

INTRODUCTION

■ **“I WILL CONFESS, NOT WITHOUT BLUSHING,** that I enjoy cinema more than theater,” stated one of the writers of the Chilean cinema magazine *El Film* in early 1919. The reason the writer gives for this preference was that cinema “knew no boundaries,” and so “as soon as the lights of the auditorium go out, and the machine begins to murmur its spell, the world of reality and the world of dreams become entangled in our sight and in our mind.” Furthermore, cinema provided a break from the “material and moral agitation of this terrible epilepsy that is called modern life.”¹

This quote gives an idea of some of the reasons that motivated audiences to attend the cinematographic spaces that began to appear in Santiago and Buenos Aires in the early 1900s. It also introduces the main themes of this book, as it brings forward the paradox of cinema being an escape from modern life, while being a modern technology itself. To understand this tension, this book investigates how cinema buildings evolved from a shared entertainment space to a space built particularly for projecting movies, the role that technology played in the experience of going to the movies, and what attracted people to the cinema and what people experienced once they were sitting down. In other words, how did moviegoing become a part of people’s everyday lives?

With these questions in mind, this book examines the practice of going to the movies in Santiago and Buenos Aires as a way of understanding how people experienced modernity in everyday life. By attending the cinema, moviegoers were exposed to both the content and form of what was thought to be modern.² Moreover,

going to the cinema was also an activity that became part of weekly (or even day-to-day) routines. One of the main characteristics that people writing in cinema magazines attributed to cinema was cosmopolitanism, because it was an apparatus that allowed viewers to see other realities of the world (both cultural and geographic). Cinema's cosmopolitan aspect was its universality: the experience of going to the movies was supposed to be the same for all spectators around the world. This proclaimed universality was very modern in itself, since moviegoing was an entertainment meant for everyone regardless of class, gender, or politics.

This book highlights the spaces of dialogue that cinema and the practice of cinema-going opened up in a comparative and transnational context and within the cities of Santiago (Chile) and Buenos Aires (Argentina). Dominant histories have presented Buenos Aires as an exceptional case within the region when focusing on modernity discourses and the cinema. The Argentine capital's port was one of the most important in Latin America, which impacted the circulation of goods and people, as well as ideas. This transformed Buenos Aires into a referent of a city that was modern and an example to follow within Latin America, a sort of "provincial modernity" or what Beatriz Sarlo calls "peripheral modernity."³ Santiago, on the other hand, was more rural, smaller, and set next to the Andes, which made it seem like a city that was less in contact with the world. Santiago was also perceived as more conservative than Buenos Aires. In comparing these two seemingly incomparable capitals, it is not their obvious differences, but rather their surprising number of similarities that add complexity to how scholars understand these two cities and the concept of modernity in Latin America. This comparison also provides insights on the social experiences that were intertwined with how to be modern in the beginning of the twentieth century, which comprised actions such as going to the movies.

Chile and Argentina's political organization established them as the spaces where national debates took place and where decisions were taken for the nation as a whole. Through the study of these two capitals, this book offers an understanding of national processes and the way they worked in dialogue with the other countries in the region as well as with each other. The comparison of these two cities allows me to pinpoint ideas about cinema that went beyond the capital city space and local national realities, such as the universal character of cinema. At the same time, I suggest that this universality played a different role in Santiago and Buenos Aires. *Modernity at the Movies* builds from these two case studies in order to shed light on tendencies at large and historical processes at work in the development of mass culture and consumer society. By using a comparative approach, this book helps to illuminate the experiences of the audiences in both cities, understanding how cinema became a part of everyday life of *santiaguinos* and *porteños*—the people of Santiago and Buenos Aires respectively—in a modern context.

Each city appropriated cinema as entertainment differently, which in turn had an impact on ideas of what it meant to be modern. A transnational character arises

from the mutual exchange that the two capitals had through the press and specialized media. In this sense, many articles and photographic spreads in magazines, such as *Zig-Zag* or *Pacífico Magazine*, documented Buenos Aires's modernization and the beauty of its streets and neighborhoods. On the other hand, specialized magazines often reported news and decisions from the porteño cinema industry. However, Buenos Aires magazines also reported on Santiago's industry and the city, showing that there were exchanges of ideas not only between the santiaguino and porteño cinema industries, but also between the cities.

