

A large, stylized sunburst graphic in a lighter shade of purple, positioned on the left side of the cover. It features a central oval shape with multiple curved rays extending outwards, creating a fan-like effect.

HOW SOUND CINEMA ARRIVED IN ECUADOR:

Case Study of Quito in the
Late 1920s and Early 1930s

Bolivia Erazo



UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

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To Seppo, Eliel and Rodrigo (+)

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November 2018

Abstract

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU
Faculty of Humanities
School of History,
Culture and Arts Studies
Cultural History

ERAZO, BOLIVIA: How Sound Cinema
Arrived in Ecuador: Case Study of Quito in
the Late 1920s and Early 1930s
Doctoral Dissertation, 329 pages
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This monograph analyses the transition from silent to sound cinema in the late 1920s and early 1930s in Quito, Ecuador. In addition to being the first study of this kind on the film history of Ecuador, Quito's location makes an interesting case study that it differs from other cities, even in Ecuador, since it is a landlocked capital city located in the highlands.

With no digital newspapers available in Ecuador, this thesis is based on printed newspapers and manually photographed news. Thousands of pieces of research material were found in the local dailies of different archives in Quito searched under the premise of cinema. All press clippings were read and analyzed in detail. The material was interpreted by using the historical method and also by drawing on Michel Foucault's discourse analysis. Among the most important conclusions, it becomes clear that sound cinema dominated the cinematographic scene in Quito much before the first screenings of the first sound films, which took place in September 1930. This occurred because sound cinema was widely discussed in the local dailies and magazines since 1928, much before the screening of this novel technology to Quito. Therefore, by the time the first sound films were shown in the city people had already been well aware of the pros and cons of this technology and indeed locals demanded the arrival of sound cinema in the city.

Keywords

Sound cinema - silent cinema - sound - newspapers - Ecuador - Quito - discourse - reception - audiences - spatiality

Tiivistelmä

TURUN YLIOPISTO
Humanistinen tiedekunta
Historian, kulttuurin ja
taiteiden tutkimuksen laitos
Kulttuurihistoria

ERAZO, BOLIVIA: Miten äänielokuva saapui
Ecuadoriin. Tapaustutkimus 1920-luvun lopun
ja 1930-luvun alun Quitosta
Väitöskirja, 329 sivua
Tohtoriohjelma Juno
Tammikuu 2019

Tämä väitöskirja tutkii siirtymää mykkäelokuvasta äänielokuvaan 1920-luvun lopun ja 1930-luvun alun Quitossa, Ecuadorissa. Sen lisäksi, että tämä on ensimmäinen tutkimus laatuaan Ecuadorin elokuvahistoriasta, Quiton sijainti tekee aiheesta mielenkiintoisen, koska Quito on vuoristossa sijaitseva sisämaan pääkaupunki.

Ecuadorissa sanomalehdet eivät ole saatavissa digitaalisessa muodossa, joten tutkimus perustuu painettuihin sanomalehtiin, joista uutiset ja muu aineisto on tallennettu digikameralla tutkimuskäyttöön. Paikallisista sanomalehdistä löytyi Quiton eri arkistoista tuhansia elokuvaan liittyviä tekstejä tutkimusmateriaaliksi. Kaikki elokuvaa sivuavat lehdistömateriaalit luettiin ja analysoitiin tarkasti. Materiaali tutkittiin historiallista menetelmää käyttäen sekä ammentamalla vaikutteita Michel Foucault'n diskurssianalyysistä. Yhtenä tärkeimpänä johtopäätöksenä on selvää, että äänielokuva hallitsi elokuva-alaa jo paljon ennen ensimmäisten äänielokuvien esitystä, joka tapahtui syyskuussa 1930. Tämä tapahtui, koska äänielokuvasta keskusteltiin laajasti paikallisissa sanoma- ja aikakauslehdissä vuodesta 1928 alkaen, paljon ennen tämän uuden teknologian ensimmäistä käyttöä Quitossa. Näin ollen, kun ensimmäiset äänielokuvat esitettiin, ihmiset olivat jo hyvin tietoisia tämän teknologian hyvistä ja huonoista puolista, ja paikalliset vaativatkin äänielokuvan tuomista kaupunkiin.

Avainsanat

Äänielokuva - mykkäelokuva - ääni - sanomalehdet - Ecuador - Quito - diskurssi - vastaanotto - yleisö - tilallisuus

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Introduction

Studies of sound cinema have emphasized various characteristics of this phenomenon, such as the technological¹, economic², and the reception of sound cinema.³ However, in spite of sound cinema being a widely examined topic, in the case of Ecuador, and Quito, the capital, in particular, this monograph is the first study of the arrival of this technology.

In addition to being the first study of sound cinema in Ecuador (using Quito as an example), this monograph does not seek to examine the period when Ecuador started to produce sound movies, but rather the starting point of when this technological innovation began to be discussed publicly in the local press, that is, much earlier than Ecuador began to produce its own sound movies, even earlier than when sound screenings began to take place in Quito. Therefore, this monograph seeks to understand the public discussion of the entire phenomenon of sound cinema prior to the arrival of sound movies, the construction of sound cinemas and the Ecuadorian production of sound films.

This is why, in addition to being the first study on sound cinema in Ecuador, this study is also a pioneer, as it examines the debate on sound cinema prior to the arrival of sound screenings in Quito. I do this because in the case of Quito even though the first sound movie exhibition took place in September 1930, people had already been engaged in a public discussion about this in late 1929, which focused on issues such as the importance of having sound cinema in the city. In other words, writings in the local press about this technological innovation in other places around the world fueled people's desire to have sound cinema in Quito.

It should also be mentioned that my interest in examining Quito goes beyond the fact that I come from this Ecuadorian city. Quito is an interesting case study since it is a landlocked capital city located in the highlands. Quito's location differs from other cities even in Ecuador, since, as shown in comparison to the Ecuadorian port city of Guayaquil, the arrival of sound cinema occurred in a different way.

- 1 Harry M. Geduld, *The Birth of the Talkies: From Edison to Jolson* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).
- 2 Douglas Gomery, *The Coming of Sound* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
- 3 Donald Crafton, *The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926-1931* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997).

Previous studies

Although sound cinema has not been researched in Ecuador, some studies on Ecuadorian cinema mention certain information about sound cinema, such as *Historia del cine en el Ecuador 1906-1986*, *Cronología de la cultura cinematográfica 1849-1986*, and *Cine silente en Ecuador 1895-1935*. However, data about this phenomenon in these works is scarce, and they lack precision. For instance, regarding the production of the first Ecuadorian sound film, which was already produced in the early 1930s, *Historia del cine en el Ecuador* and *Cine silente en Ecuador* consider that the production of the first Ecuadorian sound films occurred in the late 1940s and early 1950s.⁴ Thus, *Historia del cine en el Ecuador* asserts that the film *Se conocieron en Guayaquil*, produced in the late 1940s and early 1950s,⁵ was the first Ecuadorian sound film, and *Cine silente en Ecuador* sees the transition from silent to sound cinema as having taken place during these years: “the ‘difficult and problematic’ transition from silent to sound [film] took place in Ecuador in the late 1940s.”⁶

As is clear, both studies disregard the screening of the locally produced ‘semi-sound’ film *Guayaquil de mis amores* (1930) in the early 1930s in Quito.⁷ This omission is also evident in recent studies such as *The Routledge Companion to Latin American Cinema*, in which *Guayaquil de mis amores* is considered as having been accompanied only live.⁸ Confusion has arisen regarding not only the production of the first Ecuadorian sound film, but also regarding the arrival of sound films from abroad in Quito. For instance, *Cine silente en Ecuador* claims that the first Spanish-language sound film screening in Quito took place in November 1931 with the movie *Galas de la Paramount* (1930),⁹ which is not the case, because the first sound film in Spanish and, indeed, the first sound film shown in the capital was *Sombras de gloria* (1930), which had already been screened in September 1930.¹⁰ The only book that mentions *Sombras de gloria* as the first sound film in Quito is

4 Teresa Vásquez, Mercedes Serrano, and Wilma Granda, *Historia del cine en el Ecuador 1906-1986* (Quito: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana “Benjamín Carrión”, 1986), 122. See also Wilma Granda, *Cine silente en Ecuador 1895-1935*, (Quito: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana “Benjamín Carrión”, 1995), 131.

5 Vásquez et al., *Historia del cine en el Ecuador*, 166-177.

6 Granda, *Cine silente en Ecuador*, 131.

7 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 20, 1930.

8 Rielle Navitski, “Silent and early sound cinema in Latin America: local, national, and transnational perspectives,” in *The Routledge Companion to Latin American Cinema*, ed. Marvin D’Lugo, Ana M. López and Laura Podalsky (London: Routledge, 2018), 41.

9 Granda, *Cine silente en Ecuador*, 152.

10 Jorge Salvador Lara, in *Breve historia de los servicios en la ciudad de Quito*, ed. Mario Vásconez et al., (Quito: Ciudad, 1997), 103.

*Breve historia de los servicios básicos en Quito.*¹¹

In addition to this, local studies on cinema have entirely disregarded the analysis of the arrival of sound films from abroad in Ecuador in the late 1920s and early 1930s, respectively. Furthermore, Ecuadorian studies have not taken into account the public discussion about sound cinema prior to the screening of sound films in Quito.

Another imprecision of these studies which must be clarified is the year of the emergence of the first four cinemas, which were not inaugurated in 1914, as the aforementioned studies argue.¹² In 1914, two cinemas opened: The Variedades in April 1914¹³ and the Royal Edén in November 1914,¹⁴ and the other two venues were inaugurated some years later. For instance, the construction of the Puerta del Sol began in 1917,¹⁵ and it opened in May 1919¹⁶ as a cinema, and as a skating room two months earlier¹⁷ and the Popular appears to have been inaugurated in January 1922:¹⁸ This is the earliest information about this venue that I have found so far in the local press.

As for the influential studies on sound cinema, Harry Geduld's *The Birth of the Talkies: From Edison to Jolson* thoroughly examined the very early technological inventions, including those of the late 19th century and early 20th century, which led to sound cinema in the late 1920s. Scott Eyman's *The Speed of Sound: Hollywood and the Talkie Revolution 1926-1930* also analyzed the early junction of phonographs and projectors at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century, that is, all of them before *The Jazz Singer*

11 Mario Vásconez et al., *Breve historia de los servicios básicos en Quito*, (Quito: Ciudad, 1997).

12 Teresa Vásquez et al., *Cronología de la Cultura Cinematográfica (1849-1986)*, 14. See also Vásquez, Serrano, and Granda, *Historia del cine en el Ecuador*, 34. See also Granda, *Cine silente en Ecuador*, 32. See also Wilma Granda, *Breve historia de los servicios en la ciudad de Quito*, ed. Mario Vásconez et al., (Quito: Ciudad, 1997), 105.

13 "Inauguración de "Variedades"," *El Día*, April 11, 1914. See also "En el "Variedades"," *El Día*, April 12, 1914. See also "El "Variedades"," *El Día*, April 14, 1914.

14 "Estreno," *El Día*, November 13, 1914. See also "Teatro Royal Edén," *El Comercio*, November 14, 1914. See also "Cine "Ambos Mundos"," *El Día*, November 14, 1914. See also "En el Pasaje Royal," *El Día*, November 15, 1914. See also "El Pasaje Royal," *El Comercio*, November 17, 1914.

15 "Avenida 24 de Mayo," *El Comercio*, February 10, 1917. See also "Con mucho aire," *El Comercio*, February 23, 1917.

16 "Otro cine," *El Día*, May 25, 1919.

17 "De sport," *El Comercio*, January 24, 1919. See also "Próximo estreno," *El Día*, March 14, 1919. See also Alonso Quijano, "En el Puerta del Sol," *Caricatura*, 1919.

18 Cinema advertisement, *El Comercio*, January 18, 1922.

(1927),¹⁹ considered the first sound film in the world. The Kinetophone,²⁰ the Chronophone,²¹ the Cameraphone,²² Synchronoscope²³ were part of such inventions. The problem with these innovations was that “uniform speed was difficult to maintain, and achieving decent amplification was deeply problematic.”²⁴

Another influential study is Douglas Gomery’s *The Coming of Sound*, which does not focus on the early inventions but rather on the breakthrough from silent film to sound film, occurring in the late 1920s in the United States. To Gomery, this breakthrough from silent to sound cinema was not a chaotic process²⁵ but rather a rational transition, which he regards as explainable by the theory of technological innovation.²⁶ Gomery’s study is an analysis more from an economic perspective.

Unlike Gomery, Donald Crafton in his highly celebrated book *The Talkies: American Cinemas Transition to Sound, 1926-1931*, regards the transition from silent to sound “as partly rational and partly confused”²⁷ process. To this author, “rather than seeing Hollywood as a manufacturer planning for a rational changeover (...), I prefer the analogy of the noisy bazaar. Eager costumers were shouting for a new item, and the vendors were having difficulty keeping up with demand.”²⁸ In addition to this, Crafton’s book examines the reception of sound films in the United States, or as the author stated, his emphasis is more “on end-use than on production.”²⁹ Alexander Walkers’ *The Shattered Silents: How the Talkies Came to Stay* is another book which thoroughly examines the sound screenings in 1926-1929.

Research question

My argument is that sound cinema dominated the cinematographic sphere even before sound film screenings. This is why I explore in this monograph how sound cinema managed to prevail over silent cinema. In tune with

19 Scott Eyman, *The Speed of Sound: Hollywood and the Talkie Revolution 1926-1930*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 25.

20 Ibid., 25.

21 Ibid., 26.

22 Ibid., 28.

23 Ibid., 29.

24 Ibid., 26.

25 Gomery, *The Coming of Sound*, preface xviii.

26 Ibid.

27 Crafton, *The Talkies*, 4.

28 Ibid., 6-7.

29 Ibid., 6.

my argument, in this manuscript, I examine the different ways in which sound cinema prevailed in comparison to silent cinema and, furthermore, how the expectation of the coming of sound cinema arose without listening to this technology, that is, by only reading about it. Thanks to people reading about this technological innovation in newspapers and magazines, sound cinema managed to dominate. This fact alerts us to the importance of paying attention to other forms of consuming cinema, such as reading written texts, which go beyond moviegoing.

In addition to this, inspired by de Certeau's question as to what the users or the consumers of television images do with the images they see and during the hours spent in front of the TV,³⁰ I have also posed the question of what contemporary inhabitants in general did with the information that they read about sound cinema in different written sources. In other words, what actions they engaged in upon reading about this technological innovation; what reactions they had and what emotions the knowledge of sound cinema provoked in them.

Combining de Certeau's analysis, first about the 'uses' that to him are in the end 'actions',³¹ and second his concept of production as consequence of consumption,³² I analyze what kind of production brought into being the consumption not of sound films themselves, but rather of the entire press material (verbal and figurative), including the information about the monuments, and the description of the sounds of the sound films in the local press.

Consequently, this exploration does not take into account only the lived experience of those who attended the screenings but of those who also read about cinema in the written sources. Therefore, this study takes into consideration how the non-film-goer consumed this information and what actions they took in relation to the coming of sound cinema.

Drawing on de Certeau's theory, and based on my argument that sound cinema dominated the cinematographic sphere even before the sound screenings, I propose a new concept of audience as I do not consider that the consumers of sound cinema are only those who attended the show. To me, the consumers of sound cinema include those who first heard about this

30 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 31.

31 Ibid., 5.

32 Ibid., 31.

technological innovation (businessmen, distributors, the press); those who planned it, including, for example, architects and designers; the exhibitors; those who operated the machines; those who attended, those who did not attend the screenings but participated in the press discussions on sound cinema (such as religious women); and those who attended the screenings but did not leave a written record on this subject (children and women). All in all, my concept of audience includes a much wider community of social actors.

I thus argue that sound cinema as a cultural phenomenon was simultaneously consumed by different social groups in different ways at the same time. Some went to the cinema, but others read about it. Others went to cinema and also read about it. The lower social groups, before becoming part of the moviegoers, consumed it from the outside. Part of this consumption was the visualization of the cinema venues. I also consider part of the audience those who, by opposing sound cinema, found another way to consume it by preventing its arrival in Quito.

Methodology

With no digital newspapers available in Ecuador, this thesis is based on printed newspapers and manually photographed news found in the local press from 1906 to 1923 and from 1929 and April 1933. The premise to gather the research material was cinema. Therefore, I collected interviews, debates, advertisements, news, stories, editorials, and everything that was related to cinema. All press clippings were read and analyzed in detail by using the historical method and also by drawing on Michel Foucault's discourse analysis. Additionally, I also utilize interviews from those who attended the sound screenings during the transitional years. Of course, there are relevant aspects related to sound cinema that I do not discuss in the monograph because I focused only on the aspects that support the research question. The rest of the material will be published in articles.

Inspired by Henri Lefebvre's triad, which is composed of the perceived, conceived and lived spheres, I have divided this monograph in three parts. The reason for this is that the triad has been very useful to me in illustrating the process of arrival of sound cinema in Quito. Although Lefebvre starts in his study *The Production of Space* by discussing the triad in a particular order, I have inverted the position of the first two spaces, that is, those of the perceived and conceived spaces, and begin by analyzing the conceived space of sound cinema in this monograph.

In Part I, that is, in the conceived space that Lefebvre relates to the space of planners, designers and architects, I analyze how the space of this technological innovation was planned by different professionals such as architects and designers. In addition to the professionals who planned it, I include the different voices that, as mentioned by Lefebvre, not only commanded, but actually demanded the appearance of a certain place. In this way, I take into account the different social actors that were involved in the process of the production of that space. In the case of sound cinema, these voices include those of the exhibitors, entrepreneurs, the municipality, the audience, and also what was published in the local press (local and international materials).

In the conceived space, I have also included the analysis of what the press published about sound cinema until before the first sound exhibition of the film *Sombras de gloria* in September 1930. Even though to Lefebvre the conceived space is the field of planning and designing, I have included the public debate about sound cinema, as this discussion boosted the arrival of sound cinema in the city.

In Part II, I discuss the perceived space, which to Lefebvre is the space of objects: "Social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information. Such "objects" are thus not only things but also relations,"³³ in other words, networks.

Drawing on Lefebvre, I examine what was debated in the press in relation to the monuments of sound cinema and to its sound equipment taking care that, as mentioned by Lefebvre, the fact that the social space is a space of objects does not mean that the researcher should make an inventory of the things in space:

This history is to be distinguished from an inventory of things in space (or what has recently been called material culture or civilization), as also from ideas and discourse about space. It must account for both representational spaces and representations of space, but above all for their interrelationships and their links with social practice.³⁴

33 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 1st ed. trans. Donald Nicholson Smith, (Oxford, OX, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991), 77.

34 *Ibid.*, 116.

In Part III, I examine the lived space, that is, I study what was written about the experience of those who read about cinema or attended the movie screenings. The lived space is mostly related to the realm of 'users.'³⁵ To Lefebvre, these three spaces are not isolated from one another, but rather interact in the production of space.

In addition to drawing on Lefebvre's understanding of the production of space, I also draw on Michel de Certeau's understanding of the term production, which is the emergence of something new as a consequence of the encounter of a person and a certain text. De Certeau asserts this considering that even though there are different aspects that can be transferred to a space, "the ways of using things or words according to circumstances"³⁶ cannot be transferred, and therefore the consumption of something provokes different actions that go in hand to the context in which they are received. In other words, consumption *produces* something different.³⁷ These uses, which are different to what is received, are what de Certeau regarded as mostly 'actions.'

In addition to these authors, I also draw on Norbert Elias' analysis of *The Civilizing Process*,³⁸ as it inspires me to closely follow the use of adjectives in describing children's sounds as noisy, or other discriminatory and judgmental terms. The same idea of paying attention to the adjectives has been applied to examine the public discussion of the gramophones in the city and other sound mechanical devices. The idea of including the analysis of the discussion of the gramophones in Chapter 4 was to examine part of the different mechanical devices that were debated publicly by contemporaries as producers of sound.

Sources

There is one major aspect in relation to my primary sources: I study the entire sonic phenomenon of the transition from silent to sound cinema in written primary sources such as newspapers. While most scholars have focused on the examination of sound movies to study the transition from silent to sound cinema, I study the public discussion on sound cinema in Quito from 1930 to April 1933 in the press. This means that the sound films

35 Ibid., 38-39.

36 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 20.

37 Ibid., 35.

38 Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2000).

that were screened in the period are not under investigation. In addition to sound cinema, I also study part of what I call the audible manners used in reference to what Norbert Elias refers to as human relations turned into sound, i.e. the noise and speech of human beings.

I analyze the arrival of sound cinema in Quito through three newspapers. The reason I chose these dailies is that these are the ones that were involved in the public debate held via the press between the cinema company and the *El Comercio* newspaper in late 1929, which is examined in Chapter 3. The first daily that I analyze is *El Comercio*, which was owned by the Mantilla brothers, and promoted as an independent daily. Although in practice, it was the defender of conservative ideas. *El Comercio* stopped publishing on local cinema from November 1929 to early 1933 due to the dispute with the owner of the cinemas in Quito. This is the reason why it would not have been possible to write this history of cinema in Ecuador on the basis of only this daily.

Second, I examine *El Día*, the liberal newspaper, which was the only daily in Quito, of those I researched, that published cinema advertisements from late 1929 to April 1933. This daily focused on local cinema.

