process. Melodrama is shaped by social, cultural, political, and economic factors *and* is a key form in shaping those very factors. During the first decades of twentieth century Latin America, melodrama in book form, the illustrated press, and moving images participated in the rapid expansion of an emergent mass culture sparked by modernization. As a mass cultural commodity, melodrama established complex relationships between its producers and consumers. Not a one-way or even a two-way process, melodrama forged historically specific, multi-directional relations, tensions, and worldviews across the social spectrum via multiple media platforms. To further complicate this process, the circulation of melodramatic narratives in text and film across national borders resulted in the global cross-pollination of melodrama and experiences of worldwide current events.[29] In this sense, we cannot simply consider melodrama a product or a reflection of a particular époque. Nor can we consider it a particular economic and sociocultural juncture. In a similar way, we cannot see melodrama either as a fundamentally manipulative offspring of mass culture, à la Adorno and Horkheimer,[30] or as the felicitous locus for oppositional readings and resistance, à la Martín-Barbero. Melodrama builds upon these, and further points to more elaborate interconnections between storytelling, current events, everyday life, access to representation, and subject and group formations. This is the case in Latin America and elsewhere.

Latin America's modernization processes, as stated above, brought about new social actors and media technologies, among other factors. Old and new writers as well as emergent filmmakers found in mushrooming press houses and expanding film markets a ripe space to melodramatically (re)present multiple Latin American modernities, while being attentive to the specific changes their communities experienced. Broadly speaking, my case studies offer contrasting examples of this process. Argentine melodrama presented,

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[29] Recent early cinema scholarship has increasingly focused in these global processes of cross-pollination. See Bean, Kapse, and Horak's *Silent Cinema and the Politics of Space* in note 5.

[30] Initially published in 1947, Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* denounced the homogeneity of mass cultural goods and the ways these are used to manipulate mass society into passivity. See "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Edmund Jephcott. Trans. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002. Print. 94-136.

and to a certain extent celebrated, a changing social order in the throes of modernization, whereas Colombian melodrama proclaimed a conservative attitude, particularly regarding social mobility, as the necessary condition for modern progress. As I will further explore in the following chapters, the contrast springs from actors competing for the hold on representation in Latin America. For Miller, quoting Marx and Engels' *Manifesto*, in late nineteenth century Latin America "fundamentally conservative landowning oligarchies held sway over a rising commercial bourgeoisie [.] These oligarchies had accomplished no wonders; 'all fixed, fast-frozen relations' did *not* 'melt into air,' 'all that was holy' was certainly not 'profaned' … Latin America had demonstrated a remarkable capacity to absorb modern imports while its ways of life remained more or less untouched" (12-3, emphasis in original). As Miller suggests, the Latin American social landscape was problematically divided at least between two main actors—patrician elites and emergent social actors. In the first decades of the twentieth century, part of the struggle between these took place *over and in* emergent media. Extrapolating Miller's observations from her own reproduction of the "narrative of the deficient," in this study I comparatively nuance this process of social change, exploring how different social actors competed in producing diverse renderings of modernization via melodramatic modernities. Or in other words, how they reshuffled their ways of narrating and visualizing these processes.

So far, I have used the term melodramatic modernities in two ways. Both as a representation of current events and as a practice, realized through emergent mass media. Another suggested use could be the experience of everyday life, running the risk to "melodramatize everything," which Martín-Barbero explicitly celebrates. Without proclaiming that in Latin America everything and everyone was melodramatic in the first decades of the twentieth century, I propose that melodrama was outstandingly pervasive—registering and processing the changing present in literature, periodicals, and film,[31] as well as in the experiences and interactions of media consumers. Through melodramatic narratives, certain transformative processes of modernization gained visibility and narrative saliency, while other processes were obfuscated or never mentioned. Diverse social actors, driven by individual or group agendas, deployed melodramatic narratives in literature, periodicals, and films that made visible or invisible then current events or concerns. The weekly novel *Los misterios del crimen* (*The Mysteries of Crime*, 1924-1926), analyzed in chapter two, provides a fascinating example of urban anxiety rendered in sensationalist murders, for instance. The play between visibilities and invisibilities, of what could be narrated and what could not be narrated, and the ways in which diverse social actors used these narratives at the level of reception, conferred on melodrama a very important role in historically specific "distribution[s] of the sensible," to borrow from Jacques Rancière. In this sense, the connection between then current events and concerns, melodramatic subject matter, and the places social actors obtained by gaining access to representation, require us to reconsider the very concept of melodrama. More than a

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[31] In chapter three I will refer briefly to other media such as music and theatre to signal important relations between these and the press and the cinema. Certain scholars, however, such as Oroz and Monsiváis, find in music, and to a lesser extent theatre, distinctive qualities of Latin American melodrama. For a thorough study of *tango* and *sainete*, a one-act play in Argentine melodrama, also see Matthew B. Karush's *Culture of Class: Radio and Cinema in the Making of a Divided Argentina, 1920-1946*. Durham: Duke UP, 2012.

narrative mode, or a theoretically nebulous cultural mode, melodrama consists of a visual regime—what I term the *melodramatic regime*.[32]

Before proceeding to the specifics of this regime, it is important to define what is at stake when melodrama is considered in terms of visual regime, a concept best framed in the work of Jacques Rancière. *The Distribution of the Sensible* (*Le partage du sensible*, 2000) inaugurates a later phase in the career of this philosopher. A disciple of Althusser, starting from the 1970s and 1980s Rancière ventured into a philosophical and archival journey to counter Althusser's notion of ideological domination and the little space it allocated to equality, freedom, and autonomous expression by subaltern classes ("Jacques" 2). His philosophical and political discourse elaborated "a politics of democratic participation" (Rockhill 3), centered on historically specific distributions of the sensible—systems that define what is visible, sayable, and even doable in certain aesthetic and political junctures within a given community. In *The Distribution*, Rancière tackles aesthetics not only with respect to its practice by subaltern classes. As suggested in its foreword, the text is concerned more generally "with aesthetic acts as configurations of experience that create new modes of sense perception and induce novel forms of political subjectivity" (*The Politics* 9). Attentive to aesthetics and its conjunction with both politics and history, Rancière conceives shifting visual regimes as politically determined reconfigurations of societal activities and subject matter (supported in any medium) associated with a certain historical juncture. Importantly, Rancière proposes that distributions of the sensible can structure the ways in which arts can be perceived and thought of as forms of art *and* forms that inscribe a sense of community. In his terms, these distributions disclose "the existence of a community and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it" (11).[33]

Within this framework, the verb *partager* (to distribute, to partition) underpins the complex relations implied in shifting visual regimes. *Partager le sensible* refers at once to "the conditions for sharing that establish the contours of a collectivity (i.e. "*partager*" as sharing) and to the sources of disruption or dissensus of that same order (i.e. "*partager*" as separating)" (Panagia 95, emphasis in original). For Rancière, the concept of (re)distributing the sensible order carries a political weight when the excluded or previously invisible elements in a society (re)determine who can speak (or paint, write, make movies) and about what, thus challenging the political order (*The Politics* 13).

Rancière distinguishes a typology of artistic practices consisting of three "major" visual regimes (20)—the *ethical* regime of images, the *poetic* or *representative* regime, and the *aesthetic regime* of art. These consist of different forms of *partager* and, consequently,

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[32] Since I consider melodrama a visual regime, throughout the dissertation I will use the shorthand "melodrama" to refer to the visual regime I examine. Only in occasions when melodrama may require further clarification—i.e. when I refer to a particular melodramatic narrative within the broader visual regime—or when I wish to stress melodrama *qua* visual regime I will use the term "melodramatic regime."

[33] I slightly alter Rockhill's translation from "something in common" to "community" based on the original French: "donne à voir en même temps l'existence d'un commun et les découpages qui y définissent les places et les part respectives" (*Le partage* 12). As Rockhill explains, "le commun" in Rancière's work "is strictly speaking what makes or produces a community and not simply an attribute shared by all of its members" (*The Politics* 102-3).

propose different configurations of collectivity and societal practices therein. The ethical regime of images links artistic practice to the ethos and mores of a community. By judging artistic representations according to their ontological veracity (how accurately they represent an ideal model) and their moral or political function, this regime "prevents 'art' from individualizing itself as such" (20). The ethical regime finds a clear example in Plato's *Republic*—where only certain forms of expression are considered acceptable within the polis, hence the banning of the poets. Important to my argument, moral and political worth determines the value of artistic practices and artifacts in this regime, argues Rancière.[34] In its turn, the poetic or representative regime, premised on Aristotelian notions, attributes to art a mimetic function and, consequently, distinguishes art from other productive activities. Art, beyond its specific medium, "represents the activities of men" (21), extricated from any judgment about its ontological veracity. Accordingly, this second regime develops other forms of judgment not premised on the *essence* of the image but premised on forms of normativity that assess *imitations* and the ways of producing such imitations. Thus, this regime develops genres and hierarchies in representation according to their subject matter (e.g. the "fine arts," Neoclassical tragedy versus *Mélodrame*, and so on). Moreover, these partitions and distributions determine specific social occupations (the commoner, the author, the dramaturge). Put together, genres, representations, and social occupations "figure into an analogy with a fully hierarchical vision of the community" (22).

Unlike the previous two regimes, the aesthetic regime of art challenges hierarchical worldviews and the systems of representation that duplicate them. Rancière finds in realism "the inaugural moment" of this third regime, for during the nineteenth century a "reversal of the hierarchies of representation" operated in novelistic realism (24), where "the dignity of the subject matter [did not] dictate the dignity of genres of representation" (32). Consequently, this breakdown of systems of representation ushered in the "appropriation of the commonplace" (33) and the "appearance of the masses" (34) in representation. At the same time, it witnessed emergent social actors, regardless of their social occupations, becoming themselves producers of art—consequently challenging the elites' monopoly on representation.

Even though Rancière historically locates the emergence of the aesthetic regime of art in the nineteenth century (as well as in German Romanticism), it is important to note that his three major regimes—ethical, representative, and aesthetic—do not consist of historical categories (Deranty 119). As mentioned above, they consist of distributions of the sensible that at a given historical juncture determine ways of doing artifacts, ways of assessing these objects, subject matter, and social occupations (or ways of being) within a community. A central element across these regimes consists in the endless recasting of social hierarchies—dependent on aesthetic production, what this production makes visible

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[34] It is important to note that Rancière considers "art" in a broad sense. In *Aisthesis* he explains, "[art] is a way of doing, the use of a proper technique that becomes individual in distinction to others" (210). In other words, art is the product of the *artifex*, a term in Latin that equally denotes artist, author, maker, and craftsman. Therefore, a text, an illustration or a film can be conceived as art, in the sense that the developments of aesthetic practice attributed to cinema and photography antedate their technologies of mechanical reproduction. For Rancière, these developments pertain to the aesthetic regime of art (*The Politics* 32-3).

or invisible, and who produces such work. An important feature for considering a *melodramatic regime* is that Rancière's "major" regimes can and do overlap. In their succession, they do not shape a cumulative narrative of liberation or democratic participation. On the contrary, Rancière conceives the possibility of "polemical distribution." He argues that "at a given point in time, several regimes coexist and intermingle" ("The Janus-Faced" 50). I find this polemical *partage du sensible* at the core of the melodramatic regime, where multiple forms of *partager* coexist.

Melodrama produces and is the product of historically specific distributions of the sensible. As most critics note, melodrama originated as a lower dramatic genre in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century France. Unlike Neoclassical tragedy, its aristocratic counterpart, melodrama was written for a broad public that extended from the lower classes to the aristocracy (Brooks xvi). It combined distinct dramatic registers—namely, a combination of spoken soliloquy and pantomime with heightened orchestral accompaniment (14)[35]—and retreated from Neoclassicist subject matter, i.e. Greek and Roman models as examples of perfection. Instead, melodrama performed "a spectacle-laden unmasking of class privilege and absolutist power that, until that point, structured social relations" (Anker ch. 2). From its roots in theatre, melodrama challenged hierarchies in (dramatic) representation and subject matter. In this sense, melodrama consisted of an aesthetic revolution that recast what could be narrated, by whom, and for whom in accordance to community-specific historical and political junctures.[36] Therefore, it is possible to consider a melodramatic regime, one that complicates Rancière's tripartite shifts in visual regimes. Taking into account dominant narratives in text, image, and moving image in early twentieth century Latin America, I argue that the melodramatic regime presents conflicting distributions of the sensible order, which in turn reflect and (re)produce conflicting partitions of specific social orders. Hence this dissertation's comparative perspective: to foreground the historical and community-specific formations of this visual regime, it studies melodrama in Argentina and Colombia. To lay the theoretical ground for the specific analyses to follow, I will single out historically specific key factors of the melodramatic regime, some of which I already touched on, and recognizing that more could be considered.

The melodramatic regime is premised on (competing) recastings of hierarchies of representation—i.e., competing forms of *partager*. This partition of the sensible order thus shaped, challenged *and* reproduced hierarchies in the social order. In Latin America, diverse social actors from then recent migrants to established *criollo* intellectuals deployed forms of inclusion as well as forms of exclusion by conferring narrative visibility to either changing or stratified social orders in narrative. Made available to an unprecedented mass readership and spectatorship through the press and the cinema, these narratives represented stratified social orders, divided in terms of class, race, and gender. Through bipartite divisions, they clearly defined a suffering victim with whom the reader or

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[35] Hence its name: *melos-drama*. Jean Jacques Rousseau coined the term *mélodrame* in 1774 drawing from the Ancient Greek term for music (*melos*) and the Late Latin term *drama* to denote this novel form of theatrical play.

[36] Brooks, for instance, compares the spectatorships of both early French and British melodrama, considering the specifics of these two forms based on the particulars of French and British collectivities (xvi-xvii).

spectator could identify. These partitions did not necessarily entail singling a villain out to be expelled from the social order—i.e., polarization between good and evil—as epitomized by Jorge Isaacs' *María* (1867) (see chapter one). Certainly, many narratives presented lecherous and vicious evildoers, but most narratives constructed non-individualized, classed and raced forces beyond the righteous victim's understanding and control. Such forces rendered suffering characters ethically legible and consequently elicited in the reader or spectator a process of sympathetic and moral identification. The moral partition favored victims, which in turn metonymically rendered legible the classed, raced, and gendered worlds to which these victims belonged. Thus, melodramatic narratives described how the victim's community *was* and suggested how it *should be*—expelling or keeping at bay antagonist forces. Since some of these narratives, as mentioned, do not clearly depict a villain or antagonist but present hazy forces beyond the victim's understanding and control, it is important to note that these melodramas did not necessarily resolve society's structural problems on an individual level.[37] On the contrary, they pointed to structural social problems via melodramatic narrative. It is also important to note that, as far as archival documents showed, narratives denouncing established social orders did so in terms of class and gender. Conversely, narratives that imposed hierarchical senses of community included class, gendered, and raced Others deemed threatening. Socially (and morally) immobile racialized groups or individuals in narrative show the inclusionary limits of the early twentieth century melodramatic regime.

Apportioning narrative space in the terms stated above—an ethical reading of social actors—points to the melodramatic regime's reach inside and outside of narrative. Melodrama served a heuristic function for readers and spectators to understand the present in relation with the past, as Martín-Barbero suggests (see above). Melodramatic narratives premised on victimization presented the reader or spectator morally dubious worlds in need of depuration. Although some narratives explored genres such as fantasy and science fiction,[38] most invested in everyday characters to visualize then current social concerns in opposition to (ideal or factual) past social orders. In worlds where positions, individuals, and values constantly change, where vicissitudes of fortune are common, the family became the point of reference to assess modern transformation. Visualized as an extremely frail structure, the family and its breaking apart (or its threat) structured the heuristic possibilities the melodramatic regime offered readers and spectators to understand their present. Colombian silent cinema outstandingly draws on this trope. Safeguarding or rebuilding the unity of the family—through shifting categories of class, race, and gender—determined what could or could not have part in melodramatically depicted communities. Such depicted communities were presented as equivalents to those of the reader or spectator. In the same vein, Latin American melodrama presented a quality

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[37] A scholarly conventional reading that relegates melodrama to the status of ideological or educational narrative and therefore apolitical. See Anker for a very recent example: "melodramatic subjects externalize all responsibility for society's problems to an evil Other, and once the villain is removed, society can go back to its smooth functioning" (Anker ch. 2).

[38] Margarita Pierini, in response to Beatriz Sarlo's *El imperio de los sentimientos*, highlights some of these narratives in her *La novela semanal (Buenos Aires, 1917-1927): un proyecto semanal para la ciudad moderna*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2004.

that Martín-Barbero only hints at as mentioned above (75)—blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction. Be it in the novel, serialized fiction, or the cinema, Latin American melodrama claimed authenticity as being the product of "real life" social problems. After the advent of photography and moving images, this quality was reinforced by capitalizing on the "existential bond" (Doane 92) between image and object implied in photochemical visual technologies, to attest to its ontological veracity (Figure 1). Since this bond is necessarily medium specific, in the following chapters I will analyze its particulars in literature, illustrated periodicals, and moving images.

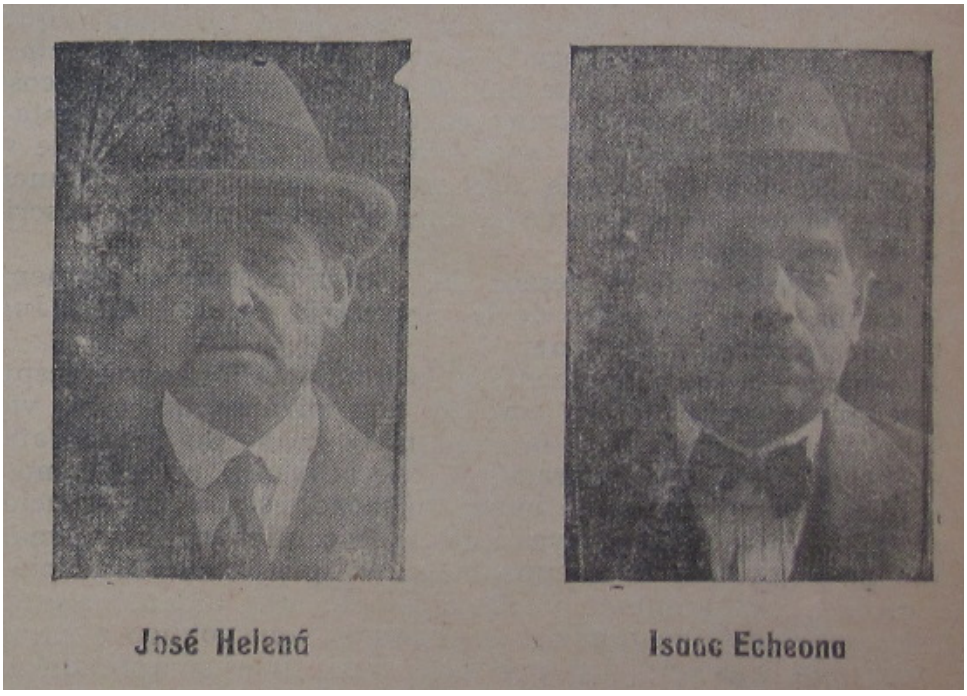

Figure 1 "Real" mug shots in a crime-focused weekly novel. *Los misterios del crimen* 34. 15 Apr. 1926. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia

Also, the melodramatic regime harnesses seriality in order to structure melodramatic storytelling, develop a melodramatic reading proficiency among readers and spectators, and operate across media. Simply put, seriality functions in multiple levels within the melodramatic regime. In the level of narrative, from *feuilleton* to film serials, narratives delivered extended stories that orchestrated narrative climaxes in each installment in the service of an overarching narrative, regardless of subject matter. Another possible form of serialization was the iteration of a particular theme that linked self-contained narratives published regularly and that referred to previous published works in the same collection. My archival research did not yield findings of Argentine or Colombian film serials. However, it must be noted that by the mid teens film serials were very influential in both countries and in Latin America in general. In Mexico, for instance, American and European crime serials inspired the production of local film serials that resonated with Revolutionary Mexico's sensationalist visual culture in press and moving

images.[39] Beyond the narrative level, serial formats developed what Martín-Barbero calls a "sense of duration" (72), as quoted above, that dovetailed melodrama consumption with everyday living. The iterative presence of melodrama, as well as meta- or para-textual comment on its iterative tropes, fostered a reading proficiency of melodramatic forms that ultimately contributed to the melodramatic regime's heuristic function. A third form of iteration consisted of the remediation of one story in multiple media. As my analysis will show, this third form, premised on repurposing a narrative for different historical and sociopolitical junctures, served as a means to impose certain stories as canonical narratives. Consequently, with these stories elite groups reproduced their stratified senses of community via the melodramatic regime—senses that in certain cases, such as the Colombian case, still operate today.

The following three chapters, drawing on documents and silent film footage unearthed from Argentine and Colombian archives, analyze competing cross-media and media specific instances of the melodramatic regime during the 1910s and 1920s. The first chapter addresses how the national imagination in Latin America, particularly around the Centennial celebrations, was shaped through the melodramatic regime, correlatively determining dominant narrative tropes across media. More specifically, the chapter analyzes how two paradigmatic narratives, the Argentine feuilleton *Amalia* (1851-1855) and the Colombian novel *María* (1867), shaped across media the contours of collectivities through melodrama. Attentive to the historical importance as well as to the dominant reading of both works as "foundational fictions," I read both narratives against the grain and argue that Latin American melodrama did not propose narratives premised on uniting fragmented communities. On the contrary, and with recourse to remediation, these melodramas contributed to building highly stratified ideas of nation within larger discourses of state formation. Published multiple times and later adapted to illustrated periodicals and silent cinema during my period of study, *Amalia* and *María* produced some of Latin America's most durable guiding fictions—respectively, the classed and raced battle between civilized and barbaric political parties, and the desire to mythify the origin of the nation in the extinct aristocracy of the *latifundistas*, landowners of great estates. Iterations of *Amalia* and *María* in three different media—books, illustrated periodicals, and moving images—shed light on the functions of remediation in forging the melodramatic national imagination in Latin America. Paradoxically, both multimedia narratives, remarkably popular and yet rhetorically exclusivist, posited national communities premised on defining and, most importantly, re-presenting social difference.

The second chapter focuses on 1920s serialized publications, particularly the "Novelas de Humildades" ("Poverty Novels," 1922), a series of micro-melodramas published in the Buenos Aires tabloid *Crítica*, and the weekly novel *Los misterios del crimen* (*The Mysteries of Crime*, 1924-1926) published out of Bogota. These publications served as platforms for emergent writers who, unlike the authors and reproducers of *latifundista* stories, were not concerned to visualize the vicissitudes of the elites. On the contrary, they were enthralled by the lives of urban outcasts trying to survive in the expanding margins of urban space. In this chapter, I argue that serialized publications visualized accounts of

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[39] See Rielle Navitski's "Spectacles of Violence and Politics: *El automóvil gris* (1919) and Revolutionary Mexico's Sensational Visual Culture." *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 23.2 (2014): 133-152. Print.

urban marginality that, according to the specific urban conditions of both Buenos Aires and Bogota, condemned or reproduced stratified social orders and inequity. The *porteño* "Novelas" aspired to mediate between its mass reader and the Buenos Aires cityscape. They aimed at challenging elitist visual regimes with narratives that pictured suffering, displaced subjects while idealizing them as repositories of waning social virtues. Conversely, the Bogota publication drew on legal and positivistic discourses to depict destitute individuals as moral threats to an ailing social body. On either side of the spectrum, these publications capitalized on pauperism and urban violence to register urban change while at the same time thrill the reader with "real" stories of poverty and malady-stricken individuals. Harnessing the technological advances in photography and the rotary press, these publications emphasized the ontological veracity of their stories with photographs of actual city dwellers and (in)famous urban landmarks.

Turning the focus towards early cinema, the third chapter examines the tense relations between material progress, tradition, social change and social immobility, made visible through the melodramatic regime in three different film genres. In Argentina, the then called *cine de ambiente campero*, or country ambience films, recast the figure of the *gaucho* as the repository of Argentiness, while paradoxically visualizing his demise in the face of modernization. In a similar vein, *porteño cinedrama*—urban melodramas of working women and prostituted women—reproduced the cross-media trope of the *mal paso*, "the girl who stumbles" in the path of virtue, which was extremely popular in tango, *sainete* theatre plays, and silent cinema during the 1920s. Both genres told the tale of a break with tradition and presented a changing social order, registering while offering a heuristics of rural and urban change for *criollos* and immigrants alike. In its turn, Colombian family melodrama focused on *latifundistas* whose greatest concern was their children's desire to marry below their class. These films invest in the melodramatic trope of star-crossed lovers, a common theme epitomized as far back as mid-nineteenth century by *Amalia* and *María*, not only to visualize the impossibility of social mobility, but also to construct seemingly paradoxical worlds. Harnessing the presentational qualities of cinema and melodramatic plot, these films visualize patriarchal communities reproducing colonial social hierarchies while presenting them as the necessary condition for modern Progress.

These contrasting melodrama examples in literature, illustrated periodicals, and early cinema present overarching but by no means definitive ways in which the melodramatic regime registered and made sense of the multiple processes of modernization and experiences of modernity in Latin America during the period in question. Melodrama focused on the consequences of modernization at individual and group levels. As such, it served as a platform to reshuffle distributions of the sensible order in different Latin American communities. The melodramatic regime, however, did not necessarily serve a democratizing function. In the unprecedented changes taking place in Latin American modernities, it mediated and supported different renderings as well as old and new voices. The regime's dominance determined narrative forms, subject matter, (in)visibilities, reading proficiency, and the recasting of social actors and collectives. Shaping places of intelligibility and practice, the melodramatic regime rendered Latin American modernities into melodramatic modernities.

CHAPTER 1

María and *Amalia*: Melodrama, Iteration, and the Nation-State

Introduction

If the melodramatic regime distributes and partitions the sensible order, this chapter focuses on the latter—*partager* as (hierarchical) partition. Paying particular attention to Jorge Isaacs' *María* (1867) and José Mármol's *Amalia* (1851-1855), this chapter studies how cross-media iteration revitalized and consolidated certain melodramatic narratives in the Latin American imagination. *María* and *Amalia* epitomize the ways in which melodrama has shaped the contours of collectivities. As such, both novels instantiate an imposing fold of the melodramatic regime. Current scholarship still addresses both novels as "foundational fictions," that is, narrative and ideological building blocks for nation-state formation in nineteenth century Latin America. The argument revolves around two factors. First, these fictions purportedly developed what Doris Sommer terms an "erotics of politics" in which lovers representing political, racial, and economic factors (among other factors) "provided a figure for apparently nonviolent consolidation" (Sommer 6). Second, drawing from Benedict Anderson's much quoted notion of "imagined communities" and the related concepts of "print-capitalism" (6) and "simulateity" (61),[1] these novels purportedly created a national sense of community by having readers, far and wide, experience "affective bonds" (64) at roughly the same time.

I propose an alternative reading. *María* and *Amalia* contributed to community building, albeit with exclusivist narratives reinforced through iteration. Both novels epitomize hierarchical ways to apportion the sensible within the melodramatic regime. In *María* and *Amalia* (as well as in other novels of the time) the obstacles to love overpower the protagonists. Instead of union, at the heart of these fictions lies separation, epitomized in death and the correlative loss of home. From the outset, these elements invite a melodramatic reading premised on what I term, borrowing from Brooks, the logic of the excluded middle (i.e., *who* has a *place* in narrative and *how*). Further, historical accounts suggest that *María* and *Amalia* did not win partisans in an ideally simultaneous reading experience, which would have created a broader sense of community premised on shared affect.[2] Rather than simultaneity, iteration embedded these melodramas in the national imagination at different historical junctures. It must be noted, however, that iteration does not consist of mere repetition or republication. Particularly in the cases of *María* and *Amalia*, iteration implied a complex form of remediation, which media scholars David Bolter and Richard Grusin term "repurposing"—ways of borrowing narrative content from one medium to another that yield "a necessary redefinition" of medium-specific narrative

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[1] Scholars prefer quoting Anderson's rather obscure expression "homogeneous, empty time" (26), borrowed from Benjamin.

[2] For instance, historian Marco Palacios notes that by 1867, publication year of *María*, more than 52 novels had been published which "seemed to have very little impact in the formation of national identity." In such context, "[*María*] would not qualify then as 'national' [novel]" (689).

conventions and content use (45). Repurposing also implies forms of "interplay … for the reader or viewer who happens to know both versions and can compare them." Strongly supported by readerly and (later on) spectatorial proficiency, iteration underpinned the political and community building functions of both novels across time and media.

María and *Amalia* epitomize the role of the melodramatic regime in the "modern political pact," if we understand the latter as a contested site of representation (Montaldo 30). Responding to their particular historical and political contexts, both melodramatic narratives deployed forms of inclusion and forms of exclusion through representation. They determined visual regimes in the service of state building, by conferring narrative saliency to certain individuals and social groups. Both *María* and *Amalia* apportioned what could be narrated and made visible (as well as what should not be narrated nor visualized) within historically specific national imaginations. Despite their cultural and historical particulars, both narratives contributed to building highly stratified ideas of community: the nations of the great patriarchal families and landed bourgeoisie. This is not to say that every reader or later spectator gullibly identified with the body politic depicted in these narratives. It is to say that at given historical junctures these narratives aimed at producing "felt legitimacy" (Anker ch. 3) for the state formations they iteratively presented.[3]

This was particularly the case during the teens and twenties. Around the Centennial celebrations of both countries—angst-ridden times of massive rural to urban and foreign migrations—both narratives reappeared remediated in the expanding spheres of illustrated periodicals and cinema. The resulting phenomena of iteration revitalized both narratives, consolidated their massive appeal, and repurposed both texts within the melodramatic regime. In order to address the intricacies of this process, I will first analyze how both novels show a remarkable awareness of their roles in shifting visual regimes, by comparatively examining their prologues. In the two following sections, I will analyze both novels in depth, singling out key melodramatic tropes to highlight the top-down political uses of melodrama in determining senses of community. (These tropes reappear with varying functions in other stories and media in the following chapters). In the fourth section, borrowing on Bolter and Grusin's concept of repurposing, I will trace the processes of remediation these novels experienced during the teens and twenties. I will pay attention to the medium-specific changes remediation entails in melodramatic storytelling and how these changes reflected the shifting political uses of both narratives during the period. Analyzing both narratives across time and media sheds light on melodrama's function in shaping the contours of specific communities and their political (im)possibilities at specific historical junctures. In the particular case of *María* and *Amalia*, I will trace how a dominant trope in both novels reappears in early twentieth century Argentina and Colombia, repurposed to shape the nation-state. Premised on the desire for a yet non-existent nation

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[3] In her study of post-9/11 American melodramatic political discourse, Elisabeth Anker defines felt legitimacy as "a real form of consent, even though it is a separate process from civic participation or juridical accountability" (ch.3). For Anker, in an America riven with exceptionally powerful and unaccountable state practices, felt legitimacy "depoliticizes the capacity to partake in governing decisions." In this chapter, however, I borrow the term in the context of unstable Latin American state formations where melodrama, I argue, aimed at fostering both consent and dissent. This chapter focuses on the former.

(*Amalia*) or the nostalgia for a lost body politic (*María*), this powerful trope paradoxically lamented the impossibility of a political order.

"Calculated Fiction:" the Narratable and Reader Response

Past and recent scholarship has analyzed *Amalia* and *María* under the rubric of melodrama.[4] This scholarship, however, strives to find literary value in both works *despite* what it considers melodramatic traits—sentimental excess, tendentious narrative, "corniness," and so on. Such an approach eschews melodrama's cultural hold on the Latin American imagination and considers melodrama a historically pervasive yet fraught narrative mode. Melodrama is far from poorly crafted storytelling, however. On the contrary, it springs from stylistic choices, reliance on reader proficiency, and awareness of affective and bodily reader response to specific narrative tropes. Prologues in *Amalia* and *María* suggest a keen awareness of the melodramatic form and its role in shifting relationship between politics and aesthetics. *Amalia* exemplifies affective appeal through thrilling narrative action, while *María* epitomizes bodily response—weeping triggered by pathos— as a precondition for sense-making (this is not to say that all readers of *María* necessarily weep; sometimes I have been one of them, sometimes not). Through either action or pathos, both novels propose felt legitimacy as an intersubjective, vicarious experience. For both novels, the intimate bond between reading body and text blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction, giving sense to the latter via the former. Real reactions to diegetic pathos (or action) affectively and physically make melodrama a felt, sense-making experience for the reader. Thus operates the melodramatic regime; by determining what can be narrated and visualized at specific historical junctures, it distributes forms of perception, affection, and thought. *Amalia* and *María* manifest a keen awareness of their role within the melodramatic regime, regarding their textual possibilities and the responses they provoke.

Albeit intended for two very different audiences and written under very different production conditions,[5] both novels show remarkable structural equivalences. Key, short texts precede the narratives. These add a diegetic layer blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction. In both cases, the short texts reflect on the act of writing and readerly responses to the written. As "paratexts," or satellite writings, they mediate between the novel and its readers. "Neither on the interior nor on the exterior" but "on the threshold" (Genette xvii), these paratexts impinge on the reading experience and preform the reader's horizon of expectations, soliciting our attention to particular aspects of the text or the very act of reading. Consequently, they impose a certain distribution of the sensible in the novels

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[4] See for instance Hernán Vidal's "*Amalia*: melodrama y dependencia." *Ideologies and Literature*. 1.2. (1977): 41-69. Print. and Osvaldo Di Paolo's "Imitación, asimilación, importación y posesión: una lectura cursi de *María* de Jorge Isaacs." *Revista de Estudios Colombianos*. 41. (2013): 6-13. Print.

[5] In exile, José Mármol initially wrote *Amalia* as a *feuilleton* for his anti-Rosas newspaper *La Semana* (1851), which was published out of Montevideo. Conversely and from the start, Jorge Isaacs conceived *María* in the authoritative format of the book. I will explore in further detail the formats of both narratives in the third section of this chapter.

they precede. In *Amalia* and *María*'s case, the "Explicación" and "A los hermanos de Efráin," respectively, define both works as affective mediators between readers and historical facts or between readers and the phenomenological world. In this sense, and as we shall see, both novels guide the reading of their melodramatic stories either *as a means to* register and understand historical civil strife (*Amalia*) or *as a means to* community building through pathos (*Amalia*, *María*).[6] In this sense, both paratexts posit these melodramas as heuristic and affective mediations.

The "Explicación" situates *Amalia* on the threshold between history and fiction, and between political outcry and leisurely reading. *Amalia* narrates events related to the dictatorial regime of Juan Manuel Rosas in 1840s Argentina. Mármol, conscious of the contemporary dangers in and for representation, began his serialized novel with an "Explanation" of its narrative mode. Because most of the historical characters in the work then occupied important "political or social" positions, Mármol penned "a calculated fiction" [ficción calculada] (61) that transposed down a generation contemporary events. Mármol's solution is founded on using the preterit tense: "the reader will never find the present tense referring to [dictator] Rosas, his family, his ministers, etc." (61). Alejandra Laera aptly describes the gesture in terms of a "voluntary anachronism" that "operates on the political transforming it into the historical" (121). In Mármol's novel, setting the present in past tense narratively registered political unease for contemporary readers.

Laera recognizes *Amalia* as the first Argentine novel to make political use of fiction (118). However, she finds in Mármol's solution—changing present tense to past tense—"a certain ingenuousness" (122). What she interprets as a candid reaction to political danger can be better explained as a strategic use of narrative possibilities. Mármol's calculated fiction, by reflecting on its own narrative mode, assessed then-present political risk as well as aesthetic risk. In Spanish, to choose the preterit for storytelling may seem an obvious remark. Conversely in French (a language of paramount importance in *Amalia*'s ending as discussed in the following section), to opt for the preterit implies an aesthetic choice. "Obsolete" in spoken French, the preterit "is a part of a ritual of Letters," the "sign of an intention," says Roland Barthes. The preterit implies a reduction and an imposition, Barthes argues; it concatenates events, turned into "orientated actions," in the service of literary world building (30). Thus, Mármol's "Explicación" reveals a keen awareness of the performative power of narrative. Merging politics and history in melodrama, Mármol narratively performs a political statement in the past tense about present Argentina. And most importantly, through a play between present and past, he stakes out the novel's political relevance for the future: "[Calculated fiction] is convenient for narrative clarity," the author explains. "Regarding the future of the work, it is convenient, like it is for anything … written on the dramatic époque of the Argentine dictatorship, for future generations with whom it will harmonize perfectly" (61). From its conception, Mármol's "calculated fiction"—a thoughtfully crafted melodrama—was a first step in a political

[6] This is not to say that *Amalia* does not draw on pathos for community building. In this section I only delve with the novel's paratexts. The second section will reveal how pathos is crucial for both *Amalia* and *María*.

praxis that successfully visualized 1840s Argentina for many generations to come.[7] His calculation encompassed far more than the preterit tense; Mármol drew on melodrama to guarantee his work's aesthetic and political future. In the following section, I will analyze *Amalia*'s main melodramatic features (including male lead action, Manichean polarizations, and cliffhanger episode structures).

If *Amalia*'s essence lies in narration, melodramatically concatenating fictive and historical events, *María*'s essence lies in interruption of the reading experience. In "A los hermanos de Efraín," a fictive editor addresses Efraín's siblings, anticipating a suspension of reading. The term *hermanos* in the dedication has an "extended meaning" that includes readerly "kindred spirits of Efraín" (Brushwood 219). It is an address that goes beyond fictional narratees and refers to factual readers.[8] As a close friend of the narrator-protagonist and guardian of his memoirs, the editor, quoting Efraín on his deathbed, invites to read in the story "what [Efraín's] tears have erased." The editor concludes the dedication with an important remark: "if you suspend the reading [la lectura] to cry, that weeping will prove I have fulfilled my purpose" (Isaacs 50). The paratext confers several functions to crying: erasure, of memories Efraín willfully left out of his personal account; communion, of intimate feelings and memories; and arrest, of reading and consequently of narrative flow. Thus, the editor, for Silvia Molloy an "expert in *pathos*" (37, emphasis in original), codifies tears as the vicarious kernel of *María* within and beyond the text. From the beginning, the novel "invites us to read tearfully" (Rosenberg 6).[9]

"A los hermanos" sets out the mechanism for the novel's readability on an apparent contradiction: to stop reading in order to cry. Tears, however, serve a mediating, heuristic purpose. Jack Katz, in his study of "out of control" emotions, explores the tensions between language and crying. For Katz, crying is an "emphatic not-speaking," where "one cries on the understanding that *the situation requires a personally embodied form of expression that transcends what speech can do*" (197, emphasis in original). *María* recuperates, in writing, this understanding of a writerly expressive impasse. In the novel, crying acknowledges the limits of language and, at the same time, attests to communication through other means. *María* demands on the part of the reader bodily and emotional response as the precondition for sense-making—crying will prove *María*'s "purpose," the editor states as quoted above. This directed call on pathos confers the reader a restrained agency to identify with the novel's proposed brotherhood of kin spirits. However, since crying presupposes specific ways of identification, it also enables a heuristics of melodrama. To

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[7] Scholars have found a sign of political commitment in Mármol's truncated career. After Rosas' fall, Mármol abandoned his future literary projects. According to Laera, Mármol himself stated that without the political incentive, he could not continue writing (119).

[8] As Brushwood duly notes, the narrator of *María* does not address himself to "sibling-readers" because he makes many references "that would be gratuitous" for the "members of his household" (219).

[9] The paratext does not reveal the identity of *María*'s fictional editor. Rosenberg proposes that Efraín's domineering father may be the unnamed editor, assuming only he could be the sole possessor of Efraín's manuscript (12), whose publication would consist of "[the father's] final attempt at self-aggrandizement" (16). However, fissures in presenting the father as a benevolent *hacienda* patriarch undermine such a reading, as we shall later see.

stop reading, and in tears lifting one's head from the page to look inward, permits pondering on the drama *and* on oneself, crying (ideally speaking that is, not all readers revel in the pleasure of tears). In this vicarious yet embodied understanding of the story and of oneself lies *María*'s relation to the national imagination.[10] Despite the different levels of immersion *María* readers may have had through the decades, the constant appeal to the tears of "kindred spirits" across media stresses the link between *María* and community building. In spite of this emotive and collective appeal, it is important to note that in *María* the community consists of a hierarchical, classed, and raced body politic. Weeping heuristically and empathically incorporates the reader's body to the social body. Thus, *María* places sympathy—*sym-pathos*, the shared experience of suffering—at melodrama's center, and stresses its role as sense-making mediation.[11] For what do we weep in *María*? For star-crossed lovers and lost home.

María's fictive editor conjures up the weeping body, consequently appealing to expressive means other than language, to cognitively mediate between reader and text. This emphasis in bodily response, however, does not counterpoise melodramatic narrative with a pre-linguistic, embodied form of understanding.[12] On the contrary, crying for *María* also springs from a "calculated fiction" that draws on several narrative tropes readily available within the melodramatic regime, such as loss of love and home. But we do not only cry because of the characters' pain. As Franco Moretti has argued regarding literature that makes us weep, "crying is 'triggered'" at a precise "moment" of the reading experience. We cry, Moretti argues, at the moment when characters realize what the reader already knows: that the tension between reality and desire cannot be overcome, that desire is futile (179). This unique shared experience of suffering—*sym-pathos* between characters and reader—operates "via a special manipulation of temporality," observes Linda Williams commenting on Moretti ("Film Bodies" 11). Indeed, Latin American melodrama finds its kernel in the experience of loss, but this very experience also depends on temporalities

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[10] Jane Shattuc, in her critique of imperialist affect in feminist theory and in emotional identification, proposes a racialized "dual hermeneutic" in melodrama: "a positive hermeneutic of the 'good cry' which recuperates the Utopian moment, the authentic kernel, from which [dominant melodramas] draw their emotional power, and a negative hermeneutic that discloses their complicity with white patriarchal ideology" (152). *María* is an excellent example of how "good" and "bad" cries come together in Latin American melodrama. By provoking tears, Isaacs' novel evokes the lost origin in the epitome of racialized patriarchal society: the sugar cane plantation *hacienda*. I will further develop this topic in the following section.

[11] I define 'sympathy' by foregrounding its roots in Ancient Greek: *sym*- 'with,' *pathos*- 'suffering.'

[12] I obliquely refer to subject-object philosophy that finds in the body the center of perception and, arguably, a pre-linguistic medium of consciousness. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's essay "Eye and Mind," for instance, examines how in pictorial art the artist must uncover a "secret of preexistence" (182) in what he or she sees that, in turn, is displayed in his or her art. Prior to pictorial language and later manifest in it, the artist is open to and immersed in the world. See Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Primacy of Perception.* James E. Edie. Ed. Carleton Dallery. Trans. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1964. 159-190. Print.

proper to melodrama, or what Martín-Barbero has termed melodrama's "sense of duration" (72). From the outset, paratexts in both *Amalia* and *María* point to this reading experience, mediated by time, sprung from "calculated fiction" and ill-stared fates. As we shall see, both novels elicit strong feelings of sympathy via outstanding actions and paroxysms of pain, fastened by two key temporalities of melodrama, the "if only" and the "too late," on top of the paratextual voices that guide the reading experience to a considerable extent. These elements and the correlative emotions they impart on readers, iteratively repurposed across media, ingrained both stories in the national imaginations of Argentina and Colombia.

Amalia: Action, Political Repression, and its Alternative

Amalia, initially published as a serialized novel while its author escaped political persecution exiled in Montevideo, draws on melodramatic conventions to concatenate fictive and historical events that took place between May 4 and October 6, 1840. Formalist scholars have highlighted the meticulous attention to temporality in this +700-page novel to suggest that *Amalia* is more concerned with cloak-and-dagger suspense eliciting "a sense of terrifying repression by violence," than with political issues pertaining Juan Manuel de Rosas' dictatorship (Brushwood 39). Conversely, other scholars such as Cristina Iglesia and Amalia Zucotti consider that, first and foremost, *Amalia* exploits what I term a contextual suspense, not only produced in the narrative but also linked to contemporary events. Zucotti pushes this nuanced conception of suspense to consider *Amalia* on the cusp of a "suspense awakened by the historical events [depicted] in the novel, and another type of suspension, that of the political events contemporarily taking place to the moment of publication" (140-1). Building on an incident that at the time received considerable attention in the oppositional press (135)—the trap in which four Unitarians trying to escape to Uruguay were captured and murdered on the night of May 4, 1840—José Mármol wove a politically committed narrative that launched a thematic line in Argentinian storytelling across media: the anti-Rosas narrative.

Today, *Amalia* has arguably lost its monopoly on national representation. As Doris Sommer notes, "it is now *Martín Fierro* (1872)," José Hernández' epic poem, "which people call Argentina's 'epic'" (111).[13] *Pace* Sommer, *Amalia* was culturally pivotal well into the first decades of the twentieth century. Multiple reprints in Latin America and Europe diffused its narrative, while transfers across media revitalized its tale for new readers and spectators. Scholars stress *Amalia*'s aesthetic and historical influence in nineteenth century Argentina. Shaping the relationships between politics and aesthetics, it became a "model" that "created a mythology of the Rosas period" and "defined the characters associated with [the regime]" (Operé 220).[14] The narration itself conveyed this purpose by comparing the historian's pen to the novelist's pen. For *Amalia*'s narrator, the latter permits "with soft and

[13] In chapter 3 I analyze the role of gaucho poetry and gaucho films in Argentine community building.

[14] Unless noted otherwise, all translations from Spanish to English are my own.

fugitive strokes, to delineate […] the physiognomy of an entire époque" (Mármol 419).[15] More influential than Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845) or Echeverría's *El matadero* (1840)—evident in the following "avalanche of Romantic novels [with] *rosista* themes that flooded the country" (Operé 220)—*Amalia* imposed a Manichean model for storytelling motivated by male lead action and star-crossed love.[16] Thus, *Amalia* set the standard for rendering then current civil strife in Argentina via polar opposites (urbane vs. bestial, beauty vs. ugliness, Unitarian vs. Federalist), and successfully disseminated its own idea of nation.