The debates that emerged from everyday cinema-going allows further understanding of audiences and practices surrounding that activity, as well as the manipulation of users who consumed culture and reappropriated it.⁴ Consumers were not passive actors, but producers of meaning that could be traced through the analysis of their discursive practices. These were reproduced through the different specialized magazines, particularly those dedicated to cinema, that began to appear from the 1910s onward. Cinema magazines in Santiago and Buenos Aires regularly engaged with major topics of debate within society such as the modernization of the city, morals, behaviors, and language. These publications played an important role in helping to bring the experience of cinema closer to the everyday life of the cinematographic audiences. These periodicals allowed their readers to experience films, as well as the life of movie stars, beyond the cinema auditoriums. This is the experience *Modernity at the Movies* wants to reveal: how moviegoing became an everyday activity in two capital cities of Latin America, which uncovers how ideas around leisure spaces, as well as practices inside those spaces, were changing. This book, thus, focuses on cinema's reception, shifting the focus from the production of films to the experience of going to the cinema. By shedding light on the audience instead of the films, I uncover how cinema-going—an activity that was considered modern—was incorporated into the everyday life of santiaguinos and porteños. Through a comparative method, this book explores how each city appropriated cinema in its own way, illuminating how each public uniquely experienced a supposedly universal modern medium. The comparison also helps readers to understand how cinema went from being considered a technical curiosity (or a modern wonder) to an art of its own right in the first half of the twentieth century.

I consider modernity a twofold process in which the idea and the experience of it come together through specific historical processes of adaptation, not simply imitation. In other words, in a European or US context, modernity was not understood or experienced in the same way as it was in Latin America. In these processes of appropriation, reinvention, and dialogue, mass culture helped to introduce and develop a particular experience of modernity through “modern wonders” such as cinema and topical specialized magazines.

Most of the existing literature on the history of cinema in Argentina and Chile tends to focus on the films themselves (what will be referred to as production) or

on the development of the industry, leaving the audiences aside.⁵ The few authors who have dealt with cinema reception chose wider approaches, situating cinema within a broader culture of entertainment that began to change in the 1910s and 1920s,⁶ or studied the discourses regarding cinema from an aesthetic and literary perspective.⁷ Recently, scholars have begun to focus on the intersection between cinema and national narratives, as well as the development of particular styles, like melodrama and what Nilo Couret has called “mock classicism.”⁸ Finally, some studies have explored the effects of cinema in Chilean society, focusing on the social history of cinema’s introduction.⁹ Other works have engaged with cinema’s transnational character, mainly focusing on Argentine or Chilean relations with the United States.¹⁰ When it comes to reception and audience studies, the most extensive and comprehensive studies have been with the United States as a geographical focus, and Mexico for the case of Latin America.¹¹ Although some of these studies incorporate the concept of modernity, they do so from the perspective of cinema as part of a wider process of modernization instead of thinking about it as a modern technology in itself.

Modernity at the Movies links the concepts of technology and modernity to the study of cinema-going in the Latin American context by looking at how cinema magazines were describing and informing the practice of going to the movies and, in their discourse, linking it to ideas of how to be modern and what that meant. In his work, Bernhard Rieger has approached the problem of technology from a social standpoint, examining how society related to it on a daily basis.¹² By integrating the concept of modernity into his analysis, Rieger is able to understand how society experienced technological innovation, especially when thinking about the different meanings attached to modern technologies. In this sense, social practices become relevant. Through a focus on an activity that everyone in society regardless of income, race, and gender enjoyed, *Modernity at the Movies* sets out to look at how *lo moderno*—what is modern—was experienced by a wide range of people, and to consider its effects on everyday life and sociability.¹³ Cinema, then, presents a combination of the universal aspiration and the particular adaptation that each city made of the experience of going to the movies. This is why cinema presents a unique tool for understanding experiences of modernity, and cinema magazines are a key source to explore cinema-going.

APPROACHING THE CONCEPT OF MODERNITY IN THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT

One of the very first elements to consider when thinking about modernity is the problem of awareness, to be conscious of time and the particularities of one’s own time.¹⁴ In this sense, it is the subjective experience of being conscious of time, history, and the role people can play in modernity through this awareness that becomes relevant. Building on the idea of consciousness, Reinhart Koselleck states

that the concept of modernity emerged as a notion that embodied the *new*, or a *shift* in experience.¹⁵ By considering a *shift* through the changes that modernity brings, Koselleck investigates the meanings of the experiences of change over time, changes that can be distressing for society. This consciousness of the past entails a feeling of uncertainty, a feeling that Marshall Berman has explored.¹⁶ The uncertainty comes from the paradox of modernity, which lies between exhilaration and fear, a tension that the quotation at the beginning of this introduction brings to light. For Berman, modernity could only be understood as a subjective experience, and in this sense, there are different ways to be modern: the cinema world, voiced by the cinema press, will have a different version of what that entails than the government.