Third, I analyze *El Debate*, which began publishing in August 1929. From the moment of its emergence, this daily published cinema advertisements and continued publishing them in January, February and March 1930, after the public disagreement of late 1929.³⁹ From May 1930 to April 1933, *El Debate* did not publish any cinema advertisements except when the first sound film *Sombras de gloria* premiered in September 1930. During this period, *El Debate* only published some information on the situation of cinema abroad, and very little or almost nothing on the screenings in Quito. *El Debate* started publishing cinema advertisements in late April 1933 when the Bolívar Theater opened. All in all, it is clear that the only daily that published the cinema schedule during the transitional days was *El Día*.

There are no cinema magazines or archive material in the movie theaters or in any other historical archive in Quito; thus, they are not in my primary sources. I have only found one sample of the magazine *Semana Teatral* in the archives of the city.⁴⁰ *Semana Teatral* was published by Quito's

39 *El Debate* of April 1930 is missing in the archive of Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana "Benjamín Carrión".

40 *Semana Teatral*, No. 336, August 3, 1930.

cinema company. This source would be valuable to widen the understanding of cinema from the exhibitors' point of view, as well as from that of the audiences, but the use of the three dailies mentioned above have been extremely helpful for reconstructing cinema culture in Quito. In addition to the verbal texts, I also used figurative texts.

In spite of the fact that there are no cinema magazines available for research in Quito, in addition to the dailies, I used magazines, even though they only rarely discussed cinema. The magazines in which I have mostly found information are *Caricatura*, and *Espirales*, which began issuing in 1918⁴¹ and 1927,⁴² respectively. *Caricatura* was published until early 1920 and *Espirales* until 1935, judging from the magazines that are available in Quito's archives.

As well as these primary sources, I also interviewed people who lived during the transition from silent to sound cinema, such as Sixto Durán Ballén, (1921-2016) former president of Ecuador (1992-1996), who was the grandchild of the brother of the owner of the cinema company in Quito, Jorge Cordovez Ricaurte.

Speaking of the historical archives, I have collected the material in the following places: Aurelio Espinosa Pólit, Biblioteca Nacional 'Eugenio Espejo,' Archivo Histórico del Ministerio de Cultura y Patrimonio, Fondo Jijón y Caamaño, and Cinemateca Nacional Ecuador.

41 *Caricatura*, December 8, 1918.

42 *Espirales*, April 1927.

Part I The Conceived Space of Sound Cinema

Chapter 1 Towards the Combination of Moving Images and Sound Accompaniment

Putting Together Moving Images and Sound

Even though it has been argued that “silent film was never truly silent,”⁴³ the fact is that in Quito, Ecuador, in 1906 and 1907, there are few references to sound accompaniment to moving images. As a matter of fact, there is no trace of the frequent presence of sound accompaniment during silent exhibitions. The only reference to moving images with sound in 1906 and 1907, as evidenced in the next quotation, is the reference to the ‘talking skull’ act shown in only the two last screenings of the one-and-half-month-long visit of the 1906 traveling exhibitor:

During the nights of the celebrations, Mr. Carlos Valenti, rivaling the best magicians will perform a true prodigy act that will surprise the entire audience: he will make a skull talk. Due to this, memories of a true miracle will be retained from the festivities of August. It is important to highlight that this ‘talking’, of course, will have nothing to do with spiritism.⁴⁴

From this quote, one can clearly see that the combination of moving images and sound was regarded as magic, which leads us to believe that cinema possibly had no musical accompaniment at all. The magic, the product of the junction of moving images and sound, was not discussed as spiritism; it was seen as human action mediated by technology. In later accounts, the relationship between religious thinking in relation to technology becomes evident since although the talking skull, also called the talking head, was considered to be an optical illusion,⁴⁵ it nonetheless was

43 James Buhler, David Neumeyer, Rob Deemer, *Hearing the Movies: Music and Sound in Film History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 247. See also Karel Dibbets, “The Introduction of Sound,” in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 211.

44 *El Comercio*, August 7, 1906.

45 “Teatro Sucre,” *El Comercio*, August 15, 1906.

described as witchery:⁴⁶

After one hour of such long waiting, it was made public that the order of the program would be inverted. And as was said, this was done. The talking head, a show with no illusion, interest or art, which had [already] been snubbed when exhibited in the low part of the episcopal Palace, was the first one presented. The scene, of short duration, ended among the mockeries of the attendants and put boredom to its highest level.⁴⁷

This is the public's first reaction to the junction between moving images and sound, as found in *El Comercio*. Moreover, apart from the fact that this account makes it clear that the traveling exhibitor was being reprimanded for not having started the program on time, one should note that the local reviewer also referred to the audience's earlier dislike of the act of the 'talking skull', raises the question as to whether the aspect of sound was the reason why the audience mostly disapproved of this particular performance.

Further evidence that contributes to the argument that cinema was shown without musical accompaniment is the statement that the muteness of moving images was considered a great source of pleasure and laughter; therefore, this was what actually made people laugh: "... and various ordinary life scenes that make one laugh due to the majestic silence with which they are made and that have an irresistible comical effect. As for us, we will not be missing tonight's screening or subsequent ones."⁴⁸ What is more, the 'solemn silence' of the moving images was regarded as the most appealing feature for the moviegoers to attend:

the mimicry in several of those scenes, taking place in the midst of such solemn silence, makes even the most melancholic person laugh. It is no wonder the theater is always full, and with very just reason there are fans that do not miss one single night.⁴⁹

All in all, the public's reaction to the talking skull and their response towards the silence of the moving images makes it clear that in 1906 and

46 W. Z., "Revista Teatral," *El Comercio*, August 17, 1906.

47 W. Z., "Revista Teatral," *El Comercio*, August 17, 1906.

48 "En el Teatro," *El Comercio*, July 5, 1906.

49 "Cinematógrafo," *El Comercio*, July 12, 1906.

1907,⁵⁰ sound was not yet regarded as an integral part of moving images in Quito; this situation was very different in Guayaquil because, being a port city, circulation was faster there; consequently, live⁵¹ and recorded⁵² music were already integrated into the screenings in 1906. To what extent musical accompaniment was part of the screenings at this time in Guayaquil is something yet to be analyzed. Why was sound not part of moving images in 1906 and 1907? Mostly, because it is possible that during these two years, there was a lack of available chamber orchestras to musically accompany the moving images, as will be explained in the coming paragraphs.

The fact that sound was not part of moving images changed at the end of the first half of 1908 in the capital, since first, the screenings were integrated into sonorous environments, and second, also sound was incorporated into the screenings in various ways. In relation to the first aspect, moving images were included in a theatrical agenda. In fact, moving images were shown as the third act of what was called a “mixed program:”

Today there will be a splendid mixed presentation -so says the program- in which, after the very repeated ‘dish of the day’ and the funny zarzuela ‘Torear por lo fino’, there will be a session (not section) cinematographic, of four moving images of long lasting and positive success.⁵³

Although it is evident that the moving images were shown after the main event, the inclusion of these moving images in a sonorous program can be regarded as the first step toward constructing the link between moving images and sound. Including the screening of moving images in the presentations of a theatrical program was not a single event: it was done on a regular basis in May 1908, as the following quote shows:

Until now we have said nothing about the cinematographic images that have just started being shown in our coliseum, as part of the theatrical performances, but we can no longer remain silent

50 During 1907, there were two traveling exhibitors that visited Quito, but in spite of this they did not show moving images with sound accompaniment. Rafael E. Ramírez could only screen his moving images once. Due to the excess of flickering in his images, he could not continue the screenings. See “En el Teatro,” *El Comercio*, April 9, 1907. Another exhibitor that arrived in Quito in 1907 was A. del Río. His screenings lasted around one week. See “El biógrafo excelsior,” *El Comercio*, November 19, 1907. See also “Corrida de toros,” *El Comercio*, November 19, 1907, “El Biógrafo Excelsior,” *El Comercio*, November 26, 1907.

51 “Biógrafo París,” *El Telégrafo*, July 12, 1906. See also “Biógrafo París,” *El Telégrafo*, July 13, 1906.

52 “Biógrafo París,” *El Telégrafo*, July 7, 1906.

53 “Teatro sucre,” *El Comercio*, May 17, 1908.

after witnessing the exciting bullfight that was shown on Saturday and after having seen the test screening of the paramount and unrivalled -take well into account these two adjectives- film *Vida de Jesús* [*The Life of Jesus*].⁵⁴

Theatrical programs were not only made of theater and moving images, but, in fact, they comprised various artistic presentations. The detailed information about one of the theatrical programs provides us with an idea of the number of sonorous acts that a theatrical program was composed of. For instance, the program started with the national anthem, followed by the theatrical play. The third number was a local dance performance executed by the two Misses Pastors. Next came a singing show, and the Pathé Freres' film *La vida de Jesús* was screened at the end of the program.⁵⁵

From the above, it is evident that cinema was not yet considered a spectacle in its own right until early 1908 in Quito. This is also confirmed by a contemporary account of this same year that discusses the spectacles of the city, which were namely three: theater, bullfighting and horse racing.⁵⁶ Moving pictures, as we can see, were not included. In other words, moving image screenings were not part of people's daily life in Quito. In fact, it is mentioned that in general, "public spectacles" were still highly rare in Quito.⁵⁷

The fact that motion pictures were not yet considered an established form of entertainment in Quito was possibly due to at least three aspects: First, cinema was dependent on other entertainment. Second, no company was in charge of the permanent cinematographic business in the city, which made the frequency of the screening of moving images depend on traveling exhibitors. Lastly, cinema had no exclusive venue to be shown in. The screenings took place in the main theater of Quito, where many other events were also staged.

Around this time, in May 1908, there was a rupture in how moving images were shown in Quito since the film *La vida de Jesús* was removed from theatrical programs. In fact, *La vida de Jesús*, which had six thousand meters of film, divided into five parts,⁵⁸ was no longer included in a theatrical

54 "Sección cinematográfica," *El Comercio*, May 26, 1908.

55 "La función de antenoche," *El Comercio*, May 26, 1908.

56 "Bibliografía," *El Comercio*, March 25, 1908.

57 "Bibliografía," *El Comercio*, March 25, 1908.

58 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, May 28, 1908.

program but shown independently. Simply put, due to the arrival of a long moving picture such as *La vida de Jesús*, moving images were no longer screened as part of theatrical programs, but in an independent fashion. It was argued that this “film” had nothing to do with the one screened in 1906 by the traveling exhibitor Valenti, since on that occasion the pictures were ‘white, still’ and only a few in number. Now these images were in color, in motion and the entire Passion of Jesus was complete.⁵⁹

To increase the attraction of the independent screening of *La vida de Jesús*, dancing became part of the cinematographic program. For the first time ever, moving pictures were the main entertainment and included a sonic event. In other words, not only films were included in sonorous environments; sonorous acts were put in programs in which moving images were the main attraction. In this type of screening, the moving images gained the main attraction status and were no longer secondary, as they had been in the previous theatrical programs.

Just after this, Quito’s contemporary inhabitants discovered that not only moving images would be shown independently, accompanied by other artistic acts, but that the moving images would have sound themselves, thanks to the arrival of the ‘Singing Biograph,’⁶⁰ owned by Mr. A. Casas.⁶¹ That is, there would be showings in which the sound would not be added by other performers, but by a machine:⁶²

This new invention must not be confused with a cinematograph. It is very different and superior because it shows moving images that depict on-stage dramatic performances, in which combined accurately with another apparatus, the characters appear to be acting and talking simultaneously. Those who see it for the first time will be amazed, to say the least, by such an astonishing invention...⁶³

The previous quote confirms the idea that the junction between moving images and sound accompaniment was not yet existent in contemporary Quito, since such a union was regarded as a completely different invention from the cinematograph, with its screening of merely soundless moving images. Furthermore, this quote demonstrates that people

59 “Sección cinematográfica,” *El Comercio*, May 26, 1908.

60 “Biógrafo,” *El Comercio*, May 27, 1908.

61 “Biógrafo,” *El Comercio*, May 30, 1908.

62 “Biógrafo,” *El Comercio*, May 27, 1908.

63 “Biógrafo,” *El Comercio*, May 27, 1908.

expected recorded sound in combination with moving images without yet having attended any screenings. In addition to this, it is clear that in the case of Quito, the first accompaniment of the moving images was recorded sound and not live sound, given that two apparatuses were necessary.

The screening of Mr. Antonio Casas's singing biograph in Quito started in early June 1908, and the apparatus that was used to screen the singing moving pictures, also called 'singing views,' was the 'Teatro Gramo-Synchronisme París':⁶⁴

The combination and correspondence between the representation and the singing is complete and excellent, and is distinguished by the accuracy and clarity of first hand... or [first] throat, as we think one should refer to it.

The illusion is thus complete in these images, and, therefore, we hope they deserve the public applause and general acceptance.⁶⁵

From these first screenings, in which moving images and sound were connected, clearly one of the aspects that was highlighted by the press was the correspondence between the moving images and sound. This relationship was described as capable of offering a complete illusion, which means that there was a visible connection between them. Since the actors who would soon be heard through the singing biograph, described as the "best actors in the world," were unknown in the city, their pictures were exhibited in a shop:⁶⁶ "In the shop of Mr. Enrique Salgado Q, the portraits of the best actors of the world are on display; their voices will be heard in the theater [cinema], when businessman Mr. A. Casas' singing biograph is shown."⁶⁷ It is unknown yet if the singing moving pictures were shown in the premiere. However, it is known that after the premiere, among the repertoire of singing, views were *Campanas de Corneville*, *La Traviata* and *Chateaux Margaux*.⁶⁸

As the screenings of the moving images continued in the city, one could observe that the singing views were put into the second part of the program and not shown at the beginning, as they had been on previous

64 "Teatro Gramo-Synchronisme París," *El Comercio*, June 4, 1908.

65 "Teatro Gramo-Synchronisme París," *El Comercio*, June 4, 1908.

66 "Biógrafo," *El Comercio*, May 30, 1908.

67 "Biógrafo," *El Comercio*, May 30, 1908.

68 "Acudid!," *El Comercio*, June 6, 1908.

days.⁶⁹ The location of the singing views as secondary in the program gives us an explicit idea of their low popularity in the city. The public's opinion of this innovation, in fact, is manifested very clearly in the following lines: "We have been assured that there will only be a few singing views so that preference is given to the ones that the public has liked the most."⁷⁰ This quotation clearly shows that moviegoers did not like much the singing views. The reasons for this are probably related to the fact that the sounds of the singing views were not heard very well in the venue.

The independent screening of moving images and the theatrical performances of the time had to adjust to each other's schedules, as both used the same venue, the Sucre Theater. Thus the moving images were shown on some days, and the theatrical company performed on the remaining days.⁷¹

During these days, J. Casajuana, another traveling exhibitor, was in Guayaquil and arrived in Quito a few days after his exhibitions there.⁷² His repertoire also included singing views, which, as mentioned earlier, were not the audience's favorites in Quito. Just as with the other singing views, photos of the actors singing in the singing moving images were displayed in public sites.⁷³ When the two traveling exhibitors converged in Quito, the moving images began to be recognized as a spectacle in the capital; thus, their screening was granted a space alongside horse racing and bullfighting and a temporary circus that had arrived in the city at that time.⁷⁴ As one might expect, this recognition of the moving images as a spectacle had emerged much earlier in Guayaquil.⁷⁵

The fact that there had been no railway to Quito seems to be the reason why Casajuana, who arrived in the capital when the railway opened in 1908,⁷⁶ apparently in the first trip from Guayaquil,⁷⁷ had not already been to the capital in 1906. On that occasion, Casajuana had already presented his showings with musical accompaniment in 1906 in

69 "La función," *El Comercio*, June 11, 1908. "... In the presentations of the second segment of the program, the singing views, there was great uniformity between the actors' singing and movements. (...)"

70 "Beneficio," *El Comercio*, June 18, 1908.

71 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, June 2, 1908.

72 "Biógrafo París," *El Comercio*, June 14, 1908.

73 "Biógrafo París," *El Comercio*, June 21, 1908.

74 "Espectáculos," *El Comercio*, June 21, 1908. See also "Más espectáculos," *El Comercio*, June 28, 1908.

75 "Biógrafo París," *El Telégrafo*, July 6, 1906. See also "Biógrafo París," *El Telégrafo*, July 9, 1906.

76 "Espectáculos," *El Comercio*, June 21, 1908.

77 "Arribo de pasajeros," *El Comercio*, June 23, 1908. See also "Más espectáculos," *El Comercio*, June 28, 1908.

Guayaquil.⁷⁸ These were not only musical moving images, but also had historical themes:⁷⁹ *Las transformaciones de personajes europeos*, *El fugitivo de muchas novias*, and *La venganza de un padre*.⁸⁰ The repertoire he presented in Quito in 1908 was partly the same as that which he had presented two years before in Guayaquil although it had also some novelties. The faraway capital received these innovations two years later than Guayaquil.

When Casajuana arrived in Quito in 1908 he continued screening singing views, which received positive comments:

... in the singing views, and even in those that, strictly, do not belong to this genre, the correspondence between music and movement in general, with the singing and the *noises* [sound effects] is perfect, and since the Biophone is powerful, and adjustable to the acoustic conditions of the venue, the illusion is complete and all in all satisfactory.⁸¹

The discussion on the volume of the apparatus is significant. In fact, the volume of the apparatus, which covered the entire Sucre Theater with sound was recognized as a feature that prompted complete illusion. Furthermore, from this information we learn that the term 'singing views' was used to describe not only images that included music, but also moving images with noises, or what today are referred to as 'sound effects.' In other words, it is important to mention that singing views were in fact moving images with different kinds of sounds (music and sound effects).

Despite the praise for this presentation, the local account mentions one issue that cannot be overlooked regarding audience numbers. It is mentioned that there was a very large number of people, and that it was certain that this number would increase in future presentations.⁸² That is to say, at that point, these exhibitions were not sold out: "... The public - numerous and select, which for sure will increase in the following screenings - could verify what we are talking about regarding the referenced screening."⁸³

78 "Biógrafo París," *El Telégrafo*, July 7, 1906. See also Wilma Granda, *Cine silente en Ecuador, 1895-1955*. (Quito: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1995), 25.

79 "Biógrafo París," *El Telégrafo*, July 9, 1906.

80 "Biógrafo París," *El Telégrafo*, July 7, 1906.

81 "El Biógrafo París," *El Comercio*, July 4, 1908.

82 "El Biógrafo París," *El Comercio*, July 4, 1908.

83 "El Biógrafo París," *El Comercio*, July 4, 1908.

As is clear, moving images were combined with recorded sound in 1908 for the first time according to what has been found in *El Comercio*. The junction between these two elements took place in May 1908. The first exhibitor that brought this innovation to Quito was Mr. A. Casas who arrived prior to the operation of the train in 1908. In addition to recorded sound, in 1908, live sound accompaniment was included in the moving image screenings. This fact can be evidenced in an account of 1908 when *El Comercio* reports the inclusion of a live orchestra in the cinematographic program in July 9, 1908, a screening done by the traveling exhibitor Casajuana: "... Despite installing electric light for the biograph's orchestra, the musicians performed really badly, just as in the previous screening, in which we were almost beaten to death with flutes and cornets."⁸⁴

This information reveals two aspects in relation to the reviewer's complaint: first, a possible amateurism of the musicians. Second, a lack of appropriate facilities such as electric light. In order for the orchestra to better perform in the cinematographic screenings, changes had to be made to the facilities of the Sucre Theater. As we can see, the lack of orchestras in Quito either by the amateurism of the musicians or due to the lack of facilities for the orchestras to perform could be another explanation for earlier non-inclusion of live music in the moving image acts. These circumstances certainly went beyond the traveling exhibitors' willingness to add live sound to moving image screenings; they simply did not have the means to do so.

In a different piece of article, there is information that the very same screening of July 9, 1908, in fact, included two kinds of auidial accompaniment: Live and recorded music, since in addition to the orchestra, whose name to this day remains unknown, there were also singing views such as *Pagliacci*, performed by Italian tenor Zenatello, which especially motivated a 'watching' and 'hearing' public.⁸⁵ This tripartite showing composed of moving images, an orchestra and singing view, was described as a success in spite of the orchestra's sorry performance.

In addition to be the first screening where live music was for the first time included, the screening of July 9, 1908 is a special one since this is the first one in 1908 that was promoted through an advertisement in *El*

84 "En montón," *El Comercio*, July 11, 1908.

85 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, July 11, 1908.

Comercio.⁸⁶ Obviously, the publishing of advertisements in the local press boosted interest in this entertainment. This can also be considered from another viewpoint: these advertisements contributed to the inclusion of the moving pictures in people's daily lives as a recreation (Fig. 1):⁸⁷



Figure 1: First advertisement for moving images in 1908 in *El Comercio*

In this advertisement, as is clear, Casajuana, who after this advertisement published various advertisements in *El Comercio* to promote his screenings,⁸⁸ did not mention the inclusion of the orchestra in the screening. Two days later, on July 11, the local Beethoven Society Orchestra was 'officially' included in the program to provide musical accompaniment:

Moving images and music.- Mr. Casajuana, promoter, has assured the success of the theater season that he is in charge of, with the presentation of beautiful views, enlivened, if I may, with musical pieces brilliantly executed by the members of the 'Sociedad Beethoven' Orchestra, which since last Saturday, is the theater's official orchestra, news something that has been received with great pleasure by the fans of the divine art of Mozart. (...)

86 Cinema advertisement, *El Comercio*, July 9, 1908. This advertisement was the first one published in 1908. It is important not to forget that in 1906 Valenti's cinematograph was also promoted through something like an advertisement although Valenti's notice was rather more a piece of news with a picture rather than an advertisement.