Mármol reworked the story of the historical Captain Lynch, and his three companions, Oliden, Maison, and Riglos, adding two fictional characters: Daniel Bello and Eduardo Belgrano. The main storyline in *Amalia* concerns Bello's attempt to protect his friend Belgrano from assassination by Federalist spies. After a gruesome battle on that ill-starred winter night, in which Bello demonstrates his skill with a mysterious weapon against overwhelming odds, Bello takes his wounded friend to the country house of Amalia, a young and beautiful widow, cousin to Bello. Belgrano and Amalia fall in love at first sight. While the narration leaves them to their idyll in the country house, it focuses on Bello's hyperkinetic conspiring against the dictator in Buenos Aires. Believed by the Federalist to be a trustworthy partisan of Rosas, Bello stands out above all other characters as an ingenious schemer and tireless defender of what he believes to be just. Bello's successful effort in the first chapter turns into deadly failure by the novel's end. In the last chapter, Bello facilitates the wedding between Amalia and Belgrano and arranges for the latter's escape to Montevideo on the night of October sixth. Shortly before the hour of departure, however, Rosas' henchmen storm the house and Bello and Belgrano are murdered in a merciless fight. The narration ambiguously suggests Amalia's death—she falls "exánime" (833), i.e. either breathless or lifeless in Spanish, beside her husband's corpse. The novel concludes with a second paratext that, in Dickensian manner, sums up the outcomes of a handful of secondary characters. To emphasize the mystery surrounding Amalia, the title character, the paratext refuses to shed light on her fate.

Despite the fact that the Amalia-Belgrano story occupies very little text space in the novel, numerous literary critics present their star-crossed love as the center of *Amalia*. Some even venture into imagining offspring never to be found in the text in order to sustain highly arguable readings, in which Amalia's unborn child would be the allegorical stand-in for national cohesion as Doris Sommer has proposed (102). On the contrary, the bulk of the novel follows Daniel Bello and the many obstacles he has to overcome in a Buenos Aires

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[15] The quote continues describing the novel: a "small sketch of the immorality upon which the government of Rosas was based in 1840." Below I will develop the relation between physiognomy and immorality in character description.

[16] In an insightful analysis, Fernando Operé traces *Amalia* influences in depicting the Rosas period throughout the century and in several works, such as Manuela Gorriti's *El guante negro* (1871) and Eduardo Gutiérrez' *Dramas del terror* (1881, 1888) (232-3). *Amalia*'s representational model can also be traced further into the twentieth century and across media. *Una nueva y gloriosa nación* [A New and Glorious Nation, Julián de Ajuria and Albert Kelley 1928] and *El adios del unitario* [The *unitario*'s Good-bye, Edmo Cominetti 1929] exemplify silent cinema and early sound versions of *federal* vs. *unitario* tensions mediated by love at the birth of the Argentine nation.

rife with rumor and fear. Following the episodic narrative style of the serialized novel, most chapters of *Amalia* capitalize on Bello's actions to thrill the reader with ever-present danger. Chapters that do not focus on the protagonist generally consist of self-contained episodes of secondary characters, further constructing an atmosphere of repression in 1840s Buenos Aires. This structure allows for multiple storylines of varying length and importance to come together under the dominant plot around Bello.

As the founding text of anti-Rosas narrative in Argentina, and pioneering novel to forward political exhortation through storytelling, *Amalia* imposed a model within the Latin American melodramatic regime—action melodrama.[17] To better understand *Amalia*'s narrative model, it must be noted that unlike *María*, whose narrative builds upon the loss of a preterit order, *Amalia* is not a fiction about the origins of the nation. In *Amalia* there is no attempt "to make [Argentina's] foundation either organic, mythical, or inevitable" (Civantos 60). On the contrary, the calculated fiction of *Amalia* hefts narrative strategies and immediate political objectives to narratively construct an Argentina risen from political circumstances. Bello, undisputed man of action and in most cases spokesman for Mármol, conveys this sense of internal conflict and unfixed borders in the first anti-Rosas meeting Bello organizes to muster forces against the dictator. In an eloquent speech, he asks: "[was] this Republic, which the Mayo Revolution improvised, a political inconvenience, born out of current necessities, or [should] it be a definitive and long-lasting fact [?]" (Mármol 325). *Amalia* answers this question through Daniel Bello's heroic feats. Bello's unrelenting action in a milieu of political repression visualizes an Argentina *in the making*,[18] not a national project gone awry. The fact that Bello eventually dies at the hands of the *Mazorca* (Rosas' paramilitary) and the long-lasting effect the novel had on Argentine storytelling reinforce *Amalia*'s political stakes. Written at a time of incredible discursive instability, *Amalia* performatively engaged in a dynamic battle for representation, which historically proved

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[17] Because the expression action melodrama is widely used in academic and non-academic circles, it is difficult to pinpoint its origin. In early cinema scholarship for instance, Ben Singer uses the term to describe a thrill-based type of melodrama (304). Linda Williams, in her turn, locates a dialectics of pathos and action at the core of melodrama's general structure (*Playing* 30).

[18] To further stress the instability of this body politic, it is important to note that during the first half of the nineteenth century, the use of the term "Argentina" and its adjectival forms was highly unstable. According to José Carlos Chiaramonte, before and after the independence 'argentino' was equivalent to 'porteño' (from or related to Buenos Aires). After the independence, the word began to be used with a broader meaning only among Buenos Aires inhabitants. *Porteño* writers discursively constructed communities and the territories they encompassed, historically varying in size and expanse. What is most interesting of his argument is that the term, in its many uses, always implies "a relation of possession" (69) of territory and its inhabitants, in which the possessor is clearly Buenos Aires. In the case of *Amalia*, it is very telling that despite the instability of the term, both Rosas and anti-Rosas camps use "Argentina" to describe Argentina as a nation-state. Beyond the immediate political stakes—denouncing the regime—*Amalia* discursively produces an encompassing sense of nation through the mouth of both heroes and villains; a rather nuanced example imposing regimes of visibility through melodramatic narrative.

successful in the pervasive anti-Rosas narrative that henceforth produced and reproduced a melodramatic national imagination.[19]

Daniel Bello is a protean performer who switches roles in his fight against Rosas. His agency, after that of Rosas, is the most developed in the novel. There are multiple parallels between both characters, which some critics attribute to the gothic and fantastic literature substratum in the novel.[20] Besides this interesting remark—suggestive of the equally protean qualities of melodrama—it is more important to stress how *Amalia* does not construct a clear-cut Manichean world in which heroes and villains collide, a common vilification of melodrama. Bello's actions, motivated by the waning "spirit of association" among dissident Argentines, consist of safeguarding his friends and family. And yet, the means to such noble ends range from political scheming to the extortion of underdogs and even murder with his mysterious weapon. Rather than a "romantic hero" whose eloquent cunning and energy denote "a high degree of civilization," as some critics describe him (Civantos 56)—a reading that simplifies then current conflicting forces in the dichotomy Unitarian-civilized-virtuous vs. Federalist-barbarian-villainous—Bello epitomizes a complex conception of the melodramatic hero. Aware of his murky deeds, in his own words "political and moral heresies I need to commit at each step" (Mármol 454), Bello proposes a type of melodramatic action that is both political in its commitment and morally complex. Consequently, *Amalia* does offer a contrast, between a violently repressive body politic and the desire to change it. However, the dichotomy does not visualize political commitment in clear-cut righteous versus wicked terms. With a focus on a morally questionable protagonist, *Amalia* leaves a window open, if ever so slightly, for the reader to consider the moral stakes and the price involved in political change.

Bello's dubious methods in terror-ridden Buenos Aires reveal in scholarship on the novel a symptomatic misreading of the dichotomy "central to the construction of [the] Argentine national identity" (Shumway 62): the civilization *and* barbarism narrative (misread as civilization *or* barbarism). With Bello, *Amalia* reproduces the narrative Argentine intellectuals in exile devised to condemn the regime. Writers such as Esteban

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[19] Several Argentine intellectuals in exile contributed to this discursive construction of the nation through poetry, the essay, and, following Mármol, melodramatic fiction. According to Adriana Amante, "the project [of these intellectuals] is not the return to an immutable origin. It is an attempt to turn a historical beginning that they are elaborating and constituting—the fight against Rosas—into the origin of a new fatherland, borne out of the evil that undermines it to construct the good that will save it" (88). Recent scholarship, however, reads the work of these intellectuals against the grain. Brendan Lanctot questions what he terms "the durable myth [according to which] dissident *letrados* of the Rosas regime wrote in a cultural void" to propose an alternative model where both anti-Rosas and pro-Rosas social actors deployed competing models for hegemony "through a common aesthetics and mutually intelligible, modern political language" (49). Lanctot's contribution nuances the scholarly debate around the Rosas period. But, focused on writing other than fiction, fails to address the importance of melodrama in the sustained construction of the national imagination throughout nineteenth century and early twentieth century Argentina.

[20] See Foster, David William. "*Amalia* como novela gótica." *Anales de literatura hispanoamericana,* 6 (1977): 223-228.

Echeverría, José Mármol, and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento bridged the gap between Buenos Aires and the "desert," the pampas, by discursively constructing the history in terms of a dialectics between civilization and barbarism. This top-down distribution of the sensible, to borrow from Rancière, was not without tensions. It imposed a hierarchical reorganization of represented subjects. The barbarian Other burst into textual space as a formidable opposite, purportedly subordinate to the civilized and yet presented as the agent of telluric, creative forces. Poetry and prose were filled with Indians, dangerous *gauchos*, and a chaotic Nature described nonetheless in sublime landscapes to be contemplated from the safe distance of the written word.[21] Particularly Sarmiento saw the dichotomy as "the forces in conflict which kept Argentina in a state of chaos" (61). His *Facundo* (1845) posited Nature, and that which comes from Nature, as the pre-cultural, untamed opposite of civilized urbanity. But such a divide was not a clear-cut, Manichean opposition. Civilization and barbarism fed from each other. Through Bello's quest, Mármol further contributes to the civilization-barbarism dialectic, zooming in on its tensions in urban space.

Barbarism in *Amalia* is not related to Nature; instead, the narration locates barbarism in the heart of Buenos Aires. Urban barbarity makes itself evident through the destruction of lives and property at the hands of Rosas' henchmen. The sustained atmosphere of terror depicts a corrupted world, which María Rosa Rojo describes as "the degradation of a previous happy state, led by an intelligent and perverse will (Rosas)" (79).[22] Strikingly, such decay demands equally intelligent and perverse response. Bello's weapon reifies the protagonist's involvement in this violence-ridden atmosphere. From the opening fight on, Bello skillfully wields and is sole possessor of a mysterious mechanical devise whose name is only revealed roughly 600 pages later: the "*casse-tête*" (634). The mute blows Bello delivers with his "head breaker" and the sustained mystery surrounding the weapon intensifies the relation between the deadly artifact and his user. To further develop Bello's dark side, when the weapon rests on its sheath, he revels in the deadly consequences of his political machinations (234). The protagonist does not demonstrate clear moral superiority compared to his enemies, nor do he's actions demand recognition of virtue on the part of his friends, a common melodramatic convention (Brooks 52).

This is not to say that Bello is as bloodthirsty as his enemies, for in melodrama a contrast between opposing characters is paramount for the production of empathy in the reader. Bello leaves the justification of his deeds to the narrator who presents his actions as means to higher political ends. The narrator defends Bello as the most "pure" and "European" person in Federalist gatherings for instance (352), constantly stressing his European qualities understood as refined qualities. But Bello's comportment suggests how

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[21] For an analysis of the tensions between cultural modernization and the rural in the nineteenth and twentieth century Argentine essay, see Graciela Montaldo's *De pronto, el campo: literatura argentina y tradición rural* in the Bibliography.

[22] In her argument, Rojo refers to a lost Natural, pre-cultural "happy state." Her idea of degradation, therefore, involves human action, and particularly human action within an urban environment, on a previously harmonious order. Therefore, this idea of a "happy state" is not related to a melodramatic "space of innocence" or Amalia-Belgrano idyll in the novel, which I will discuss below.

the protagonist consists of a *violent* European, narratively complicating the then current civilization/barbarism rhetoric.

Amalia's morally complex formulation springs from the absence of a real or imagined origin in its narrative structure. As previously mentioned, this foundational melodrama does not revolve around the return to a previous (idealized) order. Peter Brooks notes that melodrama tends to open by presenting a moment of virtue, figured as innocence, taking pleasure in itself (29). Linda Williams has further emphasized how "gardens and rural homes are the stereotypical icons of such innocence" (*Playing* 28). "The most enduring forms of the mode," she argues, "are often suffused with nostalgia for a virtuous place that we like to think we once possessed, whether in childhood or the distant past of the nation" (coincidentally, these two moments being the kernel of *María*, as we shall later see). The construction of a virtuous origin from which the nation would grow imposes a specific readability; the purpose of the protagonists, and the novel in general, is to return to the once (or never) possessed initial state of virtue as innocence. In the case of *Amalia*, some scholars, following Doris Sommer's analysis, locate the idea of origin in Amalia and Belgrano's idyll (Civantos, Laera).[23] This reading is not entirely unfounded. In a novel that begins with the well-known May 4th massacre, the gardens of Amalia and her exquisitely decorated home offer a remarkable change of (s)pace.

The vicious, hyperkinetic public space Bello inhabits contrasts with the private, almost atemporal quarters in which Amalia and Belgrano meet and love each other. In Amalia's residence, the novel's visceral velocity, for lack of a better word, comes to a halt. Amalia and Belgrano, "two angels without wings" (Mármol 428), dwell in a "secret temple [adoratorio]" (488), surrounded by veils and delicate perfumes. The novel invests these two characters with a divine veneer, as the sustained otherworldly imagery suggests. Particularly Amalia, exquisitely languid but not suggestive of the *femme fatale*, becomes a metaphysical figure: "Amalia, we repeat, was not a woman but a goddess," (243) the narrator proclaims. Only her "inhexaustible wealth" (Vidal 61) anchors Amalia's seraphic nature to the physical world, materialized in the fine objects decorating her house and body. Her affluence (of which we never know the origin) highlights the frailty of her out-of-this-world space of innocence, when compared to the rusticity and poverty of the Rosas henchmen lurking around it. Despite Bello's efforts, this space is not fully insulated from lurking danger. A raced espionage network—treacherous black servants at the service of Rosas—forces this idyllic space to move. When Amalia's *Barracas* house becomes the object of scrutiny, she and Belgrano must relocate to a second home, the "casa sola," in the opposite side of the city. Mobility stresses the uprootedness proper to this space of innocence, consequently undermining its reading in terms of foundational space. It does have a crucial function that will prove meaningful at the end of the novel, however. Amalia's quarters, along with the emotional investment readers confer on the lovers' idyll, allude to the social order proposed in contrast of the Rosas regime: the markedly hierarchical society of the Europeanizing, landed bourgeoisie. Not for nothing does the

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[23] For an interesting comparative analysis of the novel and the influence of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, that albeit fails to question Sommer's allegorical reading, see: Bonnie Frederick. "Stowe and the Virtuous Mother: Argentina 1852-1910." *Journal of Women's History*. 18.1. Spring 2006: 101-120

novel also describe Amalia and Belgrano in class terms: they make part of "a *caste* as democratic in politics, as aristocratic in tone and manners," the narrator explains (298, my emphasis).

In the absence of a virtuous origin from which the nation would grow, *Amalia* centers on action to represent a nation in the making. In this sense, action stresses the novel's performative role in positing a dominant regime of visibility among highly unstable visual regimes. Again, Bello's complex personality and his weapon of choice point to the political stakes in the novel's proposed visualization of 1840s Argentina. When Bello shows the weapon to Amalia, finally revealing to the reader its mysterious mechanism, he lingers in a philological rumination over the weapon's name: "In English, it is called *life-preserver*; in French, *casse-tête*; and in Spanish, it does not have a special name, but we will use the French one, which is the most expressive, because it means as you [Amalia] know, *rompe-cabezas*" (634). Bello's commentary further builds his vigilante character, more seduced by what takes life than by what preserves it. Most interestingly, the three languages connected through this fictional weapon—English, French, and Spanish—allude to conflicting political agents inside and outside the text. Bello's word choice associates him with the Francophile opposition to Rosas, an admiration common among young Argentine intellectuals at the time in response to the French blockade of Buenos Aires while Rosas continued to traffic with England stifling home industry (Sommer 85). To play with Bello's *rompe-cabezas*, a "head-breaker" but also a "puzzle" in Spanish, his weapon also reads as a metonymy of *Amalia*. Particularly, the novel's attempt to put narrative and historical pieces together in order to impose a specific (melodramatic) regime over then current, conflicting regimes of visibility—focused on determining conflicting parties in the construction of the nation (Rosas / anti-Rosas) and condemning the dictatorship.

The end of the novel corroborates *Amalia*'s political stakes in visualizing an Argentina in the making. After the *casse-tête*, and the several Europeanist allusions scattered throughout the text, the final scene corroborates *Amalia*'s political stance in the guise of Francophile, anti-Rosas narrative. In the final chapter, the novel brings together all the narrative threads by the hand of Daniel Bello. Importantly, historical fact triggers the denouement. When Bello learns that Juan Lavalle's liberation army, which historically stood ground on the outskirts of Buenos Aires "for a painfully long time" (Brushwood 40), has withdrawn, he knows that he must help Belgrano and others leave the country. But the *Mazorca* moves faster than he does. On the night of the escape, Rosas henchmen storm the "casa sola" with one mindset: to kill everybody on sight. In the skirmish, Bello fails to deliver deadly blows with his *casse-tête*. Belgrano, in his turn, retreats from effeminate passivity to display the male bravado he flaunted in the first chapter. This time, instead of using swords he fights back with pistols. Francine Masiello notes how the "gender system in flux" in *Amalia* functions "as a metaphor for dissent in the nation" (30).[24] Belgrano's

[24] Masiello, and other scholars after her, have meticulously studied female agency in *Amalia*. In this section, however, I focus on male action as an example among others of action in the face of political repression. For studies on female agency and its limits, see Masiello and Civantos, as well as Graciela Batticuore's "Cartas de mujer: cuadros de una escena borrada (lectoras y autoras durante el Rosismo)" in Iglesia, Cristina. Ed. *Letras y divisas: ensayos sobre literatura y rosismo*. Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1988: 37-52.

return to agency goes hand in hand with the use of the French language. Capitalizing on the henchmen's supposed ignorance, he shouts instructions to Bello in French: "—Save [Amalia] through the living room door" (Mármol 832). Much like the epigraph in Sarmiento's *Facundo*—"On ne tue point les idées" (30)—Belgrano's address consists of a classed address where understandability comes into play. Directed to another member of the elite (Bello) that, like Sarmiento, can understand French and manipulate it in the service of his political agenda, Belgrano's order rhetorically subjects uneducated, racialized social actors as barbarian Others, while supporting a view of the Same as Francophile elite.[25]

When Bello and Belgrano's efforts are of little avail, the untimely arrival of a savior underscores *Amalia*'s political proposition. Right after the hoodlums murder Belgrano and gravely injure Bello, the latter's father bursts in. Bello recognizes the limits of his agency, "—Here, father, here. You save Amalia—said Daniel, when he heard and recognized his father" (833). In response, Don Antonio flaunts parental authority to (belatedly) stop the killing. The Federalist old man conjures the name of the "Restorer" (Rosas), "by a single word [Don Antonio] had suspended the dagger which the same word had raised to be the instrument of so much misfortune and crime" (833). The protagonists' vicious murder makes clear the antagonizing forces in the novel (Rosas/anti-Rosas, instead of Federalist/Unitarian), with victims holding the moral higher ground. But it is the last uttered word in the novel that ultimately puts the pieces together of this Argentine nation in the making. The *name* of the father remains unquestioned. It is the man who occupies that position (Rosas) and the menacing lower classes he leads who are to be replaced in the higher echelons of the body politic by the Europeanizing, patrician elite.

Amalia does not represent this alternative social order. On the contrary, with a tragic ending, *Amalia* proposes such order as a *project* through the narrative conventions of the melodramatic regime—particularly the temporality of the *if only*, a conception of narrative time linking fictive *and* real events in the service of political commentary.[26] If only Daniel Bello (and kindred spirits) had had the chance to overthrow Rosas, the novel proposes, a just Argentina would grow. In the novel, this project—making Argentina—is based on *ucronía*, a Spanish term with no direct translation into English denoting a particular reconstruction of history premised on assuming never-occurred events as

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[25] Ricardo Pliglia has noted how mid-nineteenth century Argentine literature was constituted within "a relationship of difference and alliance" with French literature taken as world literature (130). His insightful analysis on Sarmiento's misquotation of Diderot, which he attributes to Fortoul, foregrounds Sarmiento's strategic aim at creating a distance between himself "and the barbarism from which he becomes an exile by resorting to culture" (132).

[26] Compared to scholarship on the melodramatic temporality of the "too late," the temporality of the "if only" remains understudied. For an interesting analysis of the "appeal" of the "if only," related to self-victimization in racial melodrama, see Jane Gaine's "*The Scar of Shame*: Skin Color and Caste in Black Silent Melodrama." Marcia Landy. Ed. *Imitations of Life: a Reader on Film & Television Melodrama.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991. 331-347. Print.

plausible.[27] Based on what has never happened, the no-time (*ou-khronos*) of fiction that readers nevertheless experience *in time* through reading, *Amalia* materializes its political project in engaging action melodrama. Like Don Antonio, the novel bemoans "with a voice of thunder, but in pain [adolorida]" (832) what could have happened (Bello's cause fulfilled) if outcomes had been otherwise. However, it is important to note that the sense of justice in this novel is quite specific. The Francophile substratum, along with the restatement of the fatherly figure, propose to substitute Rosas with an aristocratic Republican order that betrays anxieties regarding upward mobility of raced and classed Others. Narratively, the novel's proposition builds up to a climax in the final skirmish. Nevertheless, throughout the text commentary on emergent social actors naturalizes what the final scene makes clear. Iteratively and in different ways, *Amalia* warns against "the excessive abundance of new faces," who populate the social order and yet could never be associated with the protagonists. These new faces consist of "coarse, stiff, and quiet men that quite obviously reveal that they are not in their sphere when they mix with the society to which they do not belong" (298), the narrator explains. *Amalia* visualizes an Argentina in the making. An Argentina to be fashioned perpetuating the immobile order of the great patrician families, the landed bourgeoisie, who saw their colonial privileges and Republican dreams at risk under Rosas. Indeed, *Amalia* produced "one of Argentina's most durable guiding fictions" (Shumway 112). And yet it was a fiction that showed the way to societal revolution by inventing social difference and performing it.

Through scattered remarks, the narrator uncovers the relation between the melodramatic regime and the experience of modernity. If representation as a contested site underpins the "modern political pact", according to Graciela Montaldo (30), the melodramatic regime recasts what can be narrated, by whom, and for whom within this pact. In the case of *Amalia*, the melodramatic regime deploys a fully hierarchical vision of the community it portrays. The narrator' comments confer a limited degree of visibility to those "new faces" as a means to determine their place in the social body: they are where they should not be. Thus, his brief observations point to the heuristic role of melodrama in the modern political pact. By giving narrative saliency to the perils of specific social actors, namely the protagonists, specific partitions of the sensible shape and reproduce hierarchies in the social order within and beyond the text (in later chapters we will discuss how the melodramatic regime can also challenge visual regimes premised on partition via distribution). *Amalia* operates a partition of the sensible to establish (or better yet propose) the contours of a traditionalist collectivity, while warning the reader of possible sources of disruption for that proposed collectivity, i.e. emergent social actors in the public sphere. In this case, the melodramatic regime singles out undesirables to be expelled from the social order. Through action and thrills, it puts them in stark contrast with the action-driven heroes, standard-bearers of the (wronged) patrician elite. *Amalia* epitomizes how, through the melodramatic regime, competing social actors denounce how a certain community *is* and propose how it *should be*. The contours of the community *Amalia* portrays posited a national community premised on social difference. As mentioned above,

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[27] The *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* defines *ucronía as*: "Reconstrucción lógica, aplicada a la historia, dando por supuestos acontecimientos no sucedidos, pero que habrían podido suceder." Web.

Amalia gained a stronger hold in the national imagination through iteration, as it was republished and repurposed in periodicals and moving images during the teens.

María: Home is Where the Heart Was

Jorge Isaacs' *María*, unlike Mármol's *Amalia* premised on action in the service of political change, laments the impossible return to a (happy) previous order. Thus, *María* makes its political critique of the present by nostalgically constructing a world out of reach in the past. In this sense, impossibility connects the temporalities of *María* and *Amalia* at the core. Traditional readings of *María* focus on the star-crossed lovers story between María and Efraín, children of a powerful plantation owner. *María*, Silvia Molloy notes, has been read as "a lachrymose novel that yearns to revive, and share with the reader, the loss of a first love" (36).[28] With a slight change of emphasis, post-Sommer readings try to cope with Sommer's definition of *María* as an "insoluble crisis" novel that does not seamlessly fit her allegorical model of national union through love (180), and yet came to epitomize the Latin American nation-building novel.[29] Without challenging her allegorical approach, these readings demean the star-crossed love component in *María* to "rescue the story from its carefully woven veil of tears" by focusing on more "complex" aspects such as "self-contradiction, irony, and dialogical tension" (Rosenberg 5). Indeed, these appear in *María*, but by no means do they elevate the novel over other purportedly simple melodramatic texts or conventions. On the contrary, melodrama capitalizes on these and other narrative registers to move the reader, sometimes with such rhetorical artistry as to elicit involuntary bodily responses such as tears.[30]

María, for Antonio Benítez-Rojo "the most widely read nineteenth-century Spanish American novel and the one about which most has been written" (458), epitomizes Latin American affinity with melodrama across time. Countless reprints and transfers to other media attest to its success in Colombia and Latin America. Particularly in Colombia, *María* attests to the role of melodrama in the multiple processes of state formation. For a century and a half, reprints, *feuilletons*, as well as film, theatre, and *radionovela* and *telenovela* adaptations revitalized its story for readers, listeners, and spectators. In the realm of the palpable and against the ravages of time, a museum and monuments in the Cauca Valley, Colombia, fix its story in brick and stone. Most impressively, *María*-inspired imagery and excerpts from the novel make melodrama the currency of Colombians' everyday in the

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[28] Recent scholarship also looks at the star-crossed lovers theme in secondary characters. See, for instance, Carmiña Navia Velasco's "*María*, una lectura desde los subalternos." *Poligramas*. 23 (2005): 31-54 and Alfonso Múnera's "*María* de Jorge Isaacs: la otra geografía." *Poligramas*. 25 (2006): 51-61.

[29] Following Sommer's lead, most of these readings delve into the title character's Jewishness to try and resolve the aporia. See, for instance, Paulk and Rosenberg in the bibliography. Gustavo Faverón Patriau offers an exception to this approach, questioning Sommer's interpretation and arguing that *María* does not propose unification through fraught *mestizaje*, but rather is a novel of exile and Diaspora (341).

[30] Particularly Franco Moretti (quoted above) has analyzed the narrative conventions that elicit readerly tears and that I attribute to the "calculated fiction" of melodrama.

current 50.000 peso banknote. A unique case of the "cash nexus," a nineteenth century literary trope "in which representation is up for grabs" (*Realist* 40), the banknote demonstrates melodrama's ubiquitous presence and versatility to monopolize the national imagination. (For comparison's sake, a US equivalent would consist of a hundred dollar bill in which little Eva, or Uncle Tom, along with Harriet Beecher Stowe appear on one side of the bill and a rendering of the "Ol' Kentucky Home" appears on the other). Instead of founding fathers, the banknote visualizes and circulates *María*'s theme of loss—of love and of the patriarchal *hacienda*—as the origin of the nation.

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, *María*'s opening paratext posits tears and crying as the criterion for the novel's readability. Tears evidence the novel's narrative complexity and mechanisms to appeal readers across generations. Not only the fictional editor's text but the text itself points several times to crying as its purpose (Isaacs 78, 284). In *María*, tears mediate between reader and text as they do between present and past. And most importantly, as proposed in the opening paratext, tears attest to the novel's successful sharing, by means of melodramatic representation, of a specific experience of loss. This loss, as Molloy has keenly noted, is not the loss of "a loved one;" rather, *María* "weeps a greater loss and in tears evokes … the fatherly home to which [one] can never return" (38). More specifically, *María* laments the loss of the slave-holding *hacienda*, the plantation system, and the social status that comes with it. Key to determining the novel's visual regimes and political stance, Efraín, a character-narrator who retrospectively tells his tale, "does not look at what he sees but at its memory" [no mira lo que ve sino su recuerdo] (41). He pictures his recollection of the irrecoverable *hacienda* under the melodramatic temporality of the "too late." Compared to *Amalia,* we can see how in both novels longing takes place, but in *María* it is, paradoxically, a longing for a non-democratic political regime. Through Efraín's account, *María* makes the reader feel at home in the patriarchal *hacienda* (locus of wealth, beauty, and innocence) only to impart, at the end, a sense of uprooted homelessness. Implicating the reader, this feeling of loss constitutes the novel's critique on the present.[31] This sense of loss lays the ground to deploy a political, albeit exclusivist, claim under the seemingly contradictory logic of melodrama where, as Linda Williams argues "the pathos of suffering … also seems to entitle action" (*Playing* 32). Within the shifting visual regimes of mid-nineteenth century Colombia, *María*'s plantation nostalgically spelled out "the will to preserve a social order" (Lagos-Pope 19) premised on landownership, heredity, and social immobility. Even though the novel presents the extended plantation system through a series of couples related to different modes of

[31] Here I follow national cinema scholar Andrew Higson who points to the critical aspect of nostalgia: "Nostalgia is always in effect a critique of the present, which is seen as lacking something desirable in the past. Nostalgia always implies that there is something wrong with the present, but it does not necessarily speak from the point of view of right wing conservatism" (238). *María* could be read as a compelling example of raced and classed conservatism, never gone out of print (Paulk 52), premised on the nostalgic treatment of the plantation system.

landownership supported by the *hacienda*,[32] I will limit my analysis to the main characters and their vicissitudes: the father, his son, Efraín, and his adopted daughter, María.

To better understand *María*'s role in shifting visual regimes and nation-building, it is important to consider its historical context, if only briefly. Compared to other Latin American nations, Colombia experienced, at a rather "slow pace," "one of the most irregular" processes of national integration (Benítez-Rojo 457). "That slowness," Benítez-Rojo argues, "caused writers to search in the past for causes to explain or mythify the fragmentation of national identity they saw in the present." Casting aside Benítez-Rojo's teleological undertones, Colombia did experience a rather fragmented process of national cohesion. Isaacs wrote his novel in a period between civil wars (1864-66). Abolition had occurred shortly before, in 1851, and had been one of the main causes for civil war in the Cauca Valley and other slave-holding areas. In these struggles, Isaacs took the Conservative side (Sommer 178-9)[33] in his homeland, the Cauca Valley. This region, Peter Wade explains, by mid-nineteenth century had developed a "fully fledged 'slave society,'" with all the complex economic and social dynamics that resulted from the plantation system (8). Abolition threatened the planter class to which Isaacs' family (and Efraín's fictional family) belonged. Later in the 1860s, and under Liberal dominance, the country underwent land reforms that further undermined the economic and social privileges of the planter class (Sommer 181). By then, Isaacs' family had already lost its properties and *María*'s author worked in a remote area away from the Cauca Valley.

Scholars have stressed how "the national crisis was also a personal one for Isaacs and provides an important backdrop to a reading of *María* as a foundational fiction" (Paulk 51). A melodramatic reading of the novel complicates such statements, which link storytelling, historically specific community building, and the practice of everyday life. If in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries melodrama "becomes the form both to register change and to process change, in particular mediating relations between a lost but problematic past and the present" (Bratton, Cook, and Gledhill 3), melodrama indeed plays an important role in representing—and comprehending—key historical junctures in Latin America. Melodrama, in this sense, deploys important mediating roles in shaping and making sense of social relationships and functions within a given community at specific historical moments (Martín-Barbero 64). Thus, reading *María* too hastily as foundational fiction (historically bound to national and personal crises proper to mid-nineteenth century Colombia) eschews the novel's role in other historically specific (competing) visual regimes within the melodramatic regime. Particularly relevant for this chapter, the rubric of foundational fiction obscures early twentieth century forms of "repurposing" *María*, i.e. borrowing narrative content from one medium to another (Bolter and Grusin 45). In the

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[32] *María* presents three distinct worlds through a series of heterosexual couples: María and Efraín's, the aristocracy of the *latifundistas*, landowners of great estates; Nay and Sinar's, slave labor; and the world of Tránsito and Braulio, wage labor on rented land.

[33] Much like the Argentine political landscape, divided between Unitarians and Federalists, the Colombian nineteenth century suffered innumerable crises between the Conservative (centralist) and Liberal (federalist) parties. The bloody struggle grew well into the twentieth century to find its sadistically vicious peak in the historical period known as "the Violence" (1946-1953).

final section of this chapter, I will further examine *María*'s mediating relations within the melodramatic regime under the lens of repurposing, a particular form of remediation.

Recently, scholars have questioned the reception of *María* in mid-nineteenth century Colombia as foundational fiction. Carolina Alzate has pointed out important alternative narratives to *María* for the Colombian foundational project: the novels of Soledad Acosta de Samper and Eugenio Díaz Castro. Of the latter's *Manuela* (1856) Alzate concludes, "this novel refuses to idealize the landscape and locate in it populations who, docile and thankful, accept the lettered project that excludes them" (133)[34]—the polar opposite of *María*'s proposal as we shall see. In a similar vein, historian Marco Palacios notes that by the time *María* was published, it had very little impact on the formation of national identity, calling into question its status as "national [novel]" at that time (689). Further, contemporaries to Isaacs also reveal the instability of visual regimes in mid-nineteenth century Colombia regarding the idea of nation and the role of *María* within this idea. Tellingly, José María Vergara y Vergara, then a prominent intellectual powerbroker, praised the novel as an "indefinable," "triple being" comprised of British, Spanish, and local components (3)—therefore not related to a foundational project.[35] Additionally, he foresaw great success for *María* "not only in the fatherland [patria] but also in Europe" (7) and concludes with a twofold congratulation: to Isaacs "for being the author of such oeuvre; and to the State of Cauca, for being the fatherland [patria] of [Isaacs]" (8).[36] Similar to the term Argentina and its adjectival forms in mid-century Argentina (see note 18), Vergara y Vergara's ambivalent use of *patria* (first referring to Colombia as a whole and later to the State of Cauca) attests to the highly unstable meaning of the term.[37] Consequently, *María*, just as *Amalia*, cannot be considered a foundational fiction from the outset. It was the (multimedia) repetition of its story—the loss of the patriarchal *hacienda*—that inscribed *María* into the national imagination, turning it into a melodramatic imagination nostalgically premised on the irretrievable past. I will return to remediation in both narratives in the final section of this chapter.

Briefly, *María* tells the story of Efraín, the son of a plantation owner in the Cauca Valley, and his heart-rending experience of loss. Also the narrator of the novel, Efraín begins his account by describing the tearful separation from his family at fourteen years of age, when he is sent to study in the capital, Bogotá.[38] Six years later, he returns home and

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[34] Alzate strongly relies in her analysis on Ángel Rama's notion of *The Lettered City* and the figure of the *letrado*, or "lettered man." Rama's seminal book foregrounds the power of written discourses and its agents in the historical formation of Latin American urban societies. I will further refer to Rama's work in chapter two.

[35] Review initially published in the Bogotá periodical *La Caridad* (June, 1868).

[36] By the time Vergara y Vergara wrote his review, Cauca and the Cauca Valley where a single, albeit disputed, political community.

[37] In a similar way, Manuel Mejía Vallejo recognizes the origins of Latin American regionalism, the discourse that favors regional rather than national cultural and political forms of affiliation: "[In *María*] we do not find *costumbrismo*, but a true, deep, and anticipated regionalism. *María* preceded regionalism across the Americas" (n.p.)

[38] Scholars concur in analyzing the passive voice of the novel's opening sentence as the marker of the patriarchal dynamics in *María* and Efraín's subservience to his father's will

falls in love with his cousin María, a distant relative Efraín's father adopted at age of three and whom he raised as his own daughter. Efraín cherishes the hope to marry María shortly after his arrival from Bogotá. It is important to note, however, that kinship is not an obstacle for the lovers' plans; rather, Efraín's love for María finds its first and subsequent obstacles in questioning his father's irrevocable determination to send Efraín to Europe to study medicine with the intent to secure the family's financial and social dominance at a time when the planter class found itself threatened by change. Efraín's father insists that he go to London and grants that, on the condition of successfully completing his education, he may return and marry María. The lovers fear Efraín's departure, foreseeing that it will keep them forever apart. And indeed their forebodings prove to be true. Their future happiness is first threatened by an epileptic attack María suffers right after Efraín leaves for a short hunting trip and then by a marriage proposal from a friend of the family. Because of Efraín's extended voyage to Europe, María suffers a recurrence of her illness and eventually dies. Although Efraín is called to return with the hope that his presence will heal María, he arrives home too late. Back in a Cauca Valley devoid of love and the plantation system (his father was forced to sell the hacienda and relocate the family in the city of Cali), Efraín visits María's tomb and inconsolably weeps as he clings to the cross. The final appearance of the black bird, a recurring bad omen in the novel, makes Efraín shudder with dismay and ride into a dark horizon.

As mentioned above, *María* presents a remarkable symmetry dividing the plantation world and its inhabitants in twos. These spatial, classed, raced, and gendered bipartitions revolve around, and are shaped by, one single character: Efraín's father. Interestingly, he remains nameless throughout the novel. His intentionally suppressed name foregrounds his function as *pater familias* both inside and outside the household. Core of the plantation system, the father exerts a possessive force on the land and its dwellers, including his aristocratic family. Taking advantage of his unquestionable authority, the father gives—and takes—at will. He incarnates "the interests of the family, God's will, Destiny … (familial and social) Morals, economic security, the Law" (Borello 71). For the most part, the narrator presents the father as a benevolent patriarch: "my father, without ceasing to be the master, offered an affectionate treatment to his slaves" (Isaacs 61). Particularly the marriage of a slave couple, Bruno and Remigia, serves to display his generosity. The father grants the slaves shelter, dance, and money for the bride's dress, as recompense for their loyalty, laboriousness, and observance of the religious duties of confession (62). Slaves, on their part, recognize the father's authority and conditional generosity, reproducing a pyramidal social structure with the "master" at its apex, followed by the *amito*, the "little master," Efraín (61). The father's ubiquitous influence imposes an extended familial structure across the plantation. Further, Efraín epitomizes the complexities of this system in which renters, unlike his father's slaves, do not call him little master but "*niño* Efraín" (71, 111, 118, 256, 273),[39] both a title of authority as well as an infantilizing yet naturalized form of subjection.

(Magnarelli, Rosenberg, Sommer)—"Era yo niño aún cuando me alejaron de la casa paterna" (Isaacs 53).

[39] In Colombia, it is "an ancient custom among humble peoples to call *niño* or *niña* the sons and daughters of high class families" regardless of their age, Mario Carvajal explains in his 1967 edition of *María* (Qtd in Isaacs 118, note 5).

By this nuanced mode of address, Efraín is denied full access to adulthood throughout the novel.

The novel presents the father's authority, revolving around possession, through sexual economies related to classed and raced forms of subordination. In Bruno and Remigia's wedding, the father has the first dance with the bride. Borello reads in this scene a "clear allusion" to patriarchal society's *droit de seigneur*, the right of the master to have sexual intercourse with the wife of the vassal (in this case, slave) on her wedding night (68). There are no other purported allusions of this right in the novel. However, the advances Efraín makes to subordinate women outside (but not inside) the household point to the sexual prerogatives figures of authority confer upon themselves in the plantation. In the novel, Efraín functions as a matchmaker of sorts among his father's subject-employees. As go-between of sexual economies, Efraín does not demand sexual rights from subordinate women, but overtly expresses his desire through innuendo-filled dialogues and titillating descriptions of (female) everyday chores (most notably in episodes on Salomé, a sensuous young *mulatta* and daughter to one of the plantation's renters).

The fatherly influence within the family household also revolves around the exercise of power and control over sexual economies. Scholars have often remarked the ambiguously sexual tenor of the relations between the father, Efraín, and the title character, María (Skinner 61, R. Williams 350-351). Particularly in what several *María* scholars have called the "haircut scene," the centripetal forces of the plantation system are played out converging in the fatherly figure. The scene begins when the father calls for María to cut his hair while Efraín takes dictation. While María cuts his hair, the father makes several flirtatious remarks to María that assert his (sexual) superiority while subordinating his son. Alluding to his virility, the father boasts of his thick head of hear and at the same time admonishes Efraín while infantilizing him: "—Careful, *niño*, with making any mistakes" (165, my emphasis). The scene concludes when the father places back on María's hair a rose that fell from her braids, in another calculated exercise of power. Picking up the flower faster than María, he says "—I will put it were it was, as recompense for [a job well done]." Placing the rose, the father says to María (and Efraín): "—I can still inspire envy." Retaining the young lady who tried to excuse herself, he kisses her forehead and adds with calculated ambiguity: "Tonight will not be like yesterday, we will finish early" (165). As Rosenberg suggests, "the hair cut scene, acted out in Efraín's presence as if challenging him, suggests the reification of the father's 'yo' at the expense of his son's" (15). This overstated assertion of the father's "I," epitomizes the extent of fatherly authority in the plantation, from owning immense spans of land and its dwellers to its most minute, familial ramifications within the *hacienda*.

Even though the novel presents erotically tense episodes such as the ones discussed above, Efraín the narrator overall describes the plantation as a bucolic land he longs to return to. Silvia Molloy keenly notices how the temporality of Efraín's world, mediated by his recollection, consists of a "time outside of time" (43). By resorting to memory, the narrator not only negates his present economic ruin,[40] but also refuses to see the plantation

[40] In an episode where the father receives news of a considerable economic setback, the narrator reveals his present, precarious economy while lamenting the ruin of the planter class: "Never again shall I … contemplate those light-filled landscapes, like in the happy

for what it is: an exploitation machine on the cusp of feudal and capitalist orders centered on a single authority. This is not to propose an anachronistic reading of Efraín's purported lack of social awareness.[41] It is to highlight the narrator's choice *not to visualize* the plantation as a site of production. On the contrary, Efraín envisions the plantation as a bucolic land, indifferent to the time of capitalist productivity, once possessed and never to be regained.

Efraín refrains from describing the plantation as a site of production in order to impose his own bucolic perspective. Shortly after his return from Bogotá, Efraín and the father visit the latter's "valley haciendas." Efraín notices how the father "had considerably bettered his properties: a costly and beautiful sugar factory [and] many acres of sugar cane" (Isaacs 60), among other improvements. The description quickly lists the infrastructural upgrades to then linger over Efraín's view of the same location:

> One afternoon … my father, Higinio (the foreman), and I returned from the fields to the factory. They were talking about completed work and work to be done; I was concerned with less important matters. I was thinking about the days of my childhood. The peculiar smell of knocked down woods … the hubbub of the parrots on guava trees … the distant sound of a shepherd's horn, echoed by the mountains: the castrueras of the slaves who slowly returned with tools on their shoulders … everything reminded me of the afternoons in which my sisters, María, and I, abusing from my mother's permission tenaciously obtained, *took pleasure* [nos solazábamos] picking up guavas from our favorite trees … and spying parakeet chicks on the corral fences. (61, my emphasis)

Efraín pictures the plantation as a "space of innocence," the crucial locus in melodrama from which one comes and yearns to return to, a place where virtue figured as innocence "tak[es] pleasure in itself" (*Melodramatic* 29). Unlike *Amalia*, premised on the lack of such space and the consequent will to change the present, *María* critiques the present deploying Efraín's idealized recollection of the past. In this way, through pathos, *María* looks to the past to lament the present demise of the planter class, and implicate the reader in the desire of its return.

The description unproblematically depicts the plantation as a harmonious, luscious landscape filled with family memories and, paradoxically, Arcadian slaves. Several scholars have noticed how the narrator takes a poetic license when referring to the horn and shepherding, a practice foreign to the Cauca Valley and familiar to pastoral poetry.[42] They have failed to see, however, that the colon (at the center of the quotation) joins slaveholding and paradisiacal imagery together. By juxtaposition and serving as an illustration of the preceding clause, the slave "castrueras" *constitute* the shepherd's horn. The text further explains this metaphorical substitution in the Glossary at the end of the novel. A common nineteenth century paratextual device that epistemically inscribes the

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days of my childhood and the beautiful days of my teenage: *today* strangers dwell in my parents' house!" (178, my emphasis).

[41] Borello traces and challenges such reading (67-8, and note 2).

[42] See Molloy (44, notes 15 and 16).

national territory while appropriating the raced Other,[43] the glossary defines *castrueras* as a "rural musical instrument such as the one attributed to the divinity Pan" (Isaacs 334). By opting to liken the African slave to the Arcadian shepherd, the narrator proposes a specific visual regime: making invisible the problems inherent to the slaveholding plantation while foregrounding a virtuous, almost atemporal body politic premised on social immobility and heredity.[44]

Throughout the novel, Efraín associates his idealized plantation with the title character: "the image of María came back to my memory. Those lonely planes, silent woods, flowers, birds, and waters, why did they speak to me of her? What was there of María? … I was looking at Eden" (72). Scholars have analyzed this discursive dual construction of love for idealized land and idealized woman (Menton 252). Some have even ventured to read in María and her untimely death an allegory for the demise of the plantation system (Henao Restrepo 11). Recent scholarship, however, questions María's seamless connection to the land and, I add, the plantation system, on the grounds of her inherent Otherness as Jewish *conversa* (Faverón Patriau, Paulk) and—unlike Efraín—her (limited) resistance to the fatherly law (Borello, Lagos-Pope). These two aspects further explain the ambiguous father-Efraín-María triangle, shed light on the sexual economies governing the plantation, and ultimately make clear the proposition at stake in *María*'s visual regime fixed on nostalgically extolling the patriarchal hacienda.