Scholars have too often answered questions about modernity in such general ways that it seems that the concept can encompass everything, therefore diminishing the value an exploration of modernity can add to a study. Nicola Miller and Stephen Hart have focused on the question of *when* Latin America became modern. Taking into consideration the importance of time, there are two terms that need clarification, to avoid a frequent confusion with the idea of modernity. First, modernism, which refers to a range of cultural movements that arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and included several versions of *modernismo* in Latin America. Most scholars who have focused on the study of modernismo have done so from the perspective of literary and cultural studies.¹⁷ Modernization, on the other hand, is a term that mainly US-based social science introduced in the 1950s to refer to processes such as industrialization or urbanization, which can, to an extent, be assessed quantitatively.¹⁸ This term has been particularly unhelpful for the region, as Latin America has often been perceived as behind or inadequate compared to a US style of modernization. Modernity is a contested concept; however, in this book, it references the idea of *becoming modern*, meaning the process of achieving or reaching modernity more than modernity as a fixed state, an idea that was prevalent in sources such as specialized cinema magazines. This presence makes it relevant for the historian to ask what modernity signified.

Modernity responds to the particular realities of particular regions, as Latin Americans (and porteños and santiaguinos in particular) created and imagined it in various ways. The result is, as Nicola Miller points out, an aspiration that always seems to be reachable but that is never fully acquired, appearing to be somewhere else in time and space.¹⁹ For Miller, the interest of modernity lies in the social imaginary, in how Latin American societies understand, imagine, and legitimize modernity as a valid model, instead of whether they get to accomplish modernity at all. This dialogue between the old and the new world resulted in a particular alternative modern imaginary that tried to fulfill a promise of political, economic, and cultural modernity through the construction of a collective and individual identity, that is, as a region and as different countries. In this particular construction, tradition played an important role, and occupied a central place in the process of building modernity.

In this sense, I echo Juan Sebastián Ospina León when he says that “modernity is a felt experience, a reaction to rapid change situated on a critical threshold between present and past.”²⁰ Hence, feelings and the subjectiveness of how modernity was lived allowed for different ways in which it could be experienced.

The concept of multiple modernities, developed by S. N. Eisenstadt, is particularly helpful to this book.²¹ The idea of multiplicity presented in this concept takes a step away from more global modernization theories, as well as from the idea that industrial societies will eventually converge. The notion of multiple modernities suggests that there is a consecutive construction and reconstruction of a multitude of cultural initiatives. Consequently, talking about modernity does not refer only to a European process because it is not the only version of it: throughout Latin America, there are diverse modernities that go beyond being fragments or versions of the European modernity to constitute processes on their own. The latter becomes even more significant when considering that, following Miller, Latin America has been able to resist the imposition of models of modernity, as well as to “generate affirmative visions of modernity from within.”²²

Furthermore, at the very center of the idea of modernity is a distinctively geographical perspective that confers a particular spatial language that is important when studying Latin American experiences. By focusing the question of *where* Latin America was modern, scholars such as Sarah Radcliffe have been able to reorient the question of modernity to also consider space.²³ There is a correlation between space and the way societies relate to projects, discourses, and experiences. Thus, cities—particularly capitals—are outstanding spaces for understanding the discourses of modernity that Latin American societies were trying to build, since they often attracted great numbers of people and embodied the image the country wanted to project to the rest of the world. It was in the cities where changes could be perceived, as change was linked to economic routes and thus connected through wider networks (of both goods and ideas) with the world.²⁴

There is a crucial spatial aspect to take into consideration when addressing the concept of modernity, since it is never the same in every country or even in every city; it has different ways of developing, of being received and appropriated. The spaces and processes of modernity have a number of interconnected scales that can give diversity to the view of the researcher. The interrelation of analyses helps to understand the reception of those ideas and discourses, which is a process in itself that necessitates examination. This book aims to integrate this spatial component of modernity in order to broaden the analysis of and ways of understanding how to be modern. In this sense, although the common idea of what modernity meant or the way it was enacted was linked since mid-nineteenth century to Europe and from the 1910s onward to the United States, there were different ways of understanding it, depending on how each geographical place perceived and translated the ideas.²⁵ Thus, exploring the local understandings of a notion such as modernity becomes

key to grasping the complexities and multiplicities of the concept in context, moving beyond the idea that there is only one way to be modern.

In the spirit of the multiple modernities perspective and the importance of considering the spatial aspect discussed above, I understand modernity as a constellation of ideas that were present during the period, such as progress and reason. I explore modernity as an aspirational concept, something to aim for rather than an achieved reality. In this sense, I am shifting the focus from the *how* in order to also include *when* and *where*. The latter can be seen in the sources, as writers in specialized cinema magazines use the concept of *lo moderno* (what is modern) instead of *modernidad* (modernity) itself. *Lo moderno* included technological changes perceived as modern, but also new lifestyles that included flapper girls and new styles of dancing as well as new activities like going to the cinema. Cinema and the specialized magazines that began to appear during the 1910s allowed for the wide dissemination of emerging ideas of *lo moderno* to audiences and readers.