87 Cinema advertisement, *El Comercio*, July 9, 1908.

88 Cinema advertisement, *El Comercio*, July 9, 1908. See also Cinema advertisement, *El Comercio*, July 10, 1908. Cinema advertisement, *El Comercio*, July 11, 1908. Cinema advertisement, *El Comercio*, July 14, 1908.

We therefore have a screening with a double attraction, the views of the biograph and real concerts by the young artists of the pleasant 'Beethoven' Orchestra. (...) Hopefully, the pieces that the orchestra plays will also be published in the program.⁸⁹

It is striking that this account emphasized the junction between moving images and music in the headline because these two elements had already been combined in the singing views screened in the city for some time. However, it is clear that the author did this since once live music, and not only recorded music, was included in the screenings, cinema was regarded as the junction of two types of entertainment in one performance for one single ticket price.⁹⁰ This allowed the traveling exhibitor to appeal to moving-image fans as well as those fond of music.

The abovementioned piece of news makes it clear that the combination of the two entertainments, moving images and live music, increased the number of attendants.⁹¹ By the same token, the inclusion of a live orchestra allowed cinema to continue to stand out as an event of its own, for it no longer depended on other spectacles to survive. It also possibly helped expand the length of the program. The music the orchestra played was not local music, but rather classical, such as the music from *La Gioconda* and "The Dance of the Hours" by Amilcare Ponchielli. Other pieces were "La Lisonjera" by Chaminade, as well as music by Béla Kéler and Frédéric Chopin.

The threefold junction between recorded sound, moving images and live music continued in Casajuana's following presentations. In other words, in this second phase of his shows, as we can see, he added the presentation of live music to the screening of singing and non-singing views. Thus, both the singing view *El Farolero* and the performance of orchestra 'Sociedad Beethoven' were highly praised. In addition to the National Anthem, the orchestra played Marseillaise, and also pieces for the opening of the second and third parts of the program.⁹²

Apart from this, the same news also revealed that Enrique Casajuana, a famous pianist, orchestra conductor, and brother of the traveling

89 "Vistas y música," *El Comercio*, July 14, 1908.

90 "Vistas y música," *El Comercio*, July 14, 1908.

91 "Vistas y música," *El Comercio*, July 14, 1908.

92 "El Biógrafo París," *El Comercio*, July 16, 1908.

exhibitor Casajuana, had just arrived in Quito. Since Enrique Casajuana was an orchestra director, it was said that he should make the musicians of 'Sociedad Beethoven' commit to future moving picture screenings in order to guarantee the success of the traveling exhibiting company and because it would please the public.

The triple combination in the screenings continued with the arrival of Casajuana's brother. Under Enrique Casajuana's conduction, the orchestra received an ovation for playing 'modern music' and not the music of past screenings, at which the reviewer had been under the impression he was attending a funeral.⁹³ Unfortunately, the author does not mention the titles of the pieces played under Enrique Casajuana's baton. As for the singing views, Giuseppe Verdi's *Otello*, sung by Ferruccio Corradetti, baritone, was screened, and over the next few days, the screenings included singing views such as *Papá Martín* performed by Ferruccio Corradetti, *Los novios* and *El silbido*.⁹⁴ Other singing views screened in Quito were an aria from *Pagliacci* and Félix Mayol's song *La Matchiche*.⁹⁵

Additionally, the Casajuana brothers screened Gaumont's *Vida, Pasión y Muerte de N. S. J* accompanied by a score written particularly for the film:

For the second 'trendy' screening that will take place next Tuesday, they have announced the premiere of the great film *Vida, Pasión y Muerte de N. S. J*. With music specially written for this motion picture by Maestro Enrique Casajuana.

This celluloid is the latest creation of the Gaumont house from Paris, and the Casajuana's company is the only one that owns it.⁹⁶

From this quote, we learn that a particular piece of music was composed to accompany a film. Furthermore, this film was exhibited on 'Trendy Tuesdays,' which means that the film was shown in a sophisticated and extraordinary performance. The 'Trendy Screenings' or premier screenings was held on Tuesdays. This⁹⁷ was established by Mr. Casajuana, taking the idea from the tradition of main capitals of Europe and America. The purpose of these screenings was to make that day something out of the ordinary: "In those screenings it is customary to have distinctive and

93 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, July 19, 1908.

94 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, July 21, 1908.

95 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, July 25, 1908.

96 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, July 24, 1908.

97 The first "Trendy Screening" took place on July 21, 1908.

elegant programs since the entire society [high social ranks] is part of the audience."⁹⁸ This shows how the idea of the premiere days arrived in Quito, and this conception of how screenings should be organized was promoted as important, following as it did the standards of other places.

The screening of Gaumont's *Vida, Pasión y Muerte de N. S. J* was a complete success, for the balcony, stalls and gallery seats were all sold out. The film, as well as the music, was highly extolled, and based on the way in which these two elements were reported, a major shift took place in Quito. Initially, the moving images and sound were reported on separately, but in the last part of the local review, the music specifically composed for the film was regarded as suitable: "A special ovation should be given to Maestro Enrique Casajuana, author of the music we listened to, which was very appropriate for this view [moving images]."⁹⁹ Along with Gaumont's *Vida, Pasión y Muerte de N. S. J* and its musical accompaniment, other singing views such as *Fausto* were also exhibited.¹⁰⁰ It took only three weeks for Tuesdays' trendy screening to become the public's favorites.¹⁰¹

One of the last screenings by the Casajuana brothers in Quito was that presented during the festivities of the Independence of Ecuador, on August 10. It is unknown whether *La Inquisición* was or not a singing view. However, the sounds of fear, provoked by the film *La Inquisición*, which came from the terrified audience were reviewed by the local press as follows:

The crowd was large, and since *La Inquisición* was being exhibited, there was great excitement from watching the different frightening scenes. The most wrought-up burst into despair and screams of execration against those who executed such horrible punishments.¹⁰²

Towards the end of Casajuana's stay, the reports began to point out repetition.¹⁰³ After the departure of Casajuana, the live orchestra remained in the programs for another year. In other words, moving images and sound accompaniment continued to be linked in different ways in 1909. In the same year J. Wickenhauser & Co. also presented moving images with an orchestra. Local reviewers continued raising their voices against the poor

98 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, July 21, 1908.

99 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, July 30, 1908.

100 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, July 27, 1908.

101 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, August 4, 1908.

102 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, August 12, 1908.

103 "Biógrafo París," *El Comercio*, August 12, 1908.

participation of the orchestra. We can see that on this occasion the orchestra was different from that which participated in 1908; this time the orchestra was that of the Conservatory:

Orchestra: Incomplete and with clear signs of improvisation: the public, who fortunately already know what good orchestral music is... could not restrain their impatience and forced the conservatory musicians to shut up.

However, this hostile protest might be the consequence of the annoyance with which, from the beginning, the public noticed that the staff of a public educational institution, which should only appear in official events, was hired in this way... the first company that appeared in the picture.¹⁰⁴

In spite of this complaint, in 1909, it also became clearer that the silent moving images contributed to the better performance of orchestras in Quito, as they forced musicians to perform and therefore rehearse more: "Even the orchestra has improved a great deal with the execution of the pieces."¹⁰⁵

This quotation suggests that the presence of silent moving pictures contributed not only to the blossoming of chamber orchestras, but also to the orchestras' better performances, probably due to the number of presentations and rehearsals that they had to undergo. Thus the showing of moving images played a part in the thriving of music in the city.

The possibility, as I stated before, that cinematography may have contributed to the development of chamber orchestras in general, and in particular to them playing during silent cinema screenings, also receives further support as 'The London Sextet,' of which four Ecuadorians were part,¹⁰⁶ was requested to play together with the 'Sociedad Beethoven' orchestra at the official event of Quito's celebrations, as there were no other appropriate spectacles available to honor the city on such an important date.¹⁰⁷

Considering the program announced by 'The London Sextett' for next Thursday's concert, one can be assured that it will be quite a musical event for Quito. For the first time, our public will

104 "Biógrafo Americano," *El Comercio*, May 27, 1909.

105 "Biógrafo," *El Comercio*, July 6, 1909.

106 "Magnífico," *El Comercio*, July 18, 1909.

107 "The London Sextett," *El Comercio*, July 29, 1909.

be able to appreciate what a true classical concert is as in all the performances of the program, this is what chamber music is. (...) Finally, we will have the occasion to listen to a Beethoven quartet, all the quartet in F major, a marvelous monument in which one can widely appreciate the genius' work.¹⁰⁸

The singing views continued to be screened in 1913. This year Gaumont's Chronomégaphone was used to exhibit these kinds of films (Fig. 2):¹⁰⁹



Figure 2: Gaumont's Chronomégaphone advertisement in Quito

Singing views referred to as talking pictures in other studies were not only in Ecuador in 1913, but also in the United States¹¹⁰ and Europe.¹¹¹ In fact, according to Rick Altman, in the 1907-1909 period, synchronized sound film projection systems were massively introduced in cinema.¹¹²

108 "The London Sextett," *El Comercio*, July 21, 1909.

109 Cinema advertisement, *El Comercio*, February 4, 1913.

110 Eyman, *The Speed of Sound*, 30, 34.

111 Ibid. 31.

112 Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 158.

In the case of Russia, according to Yuri Tsivian, although Gaumont's 'Chronomégaphone' was exhibited in Moscow as early as on 8 October 1906, no critical references to sound have been found in the local press before 1908.¹¹³

To conclude, in this chapter I have examined the process of the integration of recorded and live sound accompaniment into moving images at the beginning of the 20th century in Quito, which shows that the screening of moving images in combination with recorded and live sound did not arrive for the first time in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but had already reached Ecuador in the early 20th century.

In addition to this, as has already been pointed out, in the case of Quito, recorded sound was first used to provide sound accompaniment to moving images. The presence of live orchestras for delivering sound to the moving image screenings started somewhat later. However, whether recorded or live, sound accompaniment to moving pictures was integrated into the screenings in mid-1908 in Quito. One could argue that sound as accompaniment was integrated into the screenings at almost the same moment that the mechanical sound of the railway was heard in the city. Prior to 1908, although there are accounts of screenings in Quito, sound in these screenings, if there was any, was not discussed in any way in *El Comercio*.

Casajuana's arrival, occurring at the same time as the arrival of the railway to Quito, also led to the inclusion of live music in the silent screenings played by both an orchestra and a pianist since Casajuana first included the Beethoven orchestra into the screenings and, in addition to this, the opening of the railway certainly enabled Casajuana to bring his brother to Quito right after he had started his screenings in the city. The arrival of his brother, who was a musician, ensured the frequent inclusion of live music in the screenings, since Casajuana soon became the conductor of the local orchestra. As already mentioned, this fact raises questions about the availability of orchestras and musicians in the city to accompany the moving images. It also clearly shows how the emergence of chamber orchestras was boosted by cinema.¹¹⁴

113 Yuri Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 102.

114 To Pablo Guerrero, around 1830, when Ecuador became independent from Spain, *bandas militares* and *populares* had a key role in the diffusion of what the author calls 'war music.' Guerrero does not point out the presence of orchestras in Ecuador and in Quito. In addition to this, Guerrero points out that the establishment of the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional was decreed in 1950 and was established in 1955. See Pablo Guerrero, *Enciclopedia de la música ecuatoriana* (Quito: Corporación Musicológica Ecuatoriana CONMUSICA; Archivo Sonoro de la Música Ecuatoriana, 2002), 23-35.

Prior to the operation of trains, traveling exhibitors could do very little to transport their moving image reels to Quito, a city where transportation still relied on human and animal power. For instance, they could only carry a limited number of films, causing repetition in the repertoire. With the opening of the railway, in mid-June 1908,¹¹⁵ traveling exhibitors had an extra tool to better present their screenings: Firstly, the train enabled more variety of films since more moving pictures could be carried to Quito and, secondly, the railway enabled the inclusion of live musical accompaniment in the screenings.

By 1908, among the other aspects already discussed, it is clear that there were several changes in addition to that of the advent of the railway to Quito. One of these major shifts was that by 1908, the silence of moving images was not considered the only attraction for patrons, but rather live music accompaniment was regarded as an “addition” to guarantee moviegoers’ presence. At the beginning, the combination of moving images with live music was not yet regarded as one, but two separate forms of entertainment; that is, two amusements with one single ticket price. The insertion of music — recorded and live — possibly contributed to cinema becoming an independent form of entertainment.

115 “El ferrocarril en Chimbacalle,” *El Comercio*, June 18, 1908.

Chapter 2 Popularity of Cinema in the Late 1920s

Mechanizing Entertainment

Honest distractions are important to peoples' lives. At times, Quito falls into complete monotony because the shows become increasingly rare... On occasion, we are visited all at once by some theatrical companies, circuses and other eye-catching distractions, but they also all at once go away and the population is left eager for some healthy delight...

Since our theatrical companies are scattered, some of them dissolved, and some perhaps failed, we have no other distraction at night than cinema, to which the people have become very accustomed.¹¹⁶

By the late 1920s, there were about thirty-eight screenings per week, which were distributed across the four purpose-built cinemas as shown in the following schedule:

		Mon- day	Tues- day	Wednes- day	Thurs- day	Fri- day	Satur- day	Sun- day
10:30	Edén	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
14:00	P. del Sol	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
14:30	Variedades	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
17:15	Edén	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
21:00	Edén	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
20:30	Variedades	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
19:45	P. del Sol	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
20:00	Popular	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Table 1. Cinema schedule by late 1920s. Dashes signify no screening at that particular time and plus signs that there was a screening at that time.

From table 1, it is evident that cinema offered a wide variety

116 "Espectáculos públicos," *El Comercio*, September 4, 1929.

of hours for the audience, leaving apparently no room for other forms of recreation in the city. Despite this, cinema was not an isolated amusement since theater, bullfighting, circus, football, boxing, and horse-racing were all part of the entertainment sphere. These activities, however, could not compete with cinema's schedule, because they shared one common difficulty: Frequency.

The other amusements could not compete with the number of cinema's daily performances for various reasons, but in this chapter, I analyze two: First, the mechanical aspect of repetition of cinema, and second, the influence of weather. Regarding the first aspect, it is clear that the other amusements faced difficulties of presenting non-mechanical entertainment in a far-away city such as Quito due to the costs of presenting their shows and the difficulties of transporting all that was needed for their exhibitions to such a hard-to-access Andean city. In comparison to cinema, it is obvious that even if the other entertainments had daily performances, they would not have been able to provide them more than once per day, which made it impossible for them to catch up with the five daily screenings of the movie - screenings which could, of course, be repeated as many times as desired.

As regards the second aspect, I argue that the influence of the weather on these alternative amusements restricted their occurrence on a regular basis, as they took place in open-air spaces, excluding boxing and the circus. The following account shows that rain, for example, had an impact on bullfighting:

From the moment that we read in the programs that the bullfight would take place at three in the afternoon, we had doubts if it would be carried out at all because that time is precisely the classic hour of storms in Quito, which usually sweep away everything in their path. However, as it was also announced that a tent would cover the area, there was some confidence that the tent would help somewhat, without taking into account of course that when it rains in Quito 'water and more water pours down', so there is no possible defense.¹¹⁷

All in all, it seems plausible that it was the mechanical aspect of cinema as well as its indoor characteristic that enabled it to have thirtyeight screenings in the late 1920s in Quito. Even though there were other entertainments at the time, they could not rival the scheduling and

117 K CHITO, "De Toros," *El Comercio*, March 28, 1932.

frequency of cinema screenings.

As is clear, the mechanical nature of cinema and the influence of weather both played a role in the wide number of showings that cinema offered. In addition to this, it becomes evident that the variety of screenings was structured in earlier years, which demonstrates that cinema did not become the main entertainment in Quito overnight in 1929, but rather that it was the result of a long process. For instance, during its first years in Quito, cinema was mostly a night-time entertainment, and the screenings finished after midnight (of which, more below). However, so that families could go to the movies with their children, more screenings were gradually included during the day. The first showings to be included on a schedule other than night-time were the early afternoon exhibitions:

In view of the fact that many families cannot attend the screenings at night, this Sunday 27th the company in charge of the Biograph has decided to offer an extra showing with a selected program dedicated to children.

The screening will take place at 3 pm.¹¹⁸

The first early afternoon showing, as found in *El Comercio*, took place at 3 pm¹¹⁹ and was introduced by the Ecuadorian traveling exhibitor Manuel M. Miño in 1910. From 1910 to 1914, early afternoon screenings were extremely rare, and morning screenings did not take place, not even on Sundays, the only full-time resting day back then. From 1914 early afternoon screenings became more frequent possibly prompted by the establishment of the first purpose-built cinema in the city in 1914. However, until 1922, the date until which I have researched silent cinema, these screenings did not take place permanently.

The other screenings that were incorporated during the daytime before 1929 were the morning screenings, which took place on Sunday mornings, since this was, as already mentioned, the only full-time resting day of the week. These screenings began to appear in the cinema timetable in the mid-1910s.¹²⁰ By 1918¹²¹ morning screenings were already well positioned in the city although the frequency with which they were shown in

118 "Teatro," *El Comercio*, February 26, 1910.

119 "Teatro Sucre," *El Comercio*, February 26, 1910.

120 "Teatro Royal Edén," *El Comercio*, January 23, 1915. Although vermouths occurred at 10:30 on Sundays, they also took place occasionally on Thursday afternoons at 5:30 pm.

121 Gerard d'Lys, "La Tanda Vermouth," *El Comercio*, February 11, 1918. See also Ramiro de Silva, "La tanda Vermouth," *Caricatura*, December 15, 1918.

later years remains still unknown. In addition, in 1923, the 5 pm screenings, called 'Special,' were established.¹²²

Even though it was not only a night-time entertainment in 1929, cinema was an activity mostly confined to the evenings. As we have seen, out of thirty-eight screenings a week, twenty-eight occurred at night, seven at around 5 pm every day (only at the Edén Theater), one occurred at 10 am on Sundays (the Edén Theater) and two were early on Sunday afternoons, around 2 pm (the Puerta del Sol and Variedades Theaters).

Other characteristics that contributed to cinema becoming the main entertainment in the city in the late 1920s, before the arrival of sound film, was the geographical location of the four cinema venues and the different ticket prices offered for each screening, which allowed cinema to engage audiences from different social classes. As for the location of the venues, by 1929 Quito had four cinemas. Two cinemas, the Variedades Theater (April 1914) and the Edén Theater (Nov 1914), the two oldest purpose-built cinemas, were located in highbrow neighborhoods (Plaza del Teatro and Plaza de la Independencia, respectively). In addition to these were the lowbrow theaters, the Puerta del Sol (1919) and the Popular Theater (1922). The first was placed in a working-class neighborhood. The Popular Theater, although located behind the Variedades, did not enjoy a highbrow status.

The existence of high- and lowbrow venues demonstrates that cinema maintained the social classes' hierarchical organization in the city. The construction of the lowbrow cinemas in the late 1910s suggests that in the late 1910s and early 1920s, people of the lower strata were massively integrated into this form of the cultural public sphere. This can also be interpreted as the separation of the lower social classes from the most luxurious theaters, as people of the lower strata had already been going to cinema since earlier times. Moreover, it is also evident that the number of screenings increased proportionally to the building of more venues.

The emergence of cinemas from 1914 onwards does not mean that cinema was not screened in the city earlier than 1914. As I already pointed out in Chapter 1, moving images first occupied the Opera theater from 1906 to 1914. Even in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Opera theater was occasionally used to screen moving images. In fact, the Opera theater

122 Cinema advertisement, *El Comercio*, September 3, 1923. For early presence of these screenings see Cinema advertisement, *El Comercio*, January 16, 1923.

was the first location to host the sound cinema in Quito in September 1930.

Regarding the different tickets, which also contributed to the popularity of cinema in 1929, each screening had two seat prices: One for the stalls and one for the gallery seats. The stalls, the most expensive and high-class seats, were right in front of the screen, allowing people to see the screen from a good angle; in those times the screen was not especially large. These seats were also close to the orchestra. These two facts probably led to these places being considered the best ones. Conversely, the gallery was at the upper side of the venues, and as a result, was far from the screen and the orchestra, making these seats the cheapest. Gallery ticket prices were three times cheaper than those of the stalls.

Having two prices can be interpreted in two ways: First, cinema appealed to people from different social classes and various social statuses, and they were together in one single screening, which can be seen as inclusive. However, this also reveals that the hierarchy of the city extended even into theaters since inside the theater, social classes did not mix.

In addition to the dual ticket-price screenings, some showings, such as the Vermouth's Sunday morning showing, had a third price for children. This was the only screening that offered a special price of 30 cents for them. Sometimes, although seldom, 'balcony' seats were offered, which were very expensive. Regarding the third ticket price, the case of the Popular Theater was exceptional, as it was the only theater that permanently included a third price in all of its screenings except on Sundays, the so-called 'preference' seats. This price was slightly higher than that of the gallery.

Stalls and gallery ticket prices were not unified in all the venues, which means that each venue had different stalls and gallery ticket prices. These prices were also in tune with the status of each cinema; for example, the ticket prices of the Edén and Variedades were about the same, as were the prices of the Puerta del Sol and Popular Theaters. The prices were not always the same; they varied daily. However, this variation in price was characteristic of all the theaters.