Rather than reading María as an extension or allegory of the land, her Otherness and limited agency lay the ground for the star-crossed lovers theme and, consequently, make possible the assertion of patriarchal authority and mores in the novel. As Jewish *conversa*, María occupies a rather unstable position in the novel, oscillating between object of desire and paradigm of (Catholic) virtue. Traditional readings highlight the numerous comparisons the narrator establishes between María and the Virgin Mary, making the former a living, abject model of the latter.[45] Conversely, recent analyses foreground ambiguities in María's description, noticing how the narrator "when highlighting [María's] physical attractions, he describes her as a seductive Jewess; when emphasizing her modesty, she is a perfect Christian and Madonna figure" (Paulk 47).[46] Analyses following

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[43] For a thorough analysis on the epistemological stakes of the glossary, see Carlos Alonso's *The Spanish American Regional Novel: Modernity and Autochthony*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1990. 125-129.

[44] Some scholars read in Efraín's account a critique of the slaveholding institution, particularly by alluding to an episode in chapter XIX that revolves around a child slave who loses his hand at the sugar mill of a neighboring hacienda. These scholars claim that by the fact of making visible the horrors of the plantation, albeit not the father's, Efraín purportedly forwards a realistic critique on the institution of slavery (MacGrady 25). Conversely, other scholars see in Efraín's unresponsiveness when he hears the child's story and his evident lack of interest in the child slave before him a confirmation of the classed and raced ways of patriarchal society (Borello 69).

[45] See Ivonne Cuadra's "(De)formación de la imagen de la virgin María en Isaacs, Brunet y Queiroz." *Espéculo*. 31 (2005). Web.

[46] Paulk relies in her argument on art historian Tamar Garb, whose work on gendered depictions of Jews in European art traces how "the physicality of the male Jew is generally

Sommer's line find in María's Semitic heritage the fraught element that prevents the successful union of the national allegory (Sommer 188, 202), seeing María's purportedly inherited illness as a result of her Jewishness.[47] This reading sees in her untimely death a narrative obstacle to the threat of miscegenation. However, this reading has no textual support, given that it is the father who diagnoses María's malady as inherited illness and later on Dr. Mayn refutes the father's initial diagnosis, to no avail (Isaacs 93). As we shall see, it is for other ends that the father devises the novel's insurmountable obstacle—a deadly inherited illness that can and will worsen by Efraín's proximity to María.

María's inherent erotic/demure ambiguity constitutes a threat to the sexual economies of the plantation and, by extension, to the system as a whole. María is not only a sensualized Jewess ripe for the taking and at the same time a Catholic model of virtue not to be touched—titillating and immaculate, either way a rather passive female figure within patriarchal society. On the contrary, María is also an active agent in the novel, who exercises her agency questioning the limitations sanctioned by the fatherly law. At the basis of her ability to act lies her desire to be with Efraín against all odds. María first expresses her agency against a backdrop of patriarchal spectacle—a cavalcade.[48] As the procession slowly heads towards the parish, a lengthy dialogue ensues between María and Efraín that produces a change of heart in Efraín, who so far had been unable to critically assess, let alone challenge, the father's "irrevocable resultion[s]" (190). From then on, it is María who, with tact, leads Efraín in their quest for happiness: "—Are you going talk to dad today? [asks María] / —Yes. / —Don't tell him today. / —Why? / —Because. / —When do you want me to say it? / —If after eight days he does not say anything about your trip, find the proper occasion. And you know which one is the best? One day after you have worked a lot together. He will be grateful for your help" (191-2).

Even tough María pushes Efraín to question his father's determination, the "little master" fails to question the father and what he represents. The discrepancy between María's resolve and Efraín's submission points to the central concern of the plot: the survival of the plantation system. Shortly after the cavalcade, the father imposes the terms for Efraín and María's future together—that Efraín first go to London to complete his studies in medicine. The dialogue presents the exchange between father and children in the form of a transaction, in which the father offers a set of conditions and expects to receive compliance in return. The father sees Efraín's education as an investment in the family's

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an object of scorn and repulsion. Not so the image of the Jewess. If anything the sexualization of the female Jew involves an idealization that confers upon her an exotic otherness, a sensuality, and beauty, which make her an object of erotic fascination and protect her from some of the more virulent and overt animosity suffered by her male coreligionists" (Qtd in Paulk 47-8). Garb's observations resonate with the Orientalist gaze scholars have found in Efraín's descriptions of María (Molloy 46).

[47] See Erin Graff Zivin's *The Wandering Signifier: Rhetoric of Jewishness in the Latin American Imaginary*. Durham: Duke UP, 2008, for an extensive analysis of Jewishness and pathology in *María* and other Latin American works.

[48] The episode serves the double purpose of presenting María's courage—"Ask Emma if I am not bolder than she is," says María to Efraín before getting on the horse (186)—and María's otherworldly character; she tames the horse with her exceptionally melodic voice.

future. Interestingly, he expresses his view alluding to the harvest cycles of the *hacienda*: "Once your [Efraín] studies are over, the family will reap abundant fruit from the seed I will sow … I think you have enough noble pride not to pretend to pitifully cut off what you have begun so well" (209-10). Efraín submissively complies, and only then the father confirms that in four years María will be Efraín's wife (210). After the terms have been settled, and when the lovers are by themselves, María breaks the silence between the two: "—How nice dad is! [Qué bueno es papá] Don't you think? I [Efraín] answered affirmatively, but my lips could not mumble a syllable. —Why don't you speak? You think his conditions are good? —Yes, María" (214). Scholars have generally read in María's (decontextualized) exclamation—"¡Qué bueno es papa! ¿no es verdad?"—proof of the father's depiction as benevolent patriarch. Taking into consideration the preceding dialogue, however, "it is evident" that her comment "is ironic," as Borello has exceptionally argued (75). Her insistence to hear Efraín's opinion further demonstrates her questioning character vis-à-vis an unjust imposition.

Compared to Efraín's submissiveness, María's resolve, critical perspective, and sensuous yet demure nature pose a unique threat to the plantation system. Paradoxically, through pathos, the novel invests in this disorderly element to extol the plantation and its mores while implicating the reader in a paean for a lost world. To briefly return to the ambiguous triangle between the main characters, scholars have suggested that the haircut scene serves to confirm the father's authority within the household, as mentioned above. Others have ventured to suggest that the father not only competes with Efraín for María's affection but also sees her as a stand-in for the mother (Williams 353) or is trying to conceal a "possible father-daughter incest" while monopolizing her (Paulk 61). A more straightforward reading, however, can find in the novel not "a treatise about the failure of patriarchal power" as Paulk bombastically concludes (68) but on the contrary its confirmation. María has a utility within the household: she is the caregiver of Juan, the youngest son. Rather than participating, even if passively, in troubling forms of familial relations, María occupies a specific place in the patriarchal family on the cusp of servitude and kinship as adopted daughter and servant. Once María actively responds to Efraín's interest and therefore introduces a chaotic element to the plantation, the assertion of order becomes paramount.

As an adopted daughter, she has a place in the family on the condition of providing a service to the household, in this case childcare. Thus, from the start, hers is a subordinate position, which in the father's eyes impedes any relation with his eldest son: "María is almost my daughter, and I would have nothing to say if your [Efraín] age and *position* would allow us to think of marriage; but they don't" (87, my emphasis). In the face of Efraín's explicit desire for María and will to remove her from her appointed place in the family through marriage, the father inventively diagnoses María's illness as hereditary and fatal to keep them apart. As mentioned above, the doctor has not had the chance to examine María at this point of the novel. Instead, the father takes advantage of the situation to prevent any further disruption to his authority and unabashedly lies to his son. The following chapters prove that it is not Efraín's presence that causes her to relapse. On the contrary, it is his absence that further sickens her. Her sickness, as some scholars have suggested, may be María's final form of resistance to the fatherly law, expressed through a psychosomatic illness (Lagos 19, Skinner 65). Such reading would further strengthen a

revaluation of María as an active character in the novel who acts to the fullest extent of her agency as both female and subordinate in the planter's world.[49]

Rebel or not, María—the subordinate Other and Efraín-instigator—makes possible the star-crossed lovers theme with her (limited) agency and untimely death. Thus enabling Efraín's nostalgic recollection of an irretrievable past. Paradoxically, the novel imparts to the reader the longing for the patriarchal *hacienda* and its mores with María's death. Many scholars have stressed that there is no clear antagonist in the novel—a crucial element in melodrama that ultimately identifies which characters have a place in its diegetic world (*Melodramatic* 17)—thus formulating different readings of *María*'s central problem. However, it is the father who imposes each and every "insurmountable" obstacle in the novel, as quoted above. The function of the father, both center of the plantation and antagonist to the idyll, invites a revised conception of this paradigmatic melodrama. Unlike *Amalia*, in which Manichean antagonist are made clear (Rosas / anti-Rosas) and, with them, a social order to be purged by denying visibility to certain social actors, *María* capitalizes on lost love to impart the sense of a greater loss: the demise of the planter class and its world. *María* builds a slave-holding yet Arcadian world, where no character is morally unquestionable and where no character can be immediately vilified (even the father ultimately recognizes his mistake of sending Efraín away and the deadly price of his resolution). Rather than determining what can be visible and what can be narrated in *María*'s patriarchal world based on Manichean divides (i.e., virtuous vs. villainous) these moral nuances reshuffle *María*'s visual regimes, foregrounding a panoramic view of the plantation.[50] If *Amalia* is premised on action against clear antagonists to visualize and delimit its world, *María* is premised on vicarious pathos, particularly the one an irretrievable loss elicits. Both instances exemplify different means to a similar end: melodramatic world building.

Through action and pathos, through the will to change the present or to return to a longed past, both novels deployed specific visual regimes supporting equally specific notions of community (classed, raced, and aristocratic). However, these foundational melodramas were not immediately considered national novels.[51] As mentioned above, both

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[49] Even though the novel does not dovetail illness with resistance, it does present one more character who psychosomatically expresses his disagreement with vicissitudes of fortune. When the father falls ill due to a considerable economic setback, doctor Mayn comments: "there are maladies that coming from the sufferings of the spirit, disguise themselves in the symptoms of other maladies, or complicate into maladies known by science" (195).

[50] Scholars have also noted the novel's obsession with landscape, see for instance Carolina Alzate's "La metáfora orientalista: Efraín y el abismo en el jardín." Darío Henao Restrepo. Comp. *Jorge Isaacs: el creador en todas sus facetas*. Cali: Editorial de la Universidad del Valle, 2007. 129-136. Print.

[51] Celebratory discourses in scholarly work on both novels often suggest the opposite. For instance, Paulk quoting Sommer leads to the belief that *María* was immediately accepted as foundational fiction at home and even abroad: "*María* has never been out of publication since its first appearance in 1867, and has been so widely accepted as a narrative of nation-building that it has even 'fill[ed] the slot for foundational fiction novel in syllabi of countries such as Puerto Rico and Honduras' (Sommer 172)" (52).

novels served different purposes given their historical contexts. Particularly regarding nation-building projects, in Argentina and Colombia the notion of fatherland, *patria*, was highly unstable—product of dynamic and competing visual regimes and political agendas. To further challenge the idea that foundational fictions were considered as such by their contemporary readers, as suggested by Palacios and Vergara y Vergara, the novel was not premised on positing a comprehensive idea of nation. Rather, in *María* (as well as in *Amalia*'s case) it was through iteration—i.e., repetition with difference across media platforms and time—that their melodramatic stories and ideal body politics were engraved in State-building projects. During the 1910s and 1920s, emergent writers and filmmakers saw great interest in both *Amalia* and *María*, re-presenting while slightly altering their stories of action and pathos. The reappearance of both narratives in then new media platforms reformulated their stakes in early twentieth century visual regimes. As paradigmatic melodramas, they served new functions to register and process the present in view of the past.

Melodrama, Iteration, Remediation

Amalia and *María* epitomize Latin American melodrama's reliance on (cross-media) iteration to diffuse specific senses of community and stake political claims. In this chapter I focus on two key historical junctures, but it is worth mentioning if only briefly its expanse. *Amalia*, as mentioned above, was initially published in 1851 in regular installments, in Mármol's Montevideo weekly *La Semana* to narratively condemn the Rosas regime from the safe distance of exile. *María* also began to spread internationally its view of the plantation as periodical fiction, in Buenos Aires (1870-1871) and Mexico City (1871-1873?) (McGrady 13). Multiple publications of both novels throughout the nineteenth century turned them into well-known cultural referents across the Americas.[52] By 1885, at the dawn of *modernismo*, José Martí's characters offered one another "Mármol's *Amalia* or Isaacs' *María*" (194) as a flirtatious insinuation in *Lucía Jérez*—a serialized melodrama published in the newspaper *El Latinoamericano* targeted to Hispanic readers in New York City.[53] It was the iterative appearance of both narratives that imposed their stories as foundational melodramas, even beyond national borders. This phenomenon continued throughout the twentieth century into the twenty-first (at least in *María*'s case). But it was only until the first decades of the twentieth century when both *Amalia* and *María* experienced a novel iteration, this time across media platforms. Reproduced, with variations, both narratives continued to visualize senses of community revolving around classed and raced social immobility and heredity, albeit within new arrangements of visual regimes remarkably concerned with state-building, as the Argentine and Colombian *Centenarios* (the centennial celebrations of independence) drew near.

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[52] Susana Zanetti traces references to *María* in literature from 1867 to Manuel Puig's *La traición de Rita Hayworth* (1968) in her *La dorada garra de la lectura: lectores y lectoras de novela en América Latina* Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2002. Print.

[53] Originally published as *Amistad funesta* [Ill-fated friendship] under the pen name Adelaida Ral.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, José Mármol's *Amalia* reached an unprecedented mass of readers in the teens and twenties. During this period, marked by the top-down nation-building project surrounding the first *Centenario*,[54] Mármol's novel not only saw its greatest print run to date (Romero 8), but also was adapted to illustrated fiction and premiered as the first feature-length film of Argentina. On these two different platforms—the illustrated magazine and the cinematic medium—*Amalia* participated in reshuffled, and remarkably dynamic, visual regimes. As the new century began, Argentina experienced the first signs of malaise regarding the social changes motivated by massive immigration. Immigrants, mostly from Spain and Italy, went to Argentina initially as agricultural labor with dreams of landownership. However, facing the impossibility to purchase land from the *latifundistas*, the owners of great estates, immigrants settled in the Buenos Aires *barrios*, forever changing the cityscape and Argentine urban society. In the meantime, through periodicals and later on filmmaking, they expanded what could be narrated and visualized in thrilling urban melodramas (see chapter two) and *gaucho* and *milonga* films (see chapter three). For the time being, I wish to stress that the *Centenario* fueled conservative nationalism against the social actors and economic hardship brought about by immigration. During this period, *Amalia* served contradictory functions as a nationalist symbol. Depending on the medium, *Amalia* functioned either as inclusionary narrative or, on the contrary, as a way to assert raced and classed social hierarchies.

Amalia had a brief, but significant presence in one of the Southern Cone's most important illustrated periodicals, *Caras y Caretas* (1898-1930) which introduced a new concept of journalism in Buenos Aires[55]—the magazine, catering to readers across the social spectrum. In text and in engaging images, the magazine registered the unprecedented changes of turn of the century *porteño* society—urbanization, modern means of transportation, and the construction of the nuclear family around home, labor, and leisure activities, among other transformative processes. *Caras y Caretas*, as well as other magazines, offered emerging classes in the process of integration middle class models that echoed the lifestyles of established sectors (Romero 8, Ribera 364).[56] Comprised of immigrants and first generation Argentines, readers of these magazines, some of which did not know how to read Spanish or read all together, looked at their illustrated pages to "know what went on in their adoptive land [through] the abundant graphic information [magazines provided]" (*De la foto* 216). Because of the privileged access to emergent sectors magazines had, during the 1900s and 1910s *Caras y Caretas* also served as one of the "great builders and diffusers of official patriotic iconography with

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[54] This project was not unfamiliar with melodramatic narrative. According to film historians Paula Félix-Didiar and Andrés Levinson, "the great national histories that appeared at the end of the nineteenth century [in Argentina] appealed both to the scientific discourse of the period and to the discourse of highly dramatized epics," which they read as the "narrative matrix of nineteenth century melodrama" (54).

[55] *Caras y Caretas* was first published out of Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1890.

[56] Other periodicals served different functions in registering urban change in the first decades of the twentieth century. In chapter two, I will center my analysis on magazines that registered change through melodramatic narratives of crime and pauperism on the urban margins.

'clear,' recognizable images" (Gorelik 181). One such image was Mármol's *Amalia*, as we shall see.

With a reader in the process of integration in mind, *Caras y Caretas* capitalized on diverse textual genres and images—spanning the essay to the *feuilleton*, and pictorial art to the political cartoon. Illustrated fiction had a particular niche in the magazine. Comprised of short narratives, *feuilletons*, or famous summarized novels accompanied by photographic enactments, textual-visual stories drew on melodrama to ultimately serve an educational purpose. Andrea Cuarterolo has analyzed these fictions drawing on the cinematic principles of linear narrative and *tableau* cinema. For Cuarterolo, the ancillary photographs in illustrated fiction reproduced their textual narratives by recurring to "two formats of serialized storytelling" (*De la foto* 217): either through linear layout (photos chronologically following one another) and cross-cutting (photos depicting contemporary actions occurring in different locations), or through *tableaux* of suspended action, which offered visual summaries of climactic situations. *Amalia* re-appeared in this serialized format to engage again in the relation between melodrama and nation-building but at a different historical juncture and, consequently, within a different set of competing visual regimes.

In 1904, an illustrated version of *Amalia* appeared in a special number of *Caras y Caretas* centered on the "*fiestas mayas*,"[57] the annual holiday in Argentina that commemorates the first independent government established in May 25, 1810. Comprised of text, illustrations, and photographs reenacting climactic episodes of the novel, "Amalia" retold Mármol's novel to a reader presumably familiarized with the story. "Amalia" evokes *Amalia*'s climactic moments with remarkable concision, sometimes to the point of only listing secondary characters and their relation to the protagonists—Amalia, Bello, and Belgrano. This version confirms how Mármol's narrative, by 1904, was considered one of Argentina's "guiding fictions," as Nicolas Shumway has put it (112). I wish to stress, however, that it was iterative examples such as this one—i.e. repetition with variation—that turned *Amalia* into foundational melodrama. Bracketed by historical accounts of the May Revolution, patriotic imagery and poetry, as well as the musical score for the Argentine "victory reveille" ["Diana de la Victoria"], "Amalia" served in *Caras y Caretas* a new, clearly nationalistic purpose at turn of the century Argentina (Figure 1).

[57] *"Amalia." Caras y Caretas* 21 May 1904: n.p. Print.

Figure 1. "Amalia" (1904) Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España

Interestingly, the 1904 "Amalia," emphasizes the realism and veracity of Mármol's narrative to the extent of presenting the story as a testimony of 1840s Argentina: "Amalia is the real story of the Rosas tyranny. Through its pages and with the most absolute fidelity, Federalists and Unitarians parade, making the Argentine people live, across time and in

their minds, characters that existed and whose author, through calculated fiction, concealed with imaginary names." Alluding to the novel's "calculated fiction," a crucial element for understanding the novel's role in 1840s shifting visual regimes as mentioned above, "Amalia" even ventures to locate its author at the center of the fight against Rosas. According to the illustrated magazine version, "it can be stated that the sympathetic Daniel Bello, who plays such an important role in the novel, is Mármol himself." Truth claims in "Amalia" point to *Amalia*'s hold in the Argentine national imagination, blurring the line between fact and fiction, as melodrama so skillfully does. To further stress the novel's purported documentary character, "Amalia" enacts, photographically, key episodes of the novel.

In chapter two I analyze photography's truth-value and role in 1920s illustrated magazines. However, it is important to anticipate how in "Amalia" photographic enactments of fictional events propose the former as indexical signs of the latter, establishing an imaginary "existential bond" (Doane 92) between photograph and photographed subject. The photographs, many accompanied by the caption "photographic reconstruction," suggest that fiction was indeed fact, made available through the novel, and later through the purportedly unquestionable reproduction technology of photography. As reconstructions, these photographs also allude to the tradition of staged photography, which gained ground in *porteño* illustrated periodicals by the beginning of the twentieth century (Cuarterolo 204). Not surprisingly, *Caras y Caretas* along with other periodicals locally spearheaded this novel tradition with reportages of current events and infamous crimes. Andrea Cuarterolo stresses that stage photography was on the cusp of "realism and illusionism, between narration and attraction" (208). Her observation springs from the ways in which the magazine flirted with both recording the phenomenological world and building worlds through the photographic. *Caras y Caretas* resorted to photomontage and other image manipulation techniques, while guiding the reader with captions to make sense of the composed images (208). This is not to say that early illustrated periodicals catered to a gullible readership. On the contrary, at the time photography was both considered as a means to register the world and to build fictional worlds via composite images as well as staged compositions. Further, as Cuarterolo suggest by comparing staged photography with the cinema of attractions, staged photography responded to a pervasive interest in monstration before the advent of moving images (or in this case locally produced moving images). This precedence recalls the logic of shifting visual regimes—shifts in what is visualized respond to partitions of the sensible preceding technological change, rather than technical achievements resulting in changes of subject matter (Rancière 33).

Deemed reenactments rather than enactments, the photographs of "Amalia" invest in realist compositions that implicate the reader as an invisible observer. "Amalia and Eduardo spied by Mariño," for instance, locates the reader inside Amalia's garden with a superior vantage point (Figure 2). Unlike the protagonists, unaware of the dangers lurking outside the idyllic garden, the reader sees Rosas' henchmen watching the lovers across the luscious vegetation. Capitalizing on the reader's supposed reading proficiency of *Amalia*, the photograph does not offer visual queues to distinguish friends from foes—one character in the background (left) wears the same top hat as Belgrano, for instance. The caption is deemed sufficient to contextualize the image. Conversely, other illustrations offer

racialized visual language that reproduces the Unitarian/Federalist divide in Manichean terms of civilized-beautiful (epitomized in a bust of Amalia) versus barbarian-ugly (rendered in a physically disproportionate portrait of Don Eusebio) (Figure 3). Aimed at a broad readership, "Amalia" participated in what Luis Alberto Romero terms "popular education" that lead to "a new sociability" in early twentieth century Buenos Aires (2). This education, however, proposed an integrationist sociability premised on raced and classed distinctions, aiming to reproduce social difference in Manichean terms—whitewashed *porteños* siding with the righteous, whereas non-white Argentines would also be included, albeit historically stained.

AMALIA Y EDUARDO, ESPIADOS POR MARIÑO

Figure 2. "Amalia" (1904) (detail) Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España

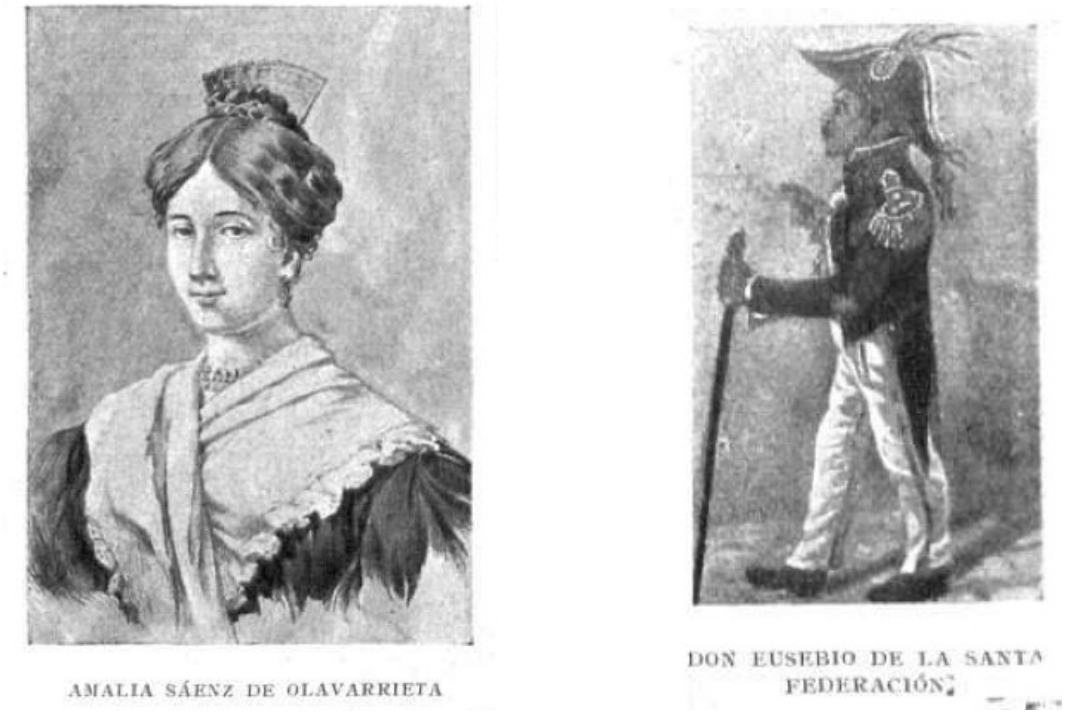

Figure 3. "Amalia" (1904) (details) Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España

Ten years later, but still inside the orbit of the *Centenario* celebrations, Enrique García Velloso's filmic adaptation of *Amalia* (1914) premiered. Unlike the illustrated fiction, Argentina's first feature-length film did not aim at diffusing national imagery across the social spectrum, but rather reinforced social difference by limiting its spectatorship, as its production and exhibition conditions suggest. Max Glücksmann, then one of Argentina's most aggressive film distributors, commissioned the film to García Velloso and cameraman (and French immigrant) Eugenio Py, destined to the charitable society Sociedad del Divino Rostro [Holy Face Society]. Directed at the highest circles of *porteño* society, the film was not a philanthropic endeavor, but an assertion of social stratification on a new medium. The film's cast was comprised "of prominent members of the local upper crust" (Finkielman 12) and premiered at a gala at the prestigious Colón Theatre (on December 12, 1914). Argentine early cinema scholars concur in reading *Amalia* as "an example of an early high-culture use of the cinema" (Losada 493) that did not necessarily cater to the immigrant masses—unlike gaucho films and later *porteño cinedrama*, as I analyze in chapter three. On the contrary, as the first Argentine feature-length film, and film that inaugurates Glücksmann's entrance into fiction film production, *Amalia* invested in Argentina's canonical novel to elevate narrative cinema's status and, in the meantime, reproduce a specific sense of community.[58]

[58] Considering the importance of iteration for *Amalia*'s revitalization across time, it is worth noting that a second film version aimed to elevate *sound* cinema's cultural status in 1939. See Matthew B. Karush's "The Melodramatic Nation: Integration and Polarization in the Argentine Cinema of the 1930s." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 87.2 (2006): 293-326.

Following the steps of French *film d'art*, which between 1908 and 1911 adapted prestigious literary works and brought actors of the *Commedie Française* to the screen,[59] *Amalia* adapted Mármol's work and conferred visibility to the *porteño* elite to bring cultural capital to the new medium. With it, the first feature-length revitalized at a different historical conjuncture: the exclusivist sense of community deployed in Mármol's *Amalia*. Appositely, it is important to note that by the 1910s the Argentine state did not "seem to acknowledge the power of the medium [of cinema] to influence the masses" (487). In the absence of top-down State intervention in cinema, the local elites harnessed Argentina's foundational melodrama to restate their social difference—a distribution of the sensible premised on *partager*, i.e. separating, the body politic. Glücksmann, Mario Gallo (*La revolución de mayo*, 1909), and other early entrepreneurs embarked into filmmaking with historical themes that closely resonated with the *Centenario* celebrations. Thusly they deployed markers of national identity to the growing, variegated variegated spectatorship massive immigration elicited. Unlike post-Perón cinema, early cinema sprung from shifting visual regimes into which prominent (i.e. affluent) members of society initially intervened, and in which other social actors later participated through the film genres I analyze in chapter three.

Amalia the film reproduced *Amalia*'s raced and classed address as a way to promote a sense of national community premised on social immobility. Film historians have stressed the film's attention to faithfully "reconstruct" the Rosas period in sets and wardrobe (Finkielman 13, Couselo 58). The film also reproduced purportedly historical practices, such as the raced informant network that leaked vital information from Unitarian households to the vicious *Mazorca*, a pivotal element in Mármol's novel. Surviving footage, mostly comprised of in-door sequences and establishing full-shots preceding such sequences, presents a racially divided world in which black servants chatter at the gates of Unitarian homes and have very little screen time inside the patrician households. The absence of intertitles for these takes further obscures the exchanges between black servants who, almost as *leitmotif*, histrionically laugh and chatter while the whitewashed protagonists enter into different Unitarian homes (Figure 4).

[59] On *film d'art* see Richard Abel's *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896-1914*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1998. Print. 246-277.

Figure 4. Amalia crosses thresholds guarded by black servants.
***Amalia* (Enrique García Velloso, 1914)**

The Colombian *Centenario* took place five years later. Again, around this pivotal nationalistic event, a revival of the Colombian foundational melodrama took place in the form of moving images. As in *Amalia*'s case, *María*'s adaptation to film had also been in the mind of immigrant distributors as a means to kick start local film production while elevating cinema's cultural status. In both cases, this remediation process, from the culturally important medium of the novel to the then novel medium of film, was not surprising. New media scholar Jay David Bolter argues that remediation engages media in a relation of combined "homage and rivalry" (13). Seen through the theoretical lens of this

dissertation, the relation seems to have a melodramatic hue, for according to Bolter: "in a remediating relationship, both newer and older forms are involved in a struggle for culture recognition" (14).[60] During the teens and twenties, when representation was certainly "up for grabs," not only did melodrama recast shifting visual regimes across media; the very media through which operated the melodramatic regime, and their operators, competed for a place in the breakdown of hierarchies of representation. Further, and to return to the subject at hand, this struggle at the level of media platforms suggests how within the melodramatic regime no medium or narrative operates in isolation within shifting visual regimes. Taking distance from a Benjaminian perspective (particularly his Artwork essay), according to which technical developments change artistic paradigms and recast the relationships between art and subject matter, the melodramatic regime repurposes subject matter from medium to medium, or across media, as a contested site of representation that precedes while incorporating technical change.

In early twentieth century Colombia, elevating cinema's cultural status was particularly important. By the centennial, Colombian society zealously and nostalgically hung onto its colonial social structures while incorporating the technological changes brought about by modernization (Arias Trujillo 11). The Italian Francesco Di Domenico, an "instrumental" figure "in establishing the cinema in Colombia [,] Central America" (Lopez 66) and we must add the Lesser Antilles, considered bringing *María* to the screen as early as 1919, year of the *Centenario*.[61] However, it was only until 1922 that another immigrant, the Spanish Máximo de Calvo, brought *María* to the screen. Inspired by a Jesuit priest who proposed and considerably funded the project, De Calvo moved to Colombia from Panama, where he filmed newsreels for Fox, with the exclusive purpose of realizing the project.

For decades, film historians, documentary filmmakers, and even De Calvo himself have built a legend around this film as both the first feature-length national film and the continuation of the most-cherished Colombian narrative. The fact that only very little footage survives, making the film inaccessible, further mythyfies its production and distribution conditions as well as its discursive nationalistic importance. Much like María the character, *María* (1922) inspires an impossible desire to posses, among archivists, historians, and critics alike. *María*'s mythical aura revolves around the tears it produced at the premiere, as chronicled then in the press,[62] and De Calvo's legendary production conditions. Through decades and in several interviews, the director reveled in narrativizing how, while shooting on location in the hacienda "El Paraíso" (once owned by the Isaacs

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[60] In the introduction I highlight the theoretical and cultural importance scholars such as Peter Brooks and Jesús Martín-Barbero confer on melodrama as a "drama of recognitions."
[61] "Una charla en el auto Fiat." *Películas* 1 Jan. 1919: n.p. In this interview, Di Domenico expresses his pioneering filmmaking project. He seems to ignore that one year earlier, in Mexico, the filmmaker and critic Rafael Bermúdez Zatarain had already filmed an adaptation of Isaacs' novel. This film is currently lost.
[62] Nieto, Ricardo. "La película 'María,' concepto de Nieto" *Relator* 21 Oct. 1922: n.p. See also "El estreno de la 'María' de Isaacs" *El Tiempo* 23 Oct. 1922: n.p. Decades later, around the centennial of Isaacs' novel, the press further reinforced the film's lachrymose powers, "Don Máximo Calvo explica por qué no ha surgido el cine en el país" *El País* 7 Mar. 1960: n.p. And "Visperas del centenario de la novela inmortal 'María'" *Occidente* 18 Apr. 1965: n.p.

family), he developed the film in María's purported oratory and later, after fixing the film, he washed it on the hacienda creek, producing with the "fresh and crystalline water" the cleanest negatives "[he] ever had"[63] (Figure 5). Further, as De Calvo's statement suggests, the line between fact and fiction surrounding the intermedial *María* narrative has always been so thin that for decades scholars "were determined to find the real person hiding behind the mask of María" (Benítez-Rojo 458) and many press articles offered "real" images of secondary characters such as an "authentic photo" of Efraín's black page Juan Ángel.[64]

Figure 5. An actor in the role of Máximo de Calvo washes *María* negatives in the hacienda creek in the dcoumentary *En busca de María* (Luis Ospina, 1985), shot on-location at hacienda "El Paraíso," Valle del Cauca.

Of *María* (1922), only 25 seconds worth of footage remain,[65] available to the general public through Luis Ospina's documentary *En busca de María* (*In the Search for María*, 1985). Comprised of long shots and extreme long shots of two characters traversing or riding into mountainous landscapes, much like the views or topicals of the variety show,[66] extant footage offers very little information on Colombia's first feature-length film.

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[63] Silva, Hernando Salcedo. "Cómo se hizo la filmación de 'María,' primera película colombiana, en 1921: (una entrevista con Don Máximo Calvo) " *El Tiempo* 6 Nov. 1960: n.p.
[64] "Vísperas" see note 62.
[65] *Largometrajes colombianos en cine y video: 1915-2004*. Bogotá: Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano, 2005. Print.
[66] On scenics and topicals, still camara shots of exotic locales or current events, see David Bordwell et all's *The Classical Hollywood Cinema : Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. 161.

Columns published around the film's premiere for the most part refrain from describing it in detail. Most praise the non-professional actor's performance and celebrate the film as the nationalistic endeavor that brought Isaacs' novel to the screen. Others, again with a nationalistic bent, speculated on the film's potential to internationally advertise Colombia: "A beautiful and patriotic oeuvre … if 'María,' the book, has been the most efficient agent Colombia has had abroad, 'María,' the film, will be even more effective," a journalist proclaimed.[67] This potential would reside in the film's purported realism, depicting Valle del Cauca's preterit everyday and landscape. A close reading of these comments, however, reveals remnants of the novel's racialized paradise, as the journalist's following comments suggest: "the Valley … its deep horizons … its incomparable rivers, its biblical herds" include scenes of "local color" such as "the preterit canoe manned by two sculptural blacks [dos negros esculturales]." Further, the journalist deploys primitivist rhetoric when he considers the "humble" people (low class non-professional actors) that appear on the film as a window to the Cauca Valley's past: "[*los humildes*] are always the best actors … they do not measure the transcendence of what they are doing [.] Looking at the ones in the film, you realize they are not acting, they are living." Accounts of the film such as this one, by appealing to induced tears or upholding *María*'s nationalistic value, revitalized the novel's nostalgic eulogy to the plantation system. Perhaps the only critical comment that points to the filmic qualities of *María* is the apparent scarcity of intertitles.[68] Lack of title cards between shots to convey character dialogue, or expository titles with a narratorial voice, suggests that the filmmaker relied on spectator reading proficiency during production. De Calvo assumed his intended spectator was familiar with the story and therefore did not require much textual clarification. Journalists demanding expository titles do not undermine but on the contrary attest to such reading proficiency. The column demands intertitles to guarantee fidelity to the original story: "Many necessary titles are missing for the better understanding of the work. But currently the company [Buga Film] is taking care of it."

These accounts, obscure as they are, point to the nationalistic value *María* had gained by the 1920s as foundational melodrama and nationalist archive—*María*, through a lachrymose star-crossed lovers story rendered visible and embellished Colombian landscapes and manners. Another document, unearthed from the archives of the Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano (National Film Heritage Foundation) and until now hidden from academic scrutiny, further sheds light on the cinematic qualities of this lost film. Around 1930, Editorial el Carmen in the city of Cali published an "album" comprised of approximately 30 stills from the film.[69] Organized following the novel's narrative

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[67] "María" (ca. 1922) newspaper column. Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano.
[68] "El estreno de la 'María' de Isaacs" *El Tiempo* 23 Oct. 1922: n.p.
[69] A letter to Máximo De Calvo, signed by film historian Hernando Salcedo Silva in 1961, acknowledges receipt of what Salcedo Silva calls "El álbum de 'La María'" and speculates it was published in 1930. The album itself does not include a publication date. Two stills were ripped out of the album: a scene in which María, Emma, and Efraín read Chateaubriand's *Atala* (available in 1960s press materials) and another rather mysterious still whose accompanying text reads "Dreams, Dreams, Dreams." Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano.

development and with quotations from the novel serving as captions, the album suggests the 1922 *María* strongly invested in reproducing Isaacs' novel on a new medium. At the same time, and perhaps as the film also did, the album assumes a strong reading proficiency on the part of its reader.

A brief text on the opposite page accompanies each combination of still and quotation. Most of these texts allude to climactic moments of the novel, but never refer to them explicitly, demanding from the reader to actively link text, image, and narrative episode together. Some texts are quite straightforward; one reads "The first goodbye," clearly referring to Efrain's initial departure at the beginning of the novel. Others, however, are rather allusive. For instance, "The tempest takes down the oak tree" introduces a full shot of a group of people surrounding a man in his sickbed (Figure 6). The accompanying quotation from the novel does not clarify who are the characters, only referring to the "doctor" by name. This example could only make sense for a *María* reader or spectator who would recognize the sick patriarch on the bed, his children—Efraín, Emma, and María—and the doctor beside him (the identity of the woman on the left remains unclear, she may be playing the role of the mother). The allusion to the "oak tree," much like Isaacs's patriarchal world, metaphorically confers meaning to the entire composition around the fatherly figure. Locating the father at the center of the shot in an exceptional moment of weakness due to infirmity, text, image, and reading proficiency render legible the group, united by the centrifugal pull of the father.

Figure 6. "The tempest takes down the oak tree."
Courtesy of Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano.

The composition of "La tempestad," with the sickbed at an unusually steep angle to maximize the father's exposure, suggests that *María* privileged *tableau*-like, fixed camera shooting. Other stills, in-doors and out-doors, mostly consist of frontal full shots with one exceptional frontal medium shot of Efraín. Some stills, however, depart from the frontal shot. For instance "Love, Tenderness, Illusions" presents Efraín and María reveling in their idyll as they walk through the hacienda garden in a high-angle long shot. This compositional flourish calls into question scholarly analyses which, without recurring to this key document, have deemed *María* an example of the "backward state with regard to form and content" of Colombian filmmaking during the 1920s (Suárez 21). The 30 stills comprised in the album, only a fraction of the feature length film, leave ample room to speculate, and perhaps affirm, that *María* and subsequent early Colombian feature-lengths did not only consist of concatenated *tableau* interspersed between expository titles. Lost or

to be found film stock might reveal more complexity in, while questioning teleological readings of, local film production.[70]

As an iteration of *María*, the "album" restated Isaacs' narrative as national melodrama, while elevating its author to the rank of founding father and questioning the boundaries between fact and fiction. Regarding Isaacs, the album begins with an epigraph, signed by a Carmelo Hispano (most likely a pseudonym), exalting the author's increasing cultural importance across time: "The glory of Isaacs is like [Simon] Bolivar's: it grows with time, because both, each one in their own sphere … are the most popular and indistinguishable geniuses that have ennobled and dignified our America." By comparing the "glory" of Isaacs to Bolivar's (the founding father of Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador) the album both and at the same time mythifies *María* and its author as the foundational bases of the nation, in a broader, continental context. Interestingly, the epigraph also highlights the importance of time—Isaacs "glory" was not implied in his novel's publication, it has grown with time and remediation.

Further, and most interestingly, the album, much like the press surrounding the film's premiere along with the scholarship of later decades, obscures the boundaries between foundational melodrama and factual reality. The first still, an establishing shot of the hacienda "El Paraíso" (located near Cali and presently turned into a museum), in a combination of image and text suggests that María and Efraín's story actually took place. Unlike the following stills, this one does not present a quote from the novel as caption. On the contrary, a line with no apparent source reads: "In this place a hundred years ago…" (Figure 7). The combination of text and image introduces ontological uncertainty to this visual archive of film stills and excerpts from the novel. Like *Amalia* (1904) in *Caras y Caretas*, the establishing shot invests in an imaginary "existential bond" between image, melodrama, and the profilmic event—on-location shooting at hacienda "El Paraíso," which by 1920s had already turned from a narrativized Cauca Valley plantation hacienda into a nationalistic and profoundly nostalgic symbol of (patrician) home.[71] The photographed façade sets up a factual origin, in time and space, from which Colombia's foundational melodrama would ground its iterative hold in the national imagination. Just as the "photographic reconstructions" in *Caras y Caretas*, here we observe photography on the cusp of registering and building worlds. The album harnesses photography's indexicality to create worlds and offer them to the reader as truthful instances of the phenomenological world.

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[70] Elsewhere, I have questioned Colombian film historians' reading of extant early Colombian cinema as "primitive" cinema in "Discursos, prácticas, historiografía: continuidad y *tableau* en el cine silente colombiano." *Imagofagia: Revista de la Asociación Argentina de Estudios de Cine y Audiovisual*. 8 (2013). Web.

[71] Around the teens, the hacienda "El Paraíso" was uninhabited and considerably deteriorated. At the time, multiple articles in the press extolled readers to associate and gather funds to purchase and restore the hacienda as a nationalistic endeavor. "El escenario de 'María'" *Lecturas Dominicales El Tiempo* 8 Jul. 1923: n.p.

Figure 7. "El Paraíso o Casa de la Sierra"
Courtesy of Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano

Both *Amalia*'s and *María*'s leaps across media during the first decades of the twentieth century attest to the role of iteration in positing these narratives as foundational melodramas. Rather than isolated stories, allegorically representing an idealized nation extradiegetically brought together through a collective—i.e. simultaneous—reading as Sommer suggests (46), *Amalia* and *María* engaged with multiple readers and later on spectators *iteratively*. Instead of union, *María* and *Amalia* proposed exclusivist communities. Particularly around the centennial celebrations, both narratives increased in state-building value and, through remediation, reached an unprecedented mass of readers and spectators. At the collective level in both Argentina and Colombia, certain readers and spectators appropriated the narratives in the service of historically specific political agendas, agendas related with state-building projects conferring special visibility to the patrician class.

These examples of remediation reveal medium specific constraints and possibilities for melodramatic storytelling. Consisting of the medial transposition of melodramatic narratives—from the textual medium of the (serialized) novel to the visual-textual medium of illustrated periodicals, to the then novel medium of film—the remediated versions of *Amalia* and *María* divested themselves of narrative intricacy. Side plots and framed narratives disappear in the remediated versions. These newer versions, however, did not suffer from narrative simplicity. On the contrary, they relied on the reading proficiency of

both readers and spectators to synthesize and, most importantly, repurpose already known stories which, furthermore, were circulating through other media such as the opera and the theatre. Likewise, by means of remediation, both *Amalia* and *María* capitalized on the narrative and technical properties of photography and cinema to incorporate "real" images and moving images that would further blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, a trope both narratives invest in to strengthen their political claims.

By considering *María* and *Amalia*'s processes of iteration, I have also tried to point to melodrama's role in shifting regimes of relationships between politics and aesthetics, recasting the meaning of cultural objects intra- as well as trans-medially. Peter Brooks proposes that material objects, seen through the lens of melodrama "cease to be merely themselves … they become the *vehicles* of metaphors whose tenor suggests another kind of reality" (*The Melodramatic* 9, my emphasis). In the case of *María* and *Amalia*, be it in book form, illustrated periodical, or photochemical images on celluloid support, their melodramatic stories—motored by the impossibility of a political order—suggested plausible yet unachieved senses of community at key state-building junctures. Remediated, they served as mediations to shape and understand then current shifting visual regimes, albeit proposing collectivities premised on highly stratified senses of community.

María and *Amalia*'s iterations continued in the twentieth century. They were published multiple times and adapted to sound cinema. Especially in *María*, Latin American directors and scriptwriters would see material ripe for repurposing well into the twenty-first century, with a total of eight adaptations to cinema and one *telenovela*.[72] This chapter traced how both *Amalia* and *María* played crucial roles in shifting regimes of visibility, when representation was "up for grabs" at two important historical junctures. Both narratives participated in a particular distribution of the sensible that, recalling Rancière's original expression *le partage du sensible*, had more to do with partitioning—and less with distributing—the body politic in representation. However, the 1910s and 1920s did not only experience the definitive establishing of these two narratives as foundational melodramas. They also experienced other forms of mediation through the melodramatic regime—*partager* as distribution. The struggle for representation between the (waning) patrician elite and emergent social actors took place over and in emergent media. The patrician elite used *Amalia* and *María* to deploy its hierarchical vision of community at the dawn of modernization via the melodramatic regime. As a contested site of representation, this regime also witnessed the emergence of alternative voices who, from their own vantage points, registered and processed the transformative processes proper to Latin American modernities in serialized melodramas of urbanization and urban outcasts, to be examined in following chapter.

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[72] Films directed by: Rafael Bermúdez Zataraín (Mexico, 1918); Máximo de Calvo and Alfredo del Diestro (Colombia, 1922); Chano Urueta (Mexico, 1938); Enrique Grau (Colombia 1966); Alfonso Castro Martínez (Colombia, 1970); Tito Davison (Colombia-Mexico, 1972); and Fernando Allende (Puerto Rico, 2010). In 1991 RCN, a Colombian private TV network, broadcasted a *María* miniseries (10 episodes) adapted by Gabriel García Márquez.