MASS CULTURE AND THE RISE OF THE SPECIALIZED MAGAZINE

The emergence of mass culture in the early twentieth century meant that the exclusivity of culture became harder to maintain.²⁶ Media of mass production and mass consumption addressed a far wider range of people. Cinema became a space that opened up the opportunity for those from various social backgrounds to become part of another public, one that was larger than the one reading created. Miriam Hansen made the link between Jürgen Habermas's public sphere and cinema, stating that cinema presented the possibility for an alternative public sphere that could have an effect on the experience of modernity.²⁷ The first years of cinema as a form of entertainment, then, constitute a major shift in the way public and private spaces were understood, particularly in everyday life and as leisure spaces developed.²⁸ In this sense, understanding the problem of spectatorship through Hansen's concept of the public sphere works on two levels: (1) cinema as a widening of the public sphere, which is "defined by particular relations of representation and reception;" and (2) cinema as "[intersection and interaction] with other formations of public life."²⁹ In other words, while Habermas set out to reconstruct the public as a historical category, linking it with the birth of the bourgeoisie and liberal capitalism, Hansen connected the public sphere with the way culture evolved as mass culture. Experience, however, is what mediates individual perception with social meaning. Thus, to really understand what cinema meant for Santiago and Buenos Aires, it is fundamental to come to grips with the moviegoing experience in those years.

As mentioned before, the changing tastes and aesthetics that found their way into society deeply affected the social experience of modernity via the new media, including the entertainment culture. Such changes were a result of the public character of the city and the rise of the modern press.³⁰ In both Argentina and Chile, modernization of the press began in the last decades of the nineteenth century and

continued into the first decades of the twentieth century.³¹ This period saw the development of channels of social communication, which did not depend on political powers or partisanship, but that worked with a degree of autonomy. This shift toward liberal or modern journalism meant that opinion and commentary moved into a clearly defined editorial section, and news came to occupy center stage. This information came from different parts of the country and the world, which situated newspapers as part of a modern, international network of information. Alongside these changes, a cultural goods market emerged with its own rhythms and demands. As the idea of modern news developed, reporters introduced the concept of a breaking story. In other words, the modernization of the press transformed it into a social actor that played a role in other modernizing projects, too, reporting on and informing society. It was in the capital cities where these different processes of modernization were most tangible.

In Buenos Aires, the public character of the city translated into a new aesthetic that emerged in the context of the cultural mixture and diversity that migrants brought to the city. The influence of European migration is a key element to understand the processes of cultural and urban transformation that took place in a city that, because of these particularities, developed a specific kind of modernity correlated with its peripheral condition.³² A big part of what this modernity entailed was an explosion of the literary field: an unprecedented number and variety of books, pamphlets, and magazines signaled a response to the needs of specific reading publics. According to Beatriz Sarlo, these publications helped to form a critical awareness and a corresponding consumer society that would buy those intellectual productions. New technologies became part of everyday life, penetrating the collective imaginary and integrating modernity into daily actions through electrical goods, phonographs, and cinema, among others. In the case of the press, technical changes developed allowing for publications to have photographs that accompanied the text. Photos and images also had an impact on the way advertisement was done and included in the newspapers. Through increased advertising revenue, journalism developed as a professional activity. Magazines like *Caras y Caretas* (founded in 1898) were a product of these transformations, displaying colorful advertisements of different products in their pages.³³

Even though Sarlo focuses on Buenos Aires, the phenomena she analyzes are present in Santiago, albeit on a smaller scale. During the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, Santiago received major flows of migrants that came from the countryside in search for new opportunities. Soon enough, Santiago had an overflow of population: most of the people lived in crowded spaces with no water, electricity, or sewer system, leading to a fight for decent housing and infrastructure systems that could handle the rising number of people living in the capital. The promise of new opportunities and wealth that the city represented helps to explain the city's spike in population. As in Buenos

Aires, the city had to change in order to accommodate people who arrived looking for opportunities and a better life.³⁴ In this sense, as in the case of Buenos Aires, the concentration of people in the city allowed for consumption to arise, giving way to a mass culture that could only emerge with the existence of high levels of population. Carlos Ossandón and Eduardo Santa Cruz have shown how, during the first decades of the twentieth century, a particular mass culture developed in Chile as the outcome of a “heterogeneous scenario, with different publics and *ethos*, in which new *media* like magazines and specialized publications, newspaper photography and silent cinema exploded into life.”³⁵ This emerging mass culture, in which cinema would play a key role, brought new social codes and sensibilities to Chilean society. Just like in the case of *Caras y Caretas* in Buenos Aires, the magazine *Zig-Zag* (1905) in Santiago addressed those new tastes and interests of a mass culture public.³⁶