All in all, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, cinema could offer a variety of showings thanks to being a mechanical entertainment and therefore able to present various screenings per day and also to its non-dependency on weather conditions. Additionally, the emplacement of the venues, the sitting locations, and ticket prices helped cinema to capture a larger audience than other forms of entertainment. Looking back in history,

the number of screenings per day was also increased considering night-time as a factor that influenced cinema since it was taken into account that parents could not attend the movies at night to put their children to bed early.

Blossoming of Secularized Times and Spaces

The only activity with a frequency comparable to that of the screenings was not a secular activity, but a religious one in the late 1920s. Masses, although not considered entertainment, also offered a variety of options for people during their free time.¹²³ The number of daily religious services was around forty. Unlike cinema, Masses mostly took place in the morning from 4 am to around 8:30 am, at which most Masses ended. Each Mass lasted thirty minutes. According to information found in *El Debate*, they took place in at least fourteen churches located in different parts of the city. Some churches held more services than others. Due to the short duration of each religious service and to the quantity of churches in which they occurred, there were around three hundred Masses per week, which shows that they far surpassed the number of cinema screenings in Quito.

The fact that most Masses occurred in the morning did not mean that they did not also take place in the afternoon. However, the number of religious services in the afternoon was small compared to that of the mornings. In fact, there were two religious services in the afternoon on Sundays, at 6 pm and 6:30 pm. This number increased to around seven services in total in the fourteen churches. In conclusion, Masses filled people's free time in the mornings, while cinema did so in the afternoons. On Sundays in the late 1920s and early 1930s, people had the option to go to church from 4 am to around 10 am.¹²⁴ Afterwards, they could go to the movies, as children's screenings began at 10:30 am.

As we can see, Masses did not overlap with the schedule of cinema, not even on Sundays. In fact, before establishing daytime cinema showings, the exhibitors took into account the schedule of the religious services, as we will see in the coming paragraphs. Daytime screenings were never shown before 10 am throughout the history of cinema in those years in Quito. This is further evidence of how secularity was becoming increasingly integrated into religious thinking.

123 "Culto religioso," *El Debate*, August 29, 1929.

124 Although the newspaper mentioned 14 churches, there was only one Mass at 11:00. The other Masses ended earlier. See "Culto religioso," *El Debate*, August 29, 1929.

In the early 1930s in Quito, it is clear that people's leisure time was structured around both secular and religious activities, principally cinema and Mass. The difference between these two was that while the Church regulated people's free time in the morning, cinema did so in the afternoon and at night. This was the situation during working days and on Sundays. The new secularized spaces did not erase the former religious time, but rather coexisted with them.

By the late 1920s, the timetable of cinema was not the only secular time that coexisted with the religious services. In the case of Quito, secularized times spread all over the city by the late 1920s: Dancing time, cinema time, tea time and a variety of sports times blossomed. This raises the question of the extent to which, in addition to the social production of space, there was also social production of time so that people would be able to consume space. One example of this can be seen in the analysis of the emergence of resting days, such as the weekend, which is my next point of examination.

Rise of the Weekend and Other Times

Since Sunday was the only full-time resting day until late 1930 for the majority of people in Quito, this was the only day when cinema always had morning and early afternoon screenings. The arrival of the 'Sábado Inglés' as it was called, the benefit of not working on Saturday afternoon, meant that state employees received a reduction of four working hours on Saturdays in late 1930.¹²⁵ They no longer had to work from 8:00 am to 12 pm and from 2 pm to 6 pm; only for the first four hours. This was the emergence of what we know today as a weekend.

It was on October 25, 1930 that public employees were able to enjoy their first Saturday afternoon without work. Once the decree was published in the *Registro Oficial*, it was officially established in the country. Therefore, the first 'Sábado Inglés' took place on October 25, 1930.¹²⁶ On their first free Saturday afternoon, workers made various plans, which mostly involved going out to the countryside: "We know that they are going to go all out, so in every office they have prepared suitable programs: Parties in the countryside; trips to resorts, in spite of the harshness of the rainy season, outdoor luncheons."¹²⁷

125 "Se establece el Sábado Inglés para empleados públicos," *El Comercio*, September 12, 1930.

126 "El primer Sábado Inglés será el día de mañana," *El Comercio*, October 24, 1930.

127 "El Sábado Inglés," *El Comercio*, October 25, 1930.

The victory of having half of Saturday free was a progressive achievement pushed for by employees. For instance, in 1930, some public employees requested this benefit considering three aspects: First, public employees argued that they also wanted the same benefits as the employees of the banks, the railway offices and the Farm Ministry (Ministerio de Hacienda).¹²⁸ That is, it is clear that workers of the private area had received this benefit before some of the public employees. In addition, public workers declared that this was the custom not only in England, but in other European nations and even in the United States and other South American countries.¹²⁹ The reasons were thus the following of foreign patterns that they considered beneficial for Ecuador. The motivations were also mostly linked to health:

If before now, the lack of this weekly day off was not noticeable, it was because the law of eight daily hours of office work was not strictly enforced. But now, with the regulation, under which the employees have the strict obligation of being in their offices from 8 am to 12 pm, and from 2 pm to 6 pm, their health has been affected and, as all the employees have unanimously manifested, at the end of the week they experience lethargy and tiredness, perhaps a precedent of the terrible fatigue that is the deadly ailment that haunts and puts an end to the days of intellectual workers.¹³⁰

Once the free Saturday afternoon was approved, parents requested this extension in schools and high-schools so that they could spend time with their children.¹³¹ Therefore, they asked to move children's free time in the urban area from Thursday afternoons to that of Saturday afternoons. In the countryside, the situation was rather different. Students there already had Saturday afternoons off rather than Thursday afternoons:

We think that in rural schools the mandate that allows staff to be off on Saturday instead of Thursday is in effect so that female teachers, by having two days in a row, can come to the city and so that rural pupils who often live far away from schools, can return to their homes and take care of their agricultural tasks or household chores.¹³²

128 "El Sábado Inglés," *El Comercio*, January 26, 1929.

129 "El Sábado Inglés," *El Comercio*, January 26, 1929.

130 "El Sábado Inglés," *El Comercio*, January 26, 1929.

131 "Las vacaciones escolares," *El Comercio*, October 23, 1930.

132 "Las vacaciones escolares," *El Comercio*, October 23, 1930.

The 'Sábado Inglés' forced a substantial reform of the service schedule in some of the governments' departments. Problems appeared, but so did solutions. For instance, in the Sanitary Department, an extra shift was established to assist customers on Saturday afternoons.¹³³ The police department established new schedules so that commissaries and employees could also have Saturday afternoons free.¹³⁴ Soon after this law was enacted, more employees asked for the same benefit. This was the case of the teachers of the Escuela de Artes y Oficios.¹³⁵

As early as in the late 1920s, the postal public workers also wanted to have Saturday afternoons off but were denied due to the fact that the post was sent on Saturday afternoon. It was thus suggested that they take any other day of the week off.¹³⁶ At almost exactly the same time that the Bolívar Theater opened in 1933, post office workers obtained this same benefit;¹³⁷ receiving it three years later than other public employees who had obtained it in 1930.

The incorporation of more screenings in the early afternoon on Saturdays did not come immediately in 1930, but rather three years later with the opening of the Bolívar, the first purpose-built sound cinema in the city. In 1933, the Bolívar included two matinées at 3 pm, one on Thursdays and one on Saturdays.¹³⁸

Networks of Secularized Spaces

In addition to the spread of leisure times, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, there was a blossoming of leisure secular places that spread in the city such as bullfighting and horse racing rinks, stadiums, hotels, clubs, resorts, and tea-rooms.¹³⁹ Of the venues of leisure time that appeared from the early 1930s onwards, the bullfighting ring 'Plaza Arenas de Quito,' inaugurated in late 1930, must be noted.¹⁴⁰ This was not the first bullfighting ring in the city. Soon afterwards, in 1932, a third bullfighting ring named

133 "Turno especial para despachar el Sábado Inglés," *El Comercio*, October 25, 1930.

134 "Turnos para el Sábado Inglés en la Policía," *El Día*, October 28, 1930.

135 "Los maestros de la Escuela de Artes y Oficios piden que a ellos se les beneficie con el Sábado Inglés," *El Día*, November 14, 1930.

136 "Acerca del Sábado Inglés," *El Comercio*, May 3, 1929.

137 "Habrà sábado inglés en la oficina de los giros postales," *El Día*, April 19, 1933.

138 This can be evidenced in the cinema advertisements from April 23 to April 30 1933, in *El Comercio*.

139 "El primer "Tea-Room" americano en Quito," *El Día*, August 23, 1931.

140 Advertisement for Plaza Arenas de Quito, *El Día*, October 12, 1930.

'Bombita' opened in Quito, which was located in Chiriaco.¹⁴¹ In addition to bullfighting, horse-racing was also part of the city's entertainment during this period. Horse-racing also took part in a specific place, the racetrack, where on Sundays people gathered in order to watch races, bet, dance, and drink tea.¹⁴²

In addition to these places of entertainment, the city had other entertainment venues, such as hotels, which hosted cocktail dances¹⁴³ or dinner concerts.¹⁴⁴ The fact that cinema venues coexisted with other spaces for entertainment, such as the dinner concert bars, was not new to Quito in the 1930s. Both kinds of venues in fact coexisted in the city for almost two decades. The difference between the movie theaters and the dinner concerts was that in principle different social classes could participate in the former due to the different ticket prices offered; the latter was a space for those who had money. In other words, in the early 1930s, hotels were areas for the rich.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, resorts also began to blossom. These places were for relaxation, and although they were not actually in the urban area, they were highly connected to urban life and the leisure time of the city's inhabitants. The emergence of these spaces was strongly connected to urban life since the development of transportation allowed people from the city to reach these places. In fact, the emergence of this varied network of leisure went hand in hand with another urban network: transportation. One of the main spas that appeared during this period was 'El Tingo.'¹⁴⁵

In summary, I have examined different aspects that positioned silent cinema as the main entertainment in the city prior to the arrival of sound cinema at Quito. As analyzed, the mechanical characteristic of repetition and the non-dependency on weather conditions made a significant difference to cinema, allowing it to present daily showings. In addition to this, the location of the theaters as well as the ticket prices played an important role. All in all, the timetable of cinema and its venues were part of a blossoming of leisure times and places that took place with emphasis in the first decades of the 20th century in Quito.

141 K CHITO, "Una tercera plaza de toros," *El Comercio*, June 1, 1932.

142 "Tardes bailables en el Hipódromo de Quito," *El Comercio*, October 15, 1930.

143 Advertisement for Hotel Savoy, *El Comercio*, February 8, 1930.

144 Advertisement for Hotel Savoy, *El Comercio*, April 14, 1933.

145 Advertisement for "Auto Fenix," *El Debate*, January 4, 1930. See also "En Alangasí se inauguraron solemnemente las piscinas de San Pedro del Tingo," *El Comercio*, August 19, 1930.

Chapter 3 The Discursive Arrival of Sound Cinema

As already mentioned, the mechanical characteristics of cinema, its non-dependency on weather conditions, the addition of daytime screenings, the location of cinemas, and the different ticket prices allowed cinema to become the main form of entertainment in Quito by the late 1920s. In this chapter, I discuss how sound cinema in particular came to dominate the cinematographic sphere through the reading of printed texts prior to the screening of sound films. To do so, I must begin by discussing how the conceived space of contemporaries or what they had in their minds was shaped by what they read on sound cinema in the late 1920s and early 1930s in Quito.

The Circulation of Newspapers

In his famous study, *The Cheese and the Worms*, Carlo Ginzburg convincingly shows us how the mental world of Menocchio was transformed, in fact, ‘expanded enormously,’¹⁴⁶ by his encounter with different texts, for example, those of Mandeville’s accounts: “It no longer consisted only of Montereale, or Pordenone, or even Venice - the places of this world as a miller - but rather, India and Cathay and islands inhabited by cannibals, Pigmies, and men with the heads of dogs.”¹⁴⁷

What is more, as regards Ginzburg, these readings and “the diversity of beliefs and practices described” in Mandeville’s writing “led Menocchio to ask himself about the foundations of his own beliefs and acts.”¹⁴⁸ In other words, what we read makes us question ourselves and, as I analyze later, leads us to construct our own identity.

Inspired by this author, I argue that the minds of those who read the information on sound cinema changed after reading different texts and led to the domination of sound cinema over the silent film already in the

146 Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms. The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 44.

147 Ibid., 44.

148 Ibid., 45.

late 1920s, even though Quito had had no sound screenings yet. In fact, the entire world became the conceived space of Quito's inhabitants, as various printed material (the written word, photographs, and drawings, etc.), most of which was published by the local press, was about sound cinema in the United States and Europe. Even though sound cinema had not actually been heard in the city, this innovation had certainly been heard of in Quito.

How did sound cinema spread through the press in the late 1920s and early 1930s? In the late 1920s, by 1929, when *El Debate* came on the scene,¹⁴⁹ there were at least three newspapers in the city, including the recently introduced daily. During this time, the press complained that there were more newspaper readers than there were newspaper buyers¹⁵⁰ since one newspaper circulated various families:

What is more, we can be assured that none of the newspapers that are published in the republic know what their readership is, because they measure it by the number of buyers, but are not able to control how many blocks one single copy covers, as it is read by a multitude of families who would not invest the smallest amount in it.¹⁵¹

As is clear, for the contemporary press, the number of newspaper buyers, which in *El Comercio's* case was ten thousand per day,¹⁵² was thus misleading in terms of the real number of its readers, which suggests that newspapers were clear that they were more read than what sales statistics indicated. Of course, since their businesses depended mostly on sales, newspapers continued complaining about the low number of newspaper buyers. The fact that several obstacles prevented newspapers from reaching more distant regions of the country seems to have affected the number of buyers since dailies mostly circulated where they were published:

In Quito, capital of the Republic, it is a very small minority of citizens who, being able to read and write and even being cultured people, bother to take a look at a newspaper every morning. Besides, if we go from the city to smaller towns, and from these to villages, the situation is sadder and more distressing. The newspaper of Quito scarcely visits a house here and there in the

149 "El Debate," *El Comercio*, August 25, 1929.

150 Vinicio, "No nos leen," *El Día*, July 17, 1930.

151 Vinicio, "No nos leen," *El Día*, July 17, 1930.

152 Advertisement, *El Comercio*, January 12, 1932.

capitals of the immediate provinces, and the newspaper of Cuenca is unknown in Quito. As for those from Guayaquil, if they achieve any circulation in the provinces, it is thanks to the attractiveness of wire information, and not due to the national problems that are analyzed within them.

What is happening with newspapers is also occurring with magazines and books, but on a larger scale; (...).

There is a lack of reading culture among us; (...) ¹⁵³

In spite of this, dailies and magazines were by far the number one reading material of contemporaries in the early 1930s:

The man of the 20th century lives very nervously, especially he who lives in a country of such rapid evolution as ours, where American speed is being acquired.

In our country's current state, very little is being read. The idealistic man fond of reading, as seen in the center and south of Europe, is an exception among us. Not even housing designs respond to the needs of studious men; a spacious living room and a corridor for thoughtful and Peripatetic walks are no longer thought of by contemporary architects. Today, a cold garage occupies the place of a warm library.

Books are no longer read, 40 volumes by Sarmiento and 30 volumes by Alberdi seem funny to the hasty passer-by who stops at the window of a bookstore. Why write so much if there is no time to read? Pamphlets have greatly replaced books, and the crowds have dropped them to open way to magazines and newspapers.

Books are like heavy shot cannons, but in modern wars, it is more necessary to have light cannons and machine guns. The newspaper is today not only a source of information, but a means of education, given that multitude of people do not use any other way to learn and cultivate themselves intellectually and morally.

In this way, how needed and useful is a good newspaper! How must we support it even if it is modest and small!

Err those who demand numbers and greatness in things, and institutions who give them support. ¹⁵⁴

In fact, in the early 1930s, newspapers were recognized as 'guides of

153 "La Prensa," *El Debate*, July 11, 1930.

154 Rómulo Amadeo, "Apreciad el tesoro," *El Debate*, June 24, 1930.

public opinion.¹⁵⁵ The high amount of readers that one newspaper could have can already be seen in the late 1910s. For example, in 1919, the City Hall Library reported that 583 people had visited during January 1919 to read newspapers and magazines:¹⁵⁶

Newspapers and magazines	583
Literature	192
History	119
Philosophy	32
Sociology	27
Arts and Sciences	74
Religion	5
Miscellaneous	15
Philology	15
Legislation	19
Total	1.104 ¹⁵⁷

From the latter, it becomes evident that one newspaper could be read by various people. One can only imagine how many people read the newspapers in the early 1930s when Quito had four libraries: Two private and two public.¹⁵⁸

The fact that the expansion of a sound technology such as sound cinema primarily occurred through the reading of printed text could be explained at first glance as a consequence of the delayed arrival in the city of the films and sound equipment required for this technology. However, contemporary perceptions claiming the popularity of reading about cinema at the time alert us to the possibility that in general, people mostly consumed cinema by reading rather than by other means such as moviegoing:

The importance of cinema today is huge. Film companies spend millions and millions of dollars on constructing buildings, improving them, making and putting on scene films with all luxury, and paying high salaries, but little, little is given to the people in the press. However, all those wonders that exist in film studios, and all that is related to cinema, would go unnoticed by so many if a more effective and cheaper means to let us know

155 "La Prensa," *El Debate*, July 11, 1930.

156 "Biblioteca Municipal," *El Comercio*, February 3, 1919.

157 "Biblioteca Municipal," *El Comercio*, February 3, 1919.

158 "Nuestras bibliotecas," *El Debate*, June 28, 1930.

about it [cinema] did not exist. Which is it? The [written] press, all the press, namely: Large and small magazines and newspapers from all parts of the world. It is remarkable to see how girls crazy about cinema as well as serious women, and even businessmen, diligently search and browse magazines and newspapers to learn, more than anything else, about the affairs of cinema. And these 'papers' are better than any other medium, the spokesman of the progress of film companies, the names of their artists, of their films and everything related to them.¹⁵⁹

Voices such as that of Laura Galaviz raise the question as to whether cinema was mostly consumed through the press not only in places like Ecuador, which had not received, for instance, sound cinema in the form of films, sound cinemas, and sound equipment, but even in places where cinema was present in various ways in addition to what was published in newspapers. Whatever the answer to this question, it is clear that even though at that time, reading about cinema in the newspapers was considered one of the main ways to consume cinema, somewhere along the line this way of consuming cinema was largely ignored in the field of sound cinema studies. The latter challenges scholars to further investigate whether cinema was indeed more often consumed during this period through the written press than through other ways, including moviegoing.

John Barrymore's Visit to Ecuador

What did the local press publish about sound cinema? The first pieces of information on sound cinema that filled the minds of those who read the local dailies started to appear in early 1927. That is, the release in 1926 of the first feature film with synchronized score in the United States, *Don Juan* (1926)¹⁶⁰ preceded by the Warner Bros.' Vitaphone shorts¹⁶¹ received no attention in the local press. In fact, months later, news of admiration and surprise were published in early 1927 regarding the junction of moving images with sound:

A new cinematographic variation has been put on public display, which consists of the screening of films accompanied by music.

159 Laura Galaviz, "Lo que debe el cine a la prensa," *Espirales*, June 1930.

160 Karel Dibbets, "The Introduction of Sound," in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 211. See also Stephen Handzo, "The Golden Age of Film Music," *Cinéaste* 21, no. 1/2 (1995), 46.

161 Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 149.

The first demonstration of this invention has been of general acceptance and has been a success.

This representation was made by the General Electric Company, and those who saw it and heard it say that the sound of the music was sharp, clear, and could be heard at a considerable distance. We can conclude from all this that once the invention is perfected and applied by the large film producing companies in the United States, it will be possible to obtain small cinematographic machines, which can give representations with the accompaniment of a good orchestra, and, in addition, in the future, it will be possible to correctly reproduce a complete symphony other than just a good orchestral accompaniment.¹⁶²

What was this account referring to? It is difficult to tell. As for *El Comercio*, it contained nothing else on sound cinema in 1927. That is, the local press did not discuss at all the screening of the first sound film *The Jazz Singer* (1927) released in October 6, 1927 in the United States. The little discussion about sound cinema in 1926 and in 1927 in the local press contrasts with the situation of 1928. In fact, in 1928, *El Comercio* reported not only on sound cinema, but also on the combination of moving images and sound on TV, which means that the discussion on the combining of these two elements went beyond cinema already at this point:

Another marvel, even more surprising, has been promised to us: The spoken and sung cinema of television, which, through radio, will make it possible to watch and hear movies at home. (...)
... Strange are these current times in which one is able to hear someone speaking three thousand miles away, and in which one could soon watch, once we are sufficiently 'televised.'¹⁶³

The union of moving images with sound in television, as we can see, was even more striking than that which took place in cinema, since moving images with sound would be available not only in the cinema, but also at home. Another account foresaw that due to this innovation, nations would be united by sight, in the future, and no longer only by voice in a clear reference to the impact that radio had in other countries:

Now thanks to the ingenuity of Dr. E. F. W. Alexanderson, we are offered not only a televising device but also a radiographic

162 "Se inventó una maravilla cinematográfica," *El Comercio*, February 2, 1927.

163 Antonio Escobar, "Vitafono, Movitono y Fotofono," *El Comercio*, October 8, 1928.

apparatus, which with these elements combined produces both vision and sound at the same time. That is, the apparatus... brings to our sight and hearing the shape of the object and the sound that it produces.