CHAPTER 2

Lived Space and the Illustrated Press: Urban Expansion, Melodrama, and *Miseria*

Introduction

In 1923, the right-wing newspaper *La Razón* published a series of interviews under the heading "Pornographic, Wimpish, or Tacky Literature: Our Questionnaire to Find Out Why the Public, the Authors, and the Publishing Houses Favor its Growth."[1] The newspaper, bent on denouncing any threats to the patrician nationalism proclaimed on its pages, mustered a group of intellectuals, writers, and editors to criticize the then pervasive "bad and cheap literature" published as weekly novels.[2] In the interview, *Centenario* luminaries, including Leopoldo Lugones and Ricardo Rojas as well as a younger, scientific breed spearheaded by José Ingenieros, forwarded angst-ridden answers condemning massive immigration, its threat to linguistic purity, and proclaiming the "civilizing" role of schools and the press. They also warned against the new market and its shifting values.[3] In sum, the interviews pictured, from a highbrow perspective, the social and cultural transformations that took place at a time when leisurely reading spread out across the social spectrum. Their anxieties sprung from shifting visual regimes—they sensed forms of *partager* coming threateningly closer to distribution, rather than partition. The expanded reading public

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[1] "Literatura pornográfica, ñoña o cursi: nuestra encuesta para averiguar por qué el público, los autores y las casas editoriales facilitan su incremento."*La Razón* published ten interviews between April and June 1923 (Column begins on 4/26/1923, then Leopoldo Lugones 5/2/1923, Ricardo Rojas 5/14/1923, Pedro Sondereguer 5/17/1923, Juan Agustín García 5/21/1923, Atilio Chappori 5/28/1923, José Ingenieros 6/2/1923, Eduardo Carrasquilla Mallarino 6/4/1923, Manuel Gálvez 6/9/1923, Alfredo Bianchi 6/12/1923, Alejandro Cánepa 6/16/1923, respectively). I thank Professor Margarita Pierini for sharing her personal transcriptions of these and other documents. Unless noted otherwise, all translations from Spanish to English are my own.

[2] "Pedro Sondereguer, escritor popular y prestigioso, nos expone las razones que a su parecer favorecen el incremento de la mala literatura hebdomadaria." *La Razón* May 17, 1923. Transcription.

[3] By 1923, Leopoldo Lugones was the lettered, undisputed authority on the national cultural field. He was the director of the *Biblioteca Nacional del Maestro*, lectured on national values and traditional art forms, and was a caustic commentator of modern cultural transformations. Ricardo Rojas also spearheaded the defense of cultural nationalism. He wrote the first, four-tome *History of Argentine Literature* (1917-1922), compiled a national literary corpus, and with Lugones, proposed gauchesque and an idealized gaucho culture as the basis for Argentinness. José Ingenieros, an Italian immigrant, was a psychiatrist who pioneered and defined new fields of inquiry (psychology, sociology, psychological sociology, criminology) in Argentina and was very influential throughout Spanish America. These three intellectuals harnessed the printed medium to diffuse their political, pedagogical, and ideological projects.

presented a social problem in moral and aesthetic terms to the cultured elite,[4] requiring censorship and supervision. At stake was determining each one's place in representation and controlling enunciation. This was particularly the case in dynamic urban settings such as Buenos Aires, where "every inhabitant of the city was a potential agent of representation" (Bergero 14).

Indeed, print media reshuffled the distribution of the sensible. Harnessing different serialized formats, periodicals narrativized material and sociocultural transformations of urban space. Shifts in what could be narrated implied the emergence of new visibilities, other than the crises of the landed gentry in favor of state-building discourses I analyzed in chapter 1. In the teens and twenties, many periodicals retreated from the models of melodramatic storytelling *Amalia* and *María* established. Tribulations in the patriarchal hacienda and a focus on the national no longer dominated the melodramatic regime. Conversely, and looking to enthrall the reader, serialized melodrama centered on the immigrant and the downtrodden, surviving in the cracks and margins of urban space. This shift was not entirely new, however. Authors influenced by positivism and naturalism at the end of the nineteenth century, such as Eugenio Cambaceres, Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera, and Federico Gamboa, had already brought social concerns in pathetic stories to the novel. Periodicals expanded the topic, reaching a mass readership with unprecedented five to six-figure print runs. These platforms also yielded shifts in authorship. Through these periodicals, new political subjectivities—Bergero's new "agents of representation"—actively participated in the melodramatic regime, reshuffling the hierarchies of representation. Hegemonic *and* contested views were deployed through these periodicals, objects of scorn and yet serving as new platforms for the elites. Particularly, sensationalist stories conferred visibility to the deprived either as harmless victims of forces beyond their control, or as terrible menaces to individual safety and public health. Joining *miseria* narratives with (pseudo)scientific discourses,[5] the illustrated press registered modernization processes in urban space, making visible deviant individuals and collectives.

The fact that many of *La Razón*'s interviewees contributed to the "cheap literature" they reviled—consequently "favor[ing] its growth"—reveals how remarkably protean were discourses and publishing practices at the time. Although some periodicals offered platforms to deploy highbrow attacks on emerging serial forms, intellectuals also ventured out into popular platforms. Just as the emergent professional writers, cultured elites saw in new readers a potential audience. For instance, both Ricardo Rojas and José Ingenieros published in *La novela semanal* (LNS), at the time the most popular weekly novel in Argentina. Rojas contributed with two murder mysteries set on the cusp of rural life and urban modernity, "La psiquina" (12 Dec 1917) and "El ucumar" (9 Sept 1918), thematically

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[4] "Ricardo Rojas, el eminente escritor nacionalista, decano de nuestra facultad de Filosofía y Letras, opina sobre la inundación literaria de la gran ciudad cosmopolita." *La Razón* May 14, 1923. Transcription.

[5] In Spanish *miseria* denotes extreme poverty (DRAE) rather than a feeling. Misery, in English, denotes "a state or feeling of great distress or discomfort of mind or body" (OED). Throughout this chapter I will refer to the current *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* (DRAE), early twentieth century versions accessed through the Royal Academy's on-line application *Nuevo Tesoro Lexicográfico de la Lengua Española* (NTTLE), and the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED).

and stylistically attuned to the magazine's corpus of suspenseful stories. Ingenieros, in his turn, published a staggering nine times in LNS.[6] Assuming the authoritative voice of the essay rather than reproducing the conventions of the weekly novel, Ingenieros combined taxonomy and sociology in order to understand the emergent, incredibly disparate mass of individuals and their ways of sociability. Combining biological determinism and sexual passion in his essays, Ingenieros searched for moral valences in a troubled world (Sarlo 79). Interestingly, Ingenieros warned the weekly novel reader against reproducing the sentimental characters found in serial fiction.[7] Albeit paternalistic, his reading recognized the performative potential of periodical narratives to register and make sense of the world.

New social actors in the illustrated press did not only erupt in Argentina. The Colombian press also produced such characters alongside educated accounts on and around *miseria*, which conceived the latter as a menace to society and mores.[8] Thus, in a comparative framework, this chapter studies the ways in which illustrated periodicals narrativized *miseria*, mirroring "operative cultural models" (Rama 7) determined by transformations in the cityscapes of Buenos Aires and Bogota. This particular distribution of the sensible order, focused on sensationalist crimes and social deviance, reshuffled the hierarchies of representation.

Prior to analyzing urban *miseria* within the melodramatic regime, it is important to consider the historical context in which the illustrated press flourished in Argentina and Colombia. Therefore, I will first discuss the material and social transformations that took place in Buenos Aires and Bogota during the first decades of the twentieth century. Second, I will explore the ways in which the illustrated press represented urban spaces as dangerous sites fraught with overstimulation. Then, and acknowledging the limits of this chapter, I will examine two periodicals that focused on urban outcasts—the "Novelas de humildades," a series of micro-melodramas that appeared in the *porteño* tabloid *Crítica* starting from 1922, and the Colombian *Los misterios del crimen* (1924-1926), a weekly novel unearthed from the Luis Angel Arango Library archives. I will compare thematic approaches to *miseria* and reflect upon different types of seriality. Each publication offers its own serialized format, creating a different "sense[s] of duration" (Martín-Barbero 72) in the service of different agendas. Through serial melodrama, *Crítica*'s "Novelas" denounced social issues, while *Los misterios* purposed to "heal" an ailing social body.

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[6] Ingenieros contributed with five essays "Werther y Don Juan" (30 Dec 1917), "La psicología de los celos" (16 Dec. 1918), "Cómo nace el amor" (7 Jul 1919), "El delito de besar" (17 May 1920), *Las fuerzas morales*, divided in five installments (Nov. 27, 1922-Dec. 25, 1922).

[7] "Werther y Don Juan." *La novela semanal* 30 Dec. 1917: n.p. Print.

[8] Scholarly work on Colombian early twentieth century periodicals, or simply put Colombian periodicals, is conspicuous by its absence. Therefore, the few published studies draw on Argentine and Spanish scholarship such as Luis Alberto Romero's and Manuel Tuñon de Lara's, respectively, for reference and comparison. See, for instance, Luz Ángela Núñez Espinel's *El obrero ilustrado: prensa obrera y popular en Colombia 1909-1929* in works cited. This chapter aims to contribute, albeit reproducing a comparative framework and recognizing the absence of an established scholarly debate, to the emerging field of Colombian periodical studies.

The Grid and The Line: A Tale of Two Cities

Multiple factors contextualized the emergence of sensationalism and *miseria* in the popular press. It comes as no surprise that urbanization, massive immigration, and new possibilities of social mobility yielded worrisome perspectives vis-à-vis change. Between 1880 and 1930 many Latin American cities experienced unprecedented changes. Immigration from Europe and rural areas to cities tremendously increased urban populations. Almost every capital saw its population double and triple in size in fewer than fifty years (J. Romero 222). New urban multitudes, along with other modernization processes, radically altered the Latin American cityscape. Historian José Luis Romero conceives the phenomenon in two ways. Some cities underwent deliberate change that drew inspiration from Haussmann's renovation of Paris (Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro) while other cities expanded their colonial layout through spontaneous housing developments. The latter retained a traditional look for their centers while cities grew to outlying areas. The former resorted to "demolition of the old to make room for the new […] to epitomize the supreme triumph of progress" (222). This top-down approach to urban space was not without problems. Spontaneous housing developments also mushroomed in planned cities such as Buenos Aires. In either case, both models implied a divided cityscape (the old and the new, the traditional and the nontraditional, the center and the periphery). Different parameters of spatial and demographic distribution yielded metropolitan urban spaces with material and cultural particulars. These material differences also shaped, and were shaped by, serialized melodrama. Before analyzing periodical narratives, however, a careful look at these two cityscapes is in order.

Buenos Aires and Bogota represent the planned and the spontaneous city, respectively. Borrowing from Adrián Gorelik's virtuoso analysis of public space and urban culture in Buenos Aires, *La grilla y el parque* (1998), I propose the grid and the line as the describing urban layouts for these two cities. Concurrently, Angel Rama's reflections on Latin American city planning bridge urban layouts with shifting visual regimes. For Rama, "[city] plans have always been examples of operative cultural models. Behind their ostensible function as neutral registers of reality lies an ideological framework that validates and organizes that reality, authorizing all sorts of intellectual extrapolations on the model" (7). For Rama, geometric configurations of built environments comprise distributions of the sensible order, making visible social, economic, political and cultural transformations in urban Latin America. If the standard checkerboard design of colonial cities mirrored regulatory principles of "unity, planning, and rigorous order reflecting a social hierarchy" (Rama 5), the grid and the line reflect the material and cultural transformations of this seminal layout. Likewise, and more specifically, they mirror specific social reconfigurations Buenos Aires and Bogota underwent between 1880 and 1930.

The grid and the line were imposed through top-down interventions or developed at grassroots levels. In Buenos Aires, unlike in any other Latin American city, planners drew up a vast public grid over the pampas in 1888. Greatly exceeding the existing city limits, planners foresaw an urban development to be accomplished in decades to come.[9] In

[9] The government of Buenos Aires Province handed over 14 thousand hectares to the national government as a means to expand the capital. In 1887, the city extended across 4 thousand hectares (of which 2/3 were actual built environment). In order to ponder the

the meantime, growth rate exploded—from 677 thousand inhabitants in 1895 to over 2 million in 1930 (Castillo Daza 41).[10] The new downtown yielded elegant avenues and plazas with an intentional resemblance to European centers. While the traditional city (pre-1888) expanded very little, suburban nodes mushroomed over the grid at incredibly fast rates in the 1900s. With varying degrees of elaboration, from precarious zinc settlements to fully built homes, these relatively self-sufficient localities engendered the *barrios*, the multifarious Buenos Aires suburban neighborhoods. For Gorelik, one quality encompassed these built environments: a "homogeneous heterogeneity" (289). The mixture of modern and traditional practices, multiple ways of sociability, factories and workshops, immigrant lower classes, among other factors lent *barrios* their characteristic variability. In this "mosaic of spatial fragments" (291), the new urban communities identified first and foremost with the *barrio*. Top-down institutions (the school, the parish, the grid's organizational thrust) and associations and practices at the grassroots level (cafes, sports and cultural clubs, *sociedades de fomento*, *bibliotecas obreras*, cinemas, the *barrio* mobile cinema)[11] forged *barrio* identity over a metropolitan sense of belonging. The city center "creative destruction," to borrow David Harvey's terms,[12] and *barrio* heterogeneity altered forever the ways of the checkerboard colonial city. Between *barrios* and center, Buenos Aires created a massive urban culture, distinct from other Latin American cities in configurations of ethnicity, race, and class.

Urban growth in Bogota followed a very different course, materially and culturally. Although a fraction in size when compared to Buenos Aires, Bogota also experienced unprecedented growth in the first decades of the twentieth century. Bogota almost tripled in size from 78.000 inhabitants in 1898 to 200.000 in 1927 (Beltrán 81). Urbanization, however, did not occur under a plan as rigorous, or as ambitious, as the grid. Spontaneous demographic expansion—product of rural to urban migrations—extended the checkerboard colonial city. Compact housing blocks were added as newcomers came to stay with the prospects of upward mobility. Architecture remained traditional. Downtown kept its role as administrative and business center, but experienced demographic displacement. Upper-class families moved out north, while neighborhoods for working-

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dimension of the grid plan, it should be noted that no other European city had such a vast jurisdiction with the exception of London (30 thousand hectares)—Paris boasted 7.900 hectares, Berlin 6.900 until 1914, Vienna 5.540, all of which had greater populations than Buenos Aires at the time (Gorelik 13).

[10] Immigration to Argentina was tremendous at the time. According to historian David Rock, "immigrants arrived in enormous droves: between 1871 and 1914 some 5.9 million newcomers, of whom 3.1 million stayed and settled" (141). About half of these immigrants were Italians, a quarter Spanish, the rest mainly Ottoman, Russian, French, and Portuguese. By the Great War, "one third of the country's population was foreign-born, and around 80 percent of the population comprised immigrants and those descended from immigrants since 1850" (166).

[11] *Barrio* parishes, open-air conferences, and political campaigns would make use of mobile cinema. An article in *La Vanguardia*, May 10 1922, refers to "the truck with the biograph," for instance. I thank María José Váldez for sharing her archival finds on 1920s *porteño* film viewing.

[12] See his *Paris, Capital of Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

class new arrivals were erected on the south side. Two factors determined urban longitudinal growth along the north-south axis. First, the city expanded along the eastern sierra. Second, monopoly over the land prevented expansion over the plateau to the west. The landed gentry, who were also the region's political and economic engine, retained control over its latifundia for decades.[13] This division of urban space and society gave way for a third actor to inhabit the fringes of urban space—marginal classes that gathered on squatter settlements on the sierra overviewing the city. These were the bread and butter of the sensational press.

The checkerboard's traditional ways broadened into a new, traditional-cum-modern configuration. The resulting linear city concentrated commercial activity and basic utilities in the colonial center.[14] Working class residential neighborhoods in the periphery depended entirely on the colonial downtown and the patrician class that monopolized land, commerce, and leisurely venues.[15] Newcomers found themselves in a city of incredible transformation. But it was also a city of rather limited social mobility. Most of the poor who had lived on the fringes of colonial society entered the workforce with a limited ability to participate in modern society. A striking example was the *Salón Olympia* (1912), "a symbol of the modernity of new picture palaces" according to John King (25). Working classes early on went to the cinema in Bogota, as in other Latin American cities in which the cinema served a democratizing function. And yet, the physical layout of *Salon Olympia* reasserted social stratification. The massive, 3000-seat film theatre had its screen located in the middle of the building; the inexpensive seats were located behind the screen, and spectators consequently had to read the intertitles backwards (Nieto 9). Shared cum segregated spaces reveal the partial yet considerable democratization of society—democratization paradoxically premised on social immobility.

Contrasting modern transformations in Buenos Aires and Bogota made their way into the illustrated press. Urban changes led to an increased demand for reading matter (higher literacy, the concept of leisure, and the expansion of leisurely venues; as well as

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[13] *Chapinero hacienda* occupied four times the area of Bogota at the beginning of the twentieth century (aprox. 2320 hectares). A single man, José Joaquín Vargas, owned *El salitre* until 1936, twice the city size and the last *hacienda* to be parceled out. The delay in land distribution left its mark on current Bogota. *El salitre* was divided into recreational parks and sports facilities in the 1970s (Castillo Daza 85). For the sake of comparison, Palermo Park in Buenos Aires went a similar process. It was laid out on the property that once belonged to strongman Juan Manuel Rosas. His estate was declared public land in 1852 (Romero 182).

[14] Born of spontaneous growth, Bogota's linear formation should not to be confused with Arturo Soria y Mata's 1882 "Linear City" urban plan, which consisted of several functionally specialized parallel sectors along a main axis.

[15] Luz Ángela Núñez Espinel posits that working-class presses, cafes, schools, and *bibliotecas populares* offered similar means of association at the grass-roots level as the ones mentioned for the Buenos Aires *barrio*. However, as Núñez explains, at the time the conservative regime systematically excluded from its archiving practices any left-wing publication or documentation. Therefore, the National Library Catalogues—and Library holdings—from the first decades of the twentieth century have very few traces of these non-hegemonic practices and texts (75).

urbanization, transportation technologies, and advances in print technology). In periodicals, texts and images represented and made visible these very changes. Interestingly, the bulk of this textual production rendered urban modernization in melodramatic stories of urban outcasts and *miseria*. Mostly written by emergent authors and journalists, "cheap literature" radically expanded what could be narrated, making visible new social actors and their issues. Reshuffling relations between politics and aesthetics, shifts in visual regimes marked "the entrance of new sectors to the modern political pact, the pact of representation" ("La desigualdad" 30). This pact, however, this (re)configuration of political subjectivities, was not without problems, as the segregating *Salón Olympia* or the presence of Ingenieros' prose in LNS suggest. On the cusp of registering and policing urban change, representations of the city and the experience of its inhabitants reproduced and challenged the waning monopoly on representation—*partager* as partition. Before delving into thrilling melodramas of the downtrodden, however, it is important to explore how an increased interest in urban change, material and social, pervaded the illustrated press in the 1910s and 1920s.

The Illustrated Press and the Urban Experience

In Buenos Aires as well as in Bogota, urbanization and commercialization caused a new density of downtown congestion, along with new social dynamics between city center and neighborhoods. The new, heterogeneous society lent a sense of fragmentation to urban space that was further complicated with the expansion of public transportation, city traffic, and new ways of visual marketing (figure 1). In this context, the illustrated press mirrored the many changes of urban society and space. Periodicals in circulation increased as more people could read. Readers revealed a "desire for participation" in an ever changing environment, and "the desire to partake of everything" that new urban spaces and practices had to offer (J. Romero 240). Capitalizing on this desire, periodicals depicted a fast-paced daily life, both threatening and titillating.[16] In other words, they pictured urban experience as an overstimulating experience.

[16] Titillating depictions of urban space in the popular press is a fascinating topic that exceeds the limits of this chapter. In chapter three I explore the titillating-yet-threatening presence of women in the public sphere in the *porteño* cine-drama. For seminal analyses on the sexual and erotic charge of early Argentine periodicals see Beatriz Sarlo's *El imperio de los sentimientos* in the bibliography and Kathleen Newman's *La violencia del discurso: el estado autoritario y la novela política*. Buenos Aires: Catálogos Editora, 1991.

Figure 1. "Bill posting prohibited" *Caras y Caretas* March 22, 1919

Journals and magazines registered change and processed change for ever-growing readerships.[17] A debacle for representation, visibility, and consequently political subjectivity, took place through periodicals. Some publications promoted urbane subjectivity models for lower and middle classes to follow. Other publications, with an anarchist or socialist bent, disseminated "useful knowledge" for readers keen on "modern ideas"—science, politics, literature, even philosophy (J. Romero 237). In Buenos Aires, following the steps of the Spanish publishing house *Sempere*, popular publishing houses thrived (Tor (1916), Claridad (1922), Femenil (1925), and many more), committed to circulate inexpensive volumes along with elaborate reading plans. Other periodicals, the reviled "cheap literature" opening this chapter, focused on promoting a new breed of professional writers of serialized fiction. *La novela semanal* (1917-1926) (LNS), with its "prodigious" print run (L. Romero 8), was a case in point.[18] In Bogota, at first a society with low literacy levels in which serialized novels "[were initially] directed to the cultivation of the elites" (Acosta 37), writers emulated *porteño* publishing formats for new readers.[19] Luis Enrique Osorio's Colombian LNS (1923-1924, 1928-1929) epitomizes the import of serialized formats. Despite an absence of large publishing houses, long-standing newspapers and magazines such as *Cromos* (1916-present) rendered legible the local experience of urban modernity.[20] By the 1910s, periodicals were part of everyday life across the social spectrum. For instance, a popular magazine advertised itself as a good

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[17] *Caras y Caretas*, one of the most read magazines in the Southern Cone for over 40 years (1898-1939), contained a section on "Modern Buenos Aires" as early as 1900. *Cromos* magazine (1916-), popular to this very day, photographically registered Bogota's infrastructural advancements starting from 1916.

[18] Luis Alberto Romero's adjectival assessment is quite accurate. The first issue of LNS indicates a print run of 60 thousand (Jan 19, 1917). One year later, it claimed 200 thousand. By 1922, LNS claims 400 thousand readers. The massive appeal of serialized fiction in Buenos Aires becomes evident with the plethora of publications that spun off LNS. Titles include (date in parenthesis indicates initial publication date): *La novela del día* (1918), *La novela para todos* (1918), *La novela picaresca* (1918), *Novela de la juventud* (1920), *Novela nacional* (1920), *Novela universal* (1920), *La novela argentina* (1921), *La mejor novela* (1928), *Nuestra novela* (n.d.).

[19] Many Colombian writers travelled to Buenos Aires to test their luck in the new market. Pedro Sondereguer, a LNS regular collaborator, was one such successful story. Coincidentally, he was also one of the interviewees published by *La Razón*. According to the interviewer, "Pedro Sondereguer is one of the writers who has most passionately reached the public from the balconies of the popular weekly literature ("Literatura pornográfica, ñoña o cursi." *La Razón*. May 17, 1923. Transcription).

[20] Statistics show that two publishing houses dominated the Bogota market by 1915—*Casa editorial Cromos* and *Editorial Minerva*. Both published magazines, periodicals of many topics (from medicine to engineering) and books. The *Cundinamarca Statistical Bulletin* shows no data on periodicals, only on books published. However, in between charts, a blank page, only filled with a comment in parenthesis in the center, significantly suggests that periodicals were quickly flooding the print market. The comment reads: "It seems that the only prosperous activity is journalistic. It is putting an end to the book" (*Boletines de Estadística de Cundinamarca* 3.18 1915 n.p).

read in urban traffic: "while [travelling] in the electric [streetcar], *Magazine Colombia!!*"[21] Both in Buenos Aires and Bogota, periodicals displayed big-city life.

Georg Simmel indicated a crucial aspect of the new urban experience in Europe. In his 1903 essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life," Simmel noted that urban modernity entailed "the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli" (11). On similar terms, Buenos Aires and Bogota periodicals observed the influence of external stimuli upon the individual. Many publications described urban experience as an intensified sensorial experience. *Porteño* film trade journals reveal opposing perspectives. Some saw urban stimuli as an imminent threat, "we live in continuous shock [sobresalto continuo] the nerves vibrate, shake, and burst into a true hysteric crisis."[22] Others, albeit recognizing caustic effects on the psyche, celebrated urban stimuli. A column on strategies of visual solicitation read, "The modern city has become a great exhibit […] each poster aims to be noticed [and] harms [hiere] the public's imagination […] in an instant […] We are the juries of this gigantic exhibit […] The art of the poster [lies] in experimental psychology."[23] Bogota periodicals were no different. The film magazine *Películas* trumpeted, "the vertiginous advance of the centuries has brought us new concerns, new dangers, new forms of expression."[24] Another important publication proclaimed, "Cosmopolitanism, imposed by transportation speed, modified sensibility and, therefore, the forms of expression" (*Universidad* 7 Apr. 1928. Qtd in Arias 130). Periodicals were suffused with a common preoccupation, (re)produced page after page—sensorial intensity in urban life.

According to Simmel, the modern urban experience radically altered the material conditions and psychological foundations of subjectivity, compared to rural experience:

> The rapid telescoping of changing images, pronounced differences within what is grasped at a single glance, and the unexpectedness of violent stimuli. To the extent that the metropolis creates these psychological conditions—with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life—it creates in the sensory foundations of mental life […] a deep contrast with the slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the sensory-mental phase of small town and rural existence (12)

Simmel's observations on urban space—and urban pace—illuminate the anxieties evident in *porteño* and Bogota periodicals. These publications fed off accelerating temporal and spatial dimensions in urban space, multiplying social actors and practices, and lost traditional ways related to a (real or imagined) pre-urban existence.

The illustrated press probed urban transformations with dystopian alarmism. Many cartoons depicted urban space dauntingly expanding in the vertical and horizontal axes. In

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[21] "El magazine Colombia!!" *Magazine Colombia* Apr. 1914: n.p.

[22] "La ciudad enferma…" *La Película* 5 June 1919: n.p. Print. Interestingly, this editorial depicts cinema as a palliative against increasing stimulus, not as "one of its most robust manifestations," as many film scholars have suggested (Singer 93). The editorial, using pharmaceutical terms, proposes to exhibitors: "may the nerves of the public find comfort [un derivativo y un calmante] on the screen."

[23] "Los afiches modernos en nuestro negocio" *El Exhibidor* 20 July 1927: n.p. Print.

[24] "Los apóstoles de la farsa." *Películas*. Apr. 1919: n.p. Print.

La vida moderna (1907-1912), "Mr. Bouvard's impressions" presented a series of cartoons of a claustrophobic and chaotic Buenos Aires. Of particular interest is a cartoon reproducing a sense of expanding urban confinement, speed, and the clash with the old. A montage of concurrent actions, this "impression" of an instant juxtaposes shooting cars from diverse angles and urban expansion. Vehicular horizontal and diagonal trajectories impress speed and movement to the composition on the upper edge. The automobiles trace a collision course with older transportation technologies—a cart drawn by four horses. The nervous shock implied in the imminent collision alludes to the clash between the old and the new. On the lower left, hyperbolic high-rise buildings tower above the Metropolitan Cathedral of Buenos Aires. A caption sardonically reads "monumental use of the terrain"—an allusion to the debates revolving around the preservation of history and radical modernization in the traditional heart of the city, in this case Mayo Square.[25] In the cartoon, the hunger for progress also transforms Florida Street, the traditional commercial artery: on center-right, appears an enormous mechanical contraption, operated by a single man, violently widening the street. The hyperbolic apparatus further supports a skeptical view on urban change and the acceleration of life—expansion implies an assault on the built environment. Interestingly, these impressions do not present an outside of the urban. The *locus* of the relentless present has no outside of the cityscape (Figure 2).

[25] Since the 1880s, energetic debates around historical preservation, modernization, and civic education sought to coalesce a sense of national unity in the face of massive immigration (Gorelik 206-12). Different media were at the center of the debates (literature, history, education), including the built environment. Carlos Rojas' pedagogical concerns epitomize the latter. In his book-long education reform project, *La restauración nacionalista* (1909), he affirmed, "history is not only taught in the classrooms—*the historic sense*, without which history is sterile forms in the spectacle of everyday life. [It is formed] in the traditional nomenclature of places, in spaces associated with historical memories, in […] museums, and even in commemorative monuments, whose influence over the imagination I have termed *the pedagogy of statues*" (221, emphasis in original).

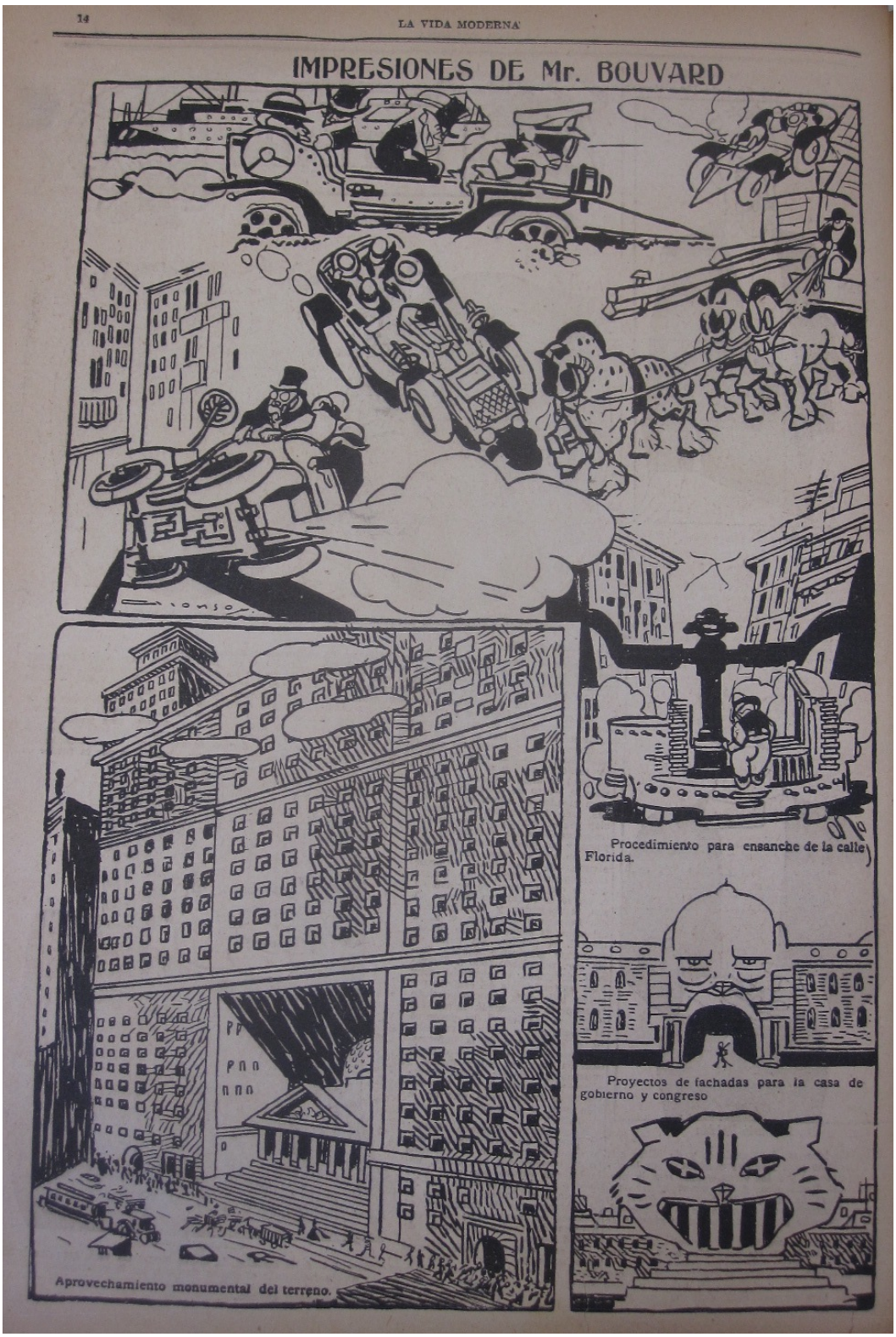

Figure 2. "Impresiones de Mr. Bouvard." ***La vida moderna*** **25 Apr. 1907**

These illustrations stressed not only the nervous shocks of big-city life but also the physical vulnerability proper to urban space. Cartoons of cars and wobbly tramways

leaving destruction in their wake abound in journals and magazines. *Luz y sombra* offered a series of cartoons on Bogota utilities titled "Municipal Services of Bogota Futuro." The title hints at *Bogota Futuro* [Future Bogota], the 1920s eponymous urban plan that, unlike the Buenos Aires grid, never came to fruition. Particularly sardonic, a cartoon on the "public slaughterhouse" presents automobiles and tramways running over pedestrians while survivors run away from danger. Incisive sarcasm serves two functions. First, the cartoon puns on the possible meanings of the word "matadero" to criticize the location of the new "modern" municipal slaughterhouse (1927). Second, and more importantly, the cartoon depicts the disastrous consequences for pedestrians when modern transportation technologies invade traditional spaces such as Bolivar Square (recognizable by the Prime Cathedral and San Bartolome School in the background), turning public space into a slaughterhouse. Sarcasm denouncing modern discomposure served as a rhetorical palliative in the face of increasing speed and stimuli of urban life (Figure 3).

Figure 3. "Servicios municipales de Bogotá Futuro." ***Luz y sombra*** **11 Dec. 1926**

Illustrated periodicals collected and presented a miscellany of texts and images readily available to the reader. From newspapers to magazines, periodicals pictured urban fragmentation through cartoons, essays and narratives, reproducing in layout and content the "homogeneous heterogeneity" of the cityscape. Siegfried Kracauer, in his "Photography" essay,[26] defined "the disarray of the illustrated press" as "simply confusion," "pieces of

[26] In "Photography," Kracauer explores the paradox between the spatial presence of the photographed object and its link to the irretrievable time the photograph was taken. Rather than the "shudder" photography produces on the individual who recognizes unrecoverable time (the diva-grandmother), I am more interested in the latter sections of the essay. In sections seven and eight, Kracauer conceives photography nestled "in the reality of the

disjointed nature" (63) that, unlike film, were without "the capacity to stir up [the] fragments of daily life" (62-3). For Kracauer, film bore the potential to bridge the gap between presence and remembrance through montage, offering provisional meanings to all possible configurations that photography, "a warehousing of nature," could not "[hold] together" as an "archive of nature devoid of meaning" (62). However, in this section I present how the extended corpus of the illustrated press meaningfully made visible the expanded urban space.

Pace Kracauer, the illustrated press served too as another type of meaningful warehousing. The term *magazine* connotes the place where goods are stored.[27] Etymological coincidence is but the starting point to conceive a protean archive mirrored on shifting visual regimes. The illustrated press operated within "the surface of 'depicted' signs," one of the three ways of distributing the sensible that also inscribe a specific "sense of community," according to Jacques Rancière (14). Intertwining graphic, pictorial, and textual capabilities, the illustrated press broke up the monopoly on representation, problematizing its hierarchies. At a time when a massive reading public was consolidated, the illustrated press made visible new ways of sociability and new ways of participation in representation. That is, the illustrated press promoted the construction of communities—"formed only by the random circulation of the written word" (14), photographs, and illustrations. These communities coalesced combining the many fragments of everyday life available, and produced, in written and pictorial surfaces.

Marginality, *Miseria*, and Melodrama

The illustrated press, understood as a protean archive of everyday life, registered in text and images everything that could be narrated and visualized at a time of accelerated expansion. Ever-growing built environments, expanding reading publics (with their concerns and demands), as well as a mushrooming number of professional writers (catering to those concerns and demands) rendered visible, and were made visible in, this potentially endless archive. In the previous section, I examined how periodicals pictured big-city life as a dangerous, overstimulating experience. This section zooms in on the dangers and stimuli certain periodicals found on the cracks and borders of urban space. Certain publications probed the lives of urban outcasts either to pinpoint threats to individual safety and public health or to offer a sympathetic yet safely distant view of their

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society produced by [the] capitalist mode of production," the "countours" of which "emerge in illustrated journals" (61). In such a society photography plays the role of archival recording within a nature devoid of meaning. I read Kracauer's argument against the grain to conceive the illustrated press—in his terms, "simply confusion"—as another sort of archival recording, full of potential to make visible and make sense of the then-present moment, by facilitating protean articulations between texts, photographs, and illustrations.

[27] The definition holds true in English, French, and Spanish. In these three languages the magazine etymologically originated from the French, '*magasin*.' The Royal Language Academy's *Nuevo Tesoro Lexicográfico* records, as early as 1787, the term 'magacín,' defined as 'lo mismo que almagacen y botillería.' According to the current DRAE, the term survived all the way to the televised medium: '2. Espacio de televisión en que se tratan muchos temas inconexos y mezclados.'

miserable conditions. Deploying melodramatic narratives of purportedly "real" *miseria* stories, these periodicals proposed another fold within the melodramatic regime. If the great nineteenth century melodramas centered on patriarchy and its values as the kernel of the nation-state, 1920s *miseria* melodrama focused on new social actors conferring narrative saliency on them. Tensions between old ways and reshuffled social orders were at the heart of these sensationalist melodramas.

Supported by other texts and images in circulation, *miseria* narratives visualized a bipartite urban space. Regarding supporting texts, many statesmen and intellectuals began to grasp the profound sociological conflicts brought about with urban change.[28] Both in Colombia and Argentina, through the press they circulated exclusivist discourses as if outlining a textual *cordon sanitaire* over the city. Emerging schools of thought, from city planning to sociology, competed to understand urban transformations and lived space. Disease and overcrowding in working class neighborhoods dominated the discussion. In Bogota, certain magazines such as *Cromos* demanded city planning as a means to "heal" the ills afflicting the city while "attribut[ing] moral properties to the urban layout" (Pedraza Gómez 173). Likewise, specialized periodicals converted overpeopled spaces into threats to public health. Various articles in *Anales de Ingeniería*— the organon of the Colombian Engineer Society—described the squatter settlement of Paseo Bolivar as an "infection focal point" [foco de infección] to be removed: "It would be convenient to suppress the high part of the city—that *barrio* made out of shanties—which should be used for gardens and forests, purifying the air and serving public health."[29] Descriptions of undesirable spaces corresponded to naturalist literary tropes to illustrate social concerns (disease, crowded poverty, lack of hygiene). These tropes suffused specialized journals as well as popular magazines.

Not without reason did periodicals appropriate naturalist and public hygiene discourses. In effect, at the time epidemic diseases would regularly spread throughout the lower classes with fatal outcomes—in 1918, the Spanish flu pandemic took more than 1000 lives in a matter of days (Beltrán 86). Precarious sanitary conditions and inefficient public infrastructures, particularly aqueduct and sewage, aggravated the public health crisis in Bogota. But for policy makers, the city's demographic and geographic distribution facilitated the equation between disease and pauper. Early on, squatter settlements mushroomed on the hillsides overviewing the Bogota altiplano. Of particular attention was Paseo Bolivar, located above the city center. Paseo Bolivar squatters were held responsible for polluting the natural waterways that irrigated the traditional city below—pushing the elite to find the beautification solutions quoted above, solutions that in fact spelled eradication.

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[28] The emergent "multitude" or the "masses" was a global concern by the end of the nineteenth century, when the mass became "the source of all social dangers." For Graciela Montaldo, the mass "definitely becomes a dangerous subject with the emergent social psychology theories. Gustave Le Bon's *best seller*, *Psychology of the masses* (*Psychologie des foules*, 1895) is but one simplified compendium of the adverse position intellectuals, scientists, politicians and 'bourgeois,' and, in general, hegemonic thought, which makes a cult out of individuality, had vis-à-vis the mass" (94).

[29] Ortega, Alfredo. "Saneamiento ambiental de Bogotá." *Anales de Ingeniería*. Jan 1906:200. Print.

Since the turn of the century, scientific discourse had shaped popular and cultivated accounts on the social and political life of urban space, with the intent to monopolize representation. In Argentina, José María Ramos Mejía, mentor of José Ingenieros, pioneered the study of the masses under an evolutionist paradigm (variation, selection, and inheritance). In his 1899 *Las multitudes argentinas* [The Argentine Multitudes], tapping into biological arguments, he described societal evolution from the masses under Rosas' regime, including the wave of immigration, to turn-of-the-century Argentina. For Ramos Mejía, combinatorial biology could reconstruct the historical development of the urban masses into a new body politic:

> The study of the multitude in the history of America, and particularly the River Plate's, is yet to be done. It would be curious to determine with possible exactitude what has been its role in the development of our political organism, that is to say, to study its *biology*, as it is said now a days, regarding the life and the development [desenvolvimiento] of the infinitely small. (qtd in Bracamonte 19-20, emphasis in original)

Authoritative voices, such as Ramos Mejía's, defined lettered elites in opposition to lower classes in transformation. Ramos Mejía and his peers, locating themselves outside of the field of sociological study, rhetorically described an amorphous social body in need of regulation and, most importantly, a rational head to lead it. Their analyses of the social body, backward and irrational, aimed to comprehend—and therefore control—the social changes and political disturbances the masses brought about. This scientific approach tackled large-scale phenomena drawing upon the science of the minute. Relating the masses to the "infinitely small" was but one way to vent the anxieties vis-à-vis a changing urban body. Not only backward and irrational, the elites morally condemned the masses for they announced a new social order to come, "there is, undoubtedly, a moral *atomicity* […] This diverse aptitude of simple bodies for forming combinations more or less complex with another simple body […] men have it among themselves to attract each other and associate" (qtd in Bracamonte 32, emphasis in original).

Moral condemnation spread through different media as fast as the disease it reviled. Political associations (mainly socialist and anarchist) were deemed immoral. Affiliation based on need—life in the *barrios* and specifically the *conventillo* life—was not only immoral but potentially threatening to public health. In an attempt to monopolize shifting visual regimes, authoritative voices divided urban space between high-class impeccability and lower-class dirtiness in subtle ways, ways that could breach the boundaries of media specifity. In the aftermath of the Spanish flu pandemic that also impacted Buenos Aires, Eduardo Martínez de la Pera y Ernesto Gunche made a thirty-five minute silent documentary, *La mosca y sus peligros* (*The fly and its dangers*, 1920), supporting these views. Using cinematic and microscopy technologies, the film established links between pathogenic bacteria and immigrant communities in Buenos Aires under the guise of scientific discourse supported by optics. Matt Losada observes how the film presents an "antinomic construction of national space" (478). Since the film does not explore spaces other than Buenos Aires and a generic laboratory, I contend that the film constructs an antinomic *urban* space, premised on the infinitely small. *La mosca* locates the source of contamination in the *conventillo*, while portraying the traditional space as "uncontaminated but importantly vulnerable" (478).

A sequence turns the popular *porteño* tenement house, unthreateningly located in the distance of the *barrio*, into an "infection focal point" as dangerous as the shantytown looming over Bogota. More precisely, infection originates in the *conventillo* toilet. A sequence traces the steps by which host flies take bacteria—which multiply exponentially under the scrutinizing gaze of the microscope—from a fly-ridden *conventillo* toilet to the *criollo* upper-class household. In a walled garden, a distinguished woman exposes herself to disease while she reads a large-format magazine. Absorbed by illustrations and text, the woman fails to notice how, in extreme close-up, a female servant picks out a fly from the glass of milk she is about to drink. Her inability to perceive the microscopic, invisible threat yields "a brief cautionary tale for the served classes" (475). Through editing, anxieties and aversion towards social transformations suture together disease, immigrant tenements, and immigrant feces.

To return to the press, narratives in illustrated periodicals expanded what could be narrated within bipartite urban models. Through their stories, they deployed oppositional or hegemonic discursive agendas. *Crítica*, one of the most-read *porteño* newspapers, published a series of narratives under the heading "Novelas de humildades" [Poverty Novels], epitomizing the oppositional perspective.[30] In order to render visible the Buenos Aires underside, the "Novelas" stringed together micro-melodramas of disease, poverty, and crime into moving accounts of the destitute. Appearing irregularly throughout 1922,[31] they ambivalently described the pauper, along with their everyday lives, as the repositories of both social maladies and virtues. Drawing upon pseudoscientific discourse, two anonymous journalists constructed Buenos Aires underworlds worthy sometimes of sympathy, sometimes of scorn. One column explicitly read, "our mission is purely and exclusively to probe [sondear] the pain and the *miseria* that lives in those souls forsaken by fate. Just as the rag-and-bone men [traperos] rummage [hurgan] garbage bins, we rummage the miserably agitated lives separated from society."[32] Forwarding social anxieties and alarms, the "Novelas" also presented the city as a spectacle to be consumed—narratively and visually enthralling, ripe for exploration from the safety of the written page and the photograph. The journalists placed their ideal readers—and themselves—*within* a society concerned and fascinated by its fringes. Urban mobility in these columns was one of

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[30] Literally translated 'novels of humilities,' the title plays with the multiple meanings of the Spanish term 'humildad.' Rather than humbleness, and according to the 1914 *Diccionario de la Real Academia*, 'humildad' refers to "1) the Christian virtue of recognizing one's lower status [bajeza] and *miseria* while acting accordingly. 2) Lower status from birth of lower status of any kind [Bajeza de nacimiento o de otra cualquier especie]. 3) Submission, surrendering" (NTLLE). In this context, humility resonates with melodramatic tropes such as victimization, limited agency in the face of forces beyond the individual's understanding, and the recognition of virtue through pathos.

[31] The first column appeared under the *Police* section on Jan 14, 1922. According to Jorge B. Rivera, *Crítica*'s police section "exploited the [narrative] procedures of the *feuilleton* and *fait divers* literature (appealing to suspense, enigmas, the need to follow a narrative series in order to understand the story)" (370). The "Novelas," however, had a particular for of serialization. Each installment consisted of a single, albeit holistic, narrative whole. I will further elaborate on the implications of serial formats below.