The emergence of a consumer culture accompanied this fledgling mass culture. Don Slater has defined the consumer culture in relation to the idea of the modern West by linking it with the making of the modern world itself.³⁷ Ana Maria Lopez and Arnold Bauer have explored how goods, particularly those considered modern such as films, moved around the world through the known economic routes.³⁸ For Slater, “consumer culture is bound up with the *idea* of modernity, of modern experience and of modern social subject.”³⁹ They show that consumer culture is inseparable from the modern experience and its expression through processes such as industrialization or urbanization. Both consumption and modernity are social experiences that feed from people’s subjectivities (individuals are free and rational) and acknowledgment of personal tastes that, in the first half of the twentieth century, could be answered through access to goods that appeal to a specificity of tastes. In this sense, accessibility and serialization of goods are equally important when thinking about the development of a consumer culture. It was because goods were more accessible that more people could buy them. Consumer culture, thus, became an intrinsic part of the urban experience in both Santiago and Buenos Aires, and how their inhabitants experienced the city.⁴⁰ In this context, the modernization of the press gives way to a new form of producing information: the magazine.

The classical understanding of the emergence of mass culture divides society between high culture, mass culture, and popular (or working class) culture. Ossandón and Santa Cruz suggest that dividing mass culture from popular culture prevents the researcher from engaging with wider historical processes.⁴¹ At the same time, the emergence of a public that had different interests and asked for those interests to be addressed was key for a modern press to develop. The latter is particularly true in the case of cinema, because it was directed at a broader demographic than any definition of *lo popular* (popular culture) would include. Furthermore, cinema as a culture of entertainment challenged any division between high, mass, or popular culture, as the common perception was that everyone went to the movies.

By going to the cinema, spectators could watch pictures of other places and

stories that were previously inaccessible, making them conscious of their place in time and of the world beyond their city or even their country. As a practice, cinema embodied the encounter between the new modern aesthetic of the mass-culture phenomenon and modernity as an experience. Cinema's mass character turned it into a vernacular in its own right, a term that Hansen uses to avoid the ideologically charged term "popular." Moreover, "vernacular" better conveys the multidimensional character of cinema, considering its everyday use.⁴² Specialized magazines accompanied the vernacular of cinema, perpetuating and extending this language through the written press.

The expansion of the school system in both countries played an important role in creating a market for cinema and the specialized press through broader literacy that engendered a wider reading public.⁴³ The combination of schooling and development of a modern press industry allowed for a diversification of interests to develop a diversification that was a big part of what mass-culture entailed. The latter could not have happened without the technological element, which enabled the medium to become accessible. The impact of technological innovation, and the rise of mass media, helped to generate an environment where images became accessible through "cinema, news photography and other graphics in the popular press," offering ideas of how to be modern.⁴⁴ At the same time, society experienced a democratization of knowledge in the sense that widespread access to information and ideas became available through new forms of mass media. Not only were cultural goods made available at lower prices, but also the range on offer was greater, potentially including everyone who wanted access.

Besides the expansion of the school system, there was also a system of distribution and exhibition set in place that allowed for cinema to become a popular entertainment. The main actors within the cinematographic business were the distributors (*distribuidores*), exhibitors (*exhibidores*), and the audience (*audiencia*). The distributors were the people or companies who rented the films to exhibitors. In some cases, the companies were run at a local (meaning a particular city) or national level, and in others, the companies expanded to distribute films at an international level. An example of this is Cinematografía Max Glücksmann, which began distributing films in Argentina and then expanded to other countries in the South American region, including Chile (where it was known as Casa Max Glücksmann).

The exhibitors were the ones who owned or rented the cinemas and put together the programs, and the specialized media often referred to them as *empresarios* or businesspeople. In some cases, distribution companies had their own cinemas. This was the case for Max Glücksmann and, from the 1930s onward, Hollywood companies such as Paramount or Metro Goldwyn Mayer.

From 1910 onward, both cities saw growth in the numbers of specialized magazines that targeted the interests of the public. The materiality of magazines shows that they were not direct competitors of newspapers, because while the newspaper

seemed to be a disposable good that lasted a day, magazines had better quality paper and could be kept for longer, collected, or passed on to another person. Many of these magazines addressed the topic of entertainment, particularly cinema. Although more general magazines such as *Caras y Caretas* or *Zig-Zag* included articles on cinema once in a while, from 1913 onward we see a series of publications solely devoted to film as an entertainment form. These magazines accompanied and helped the development of an audience for cinema in both cities.