The first public experiment was successfully carried out by Dr. Alexanderson, which established the possibility of uniting all the nations of the world, not only through voice as they are now, but also through sight.¹⁶⁴

The combination of moving images with sound was considered a possibility for achieving unification between all nations; this perception definitely marks a difference compared with the idea of the union of these two elements in cinema, since they were not seen in those terms. At the time this account was issued, the radio was not widespread in Quito; in fact, the first radio station had not yet been set up in the city.

In addition to the above-mentioned, in 1928, sound cinema was assigned eighth place among the wonders of the world that emerged in 1927.¹⁶⁵ Even though it is clear that in 1928 sound cinema was most praised, and also despite people having been informed of the existence not only of one system for the talkies, but of three systems: Vitaphone, movietone, and photophone,¹⁶⁶ this novel technology was also recognized as still being in its development stage:

I do not know if the movies that I have seen and heard were vitaphoned movietoned or photophoned, but I do know that the result has not been satisfactory. The voices are too deep and most of them are low, even the feminine ones, which indicates that the new marvel needs to be perfected, and it will be, undoubtedly, because Mr. Hoover, the presidential candidate, has said: 'With money, engineers will do whatever they are asked.'¹⁶⁷

In spite of this critique, by late 1928, the press echoed reports on the success of the expansion of sound cinema in the United States, where Western Electric had already equipped six hundred theaters to screen sound movies.¹⁶⁸ It is surprising that even by seeing the spread of sound cinema, this was not considered a threat to theater or silent cinema, at least

164 J. Hernandez Tamez, "La televisión y el radio unidos," *El Comercio*, March 17, 1928

165 "Las ocho maravillas de 1927," *El Comercio*, February 19, 1928.

166 Antonio Escobar, "Vitafoño, Movitono y Fotofoño," *El Comercio*, October 8, 1928.

167 Antonio Escobar, "Vitafoño, Movitono y Fotofoño," *El Comercio*, October 8, 1928.

168 "Desarrollo del cine sonoro," *El Comercio*, December 23, 1928

not yet, in 1928:

But won't this spoken cinema put an end to silent and theater? An end to the latter does not seem likely, since there will always be an audience who wants to see dramas and comedies depicted live by artists in the flesh. As for the former, it is not certain because silent [cinema] will have to keep on appearing for the views of landscapes and buildings, scientific issues, news of the day such as regattas, pugilism, fires, floods, and current characters, (...) ¹⁶⁹

In addition to this, in 1928, a local magazine also discussed one of the next sound films to be made: *Río Rita*¹⁷⁰ and also in this year *Don Juan*. As already mentioned, the first sound moving picture was screened in Quito as any other silent film,¹⁷¹ that is, *Don Juan* was shown with live musical accompaniment.

Sound cinema in Quito in 1929 continued to arrive through written sources, but the amount of information on sound cinema increased considerably during this period in comparison to the previous years. Prior to this enormous increase in publishing, the year began with the visit to Ecuador of John Barrymore (Fig. 3),¹⁷² who was the leading character in *Don Juan*. *Don Juan*, as already mentioned, was screened in Quito as a silent film¹⁷³ only a few months prior to the arrival of Barrymore to the city.

In other words, by the time Barrymore arrived in Quito with his wife, famous actress Dolores Costello, in 1929 as part of their honeymoon trip to Galapagos,¹⁷⁴ Barrymore had only been promoted as a famous actor of the 'silent theatre.'¹⁷⁵ This reputation continued throughout most of 1930, as the local press discussed *Don Juan* as the first sound film only in late 1930.¹⁷⁶ This is the reason why, when Barrymore visited Quito in 1929, it is highly likely that nobody in the city knew that he had filmed the first movie with recorded sound. The idea that people in Quito even in 1930 did not know that some of the films of John Barrymore included recorded

169 Antonio Escobar, "Vitafono, Movitono y Fofono," *El Comercio*, October 8, 1928.

170 "La hermosa opereta "Río Rita" será adaptada a la pantalla," *Espirales*, 1928.

171 Advertisement for *Don Juan*, *El Comercio*, November 23, 1928.

172 *El Comercio*, February 17, 1929

173 Advertisement for *Don Juan*, *El Comercio*, November 23, 1928.

174 "Dos estrellas han bajado a Quito," *El Comercio*, February 15, 1929. See also, "Los esposos Barrymore en el Palacio de Gobierno," *El Comercio*, February 17, 1929. See also "Homenaje a dos estrellas del cinematógrafo," *El Comercio*, February 17, 1929.

175 "Homenaje a dos estrellas del cinematógrafo," *El Comercio*, February 17, 1929.

176 Santiago Faure, "El secreto de las películas sonoras," *El Debate*, October 23, 1930.

sounds gets further strength when analyzing that in early 1930 *Los amores de Manon* (*When a Man Loves*, 1927), which even though this film included a musical score and sound effects,¹⁷⁷ was promoted as a silent in early 1930 in the city.¹⁷⁸ In fact, it was not mentioned in the local press that the film had those sound elements. *Los amores de Manon* was also screened with live musical accompaniment in Quito.



Figure 3: “John Barrymore and his wife taking a walk in the city.”

177 *Internet Movie Database (IMDb)*, *When a Man Loves* (1927), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0018566/>

178 “Los amores de Manon,” *El Día*, January 15, 1930. See also advertisement for *Los amores de Manon*, *El Día*, January 15, 1930. This film premiered in Quito on January 15, 1930. This day the Edén Theater also premiered a new piano brand “Fuerback.”



Figure 4: "The Barrymores at the government palace."¹⁷⁹



Figure 5: “Interesting group obtained on the occasion of the visit to Ecuador of the protagonists of the great Warner Brothers’ production *Los Amores de Manón*, whose premier will take place today. (...) From left to right: Alejandro Mesa, importer of the movie to the country, Dolores Costello and John Barrymore, principal actors of the plot.”¹⁸⁰ *El Comercio*, January 15, 1930.

The Early Discursive Arrival of Sound Cinema

As already mentioned, in 1929, sound cinema continued arriving through written texts. At this time, the local press echoed the discussion on the change in the psychology of the audience provoked by sound cinema.¹⁸¹ In addition, silent cinema was now considered to be at risk not only due to sound cinema, but to an entire set of innovations:

Will sound cinema kill silent cinema? It could be argued that yes. Its days are numbered, and the projections of sound cinema are incalculable. What is more, it is not only about sound cinema because along with it, there is embossed screening, perfect coloring and lighting and 'television' applied to the screen, all of which will appear later.

This question should be addressed to the actual theater, whose actors still argue that [cinema] is a bastard theater made for audiences of a limited cultural level. One would not dare show 'Hamlet' four or five times per day in a little theater of a small town.¹⁸²

In addition to discussing the imminent victory of sound cinema over the silent film, in 1929, the local press published articles about the film producers' efforts to solve the language barrier of English in foreign markets, which, according to local reports, represented 40 percent of the USA's cinematography income.¹⁸³ Broadly speaking, the dailies highlighted two solutions: first, the simultaneous production of sound and silent versions of a single film and, second, making silent and sound films.

With regard to the first solution for overcoming the language barrier, that is, filming two versions of the same movie — one silent and the other with sound — the press discussed the case of *Cuello de cuero*, which was filmed twice, one version being spoken and the other 'purely action.'¹⁸⁴ Another film that was going to be made both with and without sound

181 Emilio Delboy, "El cine quiere hablar," *El Comercio*, January 13, 1929. "It started by replacing the orchestras with a so-called phonographic reproduction of music. Later, the reverted sound was photographed and amplified under the same radio principles. The perfect synchronization between sound and movement appeared right away. Nowadays everything is combined through different processes and Broadway is filled with phonetic phonograms that tend to change the psychology of those old-fashioned audiences used to silent cinema."

182 Emilio Delboy, "El cine quiere hablar," *El Comercio*, January 13, 1929.

183 Emilio Delboy, "El cine quiere hablar," *El Comercio*, January 13, 1929.

184 "El problema de las películas habladas," *El Comercio*, February 17, 1929.

was *Ringside*, once the RKO had bought the rights to the play of the same name.¹⁸⁵ In the sound version, people would be able to hear the public's voices during a boxing match at the Madison Square Garden ring. The play "Ringside" became the film *Night Parade* (1929) and was released in October 1929 in the United States.

The second solution to the language problem can be considered the fact that studios such as RKO announced that they would continue making silent as well as sound films.¹⁸⁶ This company announced that only four of its productions would be sound versions, including *Río Rita* (1929) and *Hit the Deck* (1929); the remaining twenty six films would be silent "or without sound and dialogued only in some parts when it is judged prudent."¹⁸⁷ As for *Río Rita*, it was mentioned that:

After the great welcome that 'RIO RITA' received in New York, and whose music was sung, hummed and whistled not only by youngsters and humble people but even by the greatest personalities, it was shown in the theaters of other major cities like Boston, Washington, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, etc.¹⁸⁸

One aspect that cannot be taken for granted is the fact that dubbing was mentioned in local newspapers in 1929. Dubbing was not yet discussed as a solution for the problem of the language barrier, but as a method used in studios to solve the problem that the silent-era actors lacked good singing voices, which was actually another of the challenges posed by sound films. According to a local account, dubbing enabled two songs (with music and lyrics) of a well-known North American composer to be introduced in the film.¹⁸⁹ In this way, the actress appeared to be singing, although the singing voice belonged to somebody else: "... Singing and music were added to the film in New York by some person gifted with a good voice singing for the star of the movie, who would surely have given a pair of out-of-tune screams if she/he had had to do it."¹⁹⁰

According to the daily, until then one of the solutions to the language

185 "Ringside, nueva película de la Radio Pictures," *El Comercio*, May 5, 1929.

186 "La Radio dice que si hará películas sin sonido," *El Comercio*, March 17, 1929.

187 "La Radio dice que si hará películas sin sonido," *El Comercio*, March 17, 1929.

188 "La hermosa opereta "Río Rita" será adaptada a la pantalla," *El Comercio*, February 10, 1929. See also "La hermosa opereta "Río Rita" será adaptada a la pantalla," *Espirales*, November and December 1928.

189 "Aparecieron los dobles para la voz," *El Comercio*, February 24, 1929.

190 "Aparecieron los dobles para la voz," *El Comercio*, February 24, 1929.

problem had been to remove the sound parts from the 'talkies' and send them abroad as if they were silent:

Here in Hollywood there is the impression that the public who does not understand English is interested in films which, having been made to be spoken, are sent abroad as action films, that is, devoid of the elements of their synchronization. Stripped of their hearing elements, these films lose much of their interest. We immediately note in them a lack of action and also many gaps produced by the removal of the sonorous parts.¹⁹¹

Still in 1930, the press continued to discuss the different strategies for solving the language problem. For instance, films were shot twice, both with the same leading characters, but the actors were replaced by actors whose mother tongue was that of the film.¹⁹² This method was applied by Paramount in *El gran charco (The Big Pond)*, 1930). The press brought up the production of alternate language versions in Spanish later that year, but I will analyze this in another chapter.

In 1929 the local press also discussed the role played by sound cinema as a disseminator of music all over the world. For instance, "Rio Rita" was seen as having potential to have a global impact once it became sound film. In addition to this, music was described as a crucial element for sound cinema. So much so that voices alerted the actors to the fact that they would need to know about music in order to keep their jobs:

In three years nobody will be able to get a permanent contract in film studios if they do not have at least an elementary knowledge of music, declares Arthur Lange, one of the most prominent orchestra directors and composers of the United States. (...)

In effect, taking into account that a sound film will provide the opportunity to listen to good music to thousands of people who have been deprived of it their entire lives, it is obvious that the demand for musical productions will be so rigorous that the lyrical arguments will constitute an increasingly important part of the program of the studios.¹⁹³

In addition to these aspects, the local press also debated the

191 "El problema de las películas habladas," *El Comercio*, February 17, 1929.

192 "Cine sonoro políglota," *El Día*, June 26, 1930.

193 "La música, requisito obligado del cinema," *El Comercio*, September 29, 1929.

problems posed by sound cinema to actors, as it had made stars lose their status to some extent. However, at the same time, the local press discussed how sound cinema led to the emergence of new stars: “Who would have imagined, only six months ago that ‘stars’ like Florence Vidor and Esther Ralston, until then considered ‘luminaries of the screen,’ would become what they are now, simply ordinary artists?”¹⁹⁴

The press also echoed international accounts that discussed other problems with this technological innovation, for example, the lack of an appropriate acoustic system for the reverberation of sound in most cinema venues. For this situation, one of the possible solutions was Christian A. Wolf’s apparatus in the form of a lamp that would help ease this problem.¹⁹⁵

Cinema is Massively “Put into Discourse” in Late 1929

In late 1929, there was a rupture in the city’s cinema history, since for the first time in Quito, cinema was put into words in an unparalleled amount of written material in three of the city’s dailies. This sudden emergence of public discussion about cinema raises the question as to why this entertainment was suddenly so widely debated in late 1929. Why did it occur at that particular time and that particular place? Since sound cinema was already an innovation at the time, did the extensive discussion on cinema have something to do with sound cinema? What aspects of cinema did the newspapers discuss? Had these issues already previously been discussed? Or did putting into words and giving cinema a discursive presence through the dailies create problems that had not been noticed or had not existed before? Did the *El Comercio* newspaper have ulterior motives for bringing this discussion to life? In this chapter I focus mostly on the reasons why cinema made this sudden unprecedented discursive appearance at this particular time and in this specific place. I have divided this part into three sections in order to address these questions: first, the origin of the unparalleled discursive appearance; second, the discourses of cinema in late 1929; and third, the discussion on sound.

In order to examine the public discussion of late 1929, I draw on elements of Michel Foucault’s discourse analysis. As pointed out by Foucault, a phenomenon being “put into discourse,” requires the study of

194 “Hasta los ruidos menores,” *Espirales*, 1929.

195 “La cinematografía parlante,” *El Comercio*, April 14, 1929.

the fact that this topic is spoken about, the actors who become involved, the positions and viewpoints from which it is discussed, the institutions that encourage people to speak about it, and store and disseminate what is said.¹⁹⁶ All of these aspects are examined in the coming paragraphs in relation to the extensive public debate on cinema in Quito, but not necessarily in this order. In addition, I contrasted the contemporary account that provoked the public discussion on cinema against the information given in the account against more than two hundred cinema advertisements. In other words, I utilized statistics as a quantitative method in order to widen the spectrum of analysis. This was one possible way of analyzing whether what was said in this pivotal account was biased or not.

1. The Origin of the Unparalleled Discursive Presence of Cinema

The unparalleled public debate of cinema in late 1929 was triggered in September 1929 when the *El Comercio* newspaper published an anonymous account that accused one of the theaters of charging excessively high cinema ticket prices:

TWO SUCRES FOR STALLS TICKETS

Our elegant society had agreed to pay 1.50 [sucres] for stalls tickets at 'EDEN' Theater for trendy screenings¹⁹⁷ [premier days] –quite a high cost for Quito and for the 'films' screened in the city. Quite high because we have to confess that Ecuador does not receive the famous and very expensive films produced by modern cinematography due to our general belief that high prices have the faculty to pick audiences.

But the thing is that lately, and too often so, they have been charging two sucres for stalls in the above-mentioned screenings [premier screenings at the Edén], either because the film to be screened is longer than the regular ones or because from the company's point of view – a concept almost always mistaken – the film separates itself somewhat from average films.

This excessive rise is unacceptable and very burdensome for families, as there is a risk that it may be permanently established, (...)

196 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 11.

197 These particular screenings were known as the 'Trendy Days' [premier showings]. They took place on Wednesdays and Fridays at that time.

The number of cinema aficionados has expanded notably all over the world, precisely because of low prices which are accessible to everybody, but it is not fair that this increasing audience is exploited; it would be absurd to pay the same amount for the exhibition of a movie as for a theatrical representation. FANS.¹⁹⁸

The impact of the publication of this anonymous account was enormous in Quito, particularly in relation to the cinematographic sphere. To start with, two days after the publication of this complaint, Jorge Cordovez, head of the cinema company in Quito, reduced the size of its advertisements in *El Comercio*.¹⁹⁹ This continued for over a month until October 22, 1929 when a second anonymous critique entitled 'Granos de Pimienta' signed by Pimentel was published in the same daily.²⁰⁰ This second excerpt, in addition to the point about high prices, raised new aspects such as the lack of hygiene in the cinema venues, the hardness of the seats in the stalls and smoking in the cinema during the screenings, a prohibition that existed in the city, but not obeyed as in other civilized countries.²⁰¹ In addition to this, the misbehavior of children in the gallery was also pointed out. The spectrum of matters and venues targeted by this criticism of the screenings expanded. It was no longer merely the prices of the expensive seats at the Edén Theater that were admonished, which could only have gained the support of some readers, but other issues, which concerned more people.

After the publication of this second critique, the cinema advertisements in *El Comercio* were further reduced in size.²⁰² This additional reduction lasted for about a week, after which, on November 1, 1929, the

198 Aficionados, "¡A dos la luneta!," *El Comercio*, September 14, 1929.

199 *El Comercio*, September 16, 1929.

200 Pimentel, "Granos de Pimienta. Los cines," *El Comercio*, October 22, 1929. Among other aspects, it was also remarked that the prices had increased because of the will of the cinema entrepreneurs "... without taking into consideration the people's scanty means and the youngsters fond of the [that] art."

201 Pimentel, "Granos de Pimienta. Los cines," *El Comercio*, October 22, 1929. Unlike the first account the second one did not solely target the Edén, but also the other venues. At the time there were four cinema venues: the Variedades (1914), the Edén (1914), the Puerta del Sol (1919) and the Popular (192?). Excluding the Edén, in 1929 the rest of the theaters belonged to Jorge Cordovez Ricaurte, head of the cinema company. However, the Edén was also part of the cinema company.

202 *El Comercio*, October 23, 1929.

cinema company completely discontinued advertising in *El Comercio*.²⁰³ This decision lasted for more than three years until April 5, 1933 when the cinema company resumed their cinema advertisements in *El Comercio*.

While *El Comercio* claimed that Jorge Cordovez discontinued the cinema advertisement in *El Comercio* due to the criticism of the aspects of the cinemas in Quito that the newspaper had raised, Cordovez himself claimed that he made this decision because he was being pressed by the owners of the newspaper to pay a certain amount of money for the advertisements. In order to prove his statement, Cordovez made public the letter that was sent to him on October 29, 1929,²⁰⁴ that is three days before Cordovez stopped issuing the cinema advertisements in *El Comercio*:

Dearest Sir,

We would hereby like to inform you that starting this November, we will apply to your advertisements our rate of S/. 1.00 per inch if you continue sending us such small notices which we do not consider advertisements. We will keep charging you half the rate if from now on you provide us with daily 70-inch-ads.

Having no further information to notify at this moment, Sincerely,
(s) Mantilla Brothers.²⁰⁵

Cordovez interpreted the letter as an ultimatum to get a ‘... forced payment of THIRTY-FIVE DAILY SUCRES as minimum, and we do not accept impositions.’²⁰⁶ Through another anonymous account, somebody, clearly on behalf of the cinema company, replied as follows:

The public now has the key of the campaign; they want to force a client to give them S/. 35 daily as a MINIMUM amount, and since he opposes doing so, appealing to his right to dispose of his belongings as he pleases, removes the advertisements ‘from the serious company’ that wants to tyrannize the client. Therefore, it gets furious, writhes and begins a campaign of falsehoods to

203 The ECQ informs the public, through *El Día* and *El Debate*, that the company will advertise its films and other spectacles in *El Día* and *El Debate*. See *El Día*, November 1, 1929. See also *El Debate*, November 1, 1929. These two dailies were not the only means used by the ECQ to make its decision public. The cinema company also screened a notice in the picture houses themselves. See “Por qué la Empresa de Cines no anuncia en *El Comercio*,” *El Comercio*, November 3, 1929.

204 “El colmo del cinismo,” *El Día*, November 10, 1929.

205 “Al público,” *El Día*, November 3, 1929. See also “Al público,” *El Debate*, November 3, 1929.

206 “Al público,” *El Día*, November 3, 1929. See also “Al público,” *El Debate*, November 3, 1929.

undoubtedly frighten the wayward customer who does not let them exploit him in this way, to finally force him to pay the amount that they need in their budget.

How about that? Such a blatant and shameless imposition? They either pay me, or I insult them. They either advertise me as I demand, or I fulminate them with notices forwarded anonymously that are made in the same house. Courageous morality, a magnificent example of business organization and worthy procedure of obtaining clients. (...) there you have them crying out, shouting for morality, for social improvement, for the advancement of the country.²⁰⁷

El Comercio admitted having sent the letter to Cordovez, but according to them they did this only after Cordovez had considerably reduced the size of the cinema advertisements, that is, not in order to pressure him to pay more for them. The problem for *El Comercio* was that the cinema advertisements were not the appropriate size for spectacle advertisements:

For the reasons stated, the cinema company reduced the length of its ads; then, and only then were we forced to address the note that has been published, shedding new light on the facts. He made a mockery of us by sending us telegraphic advertisements that cost one cent per word, and we did not accept them because those advertisements are not for spectacles. (...)

The people have already become aware of the company's game... since everyone will agree with *El Comercio* concerning the criticism that the newspaper has accepted that the nature of the screenings today constitute an irritating monopoly.²⁰⁸

It is clear that *El Comercio* was also troubled by the fact that Cordovez had the cinema monopoly in the city. As already mentioned, the consequence of all this was that the cinema company did not publish its advertisements in *El Comercio* for several years.