[32] "Novelas de humildades" *Crítica* 31 Jan 1922: 6.

descent, from the heights of society into its underbelly. However, by having recourse to anonymity in order to probe the social depths, the journalists reshuffled hierarchies in representation. According to Graciela Montaldo, the idea of anonymity in written form was "something that modernity hardly tolerated," for anonymity "alienate[d] writing from individual property [,] allow[ed] deformations and transformations[, and naturalized] writing as a common asset [un bien común]" (*Zonas* 92). As a collective asset, the written word opened up spaces for new visualizations and, as I will return to later, new forms of political subjectivity.

Each "Novela" contained several micro-narratives linked together. These stories consisted of micro-melodramas. Micro because of their remarkable narrative economy, a single column might contain three or more enthralling stories. Melodramas because they invested in narrative tropes proper to the melodramatic regime. First, the columns drew upon themes of victimization and personal struggles against insurmountable forces. Second, and flirting with the chronicle genre, they blurred the limits between fact and fiction. Lastly, they exemplified how melodrama develops forms of "revitalization" (Williams 26) and remediation (see chapter 1). Each column constructed a series of urban types by alluding to, and therefore repurposing, preterit melodramas and melodrama in other media. The columns constantly referred to previous *feuilleton*, including Eugène Sue's *Les mystères de Paris* (1842-1843) and Victor Hugo's *Les misérables* (1962), as well as contemporary *tango* and *sainete* (a melodramatic one-act play). Combined with specific urban locations, these allusions visualized the "modern Babylon of Buenos Aires,"[33] with its *canillitas*, *atorrantes*, and *milonguitas*, to name a few urban types.[34].

The first installment explored the overcrowded *conventillo*, the "infection focal point" Martínez and Gunche two years earlier had warned filmgoers off. The column, similarly to *La mosca y sus peligros*, used scientific rhetoric "to observe, to scrutinize, to study this world." It also used sensationalism to captivate the reader: "How much pain, how much *miseria*, how much hunger is there in these *conventillos*; dirty, foul-smelling, in which contagious diseases thrive!"[35] But unlike the film, this piece—and the "Novelas" in general—harnessed these registers to denounce social inequality, domestic violence, and sexual abuse. Full frontal photographs of children and an elderly man in *conventillo* settings reinforce the truth-value of the account (Figure 4). Photographs rhetorically buttress how the "Novelas" archived the pauper's everyday life, in terms of a purportedly objective

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[33] "Novelas de humildades" *Crítica* 28 Jan 1922: 4.

[34] Word choice in the "Novelas"—'*canillitas*' [children who sell newspapers on the street] and '*atorrantes*' [homeless, idler]—stresses shifting regimes of visibility within the melodramatic regime. These terms originated in *lunfardo*, the macaronic language born out of immigration to the River Plate. Textual appropriation of these terms contributed to rearranging hierarchies of representation, an unacceptable situation to some. For Ricardo Rojas, a *La Razón* interviewee, terms such as "*atorrante*" revealed how, "nowhere in the country the decay of the moral milieu [el enrarecimiento del ambiente moral] has been as great as in Buenos Aires. It would suffice to observe the following: the voices that reach us from the anonymous bottom of the population, that is to say their most genuine creations, which give away the most ignoble spiritual states" (247).

[35] "Novelas de humildades: el dolor del conventillo, el azote de la miseria" *Crítica* 14 Jan 1922: 4. Print.

"transference of reality," to borrow André Bazin's terms (14).[36] At the same time, the photos appeal to readers through sympathy for victims. The lowermost caption reads, for instance, "Another aspect of the *convento* child population. There are sad and angry faces, you *che* [an informal exclamation] the 'patriots,' what are you doing that you don't fix this?" Intended to reach readers across the social spectrum, the column appeals to sympathy through a Manichean social divide—underdog *pathos* and an overt critique to the "patriots," an anonymous elite of which *Crítica* readers most likely were not part.

[36] Albeit much contested, André Bazin in "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" posited photography as an objective medium of record, whose truth-value hinges upon a privileged, unmediated link to reality. For Bazin, "production by automatic means […] confers on [photography] a quality of credibility absent from all other picture making […] we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually *re*-presented, set before us, […] in time and space" (13-4,emphasis in original). Bazin's notion of multiplying visibility and presence, re-presenting an object, combined with Kracauer's awe vis-à-vis the massive "warehousing of nature" (62) that photography implies, and that the illustrated press chaotically diffuses under his account, shed light on the melodramatic regime's reach. Far more than a set of narrative or visual tropes, the melodramatic regime incorporates narrative modes and diverse media (i.e. means of reproduction) in order to reshuffle the sensible order and its practices at particular historical moments.

Policía con las tragedia de la vid

NOVELAS DE HUMILDADES

El dolor del Conventillo

El azote de la miseria

¿Quién no conoce los conventillos de nuestro Buenos Aires? ¿Quién no se ha sentido impresionado al pasar ante uno de esos caserones de sesenta o setenta piezas, donde viven otras tantas familias?

Casi todos nuestros autores teatrales, o por lo menos una gran mayoría han ido a buscar al conventillo asuntos y tipos para sus sainetes. Pero ¿es que se conoce en realidad el conventillo en toda su intensidad? ¡Bah! claro que sí, se nos contestará.

Nosotros afirmamos que no. Se conoce, sí, el conventillo en su aspecto exterior, risueño, pintoresco. Pero hay que vivir en él, sufrirlo... Para eso sería menester despojarse en absoluto de prejuicios sociales, dejar a un lado todas las comodidades de nuestros hogares, renunciar al "gran mundo y sus placeres", e ir a alquilar una habitación en un conventillo; observar, escudriñar, estudiar ese mundo donde se agitan tantos seres en medio de un ambiente lleno de dolor y de miseria. Porque, dentro de ese aspecto alegre y pintoresco, cada habitación, cada familia, tiene un mundo de sinsabores, oculto en su misma ignorancia.

¡Cuánto dolor, cuánta miseria, cuánta hambre hay en esos conventillos, sucios, malolientes, donde campean las enfermedades contagiosas!

Naturalmente ,las hay que no sufren los rigores de la miseria. Mientras se trabaja, o se son pocos de familia, menos mal. Pero cuando una mujer es viuda, con seis o siete hijos "a la cola", todos pequeños; cuando falta trabajo; cuando doce o trece personas componen una sola familia y es el padre sólo el que trabaja y hay que pagar el alquiler, mantenerlos, vestirlos, con tres o cuatro pesos diarios que se ganan tras un trabajo rudo, ¡oh! entonces sí que el hambre, el frío, la miseria con toda su amargura hinca sus garras en las criaturas.

Ahí viven niños de ambos sexos, en continua promiscuidad, revolcándose por el suelo. Descalzos, sucios, amarillos, algunos enfermo, las madres no tienen el tiempo necesario para limpiarlos y atenderlos. Ellas también trabajan ayudando al esposo para que nunca falte un pedazo de pan por lo menos. ¡Y si tan siquiera nunca faltara!...

Hay niños que miran y hablan con la gravedad de hombres. Criaturas que ya tienen la frente surcada por una arruga, símbolo de la preocupación. Pero es que un niño, una niña de 9 o 10 años puede pensar? En el conventillo sí. ¿Cómo no ha de pensar que nunca tienen un juguete que jamás se ponen trajecitos nuevos, que no van a pasear, que no pueden comer hasta satisfacer por completo el estómago, que ni siquiera pueden correr, gritar y reir a sus anchas porque el encargado no quiere barullo en la casa?

Escuchad una anécdota:

Una tarde, un nitito de siete años de edad se había un tambor con una lata de kerosene. El padre, un albañil, terco y agrio, dormía la siesta. La madre lavaba en la pileta. El niño tocaba el tambor, loco de alegría.

—A ver, che, que se calle ese chico, que no me deja dormir gritó, el padre.

—Nene, quedate quieto que duerme papá, le dijo la madre.

El niño calló. Pero fué un instante que debió parecerle un siglo, porque enseguida, al momento, empezó a meter más ruido que antes.

—He dicho que se calle ese niño, rugió esta vez el albañil, apareciendo en la puerta de la habitación, iracundo y amenazador. El pobre niño se refugió atemorizado entre las polleras de la madre. Esta, para que el pobrecito no estorbara, le dió un cachete. Calló el niño, pero tras corto rato, se olvidó... y volvió a tocar el tambor. Y el padre, sin decir nada esta vez, se levantó y le rompió la cabeza con el palo de la escoba.

Cuando algunas vecinas indignadas increparon al padre, éste contestó con la mayor naturalidad:

—Mis padres me hacían lo mismo.

Este, lector, no es cuento, no es fantasía. Es dolorosamentet, tristemente cierto.

Esucchad ahora una vida de continuo trabajo.

Roque Polito es un hombre que tiene actualmente 74 años de edad. Vino a este país como tantos otros, en busca del vellocino de oro, de la América soñada. Y con todo el fervor de su juventud y sus esperanzas, se lanzó al trabajo, a la conquista del pan.

Trabajó. Trabajó mucho, enormemente, afanosamente, y honradamente. Esto último fué lo que le perjudicó.

El ser demasiado honrado. Pudo ser rico, como tantos otros, abusando de la confianza de las crédulas, aprovechándose de las ocasiones que se le presentaban para enriquecerse. Mas él, de una rectitud intachable, despreció altivamente esos medios y dedicó todos sus esfuerzos, todas sus energías, a la labor ruda y honesta que deja una satisfacción íntima en las almas nobles y generosas.

Toda una vida de privaciones, de trabajo brutal, sufriendo las inclemencias del tiempo, haciendo de todo para criar y educar a los suyos. En el ocaso de su vida, a los 74 años de edad, cuando debía tener una justa compensación a sus esfuerzos y a su vida honestísima y laboriosa, Roque Polito trabaja de "mozo" de cordel.

Hay leyes, muchas, que equilibran los actos de la humanidad, pero falta una, esencial, necesaria, indispensable diríamos, y es la del sostenimiento y cuidado de la ancianidad.

Oíd ahora la siguiente historia brutal, repugnante, dolorosa, con toda su horrible desnudez.

En una habitación de un conventillo vivía una familia compuesta del jefe, la madre y 8 hermanos.

La única habitación que ocupaban hacía de todo: dormitorio, comedor, etc.

Una noche, el padre, después de comer se fué a la cantina. La familia toda se acostó. El mayor tenía 16 años; la segunda, una niña de casi 15. Dormían en distintas camas, con, tres hermanitos pequeños cada uno ,separados por medio metro un lecho de otro. A media noche volvió el padre borracho. Entró gritando, furioso porque había perdido una partida de "patrone e sotto". Despertó a la mujer y a los dos mayores. Los menores dormían el sueño de la inocencia.

Tras mucho gritar, jurar e insultar a todo el mundo, apagó la luz y se acostó.

Poco después oíanse las respiraciones fatigosas y anhelantes de dos vidas que se funden en una sola.

Siguió el silencio, interrumpido por fuertes ronquidos.

—María — susurró el mayor.

—¿Qué? — suspiró la niña.

—¿Oiste?

—Sí.

No hubo más palabras. Un cuerpo que se desliza de un lecho a otro. Y se consumó el horrible crimen.

Había ahora una madre:

—Mire, señor. Yo quedé viuda con seis hijos. Mi hija mayor de 15 años trabajaba en una fábrica de tejidos y ganaba 30 pesos por mes. Yo lavaba para fuera y sacaba $ 1.50 por día. Las otras chicas, el mayor tiene diez años, el menor 2. Me enfermé de bronconeumonía. A mi hija la echaron de la fábrica porque no había trabajo y los patrones querían economizar. Nos moríamos de hambre. Un día, mi hija leyó en un diario que en un cabaret se necesitaban 'señoritas que supieran bailar". Mi niña bailaba muy bien. En los conventillos las chicas bailan cuando tienen cuatro años. Mi hija fué a bailar. Le daban cuatro pesos por noche. Se iba a las 9 y volvía a la seis de la mañana.

Pero los cuatro pesos no alcanzaban. Ella debía ir bien vestida, bien arreglada, sino la tomaban por una "milonguera", y es claro, la despedirían. En el cabaret pagaban a las mujeres 50 centavos por cada copa de bebida que tomaban. Empezó a beber, con eso aumentó el sueldo. Venía todas las madrugadas borracha, descompuesta, enferma, pero ¡por lo menos comíamos!

El piberío que vive feliz y contento aunque el viejo esté pobre y la vieja les dé el café amargo por que la azúcar vale mucho, gracias a Salaberry.

Otro aspecto de la población infantil del convento. Hay algunas caras tristes y otras de bronca, ustedes ché los "patriotas" ¿que hacen que no arreglan esto?.

Don Roque Polito, 74 años, itálico, 30 años de residencia, garbosa figura que lleva a cuestas las cargas de la vida. Es changador. A la hora de la "porca pipetta".

Una mañana no vino a dormir. Volvió a la 1 de la tarde; pálida, ojerosa, pero con dinero. Usted ya me comprende. Después, claro, empezó a faltar más seguido. Al principio lloré mucho, señor, pero después ella, la pobre, necesita ropa buena, los chicos necesitan comer, vestirse. Y continúa en los cabarets. Yo le lavo la ropa y se la plancho. Ella no vive aquí, vive en un departamento, con una amiga, pero viene a vernos todos los días, y nos mantiene.

Oh, madre, bendita seas en tu dolor! Bendita sea el fruto de tu vientre. ¡Jesús!...

Pero, ¿qué le importa a nuestro gobierno estas cosas? ¿Acaso los diputados, senadores, ministros y el excelentísimo señor presidente, esos hombres que rigen los destinos de la Nación y velan por el bienestar del pueblo, que el mismo pueblo elige, acaso pueden ocuparse de estas miserias?

¡Bah! Hay muchos problemas graves que resolver. Antes están la dignidad, el honor, los fueros, la bandera de la patria y otras cosas por el estilo.

¿Los conventillos? ¿El pueblo?

Vivimos en una República, abierta a todos aquellos que quieran venir a trabajar y a sufrir!

ESOS QUINIELEROS...

La actividad de la policía de investigaciones, nos recuerda a esas maquinitas fabricadas para entretenimiento de los niños.

Se les da cuerda y parten a escape. Corren un breve trecho y se plantan. No hay nadie que las mueva, una vez que se empacan. Así la persecución al esos bandoleros que se lucran con el juego. De pronto vemos que se allanan cinco o diez casas, luego el silencio por largo tiempo. Nuestra capital está plagada de infractores a la ley. En cada cuadra existen, por lo menos, cinco casas que hacen del vicio su "modus vivendi".

La policía puede cómodamente allanar diariamente veinte locales. Vamos a facilitarle en algo la tarea con una pequeña lista de nombres, por más que nos consta que ellos son perfectamente conocidos, y esto hace, como es natural, más sospechosa la indiferencia de investigaciones..

Figure 4. "Novelas de Humildades: el dolor del conventillo." ***Crítica*** **14 Jan. 1922: 4**

In the "Novelas" first installment, four "anecdotes" present the "pain of the *conventillo*" and "the scourge of *miseria*." A combination of sociolectal dialogue and narrator observations string together the lives of a beaten child, a helpless old man, a man who rapes his daughter while her eight siblings sleep in the same room, and a girl "who stumbles" into cabaret life and consequently prostitution. With the exception of the old man, characters all are nameless. Anonymity lends them a stereotypical varnish, in which *miseria* prompts alcoholism, promiscuity, and abuses of all kinds. Characters are victims of both violent *conventillo* tenants and also forces beyond their control. The narrator makes sure that the reader sympathizes with these urban outcasts, and at the same time recoils in disgust. For instance, in the incest story, the journalistic voice addresses the reader: "Hear now the following brutal story, repulsive, painful, with all its horrible nudity." The insistent invitation to read and see (through photographs) the bare drama of misery—both real and melodramatically heightened—entice the reader to bear witness *and* voyeuristically spectate critical social issues.

In serialized form, recurring to pathos aimed to build up indignation on the part of the reader and, therefore, create a new perspective on the *barrio* marginal classes. Even though the "Novelas" gave a minimal voice to the pauper in the guise of *barrio* types, the bulk of micro-melodramas laid the ground for the visualization of, and discussion about, new social actors and their individual problems. This particular installment concludes denouncing the lack of top-bottom intervention on *conventillo* overcrowding. This demand demonstrates how the melodramatic regime parceled out the sensible order and the forms of public participation that reproduced such order, inducing new forms of political subjectivity. In this case, it is the emergent professional journalist who questions the monopoly on representation. He speaks *for* the *conventillo* tenant. Appropriating sensationalist and authoritative discourses with the intent to cater to a mass readership, the journalist makes the underside of progress a contested site of representation. Urban outcasts do not have a voice in *Crítica*, but the modes of address brandished in the "Novelas" made them visible appealing to sympathy and proximity.[37]

Crítica was the first *porteño* tabloid. From the 1920s on, this incredibly popular newspaper introduced the sensationalist style inaugurated by Joseph Pullitzer and William Randolph Hearst to the *porteño* readership (Saítta 38). The opposite of *La Razón*, the newspaper opening this chapter, *Crítica* quickly took distance from party allegiances (anti-socialist, anti-radicalist campaigns) to cater to readers across the social spectrum. With striking headlines, a focus on social conflicts (crime, corruption, white slave trade, *barrio*

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[37] I borrow the notion of proximity from Assia Djebar. In the overture of her *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartment* (1980), Djebar reflects on the modes of address available to relate stories of subaltern women in Algeria. Innovatively she proposed "Ne pas prétendre 'parler pour,' ou pire 'parler sur,' à peine parler *près de*, et si possible *tout contre*: première des solidarités à assumer pour les quelques femmes arabes qui obtiennent ou acquièrent la liberté de mouvement, du corps et de l'esprit." I don't claim that *Crítica* journalists had the same sensibility of choosing modes of address as Djebar. However, by assuming an enunciatory stance through the melodramatic regime, they purposefully reshuffled visual regimes and consequently made visible urban outcasts, while sympathetically bringing them closer to the reader. This gestures expanded what could be narrated and appealed to solidarity regarding dramas of everyday life.

overcrowding) and human pathos, *Crítica* instituted a successful journalistic format within the context of urban transformation and expansion. Sensationalism, politics, sports, gaucho and urban *criollo* discourse (the latter developed in chapter 3) populated its pages. In this way, *Crítica* both catered to a mass reading public, already cultivated by the popular press, and also aimed to attract middle-class and intellectual readers (Saítta 91). Harnessing melodrama, *Crítica* aimed to serve as a "mediator," putting the reader "in direct contact with the cityscape." Its pages "recreat[ed] an emotionally charged rhetoric focused on the idea of the suffering people [el sufrido y doliente pueblo] as the repository of social virtues" (143). As the interpellation to the "patriots" suggests (quoted above), and borrowing from Brooks, for *Crítica* "melodrama bec[ame] a chosen vehicle for the attempt to change the world" (*Reading* 153), epitomized in the "Novelas."

Publications such as *Crítica* visualized a split Buenos Aires. The grid divided urban space between a rich urban center and a myriad of *miseria* nodes in the *barrios*. The Bogota line offered an equivalent partition. But unlike the grid, in which there seemed to be no outside of a horizontal cityscape, the line parceled out the city vertically. The checkerboard layout extending along the north-south axis belonged to the conservative-yet-modernizing urban expansion. For the elites, as quoted above, the squatter settlements looming over the city center threatened to contaminate the line with immorality and disease. Newspapers and magazines focused primarily on Paseo Bolivar, the *barrio* that presented the greatest threat. Because of its location, directly above the traditional downtown, Paseo Bolivar juxtaposed marginal classes and settlements to the political, economic, and cultural center. Further, unlike other squatter settlements over the sierra, Paseo Bolivar grew on the creeks that watered the busy downtown. Polluted waters and downward flow of undesirables turned Paseo Bolivar into an "infection focal point" in the minds of the elite. The alarm quickly spread to the popular press, who reproduced this exclusionary perspective as it tried to register and comprehend the social phenomena a split society yields.

During the 1920s, newspapers covered crimes and assassinations that took place on Paseo Bolivar and other urban spaces. Appealing to suspense and sensationalist headlines, they exploited narrative procedures proper to *feuilleton* and tabloid journalism. As *Crítica* in Buenos Aires, Bogota newspapers catered to a broadening readership by entering the melodramatic regime. Perusing *El Tiempo* newspaper yielded a fascinating discovery. In the mid-1920s, *miseria*, criminality, and a positivistic approach for comprehending the two found a meeting point in the weekly novel—the reviled "cheap literature" format opening this chapter. Starting March 1924, *El Tiempo* presented a series of columns amounting to a promotional campaign for *Los misterios del crimen* [*The Mysteries the Crime*, 1924-1926] (from here on LMC). The newspaper presented LMC as a register of current events in melodramatic key. Several columns described LMC in terms of a "sensational chronicle" [relación sensacional] with "palpitating scenes and unknown facts,"[38] that aimed "to arouse

[38] "Los misterios del cimen" *El Tiempo* 13 Mar. 1924: n.p. Print. "Relación sensacional" carries connotations difficult to translate into English. The term 'relación' denotes a narrative mode closer to the report than to fiction (1914 DRAE in NTLLE). Its claims to objectivity, adjectivally transformed, reveal a shift in regimes of visibility. *Los misterios* promised a thorough account of current events filtered through narrative strategies proper to the melodramatic regime.

[despertar] the deepest impression [in the reader]."[39] According to these columns, LMC aimed to both inform and thrill the reader with "exciting," "terrible" crimes.

From a lettered perspective, LMC purposed to visualize and theorize the escalating crime in Bogota, albeit from within the melodramatic regime. The periodical made visible a specific urban phenomenon and offered a means to understand it, having recourse to Manichean depictions of the destitute and suspenseful murder stories. At the same time, it was quite conscious of the platform to deliver its proposed shift in regimes of visibility. An editorial note in the first installment read, "even though some [pieces will contain] fictional passages [pasajes novelescos,] they will all be copied [calcadas] from reality and will constitute the most interesting analysis of crime in Colombia, [a topic] of ever-growing appeal and of positive scientific value."[40] Not a copy—but a *calco*—of reality, LMC proposed a hyperbolic fidelity to objective reality in weekly novel form. A *calco* consists in a traced copy of "a drawing, inscription, or piece in relief by contact with the original" (DRAE). Like photography, or for the sake of example a footprint, the *calco* implies "an existential bond" (Doane 92) between object and, in the case of the illustrated press, the surface of depicted signs (examined above). By exaggerating its truth-value, from depicted sign to indexical sign, LMC aimed to build its niche as an enthralling yet authoritative voice on criminality.[41] LMC merged positivistic discourses circulating at the time with narrative modes in demand: "this publication relies on numerous men of letters [literatos] and criminalists [criminalistas]. In this way, it presents the most varied works in style and importance to the public: police *feuilletons*, psychological novels, anthropological studies, memoirs of the best investigators, etc."[42] In a format very similar to the *porteño* and Bogota LNS, LMC offered narrativized versions of then current crimes. Weekly titles, usually referring to specific urban locales,[43] and illustrations and/or photographs of the perpetrators further boosted truth-value in each installment. Needless to say, the publication's title intertextually alludeded to—and revitalized—a corpus of global *feuilletons* focused on urban *miseria*, originating in Eugène Sue's *Les mystères de Paris* (1842-1843).[44]

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[39] "Los misterios del cimen" *El Tiempo* 15 Mar. 1924: n.p. Print.

[40] "La importancia de esta revista" *Los misterios del crimen* 14 Mar. 1924: n.p. Print.

[41] On the 28th installment, a publication contest further illustrates the magazine's aim to deliver "scientific character" colluded with sensationalism. Aimed at "criminalists" throughout the country, the contest demanded rigorous fidelity and strict narrative parameters. For the *relaciones* (see note 38) to be considered, they had be "taken directly from the respective [police] report" and should "have the sufficient appeal to keep the reader interested until the end, without [stylistically] overloading the literature and [also] paying attention to the juridical, scientific, and moralizing part." "Concurso." *Los misterios del crimen* 3 Jan. 1925: n.p. Print.

[42] "La importancia de esta revista" *Los misterios del crimen* 14 Mar. 1924: n.p. Print.

[43] Titles include, "Tragedy in 'El Robledal,'" "The Cualla Bridge Crime," The Flauta Arcade [Pasaje Flauta] Crime," "The beheaded of 'El Peñón,'" "The Sagrario Morales Murder," The Crime of La Vega," "The Montebello Crime," "The Santa Librada Parricide," "The 22nd Street Crime," "The 'Hato Grande' Crime."

[44] Initially published in 90 installments in *Journal des débats* (19 June 1842 – 15 October 1843), and according to Peter Brooks "perhaps the most widely read novel of the nineteenth century" (*Reading*, 146), Sue's *feuilleton* spawned many imitations that gave rise

The first novel, signed by LMC's owner and director Ramón Bernal Azula,[45] exploited Paseo Bolivar *miseria* to apportion urban space—spatially and morally. Based on a true story, the vicious murder of a homeless prostitute named Eva Pinzón,[46] "El río de la muerte" pictured new urban dynamics born of a split society. The story follows Eva's migration from rural to urban against a backdrop of several abusive male figures on whom she depended for survival before reaching Bogota. In the capital city, she joined a mixed group of marginal individuals, destitute *criollos* and "*indios*,"[47] who lived on petty crimes by venturing down into the city center. Eva's rural modus operandi—survival through cohabitation—gave rise to tensions among the female members. When one woman realizes that Eva monopolizes male sexual solicitations among the group, the women decide to kill her. The narrative is not clear on why the men also collaborated in the killing. Led by the women, and in a meticulously raw naturalist description, the whole group lynched Eva, stabbed her several times (beginning from her genitals), and eviscerated her. Eva's evisceration metaphorically represents exchanges in a limited resources environment that leads people to bestial behavior: "[On the verge of death] Eva let out a feeble wail. This attracted the jackals. They took her to the other side of the river. There, the entrails flew among contracted hands. Delfina, horrifyingly standing up, threw a handful of intestines to the women that stayed on the other side. She inserted the hand again [inside Eva's body]: —There is nothing more!" Eva's death renders the paupers of Paseo Bolivar into carrion-scavenging brutes who establish allegiances for their individual survival. Finally, the beastly group dumped her body on a Paseo Bolivar creek and spread her intestines on both sides of the stream. In the narration, Eva's violated body incarnates a society rife with fragmentations; her entrails lie on opposite sides of a dog-eat-dog world above, while her blood pollutes the waters flowing down to the phlegmatic city below.

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to the "City mysteries" genre, focused on the cityscape and the fringes of society. Titles include: Eugène François Vidoqc's *Les vrais mystères de Paris* (1844), George Lippard's *The Quaker City, or The Monks of Monk Hall: a Romance of Philadelphia Life, Mystery and Crime* (1844), George W. M. Reynolds' *The Mysteries of London* (1844), Ned Buntline's *The Mysteries and Miseries of New York* (1848), Camilo Castelo Branco's *The Mysteries of Lisbon* (1854), Émile Zola's *Les mystères de Marseille* (1867), and many more.

[45] Acclaimed journalist and jurist, Bernal Azula published articles in several Bogota newspapers (under the pseudonym Rambla) and was also district attorney in Tunja, Boyacá. "Manifestaciones lingüísticas y literarias: Ramón Bernal Azula." *Turmequé: Geografía Cultural*. 25 Mar. 2014. Web.

[46] It should be noted that the first installment capitalized on judicial spectacle to maximize exposure, circulation, and truth-value. On the day before *Los misterios del crimen* appeared, an *El Tiempo* column read, "[Eva Pinzón's murder] is of current interest because public hearings will take place these days at the 3rd Superior Court." "Los misterios del cimen" *El Tiempo* 13 Mar. 1924: n.p. Print.

[47] In this text 'Indian' does not necessarily point to ethnic origin. Based on complex racialized class differences proper to colonial times, 'indio' is a social marker that combines social and racial integers. See Castro Gómez, Santiago. *La hybris del punto cero: ciencia, raza e ilustración en la Nueva Granada (1750-1816)*. Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2005. Print.

Throughout the narrative, water flow metaphorically renders visible vertical exchanges and circulation in Bogota. Multiple divisions (rural-urban, poverty-affluence, above-below, victim-perpetrator) iteratively find their meeting point in the "river" that flows from Paseo Bolivar to downtown. Defying the laws of gravity, metaphoric fluids run both ways, morally corroding the entire cityscape: "'La Ñapa' [Eva] looked at the river through which corruption flows upward and downward, like mortal or material city detritus. [Downward flow] turns below into poisoned vegetation greenness [se convierte abajo en el verdor de una vegetación emponzoñada.] [Upward flow] nurtures above the lecherous vegetation of vice [alimenta arriba la lujuriante vegetación del vicio]." Overwrought descriptions encapsulate the narrator's morally charged perspective on urban social dynamics. For the narrator, idling, alcoholism, cohabitation, crime, even sadistic murder spring from questionable exchanges in a mutually detrimental, bipartite society. However, the narration eschews any description of the "poisoned vegetation" below, the patrician counterpart to Paseo Bolivar lechery and violence. In this sense, the narration confers partial visibility to a morally fraught social order. Consequently, it also obfuscates any solution, moral or otherwise, to criminality, which was the professed object of study in LMC. The narration steers clear from explicitly condemning the upper half of the social order, but suggests that the city also partakes in degrading the social body as a whole. Nevertheless, social critique can be read between the lines (from a patrician point of view). Without the sympathetic perspective that *Crítica*'s "Novelas" produced vis-à-vis the pauper, "El río de la muerte" offers alarming glimpses of social instability: "La Negra [one of the killers] expressed a deep feeling in the people [el pueblo], evident in rallies [mitines] and in cantina conversations and even in workshop ruminations." The story does not apportion blame on a specific social group, but warns against association and foresees social upheaval due to *miseria* originating in a bipartite society.

Even though criminology was not an established discipline in Colombia until the mid-1930s as it was in Argentina (Marroquín and Florez), discourses and authorities on criminology abounded in the Colombian Illustrated press. José Ingenieros' writings circulated as early as 1917 in the magazine *Voces* of Barranquilla (Lotero n.p). In Bogota, many periodicals—ranging from *Cromos* magazine to *Películas*, a film trade journal—diffused Lombrosian physiognomical theories to a mass readership. LMC partook in this popular explosion of scientific discourses with the figure of the "criminalist." His authority resided in juridical expertise, but to the purpose of the magazine it served a scientific end. The fifth installment of LMC introduced a *feuilleton* section titled "Causes of Criminality in Colombia." The introductory note anticipates essays from "lawyers, prosecutors, and judges" who would bestow "scientific character" on the magazine.[48] It is not surprising that LMC strongly relied on jurists in order to present scientific credentials to the readership. As an expansion of the colonial checkerboard city, the Bogota line not only reproduced traditional ways of sociability but also a colonial will to knowledge,[49] in a modern setting.

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[48] "Causas de la criminalidad en Colombia." *Los misterios del crimen* 15 Apr. 1924: n.p. Print.

[49] I borrow Foucault's term to denote an elite's exclusionary drive to gain and monopolize specific knowledge. See his *History of Sexuality*. Robert Hurley. Trans. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. In this dissertation I take distance from a Foucauldian approach, however, for his notion of subjectivity dismisses, as illusory, the possibility of effective political subjectivity under the omnipresence of power. In his work, Foucault explores the

Therefore, the figure of the lettered jurist held great authority at the time. Further, Bogota elites first learned about new social science discourses, particularly the Italian school of criminology (articulated by Cesare Lombroso, Enrico Ferri, and Raffaele Garofalo) in university penal law classes (Arias Trujillo 66). The fact that criminology and social sciences filtered into political and elite discussions through jurisprudence theory illuminates the underpinning of the Colombian social order. LMC drew on a revitalized body of elite, lettered men, reproducing *letrado* "principles of concentration, elitism, hierarchy, and, above all, the distance that set them apart from the rest of society" (Rama 71). This distance aimed to protect a waning monopoly on representation.

Relying on the elitist power of the written word, LMC participated in shifting visual regimes. Yet, through lettered accounts, LMC authoritatively condemned the advent of modern changes in the social order. Therefore, the publication exemplified actors within the melodramatic regime who partook in the partition—not the distribution—of the sensible. They fought against new actors who, for LMC, destabilized traditional hierarchies in representation. LMC's first *feuilleton* for the "Causes of Criminality" section (and sole survivor in the Luis Angel Arango Library holdings) was "The Current Rise in Crime in Colombia: Its Causes and Remedies" by lawyer and prose writer Marcelino Uribe Arango.[50] The essay alarmingly highlights the rise of criminality due to "international"—i.e. imported—causes such as "lust," "lack of respect for the institution of marriage," and "vagrancy," among other factors. As the title clearly suggest, scientific rhetoric across the text describes the social order in terms of a morally ailing body in need of treatment.

Following evolutionist premises of criminology, and picking up the bestial descriptions found in "El río de la muerte" quoted above, Uribe described local offenders in

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propagation of power through institutional surveillance, regimes of normalization and sanction, and technologies of the self, which compel to endless self-examination. D.A. Miller, in his Foucauldian analysis of the Victorian novel, best describes this illusion of subjecthood. For Miller, under Foucault's account the liberal subject "seems to recognize himself most fully only when he forgets or disavows his functional implication in a system of carceral restraints or disciplinary injunctions" (x). Conversely, I consider the melodramatic regime as a means to (re)produce—and contest—diverse political subjectivities who wield effective agency by shifting regimes of visibility. These shifts take place in diverse media and, correlatively, in the practices of everyday life. For the purposes of this chapter, I focus only on periodicals.

[50] Knowledgeable about the global advances in criminology, and with a sustained perception of local backwardness in his writings, Uribe Arango pioneered a scientific approach to Colombian jurisprudence. He campaigned against the death penalty in Colombia, demanding the development of statistics and criminal anthropology in his book *Contribución al estudio del problema de la pena de muerte en Colombia* (1914). He also proposed legal reforms favoring women's rights. Structured under the guise of nine flimsy dialogues with an anonymous female socialite, his 1927 *Al oído femenino* informed women about germane legal matters (prenuptial contracts, property settlements) and proposed innovative reforms such as compulsory prenuptial STD testing for men. Apparently, the success of this book led him to write another one focused on male rights and responsibilities, *El derecho y la restauración del hogar* (1928), following a similar dialogical structure with "the young husband" of *Al oído*'s socialite.

a liminal stage of criminal evolution. Perusing Bogota and regional newspapers (not delving into the factual underworld of crime), Uribe observed how "sometimes […] crimes reveal […] savage action plans, the crimes of the *wolf man* [el *hombre lobo*]. [But sometimes,] and these cases have been growing alarmingly for a few years now, the reader understands that he is not in the presence of something primitive and proper to young nations [los pueblos jóvenes]; it is the crime of decaying societies […] of refined criminals and, in a word, of the cold and astute villainy of the *fox man* [el *hombre zorro*]."[51] For Uribe, without fully explaining his bestial metaphors, Colombian criminality mirrored the tensions between a problematic past and a worrisome present—the presence of local, atavistic forms of crime as well as of the recognition of new, imported forms. Equally monstrous, the wolf man and the fox man give away a traditionalist view packaged in pseudoscientific rhetoric. In Uribe's account, criminals inhabit a developmental stage between beast and human. But this evolutionary liminality does not originate in Colombian or ethnic backwardness with respect to other societies. Rather, describing criminality in bestial terms obfuscates anxieties vis-à-vis modern changes—i.e. expanding participation in the public sphere and access to modern technologies related to the melodramatic regime across the class spectrum, as I will explore below.

As quoted, Uribe finds the causes for criminality in emerging lust and vagrancy, among other factors. Honing his analysis, Uribe catalogues eight "not too old" causes that particularly rose criminality in the Colombian milieu of his time (the list, presented in the first installment, also announced further installments to come): "I. The Press, II. The Cinematograph, III. Child abandonment, IV. Lack of [legal and social] sanctions, V. Weapons possession, VI. Penal institutions, VII. Certain books and immoral *feuilleton*, VIII. Economic strife."[52] Not surprisingly, emerging mass leisurely practices in the form of imported modern technologies—the press, with two entries, and the cinematograph—predominate in his analysis. Through a cautionary examination, Uribe warns the reader against the effects new stimuli and inheritance have on human affect and disposition. For Uribe, the new visual regimes available through the press and the cinematograph "excite […] the imagination of those unfortunates [who suffer from] criminal irritability [irritabilidad criminosa] […] their imitative spirit awakens."[53] Uribe recognizes that the illustrated press and the cinematograph "are aspects of modern life," and that they are not "evil in

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[51] Uribe Arango, Marcelo. "El actual incremento de la criminalidad en Colombia: sus causas y sus remedios." *Los misterios del crimen* 25 Apr. 1924: n.p.. Emphasis in original.
[52] Uribe Arango, Marcelo. "El actual incremento de la criminalidad en Colombia: sus causas y sus remedios." *Los misterios del crimen* 9 May 1924: n.p.
[53] Uribe Arango, Marcelo. "El actual incremento de la criminalidad en Colombia: sus causas y sus remedios." *Los misterios del crimen* 24 Jul. 1924: 16. Uribe exemplifies criminal copycats with a 1912 Bogota "shoeshine gang." It is noteworthy that imitation ran both ways during the period in Latin America. In Mexico, *El automóvil gris* (Enrique Rosas, 1919) reenacted crimes committed by the 'Grey Automobile Gang' in Mexico City ca. 1915. Rielle Navitski's research explores the ways in which imported narratives of criminality mediated modernization processes accompanied by spectacuralized violence in this film. "Temporalities of Violence Between Actuality and Fiction: El automóvil gris/The Grey Automobile (1919)." Paper read at UC Berkeley's *Cinematic Times* international conference 15 Nov. 2013.

[themselves]." What Uribe finds problematic is the dominant narrative—in his terms, "the triumphant genre today [is] the apotheosis of the thief and the *cocotte*." Combined with the readership and spectatorship's disposition to avidly consume—and imitate—such narratives, illustrated press and moving images threatened the social order with unprecedented criminal practices.

LMC's weekly novel in combination with its essayistic *feuilleton* conferred limited visibility to the marginal classes. In the meantime, it obfuscated political participation to the latter. Unlike *Crítica*'s "Novelas," in which emerging journalists probed *porteño* underworlds and ultimately spoke *for* destitute individuals, LMC's serialized format reveals an exclusionary purpose formulated within the melodramatic regime. The main narrative presented stand-alone episodes bent on sensationally and morally alienating the pauper. This type of episodic seriality narrated stories independent of previous or future installments. Conversely, the *feuilleton* essay offered a prolonged reading that spearheaded a traditionalist take on modern transformations, as mentioned above. Both types of serialization pointed to a single direction. If episodic-yet-recurrent pathos in the "Novelas" amounted to destabilizing hierarchies in representation, and if conferring visibility to new social actors induced new forms of political subjectivity, in LMC serialization prompted identifying antagonists and expelling them from a social order.[54] Recognition of virtue through pathos and clearly identifying antagonists underpin melodramatic narratives (Brooks, *The Melodramatic* 17, 27). Within the melodramatic regime, they also determined regimes of visibility, as exemplified by these two periodicals.

LMC's two serial formats—purposed to "heal" a social body—lay the grounds for considering other bodily dimensions of serial narrative. As analyzed, in LMC new forms of what could be narrated were rendered in bodily metaphors. First, discourses on the built environment apportion urban space in terms of an ailing (social) body. Second, Eva's erotically deviant and ultimately dismembered body incarnates a metaphor for social malady that partially visualizes aberrant transactions between members of a bipartite

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[54] Although the term 'serialization' usually refers to writing or publishing a story in sections that appear over a period of time, in this chapter I consider other forms of arranging narratives in a series. To do so, I draw my examples from periodicals that explore serial formats other than linear narratives divided in installments. Below, I delve into the textual relations these other formats establish and what type of readerly response they might produce. Regardless of the format, forms of serialization have an effect, and are affected by, extraliterary factors, which I relate to regimes of visibility and the production of political subjectivities. This is an intrinsic quality of serial narratives, since their inception when they "helped create modern mass-circulation journalism" (*Reading* 146). Susan Belasco Smith considers serialization as "a dominant mode in the production of literary discourse" that "offers a special form of communication for a writer, involving a complex negotiation by which a writer acts on as well as reacts to a particular and evolving publishing environment" (76). I this chapter, I consider serialization as a form of communication at the level of the writer, but I also examine its sense-making potential when related to other texts and periodicals in a specific and equally dynamic publishing environment.

society.[55] Yet LMC's weekly stand-alone episodes in conjunction with serialized essays presupposed a third body—the reader's body. Serialization foregrounds the temporality of narrative and the reader's historically and time-bounded relation to serials and everyday life. In this case it is the time of modernization and its pressing issues read, say, on the trolley to work or at home. Serialization implies reading in time; memory, of previous installments; and as I have suggested throughout this chapter, sense-making of the world via new visibilities.

Through repetition, the LMC essays persuasively affected the reader's imagination. Iteratively, they made specific social issues and modern leisure technologies the causes of crime in Colombia, as examined above.[56] Thus, LMC apportioned pseudoscientific discourse in installments to be absorbed, weekly, by the reader's body. Assuming that an ordinary reader of LMC would probably have been reading both parts of the magazine, we might wonder how the essays conditioned readerly responses to the crime narratives they followed. Without a doubt, it would make some kind of difference whether an avid reader read the magazine in order or turned first to the essay section, followed the argument through multiple installments, and then went back to the individual stories of "real" destitution and its violence. It is impossible to reproduce such reader response. LMC did not include letters to the editor or any sort of readerly feedback. Nevertheless, the combination of serial formats further brings into consideration specifics of reading serialized texts. Equally valid for *Crítica*'s "Novelas," serialized narratives harness what Barthes calls *le déjà-lu*, "the already read (and the already written), in the writer's and the reader's experience of other literature, in a whole set of intertextual interlockings" (*Reading* 19). In other words, these narratives drew on the reader's literary competence through multiple textual elements (above I stressed how both LMC and the "Novelas" alluded to multiple melodramatic narratives, for instance). Equally important to these "intertextual interlockings," paratextual elements also shaped the reading experience.[57] In

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[55] To further elaborate this point, Eva Pinzón's nickname, la "La Ñapa" [lagniappe], alludes to erotically charged exchanges in the Bogota milieu. Her nickname puts the Paseo Bolivar world into crisis and, consequently, the split urban system altogether. Lagniappe refers to "something given as a bonus, an extra gift" (OED), especially something that a merchant gives to a buyer to successfully complete a transaction. Eva's nickname ambivalently describes her character as an individual that negotiates urban sociability through transactions in kind. Either she solicits *ñapa* or offers it (becoming a threatening source of sexual surplus for competing females in an environment of limited resources). The latter case, which leads to Eva's death, suggests that any distribution between haves and have-nots attributing surplus of any kind to the pauper has no place, and therefore a very restricted visibility, in the split cityscape of Bogota.

[56] An equivalent but oppositional argument could be made for *Crítica*'s "Novelas," which iteratively appealed for social reform.

[57] Gérard Genette usefully coined the term "paratext" to consider devices and conventions that surround a text and mediate between it and its readers. According to Gennette, These deivices and conventions include titles, subtitles, and intertitles; epigraphs anddidications; forewords and afterwords; promotional blurbs; footnotes and headnotes; and other sorts of texts, supplemental or framing devices attached to what could be considered the text proper. Genette limits his study to the book form, but does mention serial publication as a

the case of LMC, the essays in the "Causes of Criminality in Colombia" section persuaded readers to understand sensational narratives as the melodramas of real lives in need of policing and control. Most importantly, the essays made new visibilities dangerously present in the reader's everyday—locating the origin of crime in modern representation technologies and democratizing leisure practices—thus shaping the reader's ways of being through shifting visual regimes.

Even though LMC condemned the pauper, it is not they who were expelled from the social order, for they motivated these narratives. Melodrama's polarized logic of the excluded middle—i.e., *who* has a *place* in narrative and *how*—operated in LMC in relation to the very shifting regimes of visibility available within the melodramatic regime. The periodical conferred limited visibility to the fringes of society. Cautionary analyses on modern technologies and their effect on individuals warned against uncontrolled, democratized access to leisurely practices. Combined, the weekly narrative and the *feuilleton* disclosed a selective antagonizing of modern transformations. Both serial formats within the periodical condemned emerging social actors and foreclosed any chance of upward mobility. But they also favored certain modern transformations reproducing an immobile social order. Uribe's "remedies," regarding the press and the cinematograph, spelled top-down control over what could be narrated and visualized. Further, Uribe proposed a press censorship bill and strengthening film censorship committees.[58]

Appositely, the epilogue of "El río de la muerte" metaphorically portrayed social immobility and apathy regarding the dog-eat-dog world above with a celebration of technological progress. The narrator makes a diegetic appearance only at the end of the story. In the epilogue he visits the crime scene. With a "poet friend," and led by a police officer that "served as [their] Cicero," the three climb to the Bogota underworld in order to find a cross that someone put on the site of the murder. The cross reads, "Here lies Eva Pinzón: April 27, 1922." Looking up, coincidentally they see how "[Camilo] Daza's airplane was overlying [the area], like a great civilizing vulture."[59] Eva's cross spatially and temporally pinpoints a no man's land between the city and modern progress. The three climbers—representing the city's civil force, *modernista*, and journalistic authorities (the text ends with Bernal Azula's well-established pen name, "Rambla")—travel up Paseo Bolivar to satisfy a scopophilic need and to marvel at an anonymous sign of sympathy in a fierce place. Picking up on the periodical's bestiary tropes, the narration turns the epitome of modern transportation technology—the airplane—into yet another carrion-eating beast. Transformed with an adjective, however, the "civilizing vulture" does not partake in human bestialization, as the "jackals" that, trapped in a limited sources milieu, eviscerated Eva. The uncaring vulture overlooks the immediate underworld below, and at the same time, attests to the technological and material progress of the traditionally modernizing city.