THE CINEMA MAGAZINES

The main corpus of sources of this book comprises specialized cinema magazines published in Buenos Aires and Santiago.⁴⁵ This corpus offers a unique way to understand how people related to the cinema, because these periodicals offered a space of specific knowledge to those who loved film, regardless of whether they were part of the trade. In both cities, it is difficult to establish these magazines' circulation, since there is no precise information about their run and each periodical had its own rhythm when publishing. Many magazines listed a price for within the country and one for neighboring nations, which suggested that there was at least an ambition for them to be distributed to other main cities and abroad.⁴⁶ Furthermore, magazines from Santiago and Buenos Aires referenced each other on a regular basis, creating a transnational flow of information. The information surrounding the circulation of magazines such as *Caras y Caretas* and *Zig-Zag* is more robust: the former comprised 42,000 issues by its first anniversary, and by 1904 the average was 80,000 copies a year, while the latter sold 100,000 copies by its first anniversary.⁴⁷ The cost of most cinema magazines ranged from a few cents to one peso, meaning that these were affordable publications, although not all of them printed their price on the front page. Both Santiago and Buenos Aires had a developed magazine market.

For the period 1915–1945, there were around fourteen cinema magazines in Santiago. Before the late 1920s the magazines in Santiago lasted only a few years (sometimes only a few issues), and the director of the publication often produced and wrote it for cinema audiences. Between 1915 and 1922, most of the magazines published in Santiago were targeted at cinematographer traders. By addressing readers within the business, these magazines pushed for improvements that would increase the standards of the cinematographic trade. These publications had three main aims during this period: *Chile Cinematográfico* focused on the promotion of cinema as an activity and cultural phenomenon; *Cine Gaceta* concentrated on providing information and commentary of interest to cinema businessmen; and *La Semana Cinematográfica* shared both of these aims and also sought to attract the attention of mass audiences, with features and articles designed to create a direct link between movie stars and the spectator.⁴⁸ Only in 1928 did Santiago see the birth of one of the few long-standing specialized magazines: *Boletín Cinematográfico*. Two

years later, in 1930, the other long-lasting cinema magazine—*Ecran*—began its publication. These last two magazines were distinctly different from their predecessors in that they endured until the 1970s and had a clear audience in mind. In the case of the *Boletín*, it was the cinema businesspeople and people part of the cinematographic trade, while *Ecran* sought to reach the general cinema audience.

Ecran is quite unique among the Santiago magazines. The magazine was part of the El Mercurio Company and was published through the company's press *Zig-Zag*, named after the variety magazine mentioned before.⁴⁹ *El Mercurio* was (and still is) one of the most important newspapers in Chile, and it is politically linked with the conservative right wing.⁵⁰ While the name *Ecran* derives from the French word for screen, it was often mispronounced with an accent on the last syllable, making it sound as if it were an English word. This perception held since the magazine was Hollywood-centric, featuring sections on gossip and lavish photo spreads of the houses and lifestyle of the stars. *Ecran* made women as its primary readership, evident in its inclusion of long articles on the latest fashions as well as other sections that were clearly designed for them. However, *Ecran* also featured information about Chile and sections that were not directly related to cinema. With María Romero as director from 1939 until 1960, the publication saw a definite shift toward Hollywood and its star system and hardly ever made a reference to the trade and its problems, which suggest that cinemagoers were the target audience. In the same vein, the magazine presented a critical view of Chilean national cinema, although it often featured interviews of people from the industry or articles on particular national productions.

Buenos Aires was a bit different during this first period of publications, since from 1914 onward there were a few lasting publications established in contrast to the short-lived Chilean ones of the period. *La Película*, *Imparcial Film*, and *Excelsior/Film* were clearly aimed at a more specialized audience that was part of the cinema guild. Their articles informed their readers about news that interested the guild, as well as technological improvements that could make the cinemas more modern and up to date in technological terms. Aesthetically, these publications looked more like newspapers than glossy magazines, which only reinforced their goal of serving the trade community.

Magazines like *Revista del Exhibidor: Heraldo del Cinematografista* and, later, *Cine-Prensa* claimed to be directed at the people from the cinema business and followed the same style of earlier magazines such as *La Película*. Of particular interest is *El Indicador: Guía del cinematografista*, which worked as a sort of cinematographic yellow pages, documenting the addresses of all cinemas in the country. It also listed other important information for cinema businesspeople: details about production companies, studios, photography labs, and professionals related to the industry.