The cinema company's decision to discontinue the publication of the cinema advertisements in *El Comercio*,²⁰⁹ one of the three dailies in which it usually published its advertisements at the time, produced a reaction from the newspaper. In November 1929, *El Comercio* began publishing various

207 "El colmo del cinismo," *El Día*, November 10, 1929.

208 "No se engaña al público," *El Comercio*, November 4, 1929.

209 Advertisement, *El Debate*, November 1, 1929.

notices which highlighted the points made in the two anonymous previous accounts entitled 'Two Suces for Stalls Tickets' and 'Granos de Pimienta.' The notices published by *El Comercio* were as shown below (Fig. 6)²¹⁰:



Figure 6: "The company Cines de Quito does not advertise in 'El Comercio' because the newspaper complained about the high price of S/. 2.50 per stall."

After issuing this, the cinema company and *El Comercio* published a series of attacks on each other's businesses. *El Comercio* published its own information on its pages, defending the criticism against the cinema spectacle in Quito, and the cinema company Empresa Cines de Quito publicized its position in *El Día* and in *El Debate*, in addition to the notices that it showed in its cinemas. The notices that the cinema company published in reply to *El Comercio's* notices were as shown below (Fig. 7).²¹¹ Of course, this was not the only one, but there were several of them:

210 The first notice appeared, *El Comercio*, November 2, 1929.

211 Notice published by Empresa Cines de Quito, *El Día*, November 6, 1929.



Figure 7: “The effects of weaning. It has already been 6 days since they last sucked.”

All in all, in November and December 1929, all of a sudden cinema acquired an unparalleled discursive presence in local dailies in a short period of time, which can be considered the biggest discursive presence in the entire cinema history of Quito until then. One of the magazines even described it as a ‘war of papers:’

Only in times of the universal conflagration could one see such a formidable war of papers such as that which has been reserved for us mortals due to the dispute between Mr. Jorge Cordovez, owner of the cinemas, and *El Comercio*, enthusiastic defender of the public moral.²¹²

As already pointed out, in addition to the aspect of ticket prices, a variety of issues emerged, including the hygiene of the cinema venues,

212 “Nariz del Diablo,” *El Comercio*, December 23, 1929.

the lack of soft seats, the misbehavior of the children, and smoking during the screenings. These aspects were further diversified in connection with several other topics throughout the public debate. For instance, later, in the case of hygiene, the problem did not center on the presence of fleas in the cinemas, but on the lack of toilets at the venues.²¹³

By discussing the different issues related to cinema or by putting into words this form of entertainment, what in fact happened was that *El Comercio* created these problems at the same time. This can be inferred by drawing on Foucault's theory that the act of putting issues into words engenders consequences. The following quotations show that these aspects were considered troublesome after the newspaper pointed them: "... of the public so much exploited for years and years, within the largest impunity, having no one to open its eyes and support its demands."²¹⁴

In addition to this, the following quote stands as evidence that *El Comercio* was considered at the time to be the first to highlight these aspects: "Let's listen to the advice of the newspapers. EL COMERCIO has brightly explained these issues: What has been suggested should be put into practice if we want societies to be healthy in body and soul."²¹⁵

Besides attributing the role of eye-opener to *El Comercio*, also worthy of special attention is the role of the dailies as advisors, as can be seen in the latter quotation. The participation of the newspaper and in general of the dailies as counsellors is, according to Habermas, a consequence of the disappearance of reading novels and writing letters, which had once been the private activities of the bourgeoisie and had been necessary in order to participate in the public sphere. Since these private activities were now gone, the bourgeoisie manifested itself in another way, through the mass media for instance. In Habermas' terms:

In general, the mass media recommend themselves as addressees of personal needs and difficulties, as authorities for advice on the problems of life. They offer abundant opportunity for identification –for a kind of regeneration of the private realm out of the readily available pool of public support and counseling services.⁷⁷²¹⁶

213 Advertisement, *El Comercio*, November 3, 1929.

214 Unos viciosos del cine, "Como se engaña al pueblo," *El Comercio*, November 4, 1929.

215 Rosendo R. Mediavilla, "El cine y la niñez," *El Comercio*, November 11, 1929.

216 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 172.

In other words, the debate of late 1929 in Quito can be read as an expression of the bourgeoisie's private interests rather than an expression in defense of the audience's interests. What is more, to Habermas, another consequence of the newspapers' manifestation as advisors is that:

The problems of private existence are to a certain degree absorbed by the public sphere; although they are not resolved under the supervision of the publicist agencies, they are certainly dragged into the open by them. On the other hand, the consciousness of privacy is heightened precisely by such publication, by means of it the sphere generated by the mass media has taken on the traits of a secondary realm of intimacy.²¹⁷

According to Habermas, the mass media put personal problems in the public sphere and in this way bring them to the attention of the institutions involved, which are then forced to take a stance on whatever the mass media open as a subject. In other words, the mass media force the intervention of official institutions. However, Habermas' quotation also makes a second point. The fact that newspapers open the discussion on certain aspects *heightens* the consciousness of privacy, in this way generating a realm of intimacy.²¹⁸ In other words, the chances that the audience felt that this debate on cinema was a personal threat are high. Thus it seems plausible that what was clearly a defense of the private business interests of *El Comercio* was felt by the audience as something personal, against them, and against their intimacy and private life.

In addition to this, it is also clear that the regard of cinema as a part of people's private life, rather than as a business, reached an even higher degree. Defending what the newspaper said about cinema was thus no longer the defense of a private business, but for the public it became a matter of defending themselves and their privacy, and not that of the bourgeoisie. However, what was really being defended was the second realm of intimacy created by the mass media, represented by *El Comercio* in this case. For the public, of course, this was no longer the situation.

Put simply, the problem between the cinema company and the daily was transferred from the defense of private interests, those of the cinema company and *El Comercio*, to opinion management. As explained by Habermas, topics of human interest such as romance, religion, money,

217 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Space*, 172.

218 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Space*, 172.

children, health, and animals are dealt with in opinion management. These topics have been well tested. *El Comercio* talked about all the aspects that Habermas considered to be of human interest during the public discussion of late 1929, as the following pages will show. In other words, the newspaper knew that such topics would attract interest and brought them to the public's attention. The facts regarding the cinema sphere during the discussion were presented in a dramatic way, and two positions could clearly be distinguished: First, *El Comercio* was acting in defense of the majority of the abuse committed by the cinema company, and second, the cinema company was being blackmailed by *El Comercio* in order to publish cinema advertisements of a specific size in the daily. Presenting facts in a dramatic way can, according to Habermas, be considered a way of making or creating news.²¹⁹

The entire discussion about cinema in late 1929 can be considered an expression of modern propaganda, since it had all the characteristics described by Habermas, such as those of enlightenment and control, information and advertising, and pedagogy and manipulation.²²⁰ This is not to say that modern propaganda in Quito was born with this debate.

Since it is important to know whether *El Comercio* had private interests to criticize the cinema as a form of entertainment and provoke the public discussion on cinema in late 1929, it is pertinent to have a look at two issues that shed light on this situation: First, the results of the analysis of the comparison between the account entitled 'Two Suces for Stalls Tickets' and the information given in the cinema advertisements published in *El Comercio* in 1929 regarding cinema ticket prices, and second, the context in which *El Comercio* encouraged the discussion on the cinema debate.

In relation to the first point, three aspects require further explanation to enable us to fully understand the comment published in mid-September 1929, which triggered the fury of both companies: First, the Edén theater,²²¹ target of the anonymous account, was one of the two highbrow theaters that existed at the time. As mentioned in the account, the stalls in those screenings were mainly frequented by the 'elegant society' of Quito.

219 Ibid., 194.

220 Ibid., 203.

221 The Edén began business in Quito in November 1914.

Second, the screenings known as ‘Trendy Days’²²² were the first-run showing days. At the time, premieres took place only on Wednesdays and Fridays at the Edén, but also at the Variedades, the other highbrow cinema venue.²²³ Third, regarding prices, 1.50 or 2 sucres was not the only price of tickets for the ‘Trendy Days.’ At the time, practically all the screenings in Quito had at least two different prices: Those for the stalls and those for the gallery. That is, the screenings on those premiere days cost 1.50 or 2 sucres for the stalls — as is pointed out in the comment — but also 0.30 cents for the gallery, a fact which is not mentioned. In other words, what was apparently a move to protect all moviegoers from a general increase in cinema ticket prices, when analyzed in detail, turns out to be a complaint against an alleged increase in the most expensive tickets. This places in doubt the idea that this was a struggle on behalf of people with meagre economic resources, and particularly of the youngsters who were fond of the art of cinema,²²⁴ as was claimed in subsequent accounts in this daily.

To determine the accuracy of the claim of an increase in cinema ticket prices, I compared the central point of the account entitled ‘Two Sucres for Stalls Tickets,’ that is that “... lately, and too often so, they have been charging two sucres for stalls...” with the ticket prices detailed in more than two hundred cinema advertisements published from January 1 to September 13, 1929. The results showed that of one hundred and forty-four ‘Trendy Days’ at the Edén from January 1 to September 13, 1929, sixteen, that is, only about ten percent, cost two sucres. Despite this low figure, however, it is noticeable that in the two weeks preceding the publication of the anonymous account, fifty percent of the viewings at the Edén cost two sucres.²²⁵ It is thus possible that even though two sucres

222 The schedule of the screenings in Quito was quite fixed and structured. There were five performances per day from Monday to Saturday. The Edén Theater screened twice a day, at 5:15 pm and at 9 pm, but the other three venues screened once per day: The Variedades at 8:30 pm; the Puerta del Sol at 7:45 pm and the Popular theater at 8 pm. During the week there were six screenings at 5:15 pm and twenty-four at night. Moviegoing was mainly an evening activity. On Sundays, the only day off in contemporary Quito, the number of screenings rose to eight. In addition to the schedule from Monday to Sunday, on Sundays there were shows in the morning at 10:30 am and in the early afternoon two matinees at 2 pm and 2:30 pm. In comparison to the other days, there were three more screenings on Sundays. One in the Edén at 10:30 am called ‘vermouth’ and two more at 2 pm and 2:30 pm in the Puerta del Sol and the Variedades, respectively. The two latter screenings were known as matinees.

223 Of the one thousand three hundred eighty-eight (1388) screenings carried out from 1 January to 13 September 1929, the four picture houses had two hundred sixteen (216) screenings known as ‘Trendy Days.’ However, not all of the viewings labeled in as this took place at the Edén; some were at a second theater, the Variedades.

224 “Granos de Pimienta. Los cines,” *El Comercio*, October 22, 1929.

225 In the first half of September four of eight ‘Trendy Days’ at the Edén cost two sucres.

was not the common price for those screenings in 1929,²²⁶ this price was charged more often in the two weeks prior to the publication of the critique.

Even though it is clear that in those two weeks the ticket prices for the most expensive seats at the most expensive screenings of the week varied, the most striking detail lies elsewhere. What raises suspicion is that the critique targeted only the Edén Theater: The situation was the same at the Variedades, but the comment ignored this theater altogether. In other words, the screenings known as ‘Trendy Days’ took place not only at the Edén, but also at the Variedades. Therefore, there were one hundred forty-four (144) ‘Trendy Days’ at the Edén,²²⁷ and the remaining seventy-two (72) were at the Variedades.²²⁸ Of those 72 ‘Trendy Days’, six charged two sucres for the stalls, that is, some eight percent. However, as at the Edén, in the first half of September, the Variedades charged two sucres for the same fifty percent of ‘Trendy Days’. This at the very least raises the question as to whether there was an ulterior motive for this attack on the Edén, and not on the Variedades.

Regarding the second aspect, that is, the context where the account titled “Two Sucres for Stalls Tickets” was published, judging by the economic crisis that was prevailing in the world and in Ecuador, it is plausible that in 1929 *El Comercio* had already had in mind — and as we will see, they had stated their intention already in 1927 — the expansion of their business in the direction of the cinematographic sphere, which was motivated by all the information that they read about sound cinema. What did the Mantilla brothers read? All the information already discussed in this chapter.

Right after the discussion of late 1929 about cinema, the owners of *El Comercio* informed their motivation to start building the first purpose-built sound cinema in Quito. That is, the two brothers announced their decision to get into the cinematographic business. As soon as this information was delivered, the two brothers published an account informing that the world was going to be spoken, discussed and no longer only read about. In fact, the former, only-written sources such as newspapers, would become sonic.

226 From January 1 to September 13, 1929, in 37 presentations the tickets for the stalls cost 2 sucres in all four cinema venues.

227 From January 1, 1929 to September 13, 1929 there were 72 ‘Trendy Days’ on Wednesdays and 72 on Fridays at the Edén theater at 5:15 pm and 9 pm. The newspapers of Wednesday March 6 and that of Friday the August 23 were missing from the archive.

228 From January 1 to September 13, 1929 there were 36 ‘Trendy Days’ on Wednesdays and 36 on Fridays at the Variedades at 8:30 pm. The newspapers of Wednesday the March 6 and that of Friday August 23 were missing from the archive.

Locals read this in March 7, 1930. This is how the world would sound in one hundred years, according to the futuristic visions of contemporaries:

By the year two thousand, no-longer will be able to say, without the risk of making the auditorium laugh:

-I saw the tiger! I heard it.

In the year two thousand thirty, newspapers will be cinema-radiophonic, (...)

In 2030, literature will be verbal and radiophonic; one will not write, but talk. One will not read, but hear.

There will be, as every year, a Goncourt Award, paintings will be electro-magnetic and even more, they will be luminous.

Canvas, colors and brushes will be replaced by the projectors of multicolored rays...²²⁹

These futuristic visions of the world in sonic terms, such as newspapers becoming sonic, was held at the time by locals. Did the Mantilla brothers know beforehand that sound would take over newspapers and possibly displace dailies? Did they fear the disappearance of silent sources enabling people to find out about the world? Was it fear of seeing *El Comercio* die that led them to embrace sound technology in cinema and later in radio? Yes. These definitely were among the motivations of the two brothers for building the Bolívar Theater and jumping into the cinema business.

Moreover, at this time it was already known that sound cinema had entered the field of news and not only that of film.²³⁰ The dissemination of news in the cinema had attracted massive audience attention. In fact, by 1930, according to the local press, the Embassy Theater had proved that the screening of sound news was of great appeal, as this venue had decided to screen only news and not films. This had proven to be very successful and was innovative, since until then, the screening of news during the silent period had filled the space between the screening of films. 'Actualities' or news were used to fill the cinematic program in Quito, in which the main element was the feature film.

When examined in larger contexts, the issue of ticket prices, the hygiene of the cinemas, the hardness of the seats and the behavior of children in the venues were not new topics in the city and some of them were not new even in the cinema sphere since they had already been discussed in

229 "Predicciones para el año de 2030," *El Comercio*, March 7, 1930.

230 "El único teatro del mundo en q' se exhibe películas noticiosas," *El Día*, January 21, 1930.

previous years. What was new was the bringing of all of these different discourses into the cinematographic realm at once. The fact that *El Comercio* brought up issues of ‘public affair or interest’ to attract attention to their cause was also noted at the time.²³¹ The discourses that concerned cinema were discourses that had been going on in the city in other areas such as money, hygiene, and comfort, among others. This is how people became interested in the debate, and *El Comercio*’s business intentions were disguised and presented as being everyone’s concern. I study all these aspects in the coming paragraphs.

2. Discourses of Cinema in Discussion of Late 1929

2.1 Money

The issue of the high cinema ticket prices²³² was linked to the economic difficulties of making a living in Quito.²³³ At the time, this was a particularly sensitive aspect due to the economic crisis that was affecting not only Ecuador, but the entire world, and which was also discussed in the local dailies. During the public discussion, *El Comercio* claimed, as already mentioned, to be defending the economy of those with less financial resources, but as we have seen, the complaint focused at first on the most expensive tickets, in other words, the tickets of the wealthiest people. Obviously, in an economic crisis, saving money was regarded as something positive.

The money spent on a cinema ticket also involved a discourse linked to the aspect of whether or not the entertainment included sound, as the main point of the account that encouraged the discussion was actually the fact that it was not considered fair to pay a high price for a silent spectacle, as if it could compete with theater,²³⁴ reviews, operettas or operas,²³⁵ which were worth that amount of money. Simply put, the demand for sound cinema was at the core of the discussion, because it was the lack of sound that was seen as making cinema tickets not worth the high price. The absence of sound cinema had undoubtedly become a problem in Quito.

231 “El colmo del cinismo,” *El Comercio*, November 10, 1929.

232 Advertisement, *El Comercio*, November 2, 1929. Advertisement, *El Comercio*, November 6, 1929. Advertisement, *El Comercio*, November 9, 1929. Advertisement, *El Comercio*, November 11, 1929.

233 Pimentel, “Los cines,” *El Comercio*, October 22, 1929.

234 Aficionados, “¡A dos la luneta!,” *El Comercio*, September 14, 1929.

235 “La empresa de cines ya no subirá los precios,” *El Comercio*, November 5, 1929.

Furthermore, the high-ticket prices were considered profitmaking from the shortage of entertainment in Quito. For instance, to *El Comercio*, the cinema company that charged those prices, was seen as "... taking advantage of the fact that there is no other spectacle in the Capital, and that he has the monopoly to squeeze pockets by showing films that in other parts would be whistled at, as old, inconvenient, amended and obscure."²³⁶

2.2 *Hygiene and Health*

The discourse on hygiene manifested itself in two realms in the public discussion of late 1929: One was cinema installations and the other was the mind of the spectators. The aim seemed to be to achieve material and immaterial cleanliness.²³⁷

We have received many congratulations from people who are valuable to the campaign that we maintain in order to obtain the greatest possible improvement in cinematographic spectacles, regarding both material comfort and prices, for the benefit of the public that attends the theaters, and concerning the moral aspect for the sake of children and youths.²³⁸

Or, as another account expressed this in *El Comercio*, a healthy body and soul was the goal to be achieved.²³⁹ In this part I discuss the issue of material cleanliness, which was mostly connected to the presence of animals and sanitary installations in cinemas.

2.2.1 *Cleaning the Infrastructure*

The discourse on hygiene was connected to the concern for animals, another of the topics that was of human interest, as mentioned by Habermas, in particular the problem of fleas in the cinema venues.²⁴⁰ At the time, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, sanitization was constantly discussed in Quito.²⁴¹ People were well aware that cleaner conditions had reduced the

236 "La empresa de cines ya no subirá los precios," *El Comercio*, November 5, 1929.

237 "El Comercio y los cines," *El Comercio*, November 9, 1929.

238 "El Comercio y los cines," *El Comercio*, November 9, 1929.

239 Rosendo R. Mediavilla, "El cine y la niñez," *El Comercio*, November 11, 1929.

240 Pimentel, "Los cines," *El Comercio*, October 22, 1929.

241 "La importancia de la sanidad práctica," *El Comercio*, May 9, 1929. See also "Croniquilla callejera," *El Comercio*, September 1, 1929. See also "La tuberculosis en Quito," *El Comercio*, September 18, 1929. See also "Consejo superior de higiene," *El Comercio*, November 29, 1929. See also "Para la construcción de un edificio sanitario en Rbba.," *El Comercio*, December 1, 1929. See also "El cinematógrafo al servicio de la propaganda higiénica y de previsión social," *El Día*, January 13, 1930.

mortality rate. In this respect, most people regarded anything to do with hygiene in positive terms.

In addition to the presence of animals, hygiene was addressed by pointing out the lack of restrooms in cinemas. For example, it was mentioned that the Variedades and the Edén,²⁴² which were the first purpose-built cinemas and therefore the oldest, lacked toilets. This complaint is strange since, even if the Edén had no sanitary facilities inside the venue, these installations were certainly available in the passage in which the cinema was located. In fact, the Pasaje Royal had had “eighteen lavatories, thirty-two toilets, installed with all the recommendations of science,”²⁴³ since 1915. These facilities were not only for the use of movie attendees, since the passage had other offices and department stores. The press studied had little information about the sanitary facilities at the Variedades. In 1929, it was mentioned that “At the Variedades Theater, for example, there are no hygiene facilities: Air ventilation is missing, there are no toilets or urinals, no sinks, etc.”²⁴⁴

Sanitation was something that was not only discussed in relation to basic services, urbanization and infrastructure, but contemporaries also extended this concept to include ‘social’ cleanliness, that is, the necessity to disinfect the social body. This was connected to the idea of removing everything that was considered infectious from society. To make the venues more hygienic, contemporary people considered that they needed infrastructure (toilets, urinals, bathroom sinks) and detergents,²⁴⁵ whereas to clean the social body people regarded it as necessary to clean the mind by banning or censoring, for instance, certain movies such as crime thrillers and romantic films²⁴⁶ which were seen as harmful to morality: “... Small children will watch those sensual films, endless kisses, horrendous crimes, those films with terrible police scenes that usually keep them up all night.”²⁴⁷

The fact that social and moral hygiene was considered necessary can be seen in the following text:

If the scenes are indecent, the events horrible and creepy, nothing

242 Don Juan, “Campo libre,” *El Comercio*, November 6, 1929. See also Rafael Flores, “El cine de Don Jorge,” *El Comercio*, November 9, 1929.

243 “Pequeña ciudad,” *El Comercio*, November 24, 1915.

244 Rafael Flores, “El cine de Don Jorge,” *El Comercio*, November 9, 1929.

245 “La higiene en los teatros y otros lugares de baile se reglamenta,” *El Día*, December 11, 1929.