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practice "whose paratextual relevance seems to [him] undeniable" (405). I contend that paratextual devices in serial publication would include Genette's list plus ads, illustrations, and any other textual element present in a magazine or periodical.

[58] Uribe Arango, Marcelo. "El actual incremento de la criminalidad en Colombia: sus causas y sus remedios." *Los misterios del crimen* 14 Aug. 1924: 14. Print.

[59] Bernal Azula, Ramón. "El río de la muerte." *Los misterios del crimen*. 14 Mar. 1924: n.p. Camilo Daza was the pioneer of Colombian aviation.

Crítica's "Novelas" and LMC exemplify two different periodical formats brokering relationship between politics and aesthetics. For different ends, they both visualized and narrated social, cultural, and lived transformations of urban space. Exploiting some of the serial narrative possibilities available in the illustrated press, and revitalizing preterit serial forms, they conferred visibility to new social actors on the fringes of society. In doing so, they reorganized the hierarchies of representation. However, reshuffling visual regimes within the melodramatic regime not always implied the emergence of new political subjectivities in the waning monopoly on representation. In accordance with the grid and the line, periodicals explored shifts in visual regimes under "operative cultural models" (Rama 7) determined by the cityscape. The "Novelas" appealed to class sympathy through recurrent pathos in spaces of heterogeneous homogeneity. Conversely, and through two types of seriality, LMC forewarned of an obfuscated mass threatening conservative progress. Both publications harnessed the protean qualities of the illustrated press, a medium for the equally protean melodramatic regime. Incorporating photography, illustrations, essays, and serialized fiction, they amalgamated scientific discourses (sociology, criminology, anthropology) with melodrama (pathos, sensationalism, virtue and vice, Manichean oppositions).

In the meantime, by exploring the textual and illustrated possibilities of "the surface of depicted signs" (Rancière 14), both publications cultivated another quality of melodrama—blurring the lines between fact and fiction. Capitalizing on first person narrators, sketches of crime scenes, and positing photography as an objective medium of record whose truth-value hinges upon an unmediated link to reality, the "Novelas" and LMC presented then current social issues as melodramas of the everyday. Claims to realism in photographic, illustrated, and textual forms in both publications emphasize the melodramatic regime's archival and sense producing functions. As I presented trough the different sections of this chapter, photos, illustrations, and texts, attuned to new visibilities and stories of the cityscape, registered and processed change for the mass reading public. Catering to the latter's needs and demands, the surface of depicted signs visualized cities to inhabit in a melodramatic key. Be it through strings of micro-melodramas, isolated episodes, or the prolonged experience of the *feuilleton*, the illustrated press diffused melodramas of everyday life through the readers' day-to-day. In this sustained circulation between depicted lives and everyday living lay the historically specific forms of perception, affection, and thought distributed by the melodramatic regime during the period. Bound in cheap or glossy paper, illustrated periodicals amounted to countless folds of sensible experience. Amassing real or imagined "fragments of daily life," to borrow once again Kracauer's words (63), they expanded lived experience with what could then be seen, told, and experienced as never before.

CHAPTER 3

Moving Images, Images in Movement: Progress, Tradition, and Circulation

Introduction

Critics during the silent period labeled Latin American films as "melodramas," with descriptions that were usually far from praiseful. Horacio Quiroga, writing for *El Hogar* magazine in 1928, considered the state of Argentine film production to be bleak. For Quiroga, local films were, "in the best cases," "a melodrama handled with the least tact possible," "a poem of unsophisticated sensibility equivalent to what is represented in any of our *tango* songs" (202). Ten years earlier, a Chilean journalist criticizing local film productions saw cinematic melodrama as regressive: "modern cinematography excludes melodramatic themes."[1] For both critics, melodrama exceeded the bounds of good taste and did not accord with present times, but nevertheless abounded in film. Without truly giving melodrama its due, other critics would recognize some of its qualities. The year *Amalia*'s film adaptation premiered (1914), another *El Hogar* critic, recurring to Ponson du Terail's famous *feuilleton*, claimed: "finally, Rocambolesque melodrama has been resuscitated." In his terms melodrama "is interesting, moving [conmueve], inspires passion [apasionante], for the imbeciles."[2] Derisive columns such as these ones elevated reviewers over films and readership. But at the same time, these columns suggested a feeling of earnest interest in the ubiquity of melodrama. Quiroga, for instance, acknowledged that "in the slum film theatre [cine de arrabal] the taste for the naturalness of the scene [la naturalidad escénica], filtered now even to small newspaper vendors, is the greatest cultural conquest cinema has achieved among us" (208). For Quiroga, there was something to be learned from melodrama after all. Through melodrama, spectators develop proficiency in cinematic language and *mise-en-scène*.[3]

Southern Cone critics were not the only ones to chronicle how melodrama motivated spectatorial connoisseurship. Witty commentary regarding film formulae and spectatorial response could also be found in the Colombian press. In 1917, in *El Cine Gráfico*, one commentator observed how "the cinema public was domesticating itself [domesticándose]." At first astounded by on-screen kisses "so intense they could straighten up the hairs of a peach," Colombian audiences quickly "learned the schools: Gaumont brand kisses, Pathé brand, Nordisk. Italian school hugging, sighs Bertini brand… In brief, the

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[1] "Avenida de las acacias" *Corre y vuela*. 11 Sept. 1918: 4. Print. All translations from Spanish to English are my own.

[2] "Notas y comentarios". *El Hogar* 18 Dic. 1914: n.p. Print.

[3] One of the first film critics in Latin America, Horacio Quiroga first and foremost praised cinematic realism. With an *avant-la-lettre* Bazinian approach, Quiroga considered cinema a "window" opened to reality that had the potential "to create a complete sensation of truth" (214, 358). Even though Quiroga highlighted how cinematic realism mirrors the world, he was also attentive to the development of cinematic language. Thus, the "naturalness of the scene" refers to a particular way of filmmaking epitomized, for Quiroga, by American cinema—i.e., continuity editing (266).

whole range of twentieth-century loving [amatoria]."[4] The ability to single out erotic cinematic languages from different production companies reveals how the avid consumption of new mass cultural products—the illustrated press and the cinema—led to an elaborate understanding of films. The newspaper column also reveals how moving images signaled change, making new forms of sociability visible. Cinema naturalized new (hair-raising) practices in the spectator's everyday.

Cinema spread unevenly throughout Latin America. The fact that filmmaking was a craftsman's endeavor in certain regions while in others it was a thriving industry complicates any overarching analysis that could relate melodrama to diverse experiences of modernity. However, contrasting examples such as Argentina and Colombia suggest how new ways of being and new practices, which sprang from rapid changes, gained visual saliency through filmic melodrama. In film, melodrama procured sites of intelligibility to both register and make sense to modern change—technologic and infrastructural achievements, the emergence of new forms of sociability, and the (re)articulation of both private and public spheres. In other words, melodrama apportioned the sensible order, conferring visibility to certain aspects of Latin American modernities while excluding others. At the same time, it delineated ways to relate to, and inhabit, such sensible order. Within this parceling out of what could be visualized and narrated, notions such as affect, history, historical reenactment, nationalism, tradition, material progress, commodity culture, and female identity, among others, were at the core of melodrama's modes of storytelling, as I have proposed throughout this dissertation.

Focused entirely on silent cinema, this chapter explores how melodrama visualized modern experiences as conflicting articulations of progress and tradition in ambiences of increasing circulation. I will focus my analysis in three genres: the gaucho film, the patriarchal family melodrama, and the fallen woman melodrama. Melodrama told stories in which the idea of progress depended upon the necessity of preserving the past. Within the historical conjuncture of the Latin American *Centenario* celebrations, as I discussed in chapter one, melodrama contributed to specific distributions of the sensible—*partager* as partition. In the first decades of the twentieth century, diverse media and narratives canonized local figures—historical and fictional—as the cultural adhesives for the social fabric. The result varied from region to region. In Argentina, which experienced massive European immigration, melodrama reflected the necessity of creating a common past for a heterogeneous, agitated present. In Colombia, conversely, melodrama presented the rigid societal structures and institutions of the past as the essential condition for material progress in the present. In both instances, distributions of the sensible performed depurations of the social order based on moral terms. These particular distributions were parceled out through many media—the press, popular music, theatrical pieces, and moving images.

In Latin America, melodrama conditioned the possibility for cinema to be conceived as art, initially by appropriating foundational melodramas such as the Argentine *Amalia* and the Colombian *María*. In the passage from actuality to narrative film, an ongoing aesthetic revolution within the melodramatic regime took shape. It consisted of an expansion of what could be visualized and narrated in moving images, amounting to the breakdown of a system of representation distinguishing high and low arts (the cause of

[4] "De todo un poco" *El Cine Gráfico* 13 Apr. 1917: n.p. Print.

angst for the first Latin American film critics). Shifts in *partager*—from partition to distribution—expanded the breadth of filmic melodrama. It allowed film melodramas to incorporate the everyday, make visible modern change, and develop special genres such as gaucho films, patriarchal family dramas, and tales of fallen women, among others. Spectators recognized these genres and avidly consumed them, film magazines and trade journals suggest—supporting Quiroga's observations on spectatorial reading proficiency.

Melodrama pictured transformative processes through the logic of the excluded middle (i.e., *who* has a *place* in narrative and *how*). In Argentine and Colombian fiction silent films, new and old social actors, old customs and new ways, and material progress presented tensions between past and present, and between the traditional and the modern. Films presented Manichean worlds in which social orders were "to be purged" and sets of "ethical imperatives to be made clear" (*The Melodramatic* 17) through struggles between modern and traditional values. This chapter examines how forces of progress and tradition coexisted and collided in film melodramas as a means to make sense—and register—the very processes of change from which they developed. Before analyzing three film genres—gaucho films, patriarchal family melodramas, and fallen woman melodramas—lets consider the impact of cinema upon its arrival in Argentina and Colombia and how it soon became melodrama.

Film Histories: Proto-Melodramas

In previous chapters, I examined how diverse media offer means to register experiences of modernity by blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction through narrative representation and diverse uses of photography. In this chapter, I will delve into the medium-specific qualities of filmic melodrama. For it is in this particular mode of filmmaking, in this specific use of mechanical reproduction, that in Latin America we witness what Mary Ann Doane finds unique in photography and cinema compared to other representational technologies of vision—"the impossible desire to represent—to archive—the present" (*The Emergence* 102), *pace* the first Latin American film critics quoted above. Unlike the moving images produced by periodicals and novels, images in movement conferred melodrama an incomparable mode of *presence*, an unprecedented "impression of reality," to borrow Christian Metz' terms (4). For Metz, such an impression lies in cinema's ability to register movement, which elicits active spectatorial response mediated by affect (8, 11).

Metz, however, does not consider cinema the trace of a past motion, a crucial aspect of melodrama when considered as a heuristic mediation between present and past, as I analyzed in chapter 1.[5] Tapping into Mary Ann Doane's reflections on cinema and the archive, I consider that film melodrama in Latin America not only recorded present

[5] According to Metz, "the spectator always sees movement as being present (even if it duplicates a past movement)" (8). André Bazin, in his seminal piece *The Ontology of the Photographic Image* considers cinema as "change mummified" (15), that is, an image of the duration of things that are no more and that amounts to "the preservation of life by a representation of life" (10). However, unlike Metz, Bazin does not consider the role of affect as a means to elicit spectatorial participation, a crucial aspect for the analysis of melodrama as moving images and as images in movement.

movement; it also registered material progress, the inventing of traditions, as well as the impending demise of certain social actors and their ways. In this sense, the compulsion to archive the present turned filmic melodrama into an archive of things becoming, as well as an archive of things past. Between present and past, filmic melodrama had "the power to draw crowds" and elicited "a mechanism of affective and perceptual *participation* in the spectator," to further borrow from Metz (4, italics in original). These qualities defined filmic storytelling within the melodramatic regime, at a time of fast-paced transformation.

Less than a year after the Lumière Brothers introduced the cinematograph at the Paris *Grand Café* in 1895, the impresario Francisco Pastor brought the novel attraction to the *porteño* public. The first screening of moving images in Buenos Aires took place on July 18, 1896. On November of that same year, Czech immigrant Federico Figner exhibited films he shot in *Palermo* and *Plaza de Mayo*, in a Florida Street theater. One year later, a French immigrant who worked at the Lepage photography house, Eugenio Py, began shooting actualities regularly, among other pioneers related to the photography business. According to film historian Fernando M. Peña, local film production and renewing *variétés* catalogues became paramount for keeping the public's attention and satisfying the growing demand (15). Until the early 1910s, Argentine filmmaking was mostly comprised of actualities. However, interest in moving images quickly went beyond fascination with the cinematographic apparatus as attraction. By 1899 the young yet prominent surgeon Alejandro Posadas hired Py to shoot his surgeries. Posadas saw the potential of the cinematograph as a pedagogical tool for his lectures at the *Hospital de Clínicas*. Examples such as Posadas' surgeries suggest that since its arrival in Buenos Aires, the cinematograph adopted many functions of which spectacle was just one possibility.

Cinema arrived a couple of years later to Colombia, during a brief moment of peace between two civil wars. In 1897 both the Edison *Vitascope* and the Lumière cinematograph entered the country via the Caribbean. They quickly spread through towns along the coast and made their way up the Andes to many cities of the interior. But the difficulties of the terrain delayed the arrival of moving images to many important cities. Even Bogota, the capital city, was to see Lumière films, including the famous *L'arrivé d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (1895), six months after their first screenings in small towns along the coast (El'Gazi 7). Theatre programs in Bogota register the production of local vistas and actualities by 1907 (Rojas 8). There are no previous records, but it is very likely that travelling exhibitors shot their own films in order to diversify their catalogues. One of these exhibitors was Gabriel Veyre, a cameraman hired by the Lumière Bros., who settled briefly in Panama City (at the time Colombian territory) after shooting several films in Mexico in 1896.[6]

The Italian immigrants Francesco and Vincenzo Di Domenico produced the first Colombian fiction films around 1915. An advertisement of their company shows how these two brothers embarked early on in the production of fiction films and actualities. In the list appear "A rural notable (comical)" and "The daughter of the Tequendama (4 acts, drama)" accompanied by "Corpus procession in Bogota 1915" and "July 18th 1915 civic procession." The same advertisement records as works "in progress," "Two noble hearts (drama)" and,

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[6] Veyre earned a niche in Latin American cinema histories for establishing the cinematograph in Mexico City. See Fullerton, John. "Creating an Audience for the "Cinématographe": Two Lumière Agents in Mexico, 1896." *Film History* 20.1 (2008): 95-114. Print.

based on its title, a historical film: "Ricaurte in San Mateo."[7] On November of that same year Di Domenico Bros. exhibited *The October 15th Drama* of which only one photogram survives.[8] The film reconstructed the assassination of General Rafael Uribe Uribe (Figure 1),[9] and laid the ground for melodrama in local film production.

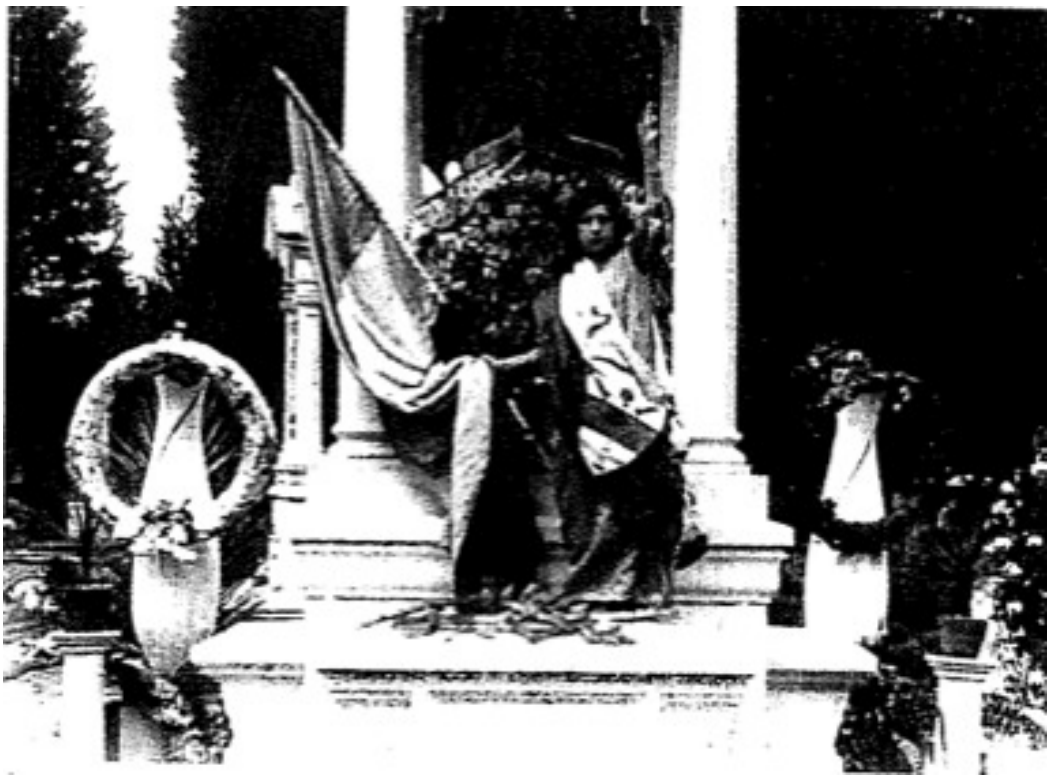

Figure 1. Surviving still from *El drama del 15 de octubre* (Vincenzo Di Domenico, 1915). Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano.

According to film historians, the film produced a great moral commotion among the national public. Indeed, the national press condemned *The October 15th Drama* and its producers because the Di Domenicos hired the real assassins to reconstruct the crime. Many periodicals engaged in a sabotage campaign to deter their readers from going to

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[7] *Olympia* 2 Oct. 1915: n.p.

[8] *Largometrajes Colombianos en Cine y Video, 1915-2004*. Bogotá: Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano, 2005.

[9] Rafael Uribe Uribe (1859-1914) was a general in the liberal party rebel army, a lawyer, and a journalist. He fought in the civil wars of 1876, 1886, 1895, and 1899. In between wars he founded and directed two newspapers, *El trabajo* and *El Liberal*, he also gained the highest public prestige as orator and political leader. He is best known for his 1901-1902 peace initiatives, which were not taken into account by the conservative government. Uribe surrendered in October 1902. He began to advocate for the conservative party and soon took a lower public profile. He was murdered on October 26, 1914. Two workers named Jesús Carvajal and Leovigildo Galarza attacked Uribe Uribe. Their motives were never fully confirmed.

theaters and watch the film.[10] Even the governmental authorities of Cundinamarca (at the time Bogota was under its jurisdiction) banned the film.[11] Scholars have analyzed this phenomenon as a proof of active spectatorship—a spectator who candidly demanded positive representations of national identities and could not digest critique of national figures in moving images. Further, the film's negative reception purportedly prefigured a somatic rejection of violent representations by Colombian audiences, identifiable in later cinematic reception experiences concerning Colombian violence (Suárez 19). Archival research questions such claims, however. Ten years after *El drama*'s premiere, in 1924, an article in the liberal newspaper *Mundo al día* celebrates the film. The column mentions that this "documentary film" [película documentaria] was "a complete box-office success all over the country."[12] Despite the film's "imperfect and primitive" photographic quality, the column acknowledges that it "helped to transmit around the country the pain that Bogota felt with the October crime." This second perspective on the film's reception has not yet been considered by Colombian film histories.

Even though many newspapers condemned the film, those mentioned by *El Cine Gráfico* are mostly conservative (see footnote 10). It is very likely that conservative elites mustered the sabotage campaign to impose their ideology through moralist arguments. After all, *The October 15th Drama* was a panegyric on Uribe Uribe, a liberal leader. It is also worth speculating if the sabotage campaign had the contrary effect—stimulating the public's curiosity. Most importantly, if we believe the anonymous journalist when he states that the film was a medium for the transmission of pain, the film could be considered a first attempt of a certain type of storytelling premised on vicarious pathos. As such, *The October 15th Drama* could be conceived as Colombian film's proto-melodrama. Located on the "weak ontological frontier" (Doane 155) between crime reenactment, documentary, and drama, between registering current events and narrativizing those events, *The October 15th Drama* overshadowed any distinction between fact and fiction in favor of pathos, two crucial elements of Colombian melodrama as I discussed in my analysis of *María* (see chapter 1).[13]

The beginnings of fiction film in Argentina date back to the 1910s. According to many film scholars, Argentine silent film production peaked between 1914 and 1918, when

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[10] "Consecuentes" *El Cine Gráfico* 28 Jan. 1916: n.p. In chapter one I refer to Colombia's violent history between Conservative and Liberal political parties.

[11] *El Tiempo* 14 Nov. 1915: n.p.

[12] The journalist's description brings to mind the vague limits between the categories of newsreel, documentary, drama, and reproduction proper to the dramatic reenactment subgenre that lost its currency around 1907 in Europe and the US, according to Mary Ann Doane (155).

[13] The "slipperiness associated with the ontological status of the image" up to 1907 was related to the "largely unregulated entrepreneurship characterizing the business of cinema in its early years" in Europe and the US, according to Doane (156). Without formulating a teleological argument, but acknowledging the complex novelty of presenting local current events in moving images, lack of any previous fiction film production in Colombia up to the early 1910s may have triggered the diverse reactions and understandings of *The October 15th Drama* crime reenactment—a film that, based on its title, aimed for moving storytelling rather than conveying historical facts.

the ravages of the Great War considerably reduced European film imports. Italian immigrant Mario Gallo shot a first series of one-act films around 1909 whose historical themes resonated with the independence celebrations of the *Centenario*. His first films were centered on Argentine history and the exaltation of *criollo* culture. As Andrea Cuarterolo duly suggests, these films were first conceived as "instruments of patriotic education" (*De la foto* 133). *La revolución de mayo* (*The May Revolution*, 1909) for instance, which is now considered the first Argentine fiction film, lacked a self-contained narration and yet told the story of the birth of a nation. The film heavily relied on the nationalist narratives being produced at the time via monuments, the periodical press, and the many lectures given by the *porteño* intelligentsia.

Drawing on the multiple discourses surrounding the *Centenario*, the film illustrates different episodes of the 1810 May Revolution such as the people united in front of the *Cabildo* (the town hall) and the revolutionaries Domingo French and Antonio Luis Beruti handing out ribbons. *La revolución* presents these and other episodes as *tableaux vivants*, didactically presenting the events without paying close attention to realism in their compositions. Buildings and interiors in scenery flats are considerably smaller in size compared to the actors. These discrepancies of scale provided actors with narrative saliency. In the final tableau, General José San Martín wrapped in the Argentine flag and in full dress uniform hovers above the *Cabildo*, while the crowd fervently points and waves at the liberator (Figure 2). Through this compositional montage, *La revolución* re-presented the foundational moment and elevated, literally, General San Martín to the figure of founding father. By means of *tableaux*, the film was mainly concerned with "the plastic figurability of emotion," to use Peter Brooks' terms (*The Melodramatic* 48). As in stage melodrama, the tableau composition functioned as an impressive visual summary of the emotional situation—in this case, the triumph of independence at the hands of brave revolutionaries. Relying on extra-diegetic narratives and historical reenactment, *La revolución de mayo* inaugurated the harnessing of emotion through moving images. Thus, it encompassed the public within a nationalistic project through affect. Both Argentine and Colombian fiction film production began by affectively relating local history—recent or foundational. Harnessing emotion and sympathy, *La revolución* and *El drama* incorporated images in movement into the melodramatic regime.

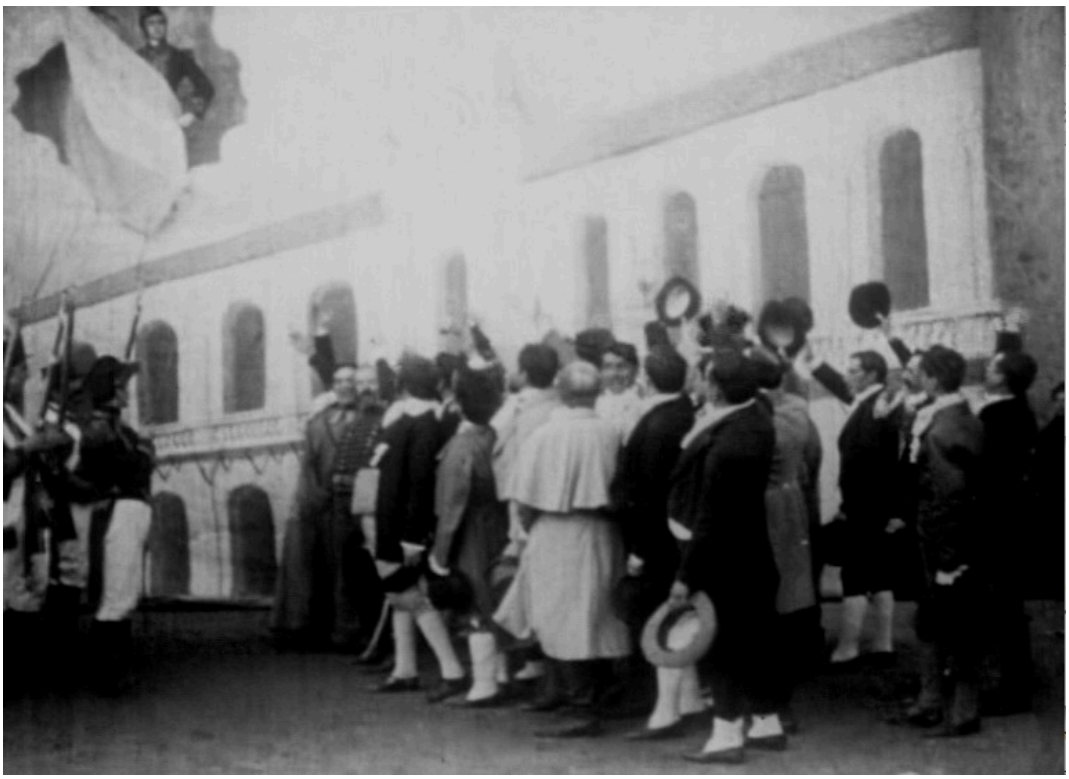

Figure 2. General San Martin hovers above the Cabildo. *La revolución de mayo* (Mario Gallo, 1909)

Despite incipient local production, film viewing was already a common practice in both Argentina and Colombia, where American and European fare (mainly French and Italian) circulated. Buenos Aires was quickly suffused with cinema. An ever-growing number of movie theatres and other venues exhibited foreign and local productions.[14] Spectators across the social spectrum avidly consumed moving images and quickly incorporated them in their everyday lives. By the end of the 1910s, a peak in Argentine fiction film production, "cinematograph-mania" had invaded the city and went beyond the cinematic medium. An enthusiastic column in the trade journal *La Película* describes how:

> Cinematographic obsession has gone to the limit. Luxury candy shops display in their pompous shop windows artistic candy boxes whose silky covers present the most brilliant cinema stars. Bookstores and postcard sellers display photographs of actors and popular actresses of the screen […] In convenience and dairy stores the so-called *cinema caramels* are sold with portraits of Margarita Clarck [sic], Theda Bara, the Pickford, the Danton, etc, in their wrappings. There are tangos with themes dedicated to William S. Hart, Douglas Fairbanks, and other aces. The streets are filled with

[14] Data from the Monthly Municipal Statistics Bulletin reveals that in less than a decade film viewing increased exponentially. By December 1921, more than 2.400.000 *porteño* spectators had attended film screenings in 31 theatres and circuses, as well as in 133 movie theatres that year. "Datos estadística municipal" *La Película* 5 Jan. 1922. Print. Archival research in Colombia did not yield any statistical data. However, many chronicles attest that Colombians quickly incorporated the cinema into their everyday lives in many cities and smaller towns.

> announcers carrying lively posters of the mute scene. Cinemas display ever-bigger posters with allegories of the most renowned films. Homes use cinematographic stamps for wallpaper. Illustrated magazines occupy space with reviews and prints of film's actuality. Religion, politics, commerce, industry and schools, they all tap into cinema to propagate their ideals and products. We are in full cinematographic frenzy! It is the civilizing wave that invades the universe![15]

"Cinematograph-mania" epitomizes how the cinematic medium introduced new elements to the already frantic circulation of images and audiovisual stimuli proper to early twentieth-century modern change. More than lights and shadows projected on screen, cinema circulated beyond its fleeting images. Citizens appropriated this new (mostly) visual culture and incorporated it in nearly every aspect of their lives. Many magazines described the bustling city as a site of multiple stimuli, which combined with massive immigration—an outstanding linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity—made Buenos Aires the "modern Babel"[16] I discussed in chapter 2.

Cinephilia did not only consist of star-truck obsession. It also involved the development of reading proficiency among moviegoers throughout the social spectrum. Film critics such as Horacio Quiroga recognized the audience's ability to assess films on different registers, as quoted above. Film magazines and trade journals also catered to, and further developed, such connoisseurship through a panoply of articles, reviews, and cartoons. For instance in the first issue of *Cine Universal*, a caricature explores, tongue-in-cheek, melodrama's formulaic elements in order to show how "original resources, both in plot and acting, are endless in film." The cartoon, titled "The most original of film plots," consists of the many vicissitudes a love triangle can trigger. Labeled with concise titles, the story literally unfolds along a path of melodramatic tropes—starting with a lonesome male protagonist and ending with a marriage and a suicide. From beginning to end peripeteias of pathos and thrills depict male bravado and female passivity in the face of conniving villainy. The text under the image appeals to the readership's proficiency in melodrama: "the keen reader, watching the drawings on this page, so moving and pathetic, will recognize the old emotions of love, avarice, hate, and justice … Notice how providence is just when Rosa and Pancho finally marry after the most intricate peripeteia [peripecias truculentas]" (Figure 3).[17] Despite the condescending tone, or perhaps putting it to good use, "The most original of film plots" winks at a reader familiar with melodrama. Taping into the pleasures reserved for the connoisseur, the cartoon reveals both the refined spectatorial desire to recognize, as well as the pleasure in recognizing, specific melodramatic tropes. Practices, articles, and caricatures such as these reveal how the cinematic experience went far beyond lights and shadows projected on screen. Driving the commercial and cultural development of the press and film theatres, filmic melodrama played a crucial role in the articulation of popular, political, and social life of an increasingly growing readership and spectatorship.[18]

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[15] "Cinematografomanía" *La Película* 15 Sept. 1919: n.p. Print.
[16] "El carnaval" *La tradición* 16 Dec. 1912: n.p. Print.
[17] "El más original de los argumentos de película" *Cine Universal* 29 May 1919: n.p. Print.
[18] These practices, articles, and caricatures also bring to mind Rancière's definition of cinema in his *Les écarts du cinéma*. For Rancière, cinema's ontological status depends on

multiple, interconnected circuits of exchange: “Se limiter aux plans et procédures qui composent un film, c’est oublier que le cinéma est un art pour autant qu’il est un monde, que ces plans et effets qui s’évanouissent dans l’instant de la projection ont besoin d’être prolongés, transformés par le souvenir et la parole qui font consister le cinéma comme un monde partagé bien au-delà de la réalité matérielle de ses projections” (12). See his *Les écarts du cinéma*. Paris: La fabrique éditions, 2011.

COMO la objeción más seria que se viene oponiendo al Cine, es la falta de novedad en los argumentos, hemos querido demostrar que en el film los recursos de originalidad, tanto en los asuntos como en las interpretaciones, son inagotables. A ese efecto, uno de nuestros dibujantes, ha ideado un nuevo argumento, cuyas escenas, cómicas y dramáticas son, como se advierte, de una originalidad rigurosa. El lector de buen tino, viendo los dibujos de esta página, tan conmovedores y patéticos, no podrá menos que reconocer que los viejos sentimientos del amor, la codicia, el odio y la justicia tienen en este argumento de película una interpretación muy novedosa.

Cómo... ¿que no es cierto esto? Véase como el valeroso Pancho defiende a Rosa, y cual es el fin del traidor Nicolás, y cuan justa resulta la providencia haciendo que después de las más truculentas peripecias, se casen Rosa y Pancho.

Para quienes reclaman más originalidad en las películas va, pues, el argumento de esta que hubo de inventar e ilustrar uno de nuestros dibujantes.

Figure 2. "El más original de los argumentos de película" *Cine Universal* 29 May 1919

Gauchos and Indians: Affirming the Filmic *Criollo* Discourse

Argentine fiction film production grew considerably during the Great War. Production responded to a decrease in film imports and a tremendous increase in local demand. Between 1915 and 1922 around 100 national productions premiered (García Mesa 28). But due to the decay of film stock and precarious film preservation, today only six Argentine feature-length films made before 1920 are known to exist.[19] The first feature-length films drew upon nineteenth-century fiction such as José Mármol's *Amalia* (1851, Max Glücksmann 1914), in accordance with the desire to heighten cinema to the category of art. They also forwarded state-building discourses, as I discussed in the first chapter. However, not only foundational melodramas related to state-building appealed to the public; the pampas, Buenos Aires, and the tensions between the city and the countryside, inspired most plots during the period. Film historian Domingo Di Nubila considers these rural-urban films part of the immensely popular "Argentine stories" [relatos argentinos] that circulated through theatre, novels, and *feuilleton* (35).[20] Di Nubila points to a process of remediation. This process, however, differed from the one I analyzed in chapter 1—repurposing specific stories from one medium to the other in the service of political agendas. The first filmmakers worked with other (contemporary) producers of rural-urban narratives. They collaborated with renowned writers of the period (such as Josué Quesada and Hugo Wast) and hired famous theatre performers in order to maximize popular interest (the Podestá family, renowned for its *criollo* circus performances, and Nelo Cosimi, to name a small few).

Many films harnessed stories in which the traditional gaucho and other outcasts collided with the ways of progress. Set in the *campo* (the pampas) and their correlative space, the city, these films constituted a genre appealing to sympathy through pathos and thrills. Film magazines called them *ambiente campero* [country ambience] films (*campero* films from here on).[21] I argue that *campero* films deployed a very specific visual regime

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[19] Domingo Di Nubila lists 221 silent Argentine films, from the early *vistas* of the late nineteenth century through the narrative features of the early 1930s. Due to the fact that much of the archival film footage remains in private collections, it is impossible to know how many silent Argentine films exist today.

[20] Di Nubila does not specify to which *feuilletons* he refers. He most likely alludes to the gaucho *folletín* sprung from Eduardo Gutiérrez' *Juan Moreira*. Initially published in installments between 1879-1880, *Juan Moreira* acquired great popularity. Its eponymous character embodies the bad gaucho who accepts his destiny of violence and vengeance in the face of injustice, humiliation, and authoritarianism. The success of *Juan Moreira* spawned a great and diverse progeny that detractors would call *moreirismo*. More than a popular literary and theatrical tradition, it was quickly considered a social tendency that fomented lowbrow passions and rebellion against authority. Versions of *Juan Moreira* were produced and reproduced in popular literature, *criollo* circus, theatre, and film well into the twentieth century. Because of its outstanding popularity across time, *Juan Moreira* can be considered a foundational melodrama like *Amalia* or *María*.

[21] "Buenos Aires Film estrenará el mes próximo 'De nuestras pampas'". *Excelsior* 24 Oct. 1923: 23. Print. The genre thrives throughout the 1920s and well into the first experiments

through melodrama to shape the contours of Argentine society—*criollo* discourse in filmic form.[22] Within the context of rapid modernization and unprecedented urban growth fueled by massive immigration, *criollo* narratives served two functions. Glorifying the all-but-extinct gaucho, they (1) defined national values and traditions, while they also (2) provided models and mechanisms by which immigrants could identify with, and adapt to, their new homeland. *Campero* films reified *criollo* discourse as the gaucho and his everyday practices. They staged the demise of the gaucho as he and his world collided with the ways of progress. This double movement—of embodying Argentine essence and foreshadowing its necessary demise in favor of progress—constituted a marginalizing yet inclusionary discourse: *criollo* discourse.[23]

Based on melodrama's logic of the excluded middle (i.e., *who* has a *place* in narrative and *how*), *campero* films defined a social order to be purged and made clear a set of ethical imperatives based on rural tradition. Rural tradition cleared the way for progress, and yet represented its opposite. An advertisement for *Mi alazán tostao* (Nelo Cosimi, 1922) synopsizes the themes of filmic *criollo* discourse:

> The imperatives of progress vis-à-vis the sentimental … veneration of things past, the eternal and disputed problem of yesterday and tomorrow as antagonists, the straw and mud ranch against the railways, constitute the themes of this national production. It is not a solution, nor does it aim to teach. It has simply been cut out from reality itself … the pain of the native, keeper of tradition, facing dispossession demanded by this turbulent, mechanical, and overwhelming century that has no time to stop for certain trivialities of the heart … The spirit of the *criollo* peasant rambles through all its scenes … A poem of our fields, where good and evil develop … with a brushstroke of fatality. [*Mi alazán tostao*] will offer a fountain of deep and

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of sound film, such as *Entre mate y mate* (Phonofilm, 1928) *La Película* 21 Jun. 1928: 19. Print.

[22] The terms 'criollo' and 'gaucho' are key in the process of constituting a national tradition in Argentina. Whereas 'gaucho' refers to the cowboy of the South American Pampas (OED), 'criollo' is a rather complex term in early twentieth-century Argentina. Initially, the term denotes a 'Spaniard born in America', as noted in the Royal Academy Spanish Dictionary (the definition stands from 1729 until my period of inquiry, see *Nuevo Tesoro Lexicográfico de la Lengua Española*). However, in Argentina the term acquires different connotations related to "the national self" (Ansolabehere 105) such as 'son of the land' or 'son of the owners of the land.' Related to the gaucho, the term refers to miscegenation between Spanish and Indian. In this section I will explore the versatility of the term in relation to the development of a national discourse and the latter's cinematic use.

[23] This movement from essence to demise was not unique to cinema. Multi-media passages abound from José Hernández' poem *La vuelta de Martín Fierro* (1879) to Ricardo Güiraldes' canonical novel *Don Segundo Sombra* (1929). During the period, gaucho narratives also flooded a theatrical form unique to the River Plate, the *circo criollo*.

> serene emotions for the traditional ones, and, why not say it, for those who forgot tradition as well.[24]

Many *campero* films capitalized on the affective struggle between tradition and insensitive progress. The ad shows how these narratives functioned as "dramas of recognition," in which "virtue is made visible and acknowledged" (Brooks 27) at the level of the individual to establish new moral values in the face of social and material change.

Furthermore, as the ad suggests, *campero* films presented rural sequences as "cut-outs" from reality exploiting cinema's weak ontological frontier between mechanical reproduction and narrative medium. Throughout the period, ads highlight at least three elements of the genre: the gaucho's inevitable demise, his exemplary nature, and "real" *criollo* practices registered on-location.[25] In the face of rapid change, *campero* films felt the urge to register the passing everyday in moving images. As a form of mechanical reproduction, cinema made possible for these films to archive an experience of the present that was soon to be no more.

Long before Argentine nationalists in the 1910s found in the gaucho the symbol to represent their cultural heritage,[26] the gaucho morally vacillated between the poles of civilization and barbarism in representation. Or, under the theoretical framework discussed here, the gaucho vacillated between both forms of *partager* shaping the contours of collectivities—partition and distribution. Gaucho depictions date back to the battles for independence: the octosyllabic *cielitos* of the pre-gauchoesque genre. Later on, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento established a key figure with his description of *Facundo* (1845), "the tiger of the plains." Sarmiento presented the "bad gaucho" as the antithesis of civilization. But he also recognized the gaucho's potential as trailblazer, as the locus of poetry (the gaucho *payador*), and as the figure that would eventually bring about national unity. Later poems such as *El Gaucho Martín Fierro* (1872) and *Fausto* (1866), written by José Hernández and Estanislao del Campo respectively, reconciled the gaucho with civilization in moral terms. The gaucho genre harnessed the gaucho's purportedly inherent poesy.

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[24] "Mi alazán tostao" *La Película* 20 Sept. 1923: 20. Print. Italics in original. *Mi alazán tostao* tells the story of a gaucho (Nelo Cosimi) who dies protecting a maid. He saves her when she is about to lose her family's ranch as well as her honor at the hands of a railroad tycoon.

[25] For instance, an ad of *La chacra de Don Lorenzo* (Buenos Aires Film, 1929) summarizes the film and itemizes factual rural practices: "A beautiful *campero* poem. The most human drama that cinematography has ever produced. All the sentiment that an agonizing lineage and the example that a gaucho gives to his children in the face of tragic adversity. Great country party – horse taming – cattle branding – rodeo – counterpoint *payada*." "La Chacra de Don Lorenzo" *La Película* 12 Sept. 1929: 24. Print.

[26] See Leopoldo Lugones' *El payador* (1916), a series of conferences that the intellectual and statesman first presented at the Odeón Theatre in 1913. Lugones attributes essential qualities to the gaucho and gaucho poetry related to the nation-building project. According to Lugones, poetry "by inventing a new language for the expression of a new spiritual entity constituted by the soul of the race in formation, established the distinguishing foundation of the fatherland [el fundamento diferencial de la patria]. Since the fatherland is an animated being, the soul in it is paramount" (21). Lugones described the gaucho in poetry as an epic gaucho, strategically disregarding other representations like *Juan Moreira* and his popular legacy in *feuilleton*.

According to Josefina Ludmer, during the nineteenth century the gaucho genre was delimited on one side by popular lawlessness and on the other by the revolution and war of independence (5-6). The vagrant, delinquent gaucho was confronted with a system of justice in which the law of vagrants and the law of conscription, its corollary, dominated rural life. Indeed the historical gaucho, usually a *mestizo* of Spanish and Indian ancestry, was exploited in *criollo* armies or rode in troops of mounted rebels known as *montoneras* that would spontaneously rise against local centers or figures of power. Such an individual did not have a place in the republican modernizing project. Hence, between the limits of vagrancy and conscription, the gaucho genre gave meaning to the gaucho—narrating the passage from delinquency to "civilized (liberal and civic) law" through the gaucho's own poetic voice (8).

Foregrounding the moral ambiguity inherent in the gaucho genre, it is not surprising that *campero* films would tap into this literary tradition to deploy *criollo* discourse. In the cinematic medium, gaucho narratives exhibit binary structures of opposites between vice and virtue, clearly identified antagonists, and a social order to be purged. Few *campero* films have survived. One of which, with its tremendous popularity, epitomizes the genre—*Nobleza Gaucha* (Gaucho Nobility, 1915). Argentine film scholars cannot stress enough how *Nobleza* was the first, and still unsurpassed, national blockbuster. In the first six months, the film saw revenues thirty times its initial investment. It ran for more than two decades and its title was adopted early on by a popular *mate* leaf brand sold to this day (Cuarterolo 2005, 22; Peña 18), becoming merchandise, commodity, and icon all at once. Some scholars speculate that part of the film's success lies in the excerpts of Hernández' and del Campo's poems found in intertitles.

A love triangle structures the film. The landed businessman Don José Gran (Arturo Mario) hires Juan (Julio Scarzella), a horse-taming gaucho, to help him in his search for horses. On that very day, Juan rescues María (María Padín) from a runaway horse. His brave actions lead to an affective relationship between the gaucho and the peasant girl turned damsel in distress. Don Gran, who also desires María, kidnaps and takes her to his mansion in Buenos Aires. In order to rescue her, the gaucho must travel to the bustling city. At the mansion, he overcomes the captor despite his slithering fighting tactics but does not kill him, as he lies defenseless on the ground. Back in the pampas, Don Gran uses his influences with a venal commissioner to falsely accuse Juan of delinquency. At the end, justice triumphs as Don Gran dies falling off a cliff. In a final act of nobility Juan tried to help his enemy—hence the film's title—but he arrives too late. Interspersed between the plot of pathos and thrills are comical scenes of a pair of *Cocoliche*-speaking Italian immigrants.[27]

It would be reductive to equate *Nobleza Gaucha*'s pampas-urban dichotomy to a barbarism-civilization divide. Good people as well as despicable villains circulate between both spaces. Rather than spatial polarization, the film presents character polarization. In this sense, confronting clearly identified antagonists facilitates spatial circulation. Long shots and extreme long shots present a compartmentalized, hierarchically ordered world in which pampas and metropolis are united in imbricated productivity.[28] The film is suffused

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[27] *Cocoliche* is an Italian-Spanish macaronic language that Italian immigrants spoke in Argentina, especially in Greater Buenos Aires.

[28] The press at the time praised the film's presentation of material progress: "This film has […] no less interesting urban shots […] with views of our great parks, streets, buildings, and

with a "descriptive will" (Peña 18) that lingers over the pampas everyday life (cattle herding, *criollo* dance, and the *criollo* roast) as well as over urban opulence and monumentality (Figures 4, 5). Following Juan and his companion Don Genaro in their search for María, the film connects pampas and cityscape through modern transportation technologies. The characters arrive in Buenos Aires at the *Constitución* train station. Then, they circulate through the *Mayo* Avenue—in which the two bewildered gauchos are almost run over by an automobile—and centers of national power, such as the Two Congresses Square and the Parliament, to finally arrive at Don Gran's mansion probably in Palermo.

Figure 4. Gaucho taming a nervous horse on the pampas
***Nobleza Gaucha* (Martínez de la Pera and Gunche 1915)**

promenades [that] attest to Buenos Aires' progress" (*La Prensa* 1915 qtd. in Cuarterolo 2005, 26).