In contrast, magazines like *Cine Universal* and *Cinema Chat* shared more similarities with the Santiago magazines. Both these publications featured a mixture

of images (mainly photos and drawings) and articles on cinema, which made the magazines ideal for the cinemagoer to read as they dealt with a less technical point of view. Magazines like *Mi Cine* (1942) continued this accessible approach through short articles about cinema, music, art, and theater that were published in a pocket-sized format (more or less a quarter of a book's page).

Cinegraf was clearly focused on establishing a direct link between the public and the stars, particularly the ones from Hollywood. The magazine was printed on high-quality paper and, like *Ecran*, used a lot of images, although not always about cinema.⁵¹ Most of the articles on Hollywood were about the taste of the stars and how they decorated their houses, and included photos of them in their homes. The magazine was highly critical of the national cinema (which presents another parallel with *Ecran*), often highlighting all the good material Argentina had in terms of stories, people, and landscape, but criticizing the lack of originality of Argentine filmmakers. *Cinegraf* was even more critical of the quality of local film shows, often stressing the importance of having good films and good cinemas in which to watch the films. Like other cinema magazines, it also included technical explanations of cinema technology, such as how color and sound worked. However, because it was aimed at a general audience, these technical explanations were intended to be accessible.

As a response to *Cinegraf*, *Cine Argentino* sought to establish a direct connection between porteño audiences and Argentine movie stars. The magazine began its run when Argentine cinema reached its peak in production, or what Domingo di Núbila called its golden age.⁵² Its focus was the Argentine national cinema industry and how it was connecting with local audiences, highlighting the efforts it could make (or was already making) to establish a mass audience that preferred national films to Hollywood or European movies. For this reason, the magazine portrayed only Argentine cinema stars and topics related to national cinema. *Cine Argentino* accompanied the local cinema industry by building a public through its publication. For this, the magazine had a section in which its writers would interview members of the public outside premieres of national films asking them for their opinion. At the same time, another section of the magazine would comment on the high-profile people who attended certain premieres as a way to show that Argentine cinema was relevant to all, both the social elite and the common person.

In general terms, regardless of their connections with particular distribution or exhibition companies, the specialized magazines of both Buenos Aires and Santiago were filled with recommendations, proposals, and comments that served as a guide for both the cinematographic business and for the cinematographic audience. In this sense, although the magazines were available to anyone, they were directed at those involved in the cinematographic profession. At the same time, these publications aimed to attract readers who were part of a lay audience, those who loved cinema as an entertainment. The editorials and articles included critical sarcastic

comments and useful suggestions for the governmental institutions that regulated cinema (mostly the municipalities of Santiago and Buenos Aires) or fellow members of the business; other sections were allocated space for fans to write letters and express their nonspecialized opinions. These publications offered guidance of different kinds to both the reader who was part of the cinema industry, and the reader who loved watching films and reading about them.

Most of the time articles were not signed, and the few that were signed used pseudonyms, which makes it easier to trace these writers' corpus of articles across different publications and to identify them as authors. In many cases, the writers were linked to the world of culture, and were part of a group of people who worked in or on the cinema industry (either as specialized journalists or linked to a distribution or exhibition company). A difference worth noting is that while in Buenos Aires people writing in the magazines were mostly people linked to the industry, in Santiago a few journalists and well-known writers would write in these publications, as Wolfgang Bongers, María José Torrealba, and Ximena Vergara show.⁵³ In Buenos Aires it was only in the 1930s that a minority of intellectuals like Roberto Arlt or Jorge Luis Borges became more interested in cinema and began to write about it.

A key aspect of these magazines was photography, because it played a major role in the development of the star system outside the United States and Europe.⁵⁴ Photography represented a direct link between audience and cinema, but particularly between audience members and their favorite film stars.⁵⁵ Besides photography, cinema magazines published small biographies of the most popular stars, which helped to connect the fan and the star, since the public knew what the actors looked like (outside their cinema roles) and knew their personal stories. The combination of photographic and biographical information allowed for feelings of adoration, or even love, to develop.⁵⁶ The regular publishing of the faces of movie stars also demarked a changed in sensibility of the public: by becoming recognizable, movie stars became public men and women.⁵⁷ This change in sensibility was intertwined with the culture of images, that was able to expand very quickly and reach a far larger audience than letters and the literate culture.