246 Advertisement, *El Comercio*, November 4, 1929.

247 “Por la moral y educación de los niños,” *El Comercio*, November 11, 1929.

is more fair and reasonable than applying rigorous and severe censoring to these kinds of spectacles in order to protect children and ensure their ethical social health, which is the basis of public and private tranquility and morality.²⁴⁸

One of the ways to censor movies was to prohibit elementary school children from entering the cinema,²⁴⁹ for which purpose police were requested. Another possibility was to ban these kinds of films altogether, or to show films specifically made for children.²⁵⁰ Underlying the debate on censoring, there was also criticism as to what was considered excessive freedom, which was labeled as debauchery.²⁵¹

Carlo Ginzburg, referring to Menocchio and the context in which he lived in Italy, particularly in Montereale in Fiuli in the 16th century, traced in Menocchio's utterances a tendency to what the author considered a reduction of religion to morality.²⁵² Ginzburg saw that morality was ultimately religion, but in a reduced way. Drawing on this, since morality became an issue during the discussion on cinema in late 1929, we can say that religion was present in the public discussion but disguised in the discourse as morality. Discussing morality was probably more attuned to modern times as a more acceptable way of spreading religion, which is another of the topic that Habermas mentioned. As for religion, it is noteworthy that the Church did not officially make any pronouncements about the public debate, despite the constant references of *El Comercio's* accounts to morality. In fact, the official position of the Church was most obviously absent from the debate. Some religious individuals and groups became involved in the discussion, but the Church as an organization did not officially engage in the debate: "The 'Women's Committee of Catholic Action,' taking into account the immense damage that immoral cinema causes in society, especially to children, wished to contribute with whatever available means to remedy such great evils."²⁵³

Another aspect that was connected with hygiene was crowdedness, as heat was seen as a consequence of the overcrowding caused by overselling

248 S. M. MENA DAVILA, "El cine y sus consecuencias," *El Comercio*, November 30, 1929.

249 S. M. Mena Dávila, "El cine y sus consecuencias," *El Comercio*, November 30, 1929.

250 Rosendo R. Mediavilla, "El cine y la niñez," *El Comercio*, November 11, 1929.

251 "Por la moral y educación de los niños," *El Comercio*, November 11, 1929.

252 Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, 39.

253 María Lasso de Eastman and Nela Arroyo D., "La Acción Católica vela por la moral," *El Comercio*, November 8, 1929.

cinema tickets and insufficient ventilation in the cinemas:²⁵⁴

Half an hour after one has entered, the theater begins to heat up and becomes suffocating and unbearable due to the enormous conglomeration, which logically turns out to be unhygienic and dangerous for the people who are there; (...) ²⁵⁵

For this reason, air conditioning and appropriate ventilation inside the venues were demanded. I discuss the issue of crowding in the following pages.

2.2.2 *Disinfecting the Mind*

In the public debate of late 1929, the main target of the attempts to clean the social body were children. Since they were discussed as the future of the country,²⁵⁶ social cleanliness was considered necessary in order to protect them from negative influences. Given that scandalous acts, provoked allegedly by police thrillers,²⁵⁷ had recently taken place in the city, contemporaries requested the banning of detective, police thrillers and sensual moving pictures, because robberies, muggings, assaults and domestic violence, among other things, were part of what they watched at the cinema:²⁵⁸

There comes a time when it [cinema] becomes a vice: Hundreds of children attend all kinds of screenings, whether they are appropriate or not, adequate or not for their age and the knowledge that they have. To satisfy their curiosity, a multitude of children resort to illicit means to obtain the money for their admission tickets and for candy. Where do they get this money from and how do they obtain it? This is the question that is often asked by those who have had the chance to see countless children frequent the theaters as regulars at these kinds of shows. Children often ask for it [money] (...) and if they do not get it in a decent way, frankly and honestly, (...) they obtain it through hidden means. They make the first mistake; they steal an object, first from their homes, then from wherever they have the opportunity to. They

254 Fray pólvora, "Para la empresa de cines," *El Comercio*, November 20, 1929.

255 Fray pólvora, "Para la empresa de cines," *El Comercio*, November 20, 1929.

256 Rosendo R. Mediavilla, "El cine y la niñez," *El Comercio*, November 11, 1929. Rosendo R. Mediavilla, "El cine y el hogar," *El Comercio*, January 6, 1930.

257 "La empresa de cines ya no subirá los precios," *El Comercio*, November 5, 1929.

258 Rosendo R. Mediavilla, "El cine y la niñez," *El Comercio*, November 11, 1929.

lend themselves to schemes or indecencies, and by repeating these actions over and over again, they do not have the slightest regret or scruple, and so they continue their misdeeds to later become pickpockets, thieves, crooks, murderers, swindlers, quarrelsome individuals and slackers, enemies of work and friends of other people's property. (...) Let's meditate and work together efficiently for our children, because they are the hope of our homeland.²⁵⁹

As is clear, control had to be taken over children in the name of time and space, since on the one hand, the contemporaries were protecting the future, that is, time, and on the other, they were trying to save the homeland, that is, space. But how did they plan to do this? The idea was to do it in two ways: First, by taking physical care of the children, and second, by taking care of their mental state. The physical state had to be protected by controlling what the children did, where they were, and what they said. The mind had to be protected by knowing what they watched and also what they heard. At the time, it was suggested that censorship be extended to the live musical accompaniment of the movies, since live music was considered to be an intensifier of the passions shown in the moving images:

But it will be said that children can find distraction in all that they hear during the show. That is not true. Music, mainly with its rhythm and its accents, does nothing but intensify the [passions] expressed by the film. When there is an orchestra, and when a violin sounds with its timbre and inflections that resemble the human voice, one believes one hears the complaints and the blasphemy, the rage and the sighs of the fantasies that populate the screen.

The board that censures films [?] only, in the silence, sacrifices undoubtedly, for its appreciation, an important psychic element. It is possible, in fact, to contemplate in silence a still image, but images that move, cannot be conceived without noise, function of movement.²⁶⁰

This can be interpreted as a suggestion that not only the infrastructure and what people watched should be cleaned, but also what people heard, in other words, the cleaning of sound. As Foucault mentions, "the deployments of power are directly connected to the body — to bodies,

259 S. M. Mena Dávila, "El cine y los niños," *El Comercio*, December 8, 1929.

260 Maurice Rouvroy, "El cinema público y la infancia," *El Comercio*, November 18, 1929.

functions, physiological processes, sensations, and pleasures; (...)”²⁶¹ In the case of Quito — during this unexpected discussion of cinema — power was manifested not only in relation to children and their emotions arising from one of the main forms of contemporary entertainment, but also in relation to the crowd. I examine the targeting of the crowd in point 2.2.3 when I discuss the discourse on comfort.

In addition to considering hygiene in terms of animals, cinema infrastructure, censorship, morality and crowdedness, hygiene was also linked to the practice of smoking:

It is a touch of personal esteem and of culture to respect ladies and not drown them in clouds of tobacco smoke. The sacrifice is not as heroic for it not to be made for the sake of hygiene and good manners. (...)

It is proven that with the amount of smoke, the film loses its clearness and becomes blurred due to the thick and unhealthy air that appears as a veil in front of the screen. Public health has shown the dangers of becoming intoxicated with this vicious atmosphere, since ventilation is scarce in the showing rooms and the agglomeration of people is enormous.

Perhaps kindness could do more than rigor and those attending the cinematographic screenings could decide not to mortify the ladies and offend the public.²⁶²

This quote shows that smoking was connected to the discourse on hygiene; it was also considered to be a display of bad manners. As smoking was regarded as a sign of disrespect to women, men seemed to have been the ones who smoked at the time in the city, although this aspect is not explicitly mentioned. During the discussions of late 1929, smoking was not seen to be done by a specific body, but the practice of smoking was commented on fairly frequently. In other words, the body of smokers in late 1929 was not a target of criticism. For this reason, I argue that, in addition to these two bodies, the body of children and the crowd, power can also be studied in an absent body, a body that is not mentioned when speaking of a topic.

So, who smoked in the cinema? It is clear that it was men. Did all men smoke during the screenings? Only a few accounts mention adult men as

261 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 151-152.

262 “Croniquilla callejera,” *El Comercio*, July 8, 1929.

responsible for smoking,²⁶³ but even though they were considered responsible for this action, the main people accused for smoking at the movies were not all men but mostly children and youngsters. It thus seems that smoking was mostly a male activity, but that age affected how they were discussed in the press:

Indeed, it causes the most awful impression to see children with cigarettes in their mouths, being such early victims of a vice that ruins their teeth, destroys their stomach, agitates their hearts and even makes their memory vanish. (...)

Educating people from an early age should not only be teachers or parents' job, it is also the duty of the police.²⁶⁴

Additionally, smoking was discussed as mostly being practiced by those who attended the galleries, that is, smoking was an activity practiced by small and young boys of the lower classes. This does not mean that the men of the upper social classes did not smoke, but in comparison to the lower social classes, the practice was usually discussed as pertaining mostly to small and young boys from the lower ranks of society. This is probably a projection of a society in which it was difficult to criticize the behavior of men, particularly adult men, but not that of young boys. In other words, this was not only an issue of gender, since male children were judged, but an issue of gender, age, and social status. All in all, it is also evidence of the authority held by adult men in Quito at the time.

In 1930, as smoking continued in cinemas, the chief of the police department ordered the imprisonment of those who smoked cigarettes inside the venues:

After failing to stop people smoking in cinemas, despite the orders of the police and of the Directorate of Health, the Intendant of Police has ordered the guards who work during those shows to arrest the offenders without any consideration whatsoever.²⁶⁵

It should be noted that in addition to the problems caused to public health and to female spectators in the cinema, it is evident from the quote that smoking was also seen as a problem because it made the screen less visible.²⁶⁶ Smoking was not only linked to the discourse on sanitation, but

263 "Vicio en la niñez," *El Comercio*, January 17, 1924.

264 "Vicio en la niñez," *El Comercio*, January 17, 1924.

265 "Medidas convenientes," *El Debate*, June 12, 1930.

266 This observation was already made in 1923, see "Los moscones," *El Comercio*, September 6, 1923.

also to the discourse on comfort, which I analyze separately in the following paragraphs.

The publication of a piece of news entitled ‘Women and the Cigarette,’ in which the writer praised women’s smoking around the world, alerts us to the possibility of acceptance of women’s smoking in Ecuador and in Quito becoming accepted, or that the image of smoking being disrespectful to women may have come to an end by 1931:

Ever since women have started smoking, they have acquired a new charm, a new appeal to their attractive and enchanting figures. They do it with such a noble grace that it spiritualizes them, and feminizes them even more. Paradoxical? Perhaps! After all, are they not mayhap living paradoxes?²⁶⁷

Does this mean that in the early 1930s women started smoking in Ecuador? This is difficult to say because there are no historical studies of smoking in Quito, but in 1932, an advertisement for Chesterfield was published in which the main character was a woman. These advertisements in which women handed men cigarettes were a thing of the past, as now the call was for women to smoke (Fig. 8):²⁶⁸



Figure 8: Cigarette advertisement in 1932

267 Leandro García, “La mujer y el cigarrillo,” *El Día*, October 19, 1931.

268 Cigarette advertisement, *El Día*, January 25, 1932.



Figure 9: Cigarette advertisement²⁶⁹ in 1918

That women were possibly already smoking in some cities in Ecuador in the early 1930s is also evidenced in the following account which mentioned “hard imprecation and the depravation of maternal feelings in female smokers, female drivers, female cocaine consumers and female dancers.”²⁷⁰ This account comes from Guayaquil, so the situation in Quito still needs to be examined.

The discussion on cleanliness, which was intertwined with the discourse on medicine and health, took the shape of law in the latter phase, as I will analyze in the following pages. In the case of Quito it occurred more or less the other way round than suggested by Foucault, who said that the “judicial institution is increasingly incorporated into a continuum of apparatuses (medical, administrative, and so on), whose functions are

269 Cigarette advertisement, *El Comercio*, November 22, 1918.

270 “Blasco de Gama condena la actitud antipática de ciertas mujeres ‘modernas,’” *El Día*, May 23, 1932.

for the most part regulatory.”²⁷¹ The fact that the medical took the form of a judicial institution in the debate of late 1929 can be seen rather as a final embodiment of power,²⁷² as also suggested by Foucault when referring to the materialization of this discourse in the juridical realm. This is why, in the following pages, I examine the final expression of power in two legal bodies: One issued in 1929 aimed to sanitize cinema installations by creating spaces that were not infectious for the audiences, and the other focused on sanitizing the mind by activating the censoring board already established in 1927.

Simply put, I study various decrees: First, I study the decree issued to clean the infrastructure of cinemas and, second, the ordinance to sanitize spectators by the revival of the censorship board that had already existed in Ecuador and the city, but had apparently only remained as an aspect of law and had not been put into practice.²⁷³ In addition to this, I analyze two more regulations that were issued in the early 1930s, which addressed the bodies of babies and women with toddlers. However, I will first refer to the discourse on comfort and then move on to the analysis of the law.

2.3 Comfort

In addition to the problem of ticket prices, the presence of animals, the lack of toilets, and the absence of censorship in cinema, the hardness of seats was also raised in the public debate, but this aspect was linked to the discourse on comfort. The seats were viewed as ‘too hard,’ in general; ‘uncomfortable and old-fashioned.’²⁷⁴ “The cinema company should use those hard benches from the Puerta del Sol and Popular cinemas as firewood.”²⁷⁵

This difficulty — apparently most evident in the lowbrow venues²⁷⁶ — was linked to the fact that the cinema company had a ‘monopoly’ over the cinema entertainment in Quito and therefore did not bother to enhance the condition of the cinema because people had no other choice of entertainment. According to *El Comercio*, the representative of the cinema company in the capital had claimed that if he were to “install stone seats,

271 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 144.

272 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 92.

273 “Por la moral y la educación de los niños,” *El Comercio*, November 11, 1929.

274 “No se engaña al público,” *El Comercio*, November 4, 1929.

275 Nick Carter, “Una visita al cine Puerta del Sol,” *El Comercio*, November 7, 1929.

276 Advertisement, *El Comercio*, November 3, 1929. See also NICK CARTER, “Una visita al cine Puerta del Sol,” *El Comercio*, November 7, 1929.

the public would sit there since they had nowhere else to go."²⁷⁷ When viewed in retrospect, this raises the question as to whether the issue of the hardness of the seats was aggravated by the increase in the length of the cinema program, that is, as a consequence of people staying in the cinema for longer hours than in 1914, when the seats were first installed.

In addition to the requirement of better cinema seats, the elimination of crowdedness during the screenings was also demanded. Crowding made cinemagoers uncomfortable, since this provoked disorder and unexpected events.²⁷⁸ Broadly speaking, crowdedness had become a problem by the late 1920s and 1930s as a consequence of the increase in the population of the city. Not only were the population and the number of entertainment events growing, but more people had access to leisure time. All in all, this posed the problem of how to manage crowds. The desire to control crowding was also manifested in transport and traffic.²⁷⁹

In addition to this, crowding was related to the discourse on the prevention of fires in the city. People were particularly worried about how such a large number of people would be able to exit through the only existing narrow door in case of fire.²⁸⁰ In this context, and also with respect to the fire that had taken place in the city's university,²⁸¹ an occurrence that was considered to have hurt the country's national sentiment,²⁸² *El Comercio* suggested the installation of fire extinguishers in the theaters and other places in which crowding occurred. The fire in the university in late 1929 provoked a public debate on the importance of having a fire department in the city. In fact, a fire department was demanded for Quito.²⁸³ The city had had a fire department before, but it had been closed down due to the scarcity of cases requiring fire fighters. In the late 1920s, the fires in Quito were considered to have been of minor proportions.²⁸⁴

In addition to the above-mentioned issues, comfort was linked to

277 Nick Carter, *El Comercio*, "En defensa del público," *El Comercio*, November 11, 1929.

278 S. M. MENA DAVILA, "El cine y sus consecuencias," *El Comercio*, November 30, 1929.

279 "Todos los choferes llevarán uniforme desde el 1o. de enero," *El Comercio*, December 1, 1929. See also "El Intendente General de Policía decreta la colocación de nuevas placas numéricas en los vehículos," *El Comercio*, December 3, 1929. See also "El Intendente General de Policía decreta la colocación de nuevas placas numéricas en los vehículos," *El Comercio*, December 4, 1929.

280 Unos viciosos del cine, "Como se engaña al pueblo," *El Comercio*, November 4, 1929.

281 "Formidable incendio consumió ayer la Universidad Central," *El Comercio*, November 10, 1929.

282 "A la sociedad de Quito," *El Comercio*, November 13, 1929.

283 "Extinguidores de incendio," *El Comercio*, November 13, 1929.

284 "Croniquilla callejera," *El Comercio*, July 13, 1929.

the arrival of electricity and its diverse applications:

There is no doubt that the enormous benefits of electricity have also brought with them a general desire for more material comfort, and for more opportunities of recreation and spiritual cultivation. Hard beds, insipid food and unhygienic conditions no longer satisfy us.²⁸⁵

It is clear that the dissemination of electricity was identified as the origin of material comfort, and also of what could be called immaterial comfort, through recreation. In other words, electricity was regarded as having raised similar feelings among contemporaries; it had created a culture. This desire was mediated by electricity, that is, by technology.

Additionally, in the case of women, electricity had created aspirations to change their way of life:

Modern women have been forced to entirely reorganize their domestic chores ever since the new maid — electricity — made its way into the kitchen. Now they should engage in studying electricity and using electrical appliances to do their domestic chores so that they would have more time to play their role in social life and at home.²⁸⁶

From this quote, it is evident that electricity had brought freedom to women, since some of their former roles were at the time performed by electricity, forcing them to reorganize their domestic tasks. Now, when electricity, referred to as the 'new servant,' was in the home, women had more free time thanks to technology; all they had to do was to study electricity and how to bring the new electric appliances into their homes:

Women should know more about the use of electricity. (...) When planning the construction of houses, ladies or housewives should take part in the arrangement of electrical installations. Such installations must be drafted and studied well so that the connections and switches are in convenient locations. (...) The location of the connections must be projected by housewives, for they are in charge of the task of beautifying the home. When it comes to electrical installations, it is convenient to take into

285 Advertisement for Compañía Comercial Eléctrica, *El Comercio*, September 22, 1930.

286 "La mujer y el uso de la electricidad," *El Comercio*, March 23, 1930.

account economy and usefulness purposes, so it is a good idea to select the main furniture before placing the connections. Then, one has to consider the issue of electrical switches or buttons.²⁸⁷

From this quote, it becomes obvious that women were still regarded as obligated to spend their time in the domestic field, albeit doing other tasks. By the time the advertisement relating to electricity was published, women were already banned by decree from the main entertainment in the city. In this sense, the decree on women's entertainment may be seen as a consequence of the extra time that the modern appliances had allowed women to enjoy and as an attempt to control women's freedom. As mentioned by de Certeau, in times of crisis, it is not sufficient for the law to be written on paper, and so the law looks for bodies on which it can be written.²⁸⁸ This was a time of crisis, economic crisis, and the law was written in texts and on particular bodies; to be precise, the bodies of women. However, as already stated, the above-mentioned decree suggests that contemporaries wanted not only control women's freedom, but also to control sound in cinemas.

2.4 The Law: Three Decrees

As already pointed out, in order to guarantee the sanitization of the infrastructure of cinemas and as a consequence of the public discussion of late 1929, a decree was issued. This legal ruling, issued allegedly to guarantee public health, emerged manifesting that its target were the venues at which Christmas dancing parties took place. The decree did not thus explicitly claim that its target was the cinemas themselves, but this was implied, as these parties usually took place at the two lowbrow cinemas, as well as at other venues.²⁸⁹

It is important to take this into account since, at first glance, a researcher may be misled by what was said in the news about this ruling: that this decree targeted public dancing at the Christmas and New Year celebrations that took place at the end of each year. When further researched, it is clear that such a normative ruling was rather a consequence of the public discussion, and primarily aimed at regulating the cinematographic sphere most of all:

287 "La mujer y el uso de la electricidad," *El Comercio*, March 23, 1930.

288 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 141.

289 Amable Viteri, "La higiene en los teatros y otros lugares de baile se reglamenta," *El Día*, December 11, 1929.

1. No place at which popular dancing takes place will be opened unless they have at least two toilets and four urinals;
2. In places that have insufficient natural ventilation, as in cinemas, as many electric fans as necessary must be installed in order to ensure sufficient air circulation;
3. Likewise, it is forbidden to smoke in places in which ventilation is insufficient, such as cinemas. If necessary, a place for smoking should be provided, and a container with lime into which smokers can dispose of cigarette butts.
4. The companies responsible shall be obliged to clean the venues on a daily basis, using a disinfectant in the amounts determined by the sanitary department.

The omission of any of these requirements will be sufficient grounds for prohibiting the companies from operating in popular entertainment venues of this kind.

Failure to comply with any of these provisions will lead to trial and punishment in accordance with Art. 60 of the Code of Health Police. Amable Viteri. Commissioner of Health.²⁹⁰

To ensure that this decree was put into practice, the sanitary department started patrolling the cinemas.²⁹¹ In addition, to ensure that this regulation was enacted, the support offered by the police department²⁹² was accepted:

Yesterday, the General Police Intendant's Office sent a memo to the national commissioners ordering that, in accordance with the provisions of Article 70 of the Police Code, they must go to theaters, circuses, cinemas, and other public spectacles to fulfill their duties as functionaries of the institution.²⁹³

The intervention of the police to help maintain hygiene was not only applied in cinemas. In the early 1930s it was hoped that the police could ensure that public health would not be threatened by the spread of infections (Fig. 10):

290 Amable Viteri, "La higiene en los teatros y otros lugares de baile se reglamenta," *El Día*, December 11, 1929.

291 "Por la higiene de las salas de cinematógrafo," *El Comercio*, December 14, 1929. See also "Inspección de teatros," *El Debate*, December 14, 1929.