Figure 5. Gaucho Juan and Don Genaro contemplate in awe Two Congresses Square in Buenos Aires *Nobleza Gaucha* (Martínez de la Pera and Gunche 1915)

Visual regimes in this melodrama reveal a compulsion to register the present and to archive a waning past. Film, as medium, occupied a privileged place within the melodramatic regime to accomplish such task. Thanks to cinema's unique ability to register movement, filmic melodrama served as an archive of things becoming and an archive of things past. In *Nobleza Gaucha*, shooting on location and character peripeteias depict nostalgically a world in the process of change. Andrea Cuarterolo in an interesting analysis relates the film's presentational imperative of present and past to the project of the Argentine Photographic Society of Enthusiasts (Sociedad Fotográfica Argentina de Aficionados or SFAA), the first Argentine photography club. Eduardo Martínez de la Pera and Ernesto Gunche, directors of the film, met and learned their skills at the SFAA. The society aimed to visually extol capitalist progress and register modernization processes taking place throughout the country—mainly infrastructure projects and modern transportation technologies. But at the same time, the SFAA's photographic work showed a nostalgic approach to national tradition and the rural ("Imágenes," 24). *Nobleza Gaucha* presents tensions between old and new in which the gaucho embodies the very essence of tradition. And yet, the film proclaims the demise of the gaucho and his world. María's abduction synthesizes the inevitable ways of progress. Don Gran takes her in his swift automobile. Immediately Juan gives pursuit on his mount, but is unable to catch the villain. In intertitles, the narrator stresses: "as the gaucho by the townsman, the noble steed is vanquished by the mechanical automobile." *Nobleza Gaucha* sublimated the pampas and the gaucho into the symbol of Argentineness; but at the same time extoled the modernization processes that were to forever transform the pampas and its inhabitants.

Campero films, like the gaucho genre, were part of a state-building process deployed via shifting visual regimes. This particular form of *partager* spelled partition, rather than distribution. Through the voice of the gaucho, nineteenth century lettered elites fashioned and disseminated political agendas of exclusivist integration—determining who had a place in the body politic, and how. By the time the gaucho represented the national essence in the 1910s, his entrance to the transformative processes of modernization was in the

guise of a domesticated gaucho. As evidenced in the film, brave as Juan may be, he is but a working hand in the Don Gran's ranch. Instead of the vastness of *Facundo*'s pampas, fences delimit his world.[29] Further, in accordance with 1910s Argentine nationalist discourses, his incorporation to *criollo* discourse relegates another figure to the marginal world of barbarism: the European immigrant (Montaldo 43). *Nobleza Gaucha* incorporates the immigrant, but it does so in terms of proto-citizen.

Don Genaro, Juan's initial companion to Buenos Aires, offers comic relief with his expressions of awe and macaronic language, while hinting at the social partitions proposed in the film. In this regard, in *Nobleza* the melodramatic regime serves, in terms of Rancière, as an "ethical regime of images" in which certain "imitations […] differentiated by their origin [and] by their end or purpose"—in this case the Italian immigrant, the gaucho, and the landed bourgeois—"provide spectators […] with a certain education and fit in with the distribution of the city's occupations" (*The Politics* 21). A tramway scene epitomizes *Nobleza Gaucha*'s agenda, recast in the form of civic education. In medium shots suggestive of the transport's claustrophobic space, Don Genaro spits on the tramway floor. The operator admonishes Don Genaro for his lack of urbanity. Candidly obliged by modern transport protocol, the immigrant opts to spit out the window. After other urbanity "errors," when requesting a stop Don Genaro mistakenly pulls the poles connecting the overhead wires, bringing the tramway to a halt. This comic scene centered on the public and social uses of the tramway makes visible the social intersections of modern life, subject to meticulous public regulation represented by the tram operator.[30] Through Don Genaro's innocent intervention, material progress and new (unwanted) social actors collide. The sequence confers visibility to the immigrant. But at the same time hints at societal depuration of "useless" citizens, by stressing the chaos the immigrant ensues.

Different regions other than Buenos Aires also produced *campero* films. Many silent film analyses disregard this fact. Strikingly understudied, non-*porteño campero* films also contributed in consolidating *criollo* discourse through melodrama. Some regional films gave Indians narrative saliency while reproducing the tensions between tradition and progress proper to this discourse. Director Alcides Greca's *El último malón* (*The Last Indian Attack*, 1917) is but one example in which sentimental stories contrast the rural and the urban.[31] As in *porteño* productions, these films obscured the line between fact and fiction—

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[29] Fences appear for the first time in gaucho poetry in Hernández' *La vuelta de Martín Fierro* (1879).

[30] To further stress the scene's pedagogical and regulatory intent, it is worth noting that around Alicia Bergero analyses *sainetes* produced around 1915 in which spitting in tramways becomes a prohibitory *leitmotif*, in accordance to a public health campaign against tuberculosis (68). *Nobleza Gaucha* may have drawn from this theatrical formula.

[31] The famous actor Nelo Cosimi also directed and/or performed in many Indian *campero* films produced outside of Buenos Aires, including *La leyenda del puente inca* (The Inca Bridge Legend, 1923) and *La quena de la muerte* (The Indian Flute of Death, 1928), shot in the Cordoba Sierra. Córdoba and Rosario produced films during the period. Even though hegemonic discourses pictured urban modernization mostly in the capital, at the time Rosario underwent an industrialization process like Buenos Aires, including the development of an incipient film industry. Absence of studies on "interior" filmmaking reveals how Argentine film history is still to depart from this tendency. For a noticeable

a recurrent trope in the melodramatic regime as we have seen throughout this study. In *El último malón*, produced by the Rosario-based Greca Film, a prologue initially presents the film as a "historical reconstruction" of the Mocoví Indian rebellion of 1904. Greca himself makes a cameo appearance, pointing on a map the town of San Javier, where the events took place. Cut to close-up of actual Buenos Aires newspapers (*La Prensa*, *La Nación*, and *La Opinión*, among others) which attests to the veracity of the story to be told. Then, Greca playing himself appears in a high-angle medium shot writing on his desk. Close-up on his pen reveals gradually the film's melodramatic reading key: he pens how the film "will not be … the police *feuilleton* or *novelón* serialization. It will be the history [historia] of an American race, strong and heroic, that filled the Chaco jungle with legends."[32] Even though Greca inscribes his film in the realm of history and legend in opposition to *feuilleton* and *novelones*—a derogatory term for melodrama—it is from within the melodramatic regime that the film presents, and offers a solution to, the polarized world of San Javier. Greca defines his own form of participation within the regime in negative terms—what the film will not be—and yet, draws on melodramatic tropes (star-crossed lovers, pathos, thrills) to present the historical San Javier *montonera* and its relation to Argentine modern change.

The film begins with arresting establishing shots. *El último malón* registers the white city of San Javier in a succession of panoramic views. High-angle circular pans contrast the white town's checkerboard layout with the dark and endless pampas in the background. These sequences, reminiscent of turn of the century travel films, depict San Javier as an oasis of progress amidst the vast unknown. As in the travel film, these sequences incorporate what Giuliana Bruno terms "modernity's desire for site-seeing." These panoramic views "turned sights into sites" (20) catering to the urban taste for viewing local or foreign sites in motion.[33] Thus, in *El último malón* vista-like sequences partition diegetic space. High-angle long shots of San Javier contrast with eye-level full and medium shots of the Mocoví ranch. By means of closer shots, the latter seems a chaotic jumble compared to the town's equilateral geometry. The film lingers over the everyday life of townsmen, "civilization pioneers," and the "miserable life" of the Indians, expository titles explain. Processions, dances, and townsmen and Indian council gatherings present a divided world. The narrator forwards a thesis for these communities' problems: Indian consumption of alcohol in the *pulperías* (local stores) brings forth the clash between civilization and barbarism. But the narrator also acknowledges that it was "the White man" who taught "the Indian" how to drink and who incarcerates the Indian when he is drunk. Thus, the film's documentary presentation is not without ambivalence. To stress the ambiguity, even though civilization resides in San Javier, only the Mocoví Indians perform on screen productive practices (hunting, fishing, and cattle herding), while *criollo*

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exception, see Andrés Levinson's *Cine en el país del viento: Antártida y Patagonia en el cine argentino de los primeros tiempos*. Rionegro: Fondo Editorial Rionegrino, 2011.

[32] "History" would also be an appropriate translation. The term "historia" in Spanish refers to both history and story.

[33] Recently, Cynthia Thompkins has made a similar argument highlighting the film's relation to ethnographic photography and film language of attractions. See her "El último malón de Alcides Greca: Repetición y cine de atracciones." *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*. 32 (2014): 97-119. Web.

townspeople—"gringos" [foreigners] in an intertitle—experience "modern comfort" with indoor dances and other leisurely practices "unaware of the storm to come."

Initially portrayed as a historical reenactment, the film quickly foregrounds star-crossed love and *montonera* action over the historical conflict. Jesús Salvador (a fictional character based on the historical Mocoví chief Salvador López, who lead the 1904 rebellion) falls in love with Rosa Paiquí, the *mestizo* wife of his brother and tribe cacique, Bernardo López. Unlike his older brother, Jesús is not satisfied with the small patches of land the *criollos* left to the tribe. He also condemns Indian labor as exploitation. Unsatisfied with the state of affairs, Jesús conspires against his brother and exhorts the Indians to rebel against their leader and the *criollos*. In a secret council, in which phonetic Spanish in intertitles hints at linguistic incompetence among Indians, Jesús and his rebels decide to overthrow cacique Bernardo and raid the white men's town.

The Indians gradually attack *criollo* settlers leading to the final Indian raid on San Javier. Expository titles present the uprising in terms of regressive evolution: "in the spirit of the Indians a regression towards savagery has taken place." Discursive primitivism finds in the final attack a cinematic equivalent. The Indian attack sequence floods the all-white frames of San Javier with dark riders and dust. Camera angles reiterate the verticality implied in the clash between (top-down) civilizers and (bottom-up) savages, intercutting between high-angle shots of the townsmen firing from rooftops and low-angle shots of Indians riding horses into town (Figure 6). The savagery and chaos represented in the darkening of outdoor shots is quickly overcome by the townsmen's modern arsenal and government troops.[34]

Figure 6. High-angle shot of townsmen firing and low-angle shot of Indians raiding the town. *El último malón* (Alcides Greca, 1917)

[34] The Indian raid sequences bring to mind similar sequences in *The Birth of a Nation* (D.W. Griffith, 1915). According to Linda Williams, the ride of the KKK in rescue sequences is repeatedly figured as "a flushing of blackness from the screen" (120). Here, on the contrary, black overflows the whiteness of the screen. However, suggesting a direct stylistic influence would be anachronistic. Griffith's great productions, including *Intolerance* (1917), arrived to Buenos Aires by mid-1919. Advertisements announcing their premieres appear in *La Película* starting from number 141, 5 Jun. 1919.

After the failed attack, Jesús is forced to escape with the surviving Indians to the North. Nevertheless, his defeat is not without gains. In the Chaco jungle he settles down with his beloved, becoming "cacique in the heart of Rosa Paiqui", intertitles explain. "The untamed Indian, who fought against civilization, took from it its sweetest legacy: the kiss, which was unknown to the savages." Townsmen oust the Mocoví tribe from the productive sites of *criollo* civilization, albeit expelling recast Indians with the potential to spread the ways of progress through affect—love spells successful acculturation. Coming back to the film's prologue, despite *El último malón*'s will to depart from melodrama (stigmatized as *novelón*), it is through melodrama that the film identifies antagonists and a social order to be purged. However, societal purge does not imply immediate condemnation of the excluded. The public may have sympathized with Jesús and Rosa's sentimental narrative—central in six out of seven parts—but ultimately acknowledge their irrelevance to material progress in the modernizing polity, as proposed in the film's ending.

Campero films reshuffled visual regimes, presenting rural everyday and *criollo* practices as adhesives for community building. In the context of an ever-growing nation due to massive immigration, *criollo* discourse dominated integrative rhetoric. Capitalizing on this cross-media discourse, *campero* films excluded the indigenous and exalted the all-but-extinct gaucho as the essence of Argentina. According to Adolfo Prieto, even though the "real" peasant and his language were waning, the gaucho, "more or less showy cattle herding", and the "mystery of the pampas," served as effective cohesion elements and symbols of social incorporation. Remarkably polyvalent, *criollo* discourse operated across the social spectrum. For the ruling classes, *criollo* discourse legitimized their elevated status against the threats of immigration. For the popular sectors, it was "an expression of nostalgia or a rebellious substitutive form against the strangeness and impositions of urban space." Furthermore, Prieto stresses that "for many foreigners," *criollo* discourse meant the "immediate and *visible* way of assimilation, the citizenship credential that they could summon to join with full right to the growing torrent of social life" (18-9, my emphasis). *Criollo* discourse was therefore quite malleable and appealed to different social classes, conferring varying degrees of visibility. Immigrants appropriated *criollo* discourse to acquire a sense of belonging in the modern Babel of Buenos Aires, while for the *porteño* elites it was a sign of distinction.[35]

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[35] Prieto studies how *criollo* discourse and *criollo* practices operated in top-down relations and at grassroots level. A practice worth mentioning was the constitution of "*Criollo* centers" (between the 1890s and 1920s) where young women and men from various ethnic backgrounds and nationalities came together to reproduce the rural atmosphere of gaucho literature. In these centers immigrants read, recited, and composed *criollo* texts. They also sang, danced, and dressed as the gauchos of fiction. According to Prieto, theses types of associations "guaranteed the acquisition of the national sentiment necessary to survive … cosmopolitan confusion [and] xenophobic outbreaks that went hand in hand with modernization" (145). It is very likely that some non-professional immigrant actors associated with *criollo* centers participated in gaucho film production as well. Some film periodicals condemned such practice. In the trade journal *La Película*, a series of rather xenophobic and elitist columns condemned the use of "foreign" actors in national productions instead of male "classic types, *criollos*, of fine lineage [buena cepa]" and "society *porteño* women and women from the provinces" ("Por mal camino" *La Película* 24

El último malón radicalizes the integrationist yet exclusionary *criollo* discourse. In Greca's film, the conflict between rural and urban posits the irresolvable opposition between civilization and barbarism—between the modern town of San Javier, symbol of progress over the desert, and the Mocoví ranch, whose inhabitants have no place in the processes of modernization. The film presents productive Indian practices, but denies a place for the Indian in its diegetic world. *Nobleza Gaucha*, on the contrary, makes use of *criollo* symbols as cohesive elements for the pampa and the city. Even if the freeriding gaucho and his world are destined to disappear, the gaucho embodies the identity essences to be appropriated by *criollo* popular sectors, elites, and immigrants alike. In both films, melodrama offers no terminal reconciliation. Rather, stories of *gauchos* and Indians present social orders to be purged, and sets of ethical imperatives to be made clear.

Melodrama shaped the contours of collectivities by apportioning the sensible order. Emphasis on hardship and tradition made gauchos the cohesive element of the social fabric on moral terms. Made visible, gaucho valor and effort embodied an appealing work ethic and forward momentum germane to modern transformations. Indians had no place in modern change, but sequences of their everyday life contributed to the modern compulsion of registering change. Both *Nobleza Gaucha* and *El último malón* are located on the weak ontological frontier between documentary and fiction, between melodrama and a factual, traditional world's impending demise. As Mary Ann Doane stresses, the difference of cinema compared to other means of mechanical reproduction was the transformation of movement into an indexical sign (219).[36] Insistence on representing and archiving the present in *campero* films underscored the existential bond between moving images on screen and the off-screen pampas everyday. These films lay on the cusp of melodrama and the living, denotable countryside. Key instances of the melodramatic regime, *campero* films conferred visibility to dying social actors in order to give sense and bearings to the living. They constituted sensible communities weaving together factual perceptions, narrative affects, and *criollo* values. In other words, they made visible historically specific forms of perception, affection, and thought that would make possible a common Argentine nation.

Tradition, the *Sine Qua Non* of Progress at the Coffee Hacienda and the City Factory

Campero films during the late 1910s built worlds in which progress and tradition collided. The end of the gaucho and his ways, and the expulsion of the Indian, consolidated

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Oct. 1918). These examples reveal that the term *criollo* was quite polysemic at the time. At *Criollo* centers, *criollo* refers to the autochthonous and promises societal integration, whereas in the quoted article the same term refers to the autochthonous as the exclusive, distinctive quality of the elite. In subsequent issues, *La Película* called for the "pasteurization" of casts in national productions ("Los intérpretes de 'films' nacionales" *La Película* 14 Nov. 1918).

[36] In *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* Doane explores various nineteenth-century discourses on the persistence of vision. She argues that cinema problematically satisfies the compulsion to register and store the present. Doane pays particular attention to C.S. Peirce's triad of signs with an emphasis on the index, a sign that is linked to its object by an "existential bond" (92). Cinematic mechanical reproduction is indexical insofar as the film registers light through a chemical process that produces the resulting image.

criollo discourse in moving images. Setting progress against tradition shaped an emergent social body in the context of massive immigration and rapid transformations in Argentina. In contrast, Colombian silent fiction films did not find the opposite of progress in tradition. And, unlike *campero* films, Colombian films did not contribute to an (whitewashed) integrative discourse. Instead, they posited colonial values and social immobility as essential conditions for progress.

Colombia mainly produced silent fiction films during the 1920s. They could be grouped under the label family melodrama, for the patriarchal family appears in almost every surviving film. This extraordinary interest derives from the instability of all Colombian social institutions in the first decades of the twentieth-century. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the cinematograph arrived in 1897 in a brief moment of peace between two civil wars. Within this bellicose context, the family was not merely a set of biological and emotive ties. In the absence of a solid State, family guaranteed the transmission of property, wealth, and name. Family made the symbolic connection between public and private, and guaranteed the survival of conventional institutions. Therefore, family origin and fortune were the decisive criteria to occupy the highest social circles (Arias Trujillo 51). Crucial to the structure of Colombian collectives, the family took center stage in film melodrama.

Two films epitomize the conjunction of progress and tradition in the Colombian family melodrama—*Bajo el cielo antioqueño* (*Under the Sky of Antioquia*, 1925) and *Alma provinciana* (*Soul of the Province*, 1925). Family melodrama trafficked in conservative ideologies. This is not surprising, since family melodrama "traces the ultimate *resignation* […] to the strictures of social and familial tradition" (Schatz 149, emphasis in original). Interestingly, Colombian family melodramas presented tradition as the essential condition of modern progress and flow of capital. In these films, colonial strictures motivated modern change, a seemingly iterative theme since Jorge Isaacs' *María* (1867) (see chapter 1). Familial vicissitudes of fortune visualized traditional values and practices while defending a modern yet immobile social order. Concomitantly, Colombian melodrama, unlike Argentine melodrama, was beholden to the ubiquitous influence of Catholic imagery and practices in Colombia. Marital love and premarital virginity served as moral currency in these films. Catholic love and morality regulated diegetic social life. Despite blatant conservatism, *Bajo el cielo* and *Alma* turned "resignation" on its head, as we shall see. Especially regarding female identity, both films harnessed female strength in feminine weakness. In both films, women sustain Catholic morals. Female leads prove their virtue through self-sacrifice rather than personal gain. This is not to say that female characters in both films are attuned to passive victimization. On the contrary, Christian deference motivates female action and places women in positions of agency—especially when they choose to leave the domestic circle to occupy other sexually differentiated spaces. In the Colombian family melodrama, overcoming moral trials visualized an oxymoronic female identity tailored to support a specific social order, which extoled material progress and defended patriarchal conservatism.

Traditional practices pictured in Colombian family melodramas question an axiom Latin American scholarship shares with Brooksian melodrama (Martín-Barbero, Herlinghauss). Colombian films built worlds not characterized by the "liquidation of the traditional Sacred and its representative institutions" (Brooks 15). Nor did they necessarily convey anxieties of a "postsacred", "disenchanted" modern life "in which people found

themselves helpless and unfriended" (Singer 132-3). This issue is particularly relevant in the Colombian case, in which modernization did not go hand in hand with secularization.[37] During the period, the Catholic Church and Christian beliefs actively shaped State affairs. They also affected Colombians' everyday. Rather than secularization, Colombians experienced a "sacralization of society" in both private and public spheres, according to historian Miguel Ángel Urrego (277). Purging melodrama of the traditional Sacred comes short when analyzing cases such as this one in which melodrama, understood as "a central fact of modern sensibility" (Brooks 21), confers visibility to the traditional Sacred in modern everyday practices. The melodramatic regime in Colombia favored modes of perception and affect upholding Catholic conservatism in order to visualize modern transformative processes. Family melodramas likened character leads to suffering Christ-figures in order to generate feelings of sympathy—on both sides of the screen. Through the traditional sacred, these narratives aimed at producing "felt legitimacy" (Anker ch 3) for the collectives they pictured. In the meantime, they visually constructed a rigid social order. Thus, melodrama harnessed the pleasure of tears and the excitement of thrills to register, and make sense of, *conservative* change.

Colombian scholarship tends to consider extant silent films as examples of "primitive" (Salcedo Silva 66) or "backward state" (Suárez 21) cinema, limited by technical expertise and economic hardship. Despite assertions in Colombian film histories, continuity editing, linear narrative, and feature length were—from the start—standard in Colombian fiction films.[38] From the 1910s on, Colombian melodrama consciously borrowed stylistic devices from the incipient mass culture, including European and American cinema. Nevertheless, concerns with modern life and rapid change provoked the irruption of other cinematic languages reminiscent of earlier scenics and topicals,[39] apparently interrupting

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[37] Néstor García Canclini, in his influential book *Culturas Híbridas*, defines Latin American modernity as a process that includes four basic projects or four "movements." These have Western modernity embedded into their core—an emancipatory project, an expansive project, a renovating project, and a democratizing project. García Canclini defines de first project, emancipation, in terms of the "secularization of cultural fields," the "self-expressive and self-regulating production of symbolic practices," and the "rationalization of social life" (51). Under this prevailing definition of modernity, the Colombian case comes across as an exception to the rule. Even though Colombia underwent rapid modernization during the first decades of the twentieth century, modernization did not imply a rupture with the traditional Sacred nor with its representative institution—i.e., the Catholic Church, legally protected by the State under the 1887 *Concordato*. For a thorough study on the Colombian State-Church relation see Arias, Ricardo *El episcopado colombiano: intransigencia y laicidad (1850-2000)*. Bogotá: CESO, Ediciones Uniandes, ICANH, 2003.

[38] The tendency begins with historian Hernando Martínez Pardo's *Historia del cine colombiano* (1978) and lingers on in the most recent scholarship on Colombian film such as Juana Suárez' *Critical Essays on Colombian Cinema and Culture: Cinembargo Colombia* (2012).

[39] Other Latin American film scholars like Ana López recognize the non-primitive qualities, for lack of a better word, in Colombian films: "instead of rough transitional narratives, the first Chilean, Bolivian, and Colombian fiction films follow very closely hegemonic representational parameters of the era—continuity editing, self-sufficient internal

continuity. In rural settings, *tableau* shots present traditional dances and other rural practices. In urban settings, shots may linger over the cityscape, oblivious of character peripeteia—favoring presentation over representation. Further, stunning arrests of narrative development register sublime landscapes (often traversed by transportation technologies). These sequences, as in *campero* films, converted sights into sites; they avidly registered the present in moving images, catering to spectator excitement and the modern compulsion to register change. The melodramatic regime conferred visual and narrative saliency to these transformations, making them meaningful for the incipient audience. In terms of film style, Colombian family melodramas welded old and new cinematic languages, performatively reproducing the convergence of progress and tradition.

In fact, purported film style inconsistencies catered to an audience both versed in foreign filmic conventions and also attentive to local experiences of modernity rendered in melodramatic form. One such inconsistency was the narrator. Another factor leading film scholars to label local production as primitive, local films present no "phasing out of the narrator" in intertitles, unlike American silent cinema after 1917 (Bordwell 27). Most films, if not all, hinge on narrators. This is not surprising, since in order to elevate cinema to the category of art, Colombian filmmakers drew upon literature and local playwrights to compose their scripts, as mentioned above. Thus, intertitles tapped into a long lasting narrative tradition of *feuilleton* and sentimental fiction that circulated in the Colombian everyday. Some films also drew upon *costumbrismo* (literature of customs and manners), evident in varying intertitle registers (narrator expository titles use "correct" Spanish whereas dialogue intertitles between popular characters present phonetic writing and slang). Rather than primitive, a more contextualized reading would see how these films stylistically and narratively acknowledged the audience's reading proficiency in the multiple registers of filmic and textual melodrama on local and international scales.

Ana López notes that in Latin America, as elsewhere, early cinema capitalized on "the panoply of modern technologies, including urban development, media, and new amusements" (49). And yet local films were inflected by the particulars of the Latin American context: "an ambiguous symbiosis of traditional experiences/practices and modernizing innovations" (56). López' seminal essay focuses on the innovative aspects of modernity. She pays less attention to traditional experiences and practices that also informed Latin American films of the period. One of these factors, paramount in the Colombian context, was Catholic doctrine and imagery. The first Colombian film to exploit religious zeal was *La tragedia del silencio* (The tragedy of silence, Casa Cinematográfica Colombia 1924). Directed by Arturo Acevedo, the film received popular acclaim because of its Catholic themes and portrayals thought to defend "la moral y las buenas costumbres" (Nieto 1987) ("Morals and good manners" was the nineteenth century Latin American urbanity mantra, deeply rooted in Catholic morals). Through familial adversity, *La tragedia* successfully visualized Bogotá high society and material progress with an emphasis in

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narration, and feature length—yet return to the nationalistic concerns of the earlier era elsewhere [in Latin America during the 1910s]" (65). In this section, however, I question the overarching nationalistic claims and cinematic-language teleological narratives that López' seminal essay reproduces.

issues around public health, particularly leprosy.[40] To filmgoers' delight, the film entwined modern change and old traditions marked with religious overtones (Figure 7). Catholic overtones were key for *La tragedia*'s success in Venezuela and Panama as well (Duque 156).

Figure 7. A priest (screen center) blesses a steel bridge at its inauguration ceremony. *La tragedia del silencio* (Arturo Acevedo Mallarino, 1924)

La tragedia's success at the box office caught Gonzalo Mejía's attention. Following Acevedo's steps, Mejía, a tycoon from the coffee region, founded in 1924 the Compañía Filmadora de Medellín [Medellín Filmmaking Company] with the sole purpose of producing *Bajo el cielo antioqueño* (1925). Profit and regionalism motivated production of the film.[41] Medellín high society comprised the entire cast. The only "foreigners"—i.e., from Bogota—were Arturo Acevedo and his son, hired as director and cameraman respectively.

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[40] It is no coincidence that leprosy motivates the story in the film. However, an analysis relating leprosy, Catholic imagery, and melodrama in Colombia exceeds the limits of this chapter. It is important to note that another film, *Como los muertos* (Like the Dead, SICLA 1925), focuses on leprosy as well, just as did melodramatic short stories in popular magazines throughout the 1920s. Between the second half of the nineteenth-century and the first decades of the twentieth, Colombia suffered collective cultural paranoia regarding the disease. Biblical mythology, overblown statistical reports, medical papers, and the popular press triggered nation-wide concern. At its peak, the result was a county-size national concentration camp and parallel currency system that removed sick citizens and their families from society. The main actors of this process were the State, the Catholic Church, and medical practitioners. All three are influential forces in Acevedo's film. On leprosy isolation hospitals see Martínez, Abel Fernando *El lazaretto de Boyacá: lepra, medicina, Iglesia y Estado*, *1869-1916*. Tunja: Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, 2006.

[41] I use the term 'regionalism' as the practice of regional rather than central systems of economic, cultural, and political affiliation.

The film, preserved almost in its entirety, did not only tap into societal narcissistic pleasure. Like the Argentine *Nobleza Gaucha*, *Bajo el cielo* was embedded in commodity culture. It served as a showcase for advertising the region's industries—coffee plantations, cattle, tobacco processing, soda industry, and modern transportation—beyond regional and perhaps national borders. The film draws upon explicit Catholic imagery to highlight melodramatic tension, much like *La tragedia del silencio*. At its climax, through iris in/outs, *Bajo el cielo* likens the male lead to a bleeding Christ on the cross (Figure 8). In a similar vein, the film's opening sequence introduces the female lead in a bucolic Catholic boarding school. However, Christ-like victimization and heterosexual love are at the service of modern traffic. Transportation technologies, people, and goods constantly circulate throughout the film. With *Bajo el cielo*, Medellín had recourse to moving image technology and melodrama for affirming economic and cultural hegemony on regional and national levels. Mejía himself published an article that described the film's aspirations:

> Of deep moral and social background, including details of our customs, racial types, landscapes of our fields and, especially, the culture of Antioquia feminism [la cultura del feminismo antioqueño] [, this] film, which will make us known elsewhere, will parade our most beautiful buildings, streets, parks, as well as the main architectural oeuvres we possess. All of this will contribute to the prestige of Medellín. [42]

Mejía's feminist claim demands special attention. By mid-1920s, periodicals targeted at female readers engaged in lively discussions around feminism. Particularly in the Antioquia region, feminism championed the liberation of women through two avenues: joining the workforce *and* fulfilling their roles as mothers inside the family household. A 1926 article eloquently describes this interpretation of feminism in terms of female economic independence at the service of the family household: "To practice feminism is not necessary to fight off motherhood [; it is] to help [the husband] a little bit in the fight for life and, further, base one's pride and spend one's energy in possessing something more useful than facial beauty." The article also stresses women's unique responsibility to "create honest citizens" out of their children.[43] This notion will prove crucial to understanding female agency in the film, as we shall see.

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[42] *La Defensa*, Oct. 1924 (qtd in Duque 175). Medellín is the capital of Antioquia. The purposes of this film could be compared to *Nobleza Gaucha*'s presentational imperative and international aspirations. See footnote 28.

[43] Ospina de Avarro, Sofía. "Lo que es el feminismo antioqueño" *Hogar* 16 May 1926: n.p.

Figure 8. Iris in/outs equate the suffering male lead with a bleeding Christ.
***Bajo el cielo antioqueño* (Arturo Acevedo Mallarino, 1925)**

Briefly, in *Bajo el cielo antioqueño* Lina (Alicia Arango de Mejía) falls in love with Álvaro (Juan B. Naranjo), a well-dressed wastrel. Her father (Gonzalo Mejía), a wealthy industrialist from Medellín, disapproves of their romance and does everything in his power to keep them apart. Going against her father's wishes, Lina decides to elope with Álvaro. At the Central Rail Station, however, a repentant woman beggar (Rosa E. Jaramillo) warns Lina against running away from the fatherly home. The encounter triggers a series of setbacks that end with Álvaro in court. He is wrongfully accused of murdering the beggar because his handkerchief was later found on her dead body. At court, and putting her honor at risk, Lina reveals their aborted elopement plans and restores Álvaro's honor with an eloquent defense. Conveniently, at that precise moment, the killers are captured and brought into the courthouse.[44] Later on, Lina arranges a marriage with an Englishman. The unexpected twist finally allows Lina and Álvaro to elope, without Lina losing her virtue in the face of Medellín society. By then, Álvaro has already squandered his fortune. Luckily, he finds gold deposits in the bucolic land where he and Lina will spend the rest of their lives.

Juana Suárez duly notes that love in *Bajo el cielo antioqueño* is contaminated by the flow of capital and commercial exchange (22).[45] Through the love story, the film documents Medellín's urban and rural industrial progress. Even if some rural sequences resort to bucolic themes, the city and its rural periphery are inextricably connected. Such ties are best portrayed in stunning arrests of narrative development. For instance, at her father's hacienda, Lina's story halts for a sip of coffee. A close-up on the *dauphine*, taking pleasure in the drink, through iris in/outs presents the entire coffee production process. Editing

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[44] The killers' capture and the trial sequences are examples of elaborate continuity editing techniques in the film. The first sequence contains cuts on action, exhilarating parallel editing, and close-ups on cops and killers as they reach for a gun on the floor. The second sequence, more *tableau*-like, complements Lina's verbal defense in intertitles with a flashback.

[45] *Pace* Suárez, I depart from her reading of an urban/rural divide in *Bajo el cielo antioqueño*. According to Suárez, the film reproduces the opposition between civilization and barbarism—indeed an important trope in Latin American narratives and film, particularly in the Southern Cone.

connects traditional and industrial aspects: from manually sowing seeds to drying coffee beans, to unloading coffee sacks from trucks in a city warehouse. The sequence comes full circle at the hacienda when Lina puts down her coffee cup in close-up. The presentational imperative is entirely motivated and yet interrupts narration in favor of monstration.[46] Halt in narrative flow temporarily freezes melodramatic peripeteia in order to *present* local circuits of exchange. By regulating the visible and the narratable, melodrama pictures the capitalist production that supports the progressive yet conservative ways of Antioquia society. In other sequences, Lina's stay at the hacienda shows how her father performs as the *pater familias* both at home and at the plantation. Don Bernardo enforces colonial fealty across an extended familial structure in both urban and rural settings, revealing extra-economic controls over the workforce, much like the father and Efraín in *María* (see chapter 1). Unknowingly, Lina also reproduces conservative social structures; the workers throughout the coffee plantation pay homage to her, as if she were of finer bloodline.

Through Lina and Álvaro's love story, the film aims at displaying the allegedly liberal ways of Medellín society, particularly regarding female identity. However, the survival of colonial practices and mores complicates Mejía's progressive claim of Antioquia feminist culture, quoted above. *Bajo el cielo* champions female agency, but it does so at the service of its conservative agenda. After Lina confesses her aborted escape plans to her father, he isolates her from the rest of the world. Don Bernardo takes her to the coffee hacienda and prevents her from reading the newspaper, whose headlines—as the periodicals studied in the previous chapter—sensationally follow Álvaro's murder case. *Bajo el cielo* puts into practice Mejía's feminist claim through other means. Lina's liveliness, competence, and moral fortitude closely align her with serial-queen melodrama heroines. She presents, like the serial queen, "culturally positive behavioral traits" that involve "the destabilization of traditional ideologies of gender" (Singer 221-2). Destabilization may not be the best term for a film that supports societal *status quo*. Rather, recourse to serial-queen melodrama traits reveals how the film constructs a vision of local transformative processes by means of local and foreign melodramatic conventions. On top of saving her *beau*, Lina prevents a friend from drowning in a river, and at the end of the film flies in a hydroplane. Harnessing thrills rather than pathos, *Bajo el cielo* builds a world that is both very traditional and at the same time very progressive. Tradition, understood as the sine qua non of progress, diametrically opposes the trope of *campero* films—the gaucho as repository of traditional values in the face of progress, analyzed above.

Recourse to serial-queen melodrama comes as no surprise in Colombian family melodramas, considering Colombian popular mass culture during the 1920s. Advertisements in magazines show how American serials flooded the market early on. Also, spectators avidly consumed press material on serial queens such as Ruth Rolland and Pearl White. Therefore we must not think that Antioquia producers had cinematic innovation in mind. A commercial enterprise after all, *Bajo el cielo* drew upon what was on popular demand in Medellín: modernity, regionalism, serial queens, fashion, and popular fiction. The film unproblematically juxtaposes Christ-like figures and female impetus as a paean to modern-traditional Antioquia society. Álvaro and Lina's love story takes the spectator on a

[46] See André Gérault, "Narration and Monstration", *Journal of Film and Video* 39 (1987): 29-36. Print.

tour of rural landscapes and cityscapes where everything is in circulation—horizontally. The film contemplates no such thing as upward social mobility.

Unlike *Bajo el cielo antioqueño, Alma provinciana* (Soul of the Province, Félix J. Rodríguez, 1926) was not an elite venture. But it was also the product of another single-film company, FélixMark Film. Film historians Rito Torres and Jorge Durán stress *Alma*'s commitment to realism, epitomized in the director's insistence on hiring non-professional actors (54). The film explores the everyday lives of the pauper, described by the heroine as "victims of misery,"[47] a trope I examined in sensationalist melodrama. But unlike the urban *miseria* studied in chapter 2, *Alma* tackles with social concerns both rural and urban. The film initially seems to demonstrate how class differences can be resolved through love. This is the only film the National Film Heritage Foundation (Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano) keeps in its entirety. The ten-reel film tells the tale of two siblings, children of landed gentry, who study in Bogota. Gerardo (Alí Bernal) leads a spendthrift's life until he meets and falls in love with Rosa, a demure, beautiful factory worker. His sister María (Maga Dalla), in her turn, goes to the hacienda on vacation where she falls in love with the foreman, Juan Antonio. Their father zealously objects to both unions. He prohibits his children to marry below their class. However, several peripeteias will reveal to don Julián how virtuous his future in-laws are. The film ends with two weddings and a felicitous return to home: the rural hacienda.

The film balances symmetrically both plots. The first act focuses on María's "life in the province", while the second recounts Gerardo's "life and miracle" in Bogota. Thus segregating urban from rural space. The film lingers on portraying practices proper to both spaces, such as bullfighting honoring the patriarch's birthday and the 1925 Student Carnival in Bogota, reproducing the weak ontological frontier between documentary and drama analyzed above regarding *campero* films. The story line allowed Rodríguez to focus on folklore of the countryside, as well as material progress of the city: shots of Bolívar Square, Independence Park, and even Congress' nighttime illuminations converted sights into sites of progress.

Despite the rural-urban narrative divide, *Alma* denounces conflicting rural practices *within* city everyday life, especially in the second act. In a sequence of frontal medium shots problematizing women's entry into the workforce, the factory-owner's son, Alberto, tries to seduce Rosa. Ordering her to carry a crate of virgin wool, he lures her into the factory warehouse to secretly make his advance. Inflamed by Rosa's rejections, Alberto attempts to force himself on her; but Rosa fiercely defends her "honor," intertitles explain. At the peak of the struggle, a struggle between vice and virtue, Alberto's father enters the warehouse and prevents the rape in the nick of time. However, he does not rebuke his son; he fires Rosa instead, burying Rosa and her sickly family deeper in urban *miseria* (Figures 9-12).

The sequence portrays the reproduction of rural labor relations inflected by colonial vassalage in the modern city factory. According to Urrego, during the period "backward" means of sociability imposed in the city "extra-economic controls over the workforce and

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[47] In Spanish *miseria* denotes extreme poverty rather than emotional distress. In chapter two I discuss at length the relation between early twentieth century *miseria* and melodrama.

subjugate[d] the female body" (208).[48] Peasant women who migrated to the cities saw certain "rights"—such as the *droit de seigneur* depicted in the sequence—transferred to new figures of authority: the factory owner, the barrio shopkeeper, or the bourgeois *pater familias*. In Colombia during the first decades of the twentieth-century, the urban did not imply opposition to the rural (Urrego 208), as this sequence shows. Gerardo himself confirms the survival of colonial ways of sociality in the city. When he first crosses paths with Rosa, Gerardo crassly approaches her. Due to her lower class clothing, Gerardo initially sees her as a sexual object that should be available for him. Her "virtuous" refusal, according to intertitles, is what captivates him. Virtue in this film carries a Catholic connotation. Rosa will strive to remain "immaculate"—that is, a virgin free of carnal sin—throughout the film.

Figure 9. Alberto sends Rosa to the warehouse

Figure 10. Alberto tries to force himself on Rosa

Figure 11. Rosa struggles to break free

Figure 12. The father fires Rosa in front of his son

[48] I contest, however, the term 'backward' in Urrego's analysis. The term suggests an anachronistic phenomenon that deviates from a "normal" modernization process. I shift the paradigm to consider the tense coexistence of modern and traditional practices as a distinctive trait of local modernities.

Unlike *Bajo el cielo antioqueño*, *Alma provinciana* does not draw upon explicit Catholic imagery to accentuate paroxysms of pain. But allocates a place for religion in its diegetic world in terms of everyday practices and morals. Rosa's zeal for defending her virtue taps into the cult of feminine spiritual superiority known as *marianismo*. This is not the cult of the iconic maternal figure. Originally based on the Virgin Mary, *marianismo* erected "a secular edifice of beliefs and practices related to the position of women in society" in Latin America (Stevens 5). Departing from the iconic figure, *Marianismo* teaches that women are morally superior and spiritually stronger than men. In the film, Rosa's actions—keeping her body from sexual intercourse—prove her moral fortitude to other characters. And most importantly, by means of example, Rosa discourages Gerardo from indulging in urban debauchery. The cultural practice of *Marianismo* is the coin of virtue in the film.[49] (This is also the case in *Bajo el cielo antioqueño*, where Lina's morals and valor save her *beau* from debauchery as well). *Marianismo* in practice differs from other literary female figures such as the Angel in the House. The latter portrays female characters selflessly attuned to the needs of the domestic circle, in which subordinate female activity complements male activity.[50] In contrast, Rosa actively builds her own female identity and consequently affects her milieu by spreading moral fortitude. This attitude does not conflict with Christian deference. On the contrary, it denounces secular social problems while upholding Catholic morals.

Female deference determines female agency in these films. Marketing strategies in film ads further point to the ways in which these films deployed a combination of demureness and active agency to attract filmgoers. For instance, a *Bajo el cielo* ad anticipates that "the film will be the finest sprout where gentleness, softness, tears, sighs, the omnipotent weaknesses of the feminine soul [las omnipotentes flaquezas del alma femenina], will open up new pathways [harán surgir caminos nuevos], will reveal deep secrets" (*El Colombiano* May 12, 1925, qtd in Duque 195). The oxymoronic quality of *marianismo*—female omnipotent weakness—posits solutions for the social order through exemplification. In this respect, *Alma* operates as a film *à these*. Like in the didactic novel, the film indicates through one of its characters the source of social problems: class difference and *miseria*. In intertitles, Rosa explains: "[social] inequality is not God's deed. It is the result of human disposition. Man always wants to stand out. And in order to do so, he needs the prostration of others." Rosa's moral fortitude stems from her impetus to undermine worldly sociability on behalf of an egalitarian divine order.

Alma provinciana deploys a specific visual regime shaping its diegetic world. The film visualizes vertical interactions between rural and urban, pauper and rich, ethical women and unethical men. Both high and low gain narrative saliency, and yet the film

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[49] *Alma provinciana* reinforces Rosa's Marian purity through montage as well. In an introductory sequence, Rosa's portrait intercuts with close-ups on white roses (a cultural allusion to purity). Likewise, the rose blossom is a Marian allegory. M*arianismo* references can also be found in *Bajo el cielo antioqueño*. For instance, it is Lina's morality that saves Álvaro from debauchery.

[50] See Susan Kirkpatrick, *Las Románticas: Women Writers and Subjectivity in Spain, 1835-1850*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1989.

reproduces a petrified social order through what is visible and what is not. As I mentioned before, in the Colombian case the melodramatic regime conjoins material change with societal conservatism. It is not a free-for-all breakdown of systems of representation, as described in the introduction to this chapter. In *Alma*, the film's visual regime favors social stratification, evident in the outcomes of Rosa and Juan Antonio. Neither demureness nor chastity guarantees upward social mobility for Rosa. After her virtue has been confirmed, both families discover that kin relates them. From the start, Rosa was destined to be part of the upper class. In a similar vein, the film elevates foreman Juan Antonio through heightened personal qualities only to grant him social ascension by other means. He is a self-taught man and avid reader with a "romantic spirit," expository titles explain. Sensible and refined as Juan Antonio may be, he can marry María only after he finds fortune in gold deposits. Like in *Bajo el cielo*, flows of capital shape love in *Alma*. In the end, spending power and kinship justify the lovers' union. Rosa's bloodline justifies vertical social mobility, while Juan Antonio's fortuitous (individual) achievement palliates collective social stagnation.

Traditionalist family melodramas do not eschew the advent of new figures in the public sphere. Tensions between old and new proper to modern experiences not only brought rural practices to the urban and vice versa, they also conferred visibility to new figures in urban space. *Alma* does so through comic interruptions in narrative flow. The film draws upon an emergent typology that was developing in humor magazines such as *Fantoches* (1926-1932) and *Sal y pimienta* (1926).[51] In *Alma provinciana* some of these types include: the student who migrates to the capital, cop-and-housemaid street-corner flirts, the pension owner, and the elusive renter.

Perhaps the most interesting type may be the *filipichín*, a "likeable Tenorio"[52] that yearns for social ascent by courting high society ladies. Unlike Tirso de Molina's, this don Juan is destined for failure. Product of an ever-changing urban milieu, the *filipichín* tries to access higher circles emulating upper class attire, but lacks the reading proficiency to successfully imitate the visual codes and manners of Bogota society. Even though he invests in markers of elegance (boots, gloves, cane, handkerchief), women brand him a "fool", "insipid", "sticky and enamored."[53] *Alma* presents this urban type with Julio. In society, he passes as a regular friend of the male lead. But in private, he reveals the essence of the *filipichín*: penniless, he cannot buy ostentatious clothes. Instead, he resorts to a complicated system of suspenders and string in order to feign elegance (Figure 13). In a brief sequence, while Julio prepares for a "date," intertitles explain, we see how under his blazer he does not wear a shirt or waistcoat. With his intricate system, only collar, cuffs, and other pieces of cloth are enough to compose his dandy image. The *filipichín* is a direct product of early twentieth century urban transformative processes. He foregrounds a visual regime centered primarily on surface impressions. Julio emulates that which is immediately perceivable through sight—the fashionable images that circulated in illustrated magazines

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[51] Particularly the articles and caricatures of the latter depict a city in constant change. In its pages Bogotá becomes a highly eroticized visual spectacle, where citizens of different social classes negotiate their place and agency in public and private spheres.

[52] *Sal y pimienta* 8 May 1926: cover. Print.

[53] "Las damas bogotanas y los filipichines: diálogo en la intimidad de un tocador" *Sal y Pimienta* 8 May 1926: n.p. Print.

and in the cinema (incidentally the *filipichín*'s favorite site for his advances, popular magazines explain). Hence his name: lacking an obverse, the *filipichín*'s ontological status resides on surface appearance.[54] With his looks, he navigates through a milieu of ever-changing semblance.

Figure 13. The *filipichín* gets ready for a date.
***Alma provinciana* (Félix J. Rodríguez, 1926)**

To sum up, the two films discussed use narrative arcs of guilt, punishment, and atonement motivated by heterosexual love stories. Recurrent topoi reveal how Colombian family melodrama is beholden to the ubiquitous influence of Catholic everyday practices and imagery in Colombia during the period. Centered on the patriarchal family and the institution of marriage, these films uphold modern social stratification through traditional values and mores. Protagonists, champions of Catholic morals, prove their virtue through self-sacrifice rather than personal gain. In some instances, montage sequences harnessing pathos compare them to Christ imagery. Nevertheless, virtuous deeds do not ultimately determine individual social ascension. Access to the flow of capital or heredity makes possible for few the crossing of social boundaries. Love and Catholic morals regulate a social order in which gender roles and class concerns are constantly at issue—but ultimately placated. The oxymoronic omnipotent weakness of female protagonists sustains economic and sociocultural *conservative* change.