PERIODIZATION

This book begins in 1915, the year that much of the cinema press began, signaling the expansion of the literary field in both cities and the interest (and need) for specialized magazines. Equally, this book ends in 1945, which marks the end of a process for these magazines and the cinema industry in Chile and Argentina. By 1945 there were only two publications focused on cinema in Santiago (*Boletín Cinematográfico* and *Ecran*), and even these magazines started changing the way they documented the relationship between cinema and society. In Argentina, although there are more publications focused on cinema than in Chile, the rise of Perón changed how Argentine society related to cinema.⁵⁸ It is also worth noting

that, in the case of Argentina, by 1945 society had, in a way, changed, giving way to a more homogenous and culturally integrated society. Moreover, the period between 1915 and 1945 is particularly remarkable because regulations, styles, ideas, and behaviors evolved and changed given that cinema as an entertainment developed in ways that the state could not always control. Finally, the years that frame this book will follow the transformation of these two capitals from *plaza* to modern cities. The process of migration and the celebration of the centennial prompted a first transformation of each city. During the 1930s, internal migration and economic depression caused both cities to be reshaped, growing beyond their initial boundaries and morphing into what Romero has called the unfolding metropolis.⁵⁹

THE EXPERIENCE OF CINEMA-GOING OUTSIDE AND IN

Modernity at the Movies is organized according to the main topics addressed by the Chilean and Argentine specialized press in the period 1915–1945. These themes reflect the tension that cinema embodied and its character of modern technology and modern experience, while, at the same time, serving as an escape from modern life. Whether the topics were about cinema and its connections to architecture, attendance, censorship, behavior, or language, the magazines often reflected debates on national identity through these themes.

The first chapter focuses on cinema buildings, examining the architectural style and the technology that defined what was supposed to be an ideal experience of going to the movies. The cinemas were as much part of the experience as the films themselves. The buildings and their decor played a vital role in the suspension of disbelief: the audience needed to forget that they were in a theater. In other words, the building needed to be an extension of the illusion the films created, something that helped to stimulate the imagination. Regardless of the architectural particularities of each building, the technology that movies offered also played an important role in the quality of the experience because it reflected how modern the cinema was, meaning that it was up to the standards of world entertainment. Technology affected the level of comfort cinemas had to offer, in, for example, the standard of the seating, the quality of the projection, and, later, the sound system. The combination of all these features aimed to offer the santiaguino and porteño audiences a show that was modern, the same as the one offered to audiences in London, New York, and Paris.

Through an in-depth study of cinema tickets prices and attendance numbers in both capital cities, chapter 2 answers the question “who went to the movies?” Cinemas were a space where people could showcase themselves and be seen, turning the cinema into a public space that could add status to one’s social life. Because of the latter, businesspeople had to develop different techniques to attract the public they wanted into their cinemas. Ticket prices became a common way of selecting the audience and are key to understanding cinema’s popularity.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the notions regarding censorship that emerged in both Buenos Aires and Santiago. In these capital cities, censorship was linked with ideas of decency and morality. Discourses of morality and what it meant to behave in an acceptable way played a role in conceptions of what a modern person should be like. Codes and regulations appeared quickly in places like the United Kingdom and the United States as various organizations tried to regulate the content of films. In Chile and Argentina, the first regulatory efforts were linked to Catholic groups who saw indecency and amoral content in the films. This chapter discusses the debates surrounding the censoring of the body, ideas of cinema as a school of crime, and how cinema fitted into the debates about social hygiene. By exploring these debates, the chapter shows how these attempts to regulate national audiences were linked to ideas of citizenship.

The fourth chapter discusses the experience of sitting inside a cinema to watch a film in Buenos Aires and Santiago, focusing on the social aspects of cinema-going, and how cinema represented both a public and a private space at the same time. Once people were inside the auditorium, the lights went off and it became a private space where behaviors changed. This section also discusses different practices that arose when changes in technology such as sound were introduced.

The fifth chapter explores the role of language in the experience of going to the cinema. Language played a key role in film, even during the silent era. Although the introduction of sound added complexity to the issue, the incorporation of sound into movies was not as big a change as dominant scholarship has claimed. Intertitles presented problems of style, translation, and grammar just as subtitles did; foreign words and expressions were a problem long before accents were heard and resulted in the introduction of dubbing. Both in Santiago and Buenos Aires, cinema magazines and audiences considered the Spanish language a point of pride that necessitated respect from the international cinema industry because it was an element of national identity. This chapter discusses the role language in films played in the identity debates in the specialized press of both cities.

The study of santiaguinos and porteños' relationship to cinema through these distinct aspects opens a new scope for understanding how the idea of modernity and of being modern was present in everyday life. This book recognizes the tensions within the experience of cinema as a modern technology, and entertainment that provided an escape from modern life. These tensions are key to comprehend the relationship between audiences and cinemas, as well as the experiences of the people going to the movies. The comparison and juxtaposition of tensions, debates, and practices of cinema in Buenos Aires and Santiago guide us to better understand the experience of modernity across two seemingly very different Latin American cities, therefore uncovering practices, behaviors, styles, and languages of what it meant to be modern through the practice of going to the movies.