Following character peripeteias, *Bajo el cielo antioqueño*, and *Alma provinciana* build diegetic worlds marked by modern transformative processes. Lovers circulate in both urban and rural spaces. Through the characters' physical displacement, these films provide

[54] In the 1920s, 'filipichín' literally refers to a patterned wool cloth. See *Nuevo Tesoro Lexicográfico de la Lengua Española*.

a *tour d'horizon* of their diegetic worlds. That is to say, character peripeteias prompt a tour of natural and socioeconomic landscapes of clearly bounded polities (Anderson 30), shaping the contours of collectivities. In each film, traditional ways problematically coexist with modern technologies and practices. These films portray regional differences born of uneven center-periphery modernization processes that led to struggles for economic and cultural hegemony between regions (Bogotá vs. Medellín). Tense coexistence affected both melodrama and experiences of modernity. Economic, social, and political transformative processes shaped melodrama. But at the same time, melodrama was a key factor for giving meaning to those very processes. The result, in the case of film, was a re-articulation of foreign cinematic languages that drew upon diverse popular narratives and genres, perpetuating the local melodramatic regime on a new medium.

Buenos Aires Shadows: Urbanity and Moral Degradation

So far, I have examined how *campero* films and Colombian family melodramas deployed highly stratified senses of community. *Alma provinciana*'s *filipichín*, however, reveals a phenomenon proper to urban space, threatening to topple rigid social structures. The *filipichín* epitomizes distinct transformative processes yielding new urban figures and practices. These became visible in concomitance with new, faster paces of circulation—of goods, wealth, and people. In this respect, emergent urban figures motivated changes in films and narratives. If by the late 1910s Argentine *campero* films set tradition against progress in order to impose *criollo* discourse, during the 1920s urban films eschewed promises of progress and tradition all together in Argentina. By the end of the 1910s, urban films appeared and quickly challenged gaucho film predominance. Trade journals defined the genre as the *suburb film* [film de arrabal] or the *porteño* cine-drama.[55] These films registered—and skeptically narrativized—Buenos Aires urban space. They presented the city as a site of constant circulation in which opulence was reserved for few, and misery abounded. Characters from opposing social classes exchanged urban experiences and positions, sparking narratives of innocence, temptation, and vice. Upward mobility as well as circulation between suburbs and center fueled these narratives. Characters struggled between honest work, urban debauchery, and lawlessness. In the process, they embodied new forms of being and ways of sociability proper to the urban metropolis. The *campo* in the *porteño* cine-drama is long lost and, as we shall see, in urban films becomes a bucolic yet impossible exit from hostile urbanity.

Thus, *Porteño* cine-drama revealed yet another instance in shifting visual regimes. Conferring visual and narrative saliency to new figures in a Manichean cityscape, these melodramas focused on downtrodden *barrio* people that ventured into the world of the rich—the intoxicating downtown atmosphere of cafés and cabarets. (In chapter 2, I examined a similar yet opposite displacement, *porteño* journalists delving into the *barrio* underworld). These shifting visual regimes recall Rancière's aesthetic revolution. Rancière recognizes a crucial development of the "aesthetic regime of the arts" in nineteenth century France, when traditional ways of expression in literature collapsed concomitant with the social hierarchies to which they corresponded. According to Rancière, thematic differences

[55] "Y en una noche de carnaval" *La Película* 23 Jul. 1925: n.p. Print; "La mujer de media noche". *La Película* 15 Oct. 1925: 16-7. Print

between noble and ignoble subjects as well as stylistic hierarchies went into crisis with the appearance of the masses in literature and the everyday:

> There was … a vast egalitarian surface of free words that could ultimately amount to the limitless indifferent chatter of the world … there was the desire to replace the old expressive conventions with a direct relationship between the potential of words and the potential of bodies, where language would be the direct expression of a potential for being that was immanent in being. (57)

Rancière's aesthetic revolution resonates with 1920s *porteño* cine-dramas. Among the Buenos Aires masses, the "limitless indifferent chatter of the world" yielded a profoundly fatalistic view in which social strata collided. In a world comprised of a boundless city, individuals—mostly women pursuing a better life—were victimized by fate. Most films deployed moral ambiguity in a double move: female sexual-moral downfall and a resulting, albeit fleeting, rise in class. Centered on vertical mobility and titillation, *Porteño* cine-dramas directly appealed to the emergent masses. These film melodramas registered urban space foregrounding its many threats—thus becoming an archive of a morally questionable present—while offering tantalizing urban typologies.[56]

It must be noted, however, that claims to media specificity weaken with regard to *porteño* cine-drama. For these melodramas influenced, and were influenced by, *tango*. *Tango* and *porteño* cine-drama developed symbiotically.[57] Borrowing Rancière's terms quoted above, in 1920s Buenos Aires the "potential of words" reached a peak in *tango.* At its most cynical, the cosmopolis—and its effects on the individual—was best described by songs like "Yira Yira" [Turns and turns, 1930]: "When you don't even have faith / Nor yesterday's *mate* leaves drying under the sun […] the indifference of the world / which is deaf and mute / you will feel … You will see that everything is a lie / You will see that nothing is love / that the world does not care about a thing / [it] turns and turns."[58] Notice how, unlike Colombian family melodramas, in a "postsacred" Buenos Aires individuals did find themselves "helpless and unfriended" (Singer 132-3). As the lyrics suggest, the city forsook notions of faith, truth, and love. With respect to the "potential of bodies," and especially the female body, *porteño* cine-dramas pointed to moral debasement as the only means for social ascent. Many filmmakers drew upon *tango* lyrics for plot peripeteias or wrote *tangos* for their films. The world of "Yira Yira", deaf and mute [sordo y mudo], gained a new dimension in moving images. Resonating with these lyrics, films during the 1920s projected a silent, cynical world that was nonetheless suffused with sound—the voices of the downtrodden and *tango*'s plight. In song and film, urban types embodied or succumbed to big-city life.

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[56] *Porteño* cine-dramas also appealed to the emerging mass public through diverse circuits of exchange. Some filmmakers even reached out to the their audiences in order to include them in the creative process. Julio Yrigoyen's successful *Sombras de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires Shadows, 1923) originated in a screenwriting contest in the popular periodical *Crítica* (*Excelsior* 19 Sept. 1923).

[57] Matthew Karush makes this claim regarding the development of tango and *sainete* (91), I appropriate it to expand on his analysis.

[58] Santos Discépolo, Enrique. "Yira yira" *Todo Tango.* Web. 9 Sept. 2013 <http://www.todotango.com/english/las_obras/letra.aspx?idletra=167>.

As in the development of *criollo* discourse, immigration also shaped *tango* lyrics and music. According to historian Sergio Pujol, "*tango* had everything: an undeniable *criollo* profile [,] the musical contribution of Spain and Italy, immigrant participation (specially their children's participation) in its production, diffusion, and significance … understood by all" (qtd in Sánchez 44).[59] Even though *tango*'s origin is fraught with ellipses, for the purposes of my argument I concur with a young Jorge Luis Borges. Writing for the culturally influential *Martín Fierro* magazine, Borges affirmed that *tango* was born in the *barrio*: "its fatherland is the pink corner of the suburbs, not the *campo*. Its ambience, the slums [el Bajo]; its symbol, the weeping willow."[60] For Borges, to his regret, *tango* had diverted from male bravado narratives—what he termed "pure felicity of valor"—to lecherous narratives focused on lament. *Pace* Borges, it was this popular variation that carried over into *porteño* cine-drama and its gendered depiction of urban sociability.

Appropriating *tango* reinforced fiction film's "melodramatic efficiency", according to Carlos Monsiváis (113). The Mexican writer keenly suggests that the popular music facilitated powerful ways for the public to sympathize with the narratives. Actively embodying narrative pathos while singing, "the listener (the singer) appropriates the role of the rejected, the enamored, the sufferer, and develops it in two or three minutes […] To find himself turned into the characters of the songs. Who rejects such a role?" Monsiváis asks (114).[61] *Tango*'s mass popular appeal was pervasive and provided a new way of experiencing pathos at the most intimate level through diverse media. *Tango* was *entrañable*—embodied and embodying. *Tango* aesthetics and performance illustrate how bodily modes of perception, affect, and interpretation are at the heart—or I should say gut, the *entrañas*—of the melodramatic regime.[62] The body is an important dimension of the distribution of the sensible and the modes of participating within it. Film theatre orchestras played *tangos* during film screenings while audiences responded enthusiastically to *tango*

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[59] Although Pujol does not venture into the melodramatic qualities of *tango,* its broad "understandability" may be due to its melodramatic underpinnings. According to Peter Brooks, melodrama is "radically democratic, striving to make its representations clear and legible to everyone" (15). In a similar vein, Carlos Monsiváis argues that "melodramatic efficiency" supported *tango*'s success. He makes the same claim for other Latin American musical genres like the Cuban *bolero* and the Mexican *ranchera* (113-5).

[60] Borges, Jorge Luis "Ascendencias del Tango" *Martín Fierro* 20 Jan. 1927: n.p. Print.

[61] Monsiváis argues that *tango*, Mexican *ranchera*, and Caribbean *bolero* fulfill this function in music and film. He even ventures to suggest that this type of music, understood as "the basis of melodrama," is the distinctive trait of Latin American cinema compared to Hollywood cinema (114). To elaborate on his comparison goes beyond the purposes of this dissertation. It must be noted, however, that *tango* and *tango* aesthetics did constitute a distinctive trait of various melodramatic narratives in Argentine music, *sainete* theatre plays, and films during the first decades of the twentieth century.

[62] American scholarship has also explored the relationship between embodiment and melodrama. For a seminal essay on the "body genres," which display bodies and affect the bodies of spectators, see Linda Williams' "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess". *Film Quarterly* 44.4 (1991): 2-13. Print.

interpretations. On certain premieres, it was the star herself who performed the *tango* written exclusively for the film.[63]

Tango left its impression on film in multiple ways. Importantly, it provided an inventory of urban character types and their social practices. Sergio Piñero, another *Martín Fierro* collaborator, satirized *tango*'s formulaic structure. Not withholding flippant remarks, he affirmed: "Tango constitutes binoculars for viewing certain social phenomena [It] involves harmony of opposite passions [and] accentuates women's subordinated condition … For these very women there is the jealous seducer who does not respect prejudices, conditions, virginities or modesties. [Women] are attracted by his deceitful voluptuousness."[64] Unwillingly, the author summarized *tango*'s legacy in film. Fallen women and their questionable suitors, the *compadrito* (urban ruffian) or the *niño bien* (rich kid), are but few examples of familiar figures populating both *tango* and film. *La costurerita que dio aquel mal paso* (the little seamstress who stumbled), the organ grinder, the blind man, the drunken husband, the unconditionally loving mother, also peopled the *porteño* cine-drama cityscape. Interestingly, city types exacerbated to hyperbole in Piñero's column nonetheless reflected "social phenomena" according to the author. In this sense, *tango* types attested to the processes of change. Thus, both *tango* and *porteño* cine-drama shared the compulsion to archive a morally dubious experience of the present.

José Agustín Ferreyra pioneered introducing *tango* and *barrios* into silent fiction film. Blurring the lines between fact and fiction, he depicted in his films the lives of working-class and vagrant Argentines with great detail and sympathy. He cultivated, as he explains in a 1921 article, an "urban realist" style premised on shooting on-location. He also considered cinema the most effective medium to narrate such urban reality rendering it understandable to the public. Cinema, for him, was "the art that is most accessible to easy and quick comprehension" (qtd in Couselo 112). Describing his own work, Ferreyra uncannily anticipates melodramatic features foregrounded in this study—particularly the melodramatic regime's function in deploying (critical) sites of intelligibility in the service of

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[63] "'Galleguita' se ha impuesto" *Excelsior* 1 Jul. 1925: 29. Print. Photograms in film ads indicate that *Galleguita* (Little Galician Girl,1925), directed by Julio Yrigoyen, also dealt with girls in cabarets. Yrigoyen began a life-long filmmaking career producing newsreels and institutional films. According to Fernando Peña his productions where always at the fringes of the Argentine movie industry. Tapping into the best-grossing tendencies in the market, Yrigoyen first dipped into fiction filmmaking by capitalizing on a makeshift River Plate Chaplin (played by Carlos Torres Ríos, brother of Leopoldo Torres Ríos) (41). During the 1920s, Yrigoyen produced films that resorted to crime mysteries and films that drew upon tango lyrics as a source of inspiration—a tendency introduced and mastered by José Agustín Ferreyra. Yrigoyen's company, Buenos Aires Films, was one of the most prolific and economically successful during the period. Full-page or double-page ads in trade journals distinguish Buenos Aires Film from other companies with its aggressive advertisement campaigns.

[64] Piñero, Sergio "Salvemos el tango" *Martín Fierro* 18 Jul. And 5 Ago. 1925. Like Borges and other *Martín Fierro* collaborators, Piñero approaches *tango* and popular culture with patronizing superiority. His diatribe against *tango* even refers to Colombian popular literature, as a way to denounce *tango* excess. "[Tango] makes superhuman efforts to achieve emotion […] like a Vargas Vila serpentine [serpentina 'vargasviliana']."

individuals or social groups. In a context of realism, Ferreyra's fictional city life included rivalry and villainy, sexual exploitation, masked relationships and masked identities, and many of the urban types mentioned above. His concern with city life, however, was not limited to urban types and stereotypical stories. A presentational imperative of the urban everyday also dominates his films. For instance, *La chica de la calle Florida* (*Florida Street Girl*, 1922) through remarkable editing techniques presents contrasts between downtown and the suburbs. Dissolves and superimpositions of high and low angle shots of Florida Street traffic, interspersed between medium tracking shots of passersby and automobiles at eye-level, saturate the frame. In contrast, medium and full shots of children in rags playing in suburban streets affectively present the *barrio* as the (sympathetic) locus of poverty[65] (Figure 14).

Figure 14. High-angle shot of Florida St. in contrast with medium shot of *barrio* child. *La chica de la calle Florida* (José A. Ferreyra, 1922)

A synopsis of *La costurerita que dio aquel mal paso* (*The Little Seamstress Who Stumbled*, 1926) does not give too much information about the plot. But highlights how *porteño* cine-drama by mid-1920s had successfully established formulaic elements recognized in trade journals:

> "it is a pretty production full of sentimentalism and suburban emotion [emoción arrabalera]. Ferreyra knows how to treat these themes … The story is about a

[65] Film historians make Ferreyra stand out over other directors of his time because of his continuity editing techniques. Press material supports such a claim. Horacio Quiroga in a 1922 column likens Ferreyra's editing to American film style, for instance. In his review of *La muchacha del arrabal* (The Girl from the Suburbs, 1922), the film "reminds" Quiroga "in its ways of focusing and presentation of the themes, Yankee cinema […] North Americans have created dramatic cinema in all of its details, establishing the bar to which a good film must yearn". Quiroga also celebrates Ferreyra's use of the close-up and scarcity of intertitles (266-7). However, this does not mean that he was the only filmmaker to use elaborate editing techniques. Luis Facelli, in a rigorous study of Roberto Guidi's lost films, has come across shot count references that indicate Guidi's fondness for rapid cutting. I thank Mr. Facelli for facilitating a copy of his manuscript.

> working girl who stumbles through the quagmires until she finds true love, which only looks upon the spiritual and immaculate side of her soul. The plot, as is well known, is inspired by the popular verses of [Evaristo] Carriego. The public loved this new film and applauded at the end. It will be a success in *barrio* cinemas"[66]

The narratives invested in an appeal to sentiment, class-consciousness (i.e., one's place in social strata), and a sense of morality. The trope of the fall synthesized these three aspects and was key for structuring film plots. Further, the synopsis presupposes a strong reading proficiency on the part of the spectator. Brevity in plot description and reference to Carriego's poetry give away a sense of familiarity with genre conventions. Passages between media reinforced the genre's formulae and readability.[67] The tale of the *costurerita*—also referred to as *milonguita* or cabaret girl—"would recur in hundreds of songs and plays" (Karush 90). The proliferation of little seamstress and cabaret girl stories catered to a mass cultural demand on diverse media, which went hand in hand with the development of an acute understanding of the genre among spectators, readers, and *tango* listeners.

Porteño cine-dramas rendered female labor in the nascent commodity culture into a moral reprimand of female desire. A column announcing the premiere of *El organito de la tarde* (*Evening Little Barrel Organ*, 1925), also directed by Ferreyra, could well summarize *porteño* cine-drama's gendered concern. "It is a facet of life in the suburbs, with its ambitions and egotisms, its desires for intense life, its illusions of grandeur. Downtown city lights attract butterflies from the *conventillo* [tenement house] and burn their wings."[68] In these narratives, material necessities pushed young women, the butterflies, to seek opportunities downtown. As the synopsis suggests, films equated female labor in the public sphere to the labor of "public" women. The column continues: "virtue [honra] is exchanged for a suit and a *tango* in the cabaret. There is a moral to the story, like a calling: the return to the *conventillo* from which she left in search of luxury and pleasure."[69] Return to the

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[66] "Ha obtenido buena aceptación el film nacional 'La costurerita que dio aquel mal paso'" *La Película* 16 Sept. 1926: 21. Print. Carriego's homonym poem (1910) inspired many *tangos*, *sainete* theatre plays, and films. In "La costurerita" Carriego critiques female desire for upward mobility. The poem depicts a Manichean world in which innocence and goodness reside in the *barrio* in contrast to the morally dangerous world of downtown. Carriego's poetry and short stories incorporated *barrio* life into the literary field. His contribution was key in the *porteño* distribution of the sensible at the time.

[67] I use the term 'genre' not as a formal category based on thematic and stylistic criteria existing in the text itself. Rather, I borrow Martín-Barbero's conception of the term—"communicability strategies." For Martín-Barbero genre consists of "modes that organize and render recognizable the communicative competence between addresser and addressee" (2002, 67). In this regard, genre describes dynamic relationships between films and spectator. Spectatorial reading proficiency conditions the possibility for defining a genre. The former acknowledges and responds to the latter's expectations and demands.

[68] "El martes se estrenó 'El organito de la tarde', obra que distribuye Argentina Program" *La Película* 15 Oct. 1925: 29. Print.

[69] The fact that *porteño* cine-drama had concerns about women's changing patterns of work does not mean that these films were exhibited for a gendered audience. In one of the film's ads, a photo of *Los Andes* theatre in Boedo shows a full house—purportedly 1170

humble *conventillo* life, to the poverty-stricken home, functioned as a volitional act of repentance on the part of the fallen woman. Most narratives, however, focused on—and rebuked—female incursions into the public sphere.

Insistence on the dangers of female social mobility denounced gender and class conflict in terms of sexual exploitation and rape, but reproduced social stagnation in moral terms at the same time. As in the Colombian family melodramas, female peripeteias in the *porteño* cine-drama mainly take place outside of home and are key for female identity building. But if in the former public space serves as an arena to prove feminine moral fortitude—the oxymoronic "omnipotent weakness" analyzed above—in the latter women's position of agency is constantly at issue. Ferreyra's work best exemplifies workingwomen's struggle. *La chica de la calle Florida* focused on department-store saleswomen in the busy Florida Street—an important commercial artery that by the 1900s had become "the site for private/public ostentation of the elite" (Bergero 49). In the film, Alcira (Lidia Liss) has a secret relationship with the department-store owner's son, Jorge (Jorge Lafuente). This candid law student is unaware of the immoral influence and abuse that Amancio Lamberti (César Robles), the store manager, exerts over young saleswomen—he demands sexual favors in exchange of a secure job. Female exploitation is not depicted as a clear-cut gendered practice, however. Without female cooperation, Lamberti would not be able to harass his female employees. Juana (Elene Guido), the manager's typist, is very much aware of what goes on inside the management office. Her departures from the office quickly becomes a *leitmotiv* to indicate when abuse takes place in the film. Alcira is the only woman who does not give in to Lamberti's advances. Her moral tenacity comes with a price; she loses her job while her boyfriend loses his place in society, after Lamberti reveals their secret relationship. As the plot unfolds, losing everything allows for both characters to exhibit their moral superiority in the throes of manual labor.

Sexual harassment in this film does not originate in rural practices brought to the urban milieu, as in the Colombian film *Alma provinciana* (in which figures of authority exert extra-economic pressure over the female workforce). Instead, the relation between female desires for upward mobility, sexual favors, and sexual abuse springs from the circulation of bodies and goods—or bodies as goods—in urban space. *La chica* presents Florida Street as a spectacularly mobile, amalgamating space. An expository title defines it as a "street of luxury, of squandering, and of misery. [A] swarm … where everything is confused and everything is known."[70] In Florida Street all social classes come together, problematically. Shimmering shop windows and elegant stores constitute a world suffused with superficial beauty. And yet, as passersby know too well, in this gleaming world immorality tarnishes female bodies. "You can recognize Florida Street girls" because "a scar gives them away," an expository title reads. Stressing the idea of beauty at surface level, the title describes them in the stores as "light-hearted little birds in those great golden cages in which, surrounded by silks, glitters, and colors, their blue illusions tend to die—illusions dreamt the night

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persons—comprised of almost as many women as men. "El organito de la tarde: el éxito de los éxitos" (*Excelsior* 21 Oct. 1925: 16-7. Print.)

[70] I use the verb 'to confuse' in order to retain the semantic ambiguity of the verb *confundir*. In Spanish, *confundir* denotes both confusion and the fusion of diverse elements. See *Diccionario de la Real Academica Española*.

before in the little old house of the sad *barrio.*"[71] In Florida Street, department stores invested in visibility "emulat[ing] the interiors of the palaces of the elite" (Bergero 50). But social practices proper to Florida Street brokered with what cannot be seen—the illusions of the poor, which in the film only become metaphorically visible as scars on body tissue. Marks of previous wounds, and the infliction of wounds, establish a polarized social order between haves and have-nots. These films do not present bodily use and abuse in moving images, but expository titles and intertitles hint at these practices. In *porteño* cine-drama the female body serves two functions: it is the locus of pathos and sexual currency. Conversely, female leads in Colombian films remain immaculate—and *immaculable*—throughout. Their bodies do not incarnate the crises brought about by change. On the contrary, they tendentiously embody a felicitous synthesis between material progress and sociocultural conservatism. These contrasting cases show how the female body serves different purposes when visualized within the melodramatic regime.

The modern Babel of Buenos Aires, in which there is no outside of urban space, leaves no place for progress in *porteño* cine-drama. If there is any, progress appears in negative terms. Upward mobility only occurs through moral degradation. Mary Ann Doane in her book on the 1940s "woman's film" states that in cinema "female identity is constructed in relation to object-hood rather than subject-hood" (285). In Colombian family melodramas and Argentine *porteño* cine-dramas a careful balance between female subject-hood and object-hood is key for narrative development. Colombian family dramas leaned towards female subject-hood while *porteño* cine-dramas did the opposite (although the "culture of Antioquia feminism" quoted above paradoxically reproduced patriarchal mores and conservatism). In both cases, degrees in female agency shaped the contours of collectivities in moral terms. Colombian films defended a progressive yet conservative social order. In their turn, *porteño* cine-dramas somberly portrayed the Buenos Aires everyday. These urban films thwarted any principled attempt of vertical social mobility. Instead, they lingered over the human detritus of progress.

Perdón, viejita (Forgive Me, Dear Mother 1927), was Ferreyra's last silent film. "A sentimental dramatic poem that reflects [refleja] the *porteño* soul" according to a review, *Perdón, viejita* focuses on themes of detritus and mud as epiphenomena of big-city life.[72]

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[71] *Porteño* cine-drama elided visual representation of the sexual trespass or abuse. Rather, narratives present progressive female abasement and decline. In this regard, *porteño* cine-drama tropes articulated narratives similar to the American fallen woman cycle of the 1930s, in which female degradation takes the form of spatial displacement and status decline. See Lea Jacobs' "Censorship and the Fallen Woman Cycle" in Christine Gledhill's seminal anthology *Home is Where the Heart Is*. London: BFI, 1987. Print.

[72] "Se pasó en privado 'Perdón, viejita'" *La Película* 18 Ago. 1927: 21. Print. Mirror and mud metaphors abound in *porteño* cine-drama ads and film critiques. This particular profusion establishes another parallel with the distribution of the sensible proper to the aesthetic regime of the arts. Although Rancière in *The Politics of Aesthetics* draws his examples mainly from Flaubert's *Mme Bovary*, another French realist likened realism's aesthetic revolution to mirrors and mud. Stendhal famously compared the novel with a trailing mirror in *Le rouge et le noir*: "Un roman est un miroir qui se promène sur une grande route. Tantôt il reflète à vos yeux l'azur des cieux, tantôt la fange des bourbiers de la route". Mirrors and mud reveal two key aspects in the aesthetic regime of the arts—its

Surviving footage opens with high-angle extreme long shots of factories and masses of people walking towards them—the "stunning aspect of human hive" of Buenos Aires, an expository title reads. The plot begins when Carlos (Ermete Meliante), a petty thief "sunk in the mud of the stream of life," and Nora (María Turgenova), "another residue, one of those many women without a name or guidance," sit together idling on a park bench. Looking at the passersby, Nora sees herself and her future boyfriend on the side of those "who have stopped being someone to become residues." They both yearn to go back to the humble, *conventillo* family life. Sharing hopes and goals, Carlos takes Nora into his family's home. United as a stable couple, symbol of (re)productive potential, they find modest jobs that provide actuality-type shots of early industrialization. A vicissitude of fortune, however, severs Carlos and Nora's impecunious but noble lifestyles, when Carlos' younger sister meets a *compadrito*. Nora, with the *milonguita* savvy she had gained in her dubious past, recognizes the man's questionable intensions and confronts him. In return, the ruffian frames the entire family in a robbery. When the police raid the humble home, the unquestionably-loving-mother (Floricel Vidal) can barely withstand the charges on Carlos and Nora. A series of revelations—his son had recourse to stealing, his fiancée had frequented downtown cabarets—breaks the family apart, along with the mother's heart. Rejected by Carlos' mother, Nora goes back to her *milonguita* ways.

Through editing, the film remarkably portrays Nora's spatial and moral displacement. Close-ups on her high heels as she steps into the *barrio* mud, along with a dissolve to the entrance of a cabaret, visualize the girl who stumbles theme—editing performs the *mal paso*, the moral downfall transforming the little seamstress into the cabaret girl (Figure 15). The unpredictable mobility proper to urban space supports the theme. A bad choice or forceful imposition, epitomized in the image of the "bad step" turns the innocent girl into a *milonguita*—also called in tango lyrics the tarnished *flor de fango* [mud flower].

Figure 15. Close-up and dissolve on Nora's high heels visualize the girl-who-stumbles theme *Perdón, viejita* (José A. Ferreyra, 1927)

Nora's fall epitomizes *porteño* cine-drama's degree of social critique. P*orteño* cine-dramas downplay the social causes leading young women to prostitution or sexual reciprocity in favor of melodramas of individual vice and virtue. After the police finally catch the ruffian who framed the family, Carlos goes to the cabaret hoping to "rescue" Nora.

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presentational, rather than representational, thrust and its breakdown of high/low systems of representation.

There he has to face *El Gavilán*, "Nora's former lord and master," expository titles explain. Without hesitation, *El Gavilán* points his gun towards Carlos. Close-up on his gun-wielding hand cuts to Nora in a convalescent bed.[73] Editing suggests she took the bullet instead. The lovers—having taken refuge in the *conventillo* room of Preludio, a dark-hatted *barrio* troubadour and the film's comic relief—experience again the happiness of family union. Moments later, Carlos' mother and sister enter the tenement; Preludio had secretly arranged a meeting that, after her sacrifice, bestows upon Nora her lost worthiness. After proving her virtue in the face of danger, both women accept Nora back into the household. Social problems are never discussed; Nora's individual rescue serves as a palliative for larger, social concerns. To bring closure to the scene, Preludio says while cooking a humble meal: "I propose the following… when we all live in a little white house, away from the city […] I commit myself to be the cook and present to you what I cannot offer today: a delicious meal." Cut to rural vistas. And a following cut to a rural interior presents the characters on a table while Preludio, with a gleaming white hat and attire, serves a copious meal (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Rural vistas and copious family meal in rural setting
***Perdón, viejita* (José A. Ferreyra, 1927)**

Preludio's words introduce one final melodramatic convention, which summarizes the film's grim portrayal of city life. Through editing, the film constructs a "space of innocence" (Brooks 29, Williams 28) in which the family would be happily united in the *campo*—if there was such a place. Peter Brooks notes that classic stage melodrama usually begins in a space of innocence by offering a moment in which virtue "[takes] pleasure in itself" (Brooks 69). A threat to virtue motivates peripeteias and elicits the process of virtue's fight for recognition (29). Likewise, "one of the key ways of constructing moral power," according to Linda Williams, "is the icon of the good home" (7). The dreamt familial union in the rural home figures this innocence. Intertitles in *Perdón* reveal how nostalgia

[73] Punctuating the fight, an intertitle buttresses dramatic tension: "And the groans of a melancholic *bandoneon* [concertina] wept in a *tango* the pain of those souls tortured by destiny." It is very likely that intertitles such as this one cued theatre orchestras to interpret a film's particular *tango*. Adding *melos* to the drama, musical cues enhanced emotional interactions in the *porteño* cine-drama.

for the return to a place once possessed could be the only way to restore the original familial innocence of *conventillo* life. However, the predicament at the heart of *porteño* cine-drama consists in the impossibility of regaining such a space. The diegetic perimeter of the *porteño* cine-drama culminates in the fringes of urban space. In this melodramatic genre, the bucolic *campo* has never been possessed and can never be regained. Hence the genre's terribly fatalistic view of present times. Even though *barrio* shots iteratively present children at play, their happiness is a meager one. In every shot playing ring-around-the-rosy, their games foreshadow the circulation of bodies as goods in adulthood. In the largely corrupt social order, dreams from rags to riches result in theft and prostitution, in vagrancy and vice.

Porteño cine-dramas, like *campero* films and Colombian family melodramas, incorporated in their narratives circulation and change. These films were suffused with the crossings between material progress, the (re)production of tradition and its practices, and the flow of capital—the circulation of commodities and of bodies as goods. A presentational imperative across these films portrayed modern transformative processes under the guise of melodramas centered on heterosexual love or heterosexual attraction. Stories of pathos and thrills pictured melodramatic modernities as the tense coexistence of new ways with tradition and with the past. But in order to present these transformations, the ways of progress collided—and coexisted—with rivalry, villainy, sexual exploitation, vicissitudes of fortune, and the like. No list of topoi could exhaust the ways in which melodrama responded to, and motivated, the shifting visual regimes proper to Latin American modernities. Nevertheless, the ways in which the melodramatic regime indexed—that is, recorded and pointed to—new ways of being, new ways of sociability, and material change; reveals how melodrama shaped sites of intelligibility to record processes of modernization and recast different senses of community, while reshuffling the hierarchies of representation.

The dramas of what was visible and what was hidden yielded transformations in forms of perception, affection, and interpretation. It comes as no surprise that trade journals and film magazines have recourse to mirror metaphors to describe *porteño* cine-drama.[74] Even the harshest critics—who lampooned its clichés and typologies—acknowledged *porteño* cine-drama's proximity to reality, considering it a reflection of reality. Such an observation could be carried over to the other film genres I discuss in this chapter. The mirror metaphor eloquently describes melodrama and its mass appeal. Muddy mirrors, with their tarnished sheen, epitomize the melodramatic regime's presentational, rather than representational, thrust. They also epitomize its breakdown of high/low systems of representation. Melodrama reflected—and reflected upon—transformative processes and their effects in everyday life. Trade journals and film magazines also acknowledged melodrama's specular quality through affect. Appealing to vicarious pathos, many ads promised sympathetic affinity between characters and the public because the latter could see itself, or part of itself, in the former.

As key elements of the melodramatic regime, narrative films catered to diverse audiences across the social spectrum. Film trade journal articles and fan magazine columns (quoted above) suggest that these audiences developed an elaborate reading proficiency regarding film style and subject matter. Such elaborate understanding, supported by film

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[74] For instance, "Anoche a las dos" *La Película* 27 Oct. 1927: 20. Print. See also footnote 72.

culture diffused through periodicals, further sheds light on melodrama's role regarding the distribution of the sensible via images in movement. In moving images, and in the ways these circulated in everyday life, the melodramatic regime presented new ways of being and new social practices, sprung from rapid changes. These transformations gained visual saliency in films attempting to gain a purchase on representation. Through different means, *campero* films, Colombian family melodramas, and *porteño* cine-dramas strived to weed out the social order of social antagonists (emergent or established). The depuration, be it ideological or hinting at dissent, pitted against each other the imperatives of progress and the values of tradition.

CONCLUSION

With an archival perspective, this dissertation examined how melodrama apportions and shapes sites of intelligibility for the processes of modernization in the first decades of the twentieth century in Argentina and Colombia. Looking at literature, illustrated periodicals, and surviving film footage, this dissertation traced melodrama's crucial role in registering and making sense of radical changes during the period—including massive immigration, the import of new technologies, and the reshuffling of social orders. Besides these dominant shifts in subject matter, this dissertation also analyzed the ways in which, through melodrama, diverse social actors reshuffled unstable dynamics of representation in the service of individual or group agendas in shaping the contours of collectivities. Shifts in what could be narrated and visualized, a more inclusive albeit contested access to representation, as well as the unprecedented circulation of melodramatic narratives and imagery, revealed the reach of melodramatic storytelling well beyond the level of narrative. Consequently, melodrama served as a platform for contested distributions of the sensible. In novels, periodicals, and moving images, I traced how melodrama recast the ways of storytelling and determined the latter's reach in representing and making legible the present for diverse communities. Given its operative qualities, melodrama can be best defined as a visual regime—or what I term the *melodramatic regime*.

Considering melodrama—a narrative and heuristic form—in terms of a visual regime permits us to better grasp this theoretically elusive notion. The melodramatic regime sheds light on how melodrama was *shaped* by social, cultural, economic, and political factors while at the same time foregrounds melodrama's function *in shaping* those very factors. Throughout this study, I have highlighted three qualities of the melodramatic regime, stressing their socio-historical specificity while being aware that more could be considered. During the teens and twenties in Argentina and Colombia, the melodramatic regime was premised on recasting hierarchies of representation, which were rendered in narratives of victimization and the classed and raced depuration of narrative social orders. Through these narratives and the (in)visibilities they procured, the melodramatic regime served a heuristic function made available to readers and spectators through diverse media. Thus, the melodramatic regime procured tools to read and understand changes in people's everyday lives. The narratives themselves exhorted readers and spectators to transgress the porous divide between melodrama and "real life." Regardless of the medium, the melodramatic regime blurred the boundaries between fact and fiction by making claims for the ontological veracity of its stories. To further breach this weak ontological line, melodramatic narratives in illustrated periodicals and film capitalized on the "existential bond" (Doane 92) photochemical images establish with their objects. Finally, the melodramatic regime invested in multiple forms of serialization—from the *feuilleton* narrative published in installments to the self-contained weekly novel, to the cross-media iteration and repurposing of a single narrative à la *María* or *Amalia*. With these examples, I have tried to show how seriality affected melodramatic narratives at the levels of production and reception. It determined narrative strategies to keep readerly and spectatorial attention through many installments, while at the same time suffusing everyday life with regular doses of melodrama in the service of individual or group agendas.

This dissertation stressed interconnections between melodramatic tropes and the ways in which diverse social actors relied on melodrama to represent and understand multiple processes of modernization. At the narrative level, however, I focused on certain dominant themes throughout the period that are worth highlighting. These include, as mentioned above, victimization, morally dubious worlds in need of classed and raced depuration; related to these, the family as the sole reference point in the face of ethical ambivalence; the threat of familial disaggregation; the extinction of repositories of tradition; the inexorable threats young women who yearn for economic independence face in urban environments; and the correlative moral downfall these women endure. A cross-reading of these tropes reveals how during the period the melodramatic regime consisted of (competing) recastings of social orders. Following the logic of the excluded middle, these narratives determined *who* has a *place* in narrative and *how*. This particular distribution of the sensible points to the tense relations between politics and aesthetics played out within the melodramatic regime. Narratives mirrored changes in the communities studied, but the positions its authors occupied within those communities determined what elements these narratives visualized or obfuscated via the aforementioned tropes. In the malleability of these tropes lies one of the strongest ties between the melodramatic regime and the different experiences of modernity I examined—the melodramatic regime supported an energetic struggle for representation.

This dissertation tied the melodramatic regime to a notion as complex as melodrama: modernity. Drawing on a "multiple modernities" approach, I tried to depart from the "metanarrative of the deficient" Nicola Miller identifies throughout Latin American scholarship on Latin American modernity (4). By separating modernization—a cluster of social, economic, political, and technological phenomena—from modernity—an experience of the present in tense relation with the fleeting past—I questioned the given assumption that Latin American modernity consists of an inadequate or unachieved model of modernity occurring elsewhere (the US and Europe). On the contrary, by examining similar and at times opposite case studies in both Argentina and Colombia, I have shown how different renderings of modernization, articulated through melodramatic narratives, resulted in different experiences of modernity.

Further, the melodramatic regime offered novel perspectives on scholarly debates surrounding the relations between early cinema and the sensory environment of urban modernity. I am referring to scholarship according to which changes in the modern urban environment somehow changed the "mode of [human] perception" (Benjamin 222) and ultimately impacted film style—strongly influenced by Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin's remarks on modernity and the effects of mechanical reproduction.[1] Most of these approaches also defend medium-specific readings premised on the technological distinctiveness of photochemical moving images. Instead of considering that human perception can somehow change as a result of relatively novel human environments—the metropolis—and reflect such changes in cultural products; and instead of considering that technological conditions differentiate those very products from previous cultural products; the melodramatic regime proposes that distributions of the sensible antedate technical

[1] In American film studies, this (at some times heated) debate has been labeled "the modernity thesis." Its main contributors include David Bordwell, Giuliana Bruno, Tom Gunning, Miriam Hansen, Charlie Keil, and Ben Singer.

revolutions. In the cases at hand, I analyzed how the melodramatic regime found in the then novel medium of film outlets—as well as forms of circulation and use—for relations between politics and aesthetics anteceding the emergence of moving images, i.e. the multiple narrative tropes and forms such as serialization I examined.

This perspective—centered on subject matter and use rather than media specificity and technical advancement—sheds light on importantly persistent melodramatic narratives and tropes in Latin America. In this dissertation I have focused on *Amalia* (1951-1955) and *María* (1867) to show how complex forms of iteration amounted to what still today are considered "foundational fictions" of Latin American nations. Forms that particularly around the centennial celebrations contributed powerfully to community building across media. Moreover, these foundational melodramas, which became Latin American guiding fictions, imposed through iteration certain narrative tropes for generations to come—including classed and raced tropes such as the loss of the fatherly home, the landed gentry *hacienda*. Doubtless, other multi-media narratives within the melodramatic regime served purposes other than imposing top-down senses of community. Eduardo Gutiérrez' *Juan Moreira* (1879-1880), a *feuilleton* reproduced in media as diverse as the *criollo* circus, theatre, early film and sound film,[2] fostered during the teens and twenties defiant forms of resistance—the dreaded *moreirismo*—at grass-roots levels, as I briefly touched on in chapter three.

Important examples such as *Juan Moreira*'s inevitably lead to the questions and connections that remain unaddressed in this dissertation. When dealing with the relations between melodrama and modernity in Latin America, the approach premised on the melodramatic regime is open to criticism. Objections may be raised, for instance, on the arbitrary choice of media under scrutiny. Without a doubt, as Matthew Karush suggests, *tango* music and the one-act theatre play of *sainete*, grew together "symbiotic[ally,]" sharing with Argentine early cinema important narrative tropes (88). Consequently, and as I briefly suggested, they played an equally important role within the melodramatic regime. Further study of these forms in relation to print and film melodrama is in order. Likewise, it might be objected that this study proposes the melodramatic regime as a distinctive Latin American phenomenon. Nothing could be farther from my intentions. For the purposes of containing an otherwise inapprehensible object of study, I have limited my research to melodramatic narratives produced in Argentina and Colombia. But within these very countries the melodramatic regime also encompassed the global circulation of melodramatic narratives in literature, periodicals, and film, a phenomenon that invites further scrutiny.[3] Moreover, the concept of the melodramatic regime can also shed light on the historically specific manifestations of melodrama and its uses at different historical junctures in non-Latin American communities.

Likewise, the melodramatic regime promises interesting approaches for the study of contemporary serialized forms of melodramatic storytelling on a global scale. These go

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[2] *Juan Moreira* was adapted to film by Nelo Cosimi in 1936, by Luis Moglia Barth in 1948, and most famously by Leonardo Favio in 1973.

[3] A starting point consists of my article, currently under review, "Films on Paper: Early Colombian Cinema Periodicals, 1916-1920," which explores the global circulation of early moving images and the intersection of Colombian and Italian nationalisms and film cultures in local exhibition practices.

beyond the limits of this dissertation, but offer ripe terrain for the melodramatic regime when understood as a conceptual trajectory. Latin America has had a long tradition of high-quality serialized television—the culturally pivotal *telenovelas*—that has inspired influential scholarly studies since the 1980s. In a similar vein, the recent rise of high quality television series and serials in the US has motivated scholarly interest in many types of serialized forms, including network television, proliferating sequels and remakes in mainstream cinema, as well as growing independent forms of serialization made globally accessible through the web, such as the internet-based miniseries at www.seriesdeinternet.com. Moreover, television networks have developed global production and distribution circuits for their serials that further complicate the melodramatic regime. *Telenovelas* such as *La reina del sur* (*The Queen of the South*, 2011), an American production mainly shot in Bogota's RTI studios with a Mexican cast, visualized global drug trafficking rings while shooting the illegal-immigrant-to-drug-queen story of Teresa Mendoza (Kate del Castillo) in multiple locations including Colombia, Mexico, the US, Spain, and Morocco.[4]

Complex production and distribution networks also foster novel forms of serialized iteration. A striking example, produced on the other side of the Atlantic, consists of *Teşhir-I Ihtişam*, which could be translated from Ottoman as *Exhibit of Grandeur*.[5] A "spin off" of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (*The Magnificent Century*, 2011-2014), the internationally acclaimed Turkish serial that gave birth to the Ottoman Empire historical genre, *Exhibit of Grandeur* recreates both the fictional and historical worlds of sixteenth century Constantinople. Reusing sets and props from the original serial, the exhibit embarks the visitor in the journey of the female lead Hürrem Sultan (Meryem Uzerli), from slave girl to the most powerful woman in the Ottoman Empire. The exhibit grants access to the lusciously decorated quarters of the Ottoman palace, engulfing the visitor in a feast for the senses—the visual pomp of imperial décor, clothing, and jewelry; exquisite scents; and the rich soundscape of the serial. The fully immersive experience reaches its climax with "hyperrealistic silicone statues of the most beloved characters of the serial," which, with their ominous liveliness, effectively exhort the visitor to "live this experience," as the exhibit's opening plaque urges.[6] Evidently aiming for an experience "larger than life," the *Exhibit of Grandeur* reflects, on the contrary, the powerful hold this show has in the everyday life of contemporary Turkey, a country currently aiming to retrieve its pre-Republican past while becoming a serial entertainment powerhouse in the Middle East and beyond.

The reach of Turkish serials brings us back to Latin America, where local channels have begun purchasing Turkish *telenovelas* and broadcasting them to a responsive audience. Kanal D's *Binbir Gece* (*One Thousand and One Nights*, 2006-2009) was initially acquired and dubbed into Spanish by Mega channel in Chile. The story of Scheherazade (Bergüzar Korel), a talented young architect who is forced to sleep with a powerful constructor in order to afford a bone-marrow transplant for her cancer-stricken child, premiered in Chile on March 2014, and then quickly spread to other countries such as Colombia (Canal Caracol, September 2014) and Argentina (Canal 13, 2015). Channels in

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[4] "Lo más reciente de la reina del sur." *Telemundo Novelas*. n.d. Web. 14 July. 2015.
[5] My gratitude to Muna Güvenç for her Ottoman and Turkish translations to English.
[6] "Exhibit of Grandeur." Uniq Müze. 2015. Plaque.

Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Mexico, and Puerto Rico have also acquired the rights for this Turkish serial.[7]

Global serials such as *La reina del sur* and *Las mil y una noches* open new and exciting avenues of inquiry for better understanding the reach of the melodramatic regime. They also formulate intriguing questions on the ways in which global network television distributes and partitions the twenty first century sensible order via serialized melodrama. This is not to say that the contemporary melodramatic regime only operates at the level of corporate network television. Independent web-based series, as the ones mentioned above, as well as an emergent trend of indie directors venturing into the realm of serialized television,[8] are creating productions that do not necessarily adhere to ratings and vertically integrated marketing strategies, consequently enriching—and perhaps inaugurating—a new fold in the melodramatic regime. Questions that may have remained unanswered in this dissertation thus invite to expand academic inquiry into other media—new and old—which reflect shifts in a protean yet historically determined visual regime. I am quite aware that a comparative approach between the periodicals and film cultures of two countries is not enough to understand the workings of the melodramatic regime in Latin America during the teens and twenties. This dissertation is a starting point to trace the dominant social and cultural questions inhabiting the melodramatic regime; the vicarious pathos and illusions of its readers, spectators, and authors; and above all, its empowering dreams against the tides of change.

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[7] "Cómo Turquía está cambiando el mercado de las teleseries de A. Latina." *BBC Mundo*. 3 Sept. 2014. Web. 14 July. 2015.

[8] Barnes, Brooks. "Small Screen Is Big Player at Sundance: Television Becomes a Force at Sundance Film Festival." *The New York Times*. 22 Jan. 2015. Web. 23 Jan. 2015.

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