292 "Apoyo policial a los reglamentos higiénicos," *El Día*, December 13, 1929.

293 "Vigilancia political en los espectáculos públicos," *El Día*, December 13, 1929.

- ¡ A la Cárcel !

- ¿ Por qué ?
- Por atender contra la Salud Pública.
- ¿ Cómo ?
- ¿ Le parece poco andar suelto por las calles con ese resfriado contagiando a medio mundo ?

NO está lejana la época cuando escenas como la anterior tengan lugar en los países civilizados.

Probablemente no hay otra enfermedad que cause tanto daño a la humanidad como el resfriado común. ¡ Se contagia tan fácilmente y son tan pocas las personas que le dan la importancia debida ! Tan sólo cuando el resfriado se ha complicado gravemente, se trata de ponerle remedio.

Por eso las personas de sentido común siguen los consejos de muchos médicos: **toman una dosis de FENASPIRINA apenas sienten los primeros síntomas**, repitiendo la dosis tres o cuatro horas después para mayor seguridad. Es la mejor manera de evitarse ratos amargos.

Fenaspirina
eliminador infalible de resfriados

BAYER

Figure 10: Advertisement for Fenaspirina in 1933

"To jail"?

Why?

For acting against public health.

How?

Does it seem a small matter to be walking around the streets with such a cold infecting half the world?

Soon, scenes like this will take place in civilized countries. (...)" 294

While the above-mentioned regulation dictated the solution to the problem of insufficient cleanliness in cinema venues in order to guarantee the sanitation of the mind and correct one of the main aspects that endangered the cinema, *El Comercio* demanded that the censorship law passed in 1927 be activated. This legal ruling included ten points, but those that referred to the films and the audiences were the following:

Art. 1 In each provincial capital there shall be a censorial board composed of the head of the police department, who will be the president, and two other members appointed by the Ministry of Education. (...)

Art. 4 It is prohibited to show police movies and all films that according to the censorial board overtly infringe upon morality and good values.

Art. 5 Only the films prepared for the purpose, or those with special permission from the censorial board, may be shown to children. Otherwise the admission of minors under fourteen years of age to theaters is prohibited;

Art. 9 Cinema owners who contravene any of the foregoing provisions shall be punished with a fine of one hundred to five hundred sucres.

Art. 10 The Minister of Public Instruction and Theaters is in charge of enforcing the execution of this decree. (...) (s.) Isidro Ayora.²⁹⁵

For instance, *El Comercio* requested that the censorship board restart their operations immediately, since there were serious concerns that the film *Loca juventud* (unknown) was not suitable, as it had been prohibited in Lima.²⁹⁶ Without any delay, the organization banned the film *Loca juventud* at the recommendation of one of its members, Leopoldo Rivas B.²⁹⁷ Rivas was not only a member of the censorship board, but also a former employee of *El Comercio* and thus close to the owners of the daily that had started the debate on cinema. The film *Loca juventud* was not only banned from children, but as advised by Rivas B., censored altogether.²⁹⁸ The censorship board agreed, among other things, to meet regularly on the first Monday of every

295 Ecuador. *Registro Oficial*, (no. 218). Quito: President Isidro Ayora, February 23 1927.

296 "El cine de subido color," *El Comercio*, November 7, 1929.

297 "La Junta censora de espectáculos prohíbe la exhibición de la cinta 'Loca juventud' porque atenta contra la moralidad pública," *El Comercio*, November 8, 1929.

298 "La Junta censora de espectáculos prohíbe la exhibición de la cinta 'Loca juventud' porque atenta contra la moralidad pública," *El Comercio*, November 8, 1929.

month.²⁹⁹

Two questions emerge from the censorship law passed in 1927: First, what kind of censorship existed in Quito before this date and, second, whether this regulation was actually applied after it was passed. To answer the first question, it is important to understand that movies were unofficially censored when the city had no cinema board. The censorship system was put into effect unofficially by different individuals who belonged to the higher ranks in Quito. For example, on one occasion, the chief of the police department, Luis Antonio Pallares, sent police officers to the cinema theaters to prohibit the entrance of the under-aged.³⁰⁰ Also, Rosario Zaldumbide de Crespo censored films that in her opinion were offensive to women.³⁰¹ Another method of unofficial censoring applied at the time in the city was put into practice by the cinema entrepreneurs themselves by stating in the cinema advertisements whether a film was appropriate or not for children and women. However, according to *El Comercio*, this was a tactic used to attract moviegoers who went to the cinema to watch the forbidden material rather than to prohibit their attendance.

The fact that a rather unofficial censoring system had worked in the city before 1929, but no longer existed, served *El Comercio* as an argument in response to the criticisms against the daily that the various flaws of the cinematographic sphere had not been brought up before, but only in 1929, due to the reluctance of the cinema company to pay more for advertisements or to submit bigger advertisements.³⁰² *El Comercio* also defended itself by claiming that it could no longer remain silent, since it considered that never before had the cinema company committed as many abuses of justice as in late 1929.

In relation to the second question, it is clear that by 1929, that which was required by the law of 1927 was not being put into practice.³⁰³ In other words, there was resistance to applying the decree, which is once again evidence of the presence of power, since, as Foucault pointed out “where there is power, there is resistance...”³⁰⁴ The resistance to putting this law into practice could be attributed, for instance, to the children who did not obey, to the police who failed to ensure that everybody obeyed the law, to

299 “Funciona la censura cinematográfica,” *El Día* November 7, 1929.

300 “El Comercio y los cines,” *El Comercio*, November 9, 1929.

301 “El Comercio y los cines,” *El Comercio*, November 9, 1929.

302 Un lector de periódicos, “Los cines y ‘El Comercio’,” *El Día*, November 8, 1929.

303 “Por la moral y la educación de los niños,” *El Comercio*, November 11, 1929.

304 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 95

the parents who failed to take care of their children, to the teachers who failed to educate them better, to the women who were reluctant to abandon the entertainment sphere, and to the cinema entrepreneurs who failed to select the films appropriately. Contrary to what the law of 1927 stipulated, by 1929, police thrillers continued to be screened and under fourteen-year-olds continued to attend the screenings. In fact, children were the main moviegoers.³⁰⁵ This is evidenced by the fact that the censorship of films³⁰⁶ and the regulation of children's movie going were two of the tension points in the public debate.

The alleged negative 'effects' of the modern media, in particular that of cinema, were by no means a new concern at the time. As explained by Jostein Gripsrud, organized research on this aspect had been carried out since 1905, immediately after the spread of movie theaters in the western world.³⁰⁷ In fact, as regards the influence of the media on people, this was the predominant way of thinking among media researchers internationally at the time, until around 1940. It was considered that the media could make people do anything.³⁰⁸

Contemporaries in Quito knew that concern about the negative influence of cinema was not an isolated preoccupation of Ecuador, since the local press had published articles about the measures taken in other countries to protect youngsters from the influence of cinema.³⁰⁹ They were also aware that certain countries had implemented extensive regulation, primarily in Europe, for almost two decades, in order to prohibit the entrance of children of a certain age to cinemas, and to control the admission of youngsters to cinemas in general.³¹⁰ In Quito, cinema was not the first medium to have been regarded as having a bad influence on people. Prior to the advent of cinema, books and photography were also regarded as disseminators of 'low human passions.'³¹¹

In the midst of the discussion on greater control of the cinematographic sphere, voices from abroad were arguing against the excessive regulation of

305 S. M. Mena Dávila, "El cine y los niños," *El Comercio*, December 8, 1929.

306 For instance, see advertisement, *El Comercio*, November 4, 1929.

307 Jostein Gripsrud, *Understanding Media Culture* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2002), 37.

308 *Ibid.*, 42, 46.

309 "Los niños y el cinematógrafo," *El Día*, June 16, 1930.

310 F. Restrepo, "El cinematógrafo y la protección a la infancia," *Razón y Fe*, Revista quincenal hispano-americana, Núm. 302, May 25, 1926, Tomo 75, Fasc. 4. Madrid.) in *El Comercio*, January 7 and 8 1930.

311 Maurice Rouvroy, "El cinema público y la infancia," *El Comercio*, November 17, 1929.

cinema. According to Pedro Sangro y Ros de Olano, cinema was severely judged and criticized because it was the only form of entertainment to which everyone had access. In his view, these regulations of children only made the cinema more appealing.³¹² All in all, he considered the regulations pointless.

Even though most people seem to have regarded cinema as having an adverse influence, not everybody in Quito at this time completely agreed with this view. For instance, to Enrique Dávila Jijón, the morality aspect was not reason enough to ban a film.³¹³ One could see the most moral content and still receive a highly immoral message through it; just as one could see something very immoral and still find no immorality in it. In other words, the reception of the message did not lie in the content of the object, but in the receiver.³¹⁴ This idea is exactly what Carlo Ginzburg argued in his celebrated book of *The Cheese and the Worms*; it allowed him to theorize that the reception process does not depend on the content of a text, but rather on the person who receives the message.

To Ginzburg, the reading of a source, rather than the content of such a source, can greatly determine the interpretations of what people *see* in the source.³¹⁵ To the author, when we *read* a source, we activate our particular ‘filters,’ which constitute some sort of screen through which information is received. Thus, what we receive is not always seen directly as the content of the source in question, but it is processed, and therefore interpreted, according to each of our personal screens.

To Ginzburg, “even if Menocchio’s interpretation was triggered by contact with this text, its roots had distant origins.”³¹⁶ In other words, part of the interpretation we make of a text comes from the text as such, and part of it from what we have experienced in our lives, which is activated when we face something. Like de Certeau, Ginzburg believed that there is no passive reading of a text, but that reading is an active process: “We have seen how Menocchio read his books: isolating words and phrases, sometimes distorting them, juxtaposing different passages, firing off rapid analogies.”³¹⁷ Moreover, to the author, Menocchio’s contact with certain books does not entirely explain his way of interpreting them. In other words,

312 “Reglamentaciones en el cine,” *El Día*, January 6, 1930.

313 Enrique Dávila Jijón, “La censura en el cine,” *El Día*, November 9, 1929.

314 Enrique Dávila Jijón, “La censura en el cine,” *El Día*, November 9, 1929.

315 Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, 41.

316 *Ibid.*, 41.

317 *Ibid.*, 51.

“it was not the book as such, but the encounter between the printed page and oral culture that formed an explosive mixture in Menocchio’s head.”³¹⁸

In addition to the two laws that addressed the sanitation of cinemas with detergents and hygienic facilities, and the sanitation of the mind through the censorship of the films, in early 1930 another law was passed:

1. It has been stated that it is expressly forbidden to sell more tickets than the number of available seats, to avoid crowding.
2. Likewise, it is forbidden to allow the admission of women in an ‘interesting condition’ [meaning pregnant women], and of women who are nursing their babies.
3. Smoking is strictly banned in cinemas.
4. Police officers must arrest those who violate the above-mentioned regulations.³¹⁹

This decree, issued by the chief of the police department, known as Intendente de Policía, surprisingly did not ban the attendance of either children or smokers, even though these issues had been seriously discussed in the debate of late 1929. On the other hand, babies and women with small children were addressed. As we can see, this was not merely an aspect of gender, but an aspect of gender, age, and having children or not. Single women, married women without babies and old women were still welcomed to the cinema. The reasons preventing them from cinemagoing were not described.

Why did this law not indicate how children should behave in cinemas? A possible explanation is that the way in which children should behave could be seen as operating in the realm of the norm rather than in that of the law, as suggested by Foucault.³²⁰ These norms, for instance, in the case of Quito, circulated in newspapers, or should we say that they were rather dictated by those who published their opinions in newspapers. It seems that parallel to the judicial law, a set of norms existed that were established through publication in different sources such as newspapers, although they did not really take a legal form. In the end, although it was not written in the law how children should behave in a cinema, the judicial institution expressed itself in the form of medical discourse, through hygiene, and was still regulatory. This is evidence of the authority that

318 Ibid., 51.

319 “La reglamentación de la concurrencia a los teatros de cinematógrafo,” *El Día*, January 21 1930.

320 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 144.

newspapers had established over a long period of time, not only in Quito, but around the world. As we have already seen, the suggestion that it was important to put into practice what was written in the newspapers was also made during this dispute.³²¹

The authority of the newspapers had developed over a very long time. According to Habermas, the newspaper trade developed out of a system of private letters, and was initially organized in the form of a small handicraft business, with the idea of “a modest maximization of profit.”³²² At first, only news was reported, but later on the reporting of information involved ideologies and viewpoints, “however, the compiling of items of information encountered the competition of literary journalism,” and ‘a new element — political in the broader sense — was added to the economic one. (...)’³²³ In other words, to Bücher, referenced by Habermas, it was the editorial function that transformed the newspapers from mere publishers of news to leaders and ‘dealers’ in public opinion.³²⁴ However, according to Habermas, this change had occurred before the editorial function, with the emergence of scholarly journals in Europe and moral weeklies and political journals in Great Britain. This is literary journalism.³²⁵ At this stage, the pedagogical and political influence did not leave them any profit.³²⁶

In the late 1920s and early 1930s in the cinema sphere of Quito, the protection of children from cinema remained in the realm of written norms as well as in the oral culture, but some other agents and topics did not remain in those realms. I argue this because even though the moviegoing of women, for instance, was part of the oral culture, it also became part of the written culture in two ways: Firstly in the norm published by the newspapers and secondly in the legal realm. Leaving certain aspects in the oral culture and the sphere of norms was probably intentional, as it gave contemporaries an easier opportunity to do whatever they wanted and, for instance, break agreements that had not yet become laws, and also because it did not make the issue a matter of repressive institution; the legal could be regulated in a more ‘efficient’ way. All things considered, it is clear that at the time, the oral and the written cultures clashed, in different ways.

What were the reasons for issuing this decree? How could

321 Rosendo R. Mediavilla, “El cine y la niñez,” *El Comercio*, November 11, 1929.

322 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 181.

323 *Ibid.*, 182.

324 *Ibid.*, 182.

325 *Ibid.*, 182.

326 *Ibid.*, 182.

prohibiting pregnant women from going to the cinema be explained? Of course, this ordinance stands as solid evidence that the regulation, and probably also the debate of 1929, were looking to ban women from part of the public sphere of entertainment, but this was done under the influence of the discourse on protecting them and their children from crowding and all the problems involved in this. However, the fact that women with babies were also denied entrance to cinemas could be linked to the attempt to preserve silence in the venues, which, due to the nature of this monograph, is the aspect that I now further explore.

Silence was not only required inside the cinema venues; in fact, it was also an issue in the city as a whole. At that time, people complained about the continuous playing of gramophones in the shops that sold these items, as I will discuss in the following paragraphs.

Another way of explaining the decree is by drawing on Michel de Certeau, according to whom the law or normative discourse is put into practice only after becoming a story that is believed. In other words, to the author, what was written in the law was actually, and already before that, a story. In de Certeau's own words:

In other words, *normative* discourse 'operates' only if it has already become a *story*, a text articulated on something real and speaking in its name, i.e., a law made into a story and historicized (*une loi historiée et historicisée*), recounted by bodies. Its being made into a story is the presupposition of its producing further stories and thereby making itself believed. And the tool ensures precisely the passage from discourse to the story through the interventions that incarnate the law by making bodies conform to it and thus make it appear to be recited by reality itself.³²⁷

The decree prohibiting the entrance of pregnant women and women with babies to cinemas was written in the law after this had become the story. The story had already been created a long time before this on the basis of the claim that smoke, for instance, was bad for women, and that cinemas were too crowded and dangerous for mothers with babies.

Further, this regulation portrays how women were entirely devoted to the care of children, as it does not mention that men were banned entry for taking small children with them. The only daily that gave information

327 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 149.

about this decree was *El Día*, in a rather small size piece of news. The conservative daily, *El Debate*, and the *El Comercio* newspaper published nothing on the subject.

Despite this decree being issued, the problems did not disappear. For instance, *El Comercio* continued reporting on the misbehavior of the children in the gallery who, among other types of bad behavior, made too much noise, since they even commented on the film in loud voices and whistled. They had no respect for anybody, not even the orchestra.³²⁸ Crowding and the lack of censorship were also denounced on the editorial page of *El Comercio* newspaper,³²⁹ while *El Debate* commented on similar issues as late as in October 1930.³³⁰ *El Comercio* therefore continued demanding the prohibition of children of a 'certain age' from the cinema, or tried to force them to go with an adult or supervised, but not alone.

In conclusion, it is important to highlight that the discourses on money, hygiene and comfort were not disconnected from one another; when viewed in a larger context, they are all inter-connected. The link between all these aspects is control, regulation and limitation of freedom. In other words, the discourse on control was a concept that also covered all other aspects. Control was everywhere. Control of the money that was charged as well as control of the money one spent; control of the hygiene of public events where increased crowding was an issue; control of behavior inside as well as outside the venues; and control of where people should or should not go.

Another area that saw an extensive discourse on control in the city at that time was that of transportation and traffic, mostly seen in relation to the numbers of cars on the streets and the identification of cars and chauffeurs through placards for the former and uniforms for the latter.³³¹ The attempts to control mobility or circulation is also evidenced inside the cinema in relation to crowdedness, or the number of people who could be packed into a venue.

328 "La policía y los granujas," *El Comercio*, February 4, 1930.

329 "Los peligros del cine," *El Comercio*, February 25, 1930.

330 "Policía de espectáculos," *El Debate*, October 24, 1930.

331 "Todos los choferes llevarán uniforme desde el 1o. de enero," *El Comercio*, December 1, 1929. See also "El Intendente General de Policía decreta la colocación de nuevas placas numéricas en los vehículos," *El Comercio*, December 3, 1929. See also "El Intendente General de Policía decreta la colocación de nuevas placas numéricas en los vehículos," *El Comercio*, December 4, 1929.

In order to put control into practice, all of these discursive spheres (economy, sanitation and comfort) demanded stronger intervention on the part of the police, who, although already in charge of this, were reminded to reprimand these practices more strongly. The request for the participation of the police can be interpreted by drawing on de Certeau's theory, as the author considered that for the law to be written on bodies, apparatus, different tools and objects were needed. These apparatuses were the policemen, the handcuffs and the witness box in the courtroom, for example.³³² By requesting the intervention of the police or the sanitary department, what was actually requested was that the State become involved in the cinematographic sphere. That is, it was actually simply the defense of a private business through public institutions. Was this the statization of private business? Or was it interference in people's use of their free time using public apparatus? Control also served to filter the sonic aspect inside cinemas; in concrete terms, people wanted the combination of moving images and sound to be synchronized, which I will analyze in the following section.

2.5 Sound

Another feature that was debated during the public discussion of the late 1920s is that of the live musical sound accompaniment. That the sonic aspect of silent cinema had become a problem in the city can be evidenced in the following aspects: First, the issue of cinema ticket prices in the article entitled 'Two Sucres for Stalls Tickets' was not only that the tickets were considered expensive in a context of economic crisis, but that above all, they were considered high for entertainment that lacked sound:

Thanks to the campaign for the well-being of the public that we have undertaken for months by highlighting the shortcomings and exploitations of cinema, the [cinema] company will no longer be able to unreasonably raise prices as if the silent shows could compete with the revues, operettas and opera, for which one pays two sucres for the stalls and in series.³³³

Another complaint expressed in the public discussion of late 1929 on the sonic aspect was the lack of correspondence between live music and moving images, since the film was accompanied by a variety of pieces that

332 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 141.

333 "La empresa de cines ya no subirá los precios," *El Comercio*, November 5, 1929.

did not match what was being shown on the screen:

Finally we, the *habitués* [regulars] as they call us, will be able to confidently complain about the irregularities that since its creation the cinema company Empresa de Cines has been committing against us, such as the extortion through high prices, the indecent benches of the Popular and the Puerta del Sol, and the disastrous orchestration that has never bothered to interpret the slightest passage of the film, for if there is a fox trot in it, the 'blessed' orchestra, after several demands of the public, discharge "La Bocina" or "Otavalo de mi vida," and when the villain is hung, they perform "Los ojazos de mi negro."³³⁴

Moreover, the musicians who provided musical accompaniment for the silent screenings were regarded as being insufficiently competent:

The mistakenly so-called orchestra is made up of incipient musicians who are underpaid, with no artistic taste so that instead of producing good music, they pitifully ruin whatever they play - except when, on rare occasions, maestro Albuja makes an effort to teach them certain pieces. The second pianist only plays by ear, and his place might as well be in a cabaret, not in a serious place as a cinematographic spectacle should be.³³⁵

Under these circumstances, the complaints reached the point at which one of the moviegoers said he would prefer to have a gramophone rather than the live orchestra. In other words, he would prefer recorded music to the live music provided for them:

Last Saturday, by chance, we went to the theater located on Pasaje Royal [the Edén Theater] ... (...) We patiently put up with the jumble of sounds that a cold and decadent [male] pianist got out of an out-of-tune instrument, which was uncharacteristic of a cinema of the category of the Edén Theater. It would be better [to have] one of those good phonographs that would be less monotonous for sure than the potpourris poorly put together by the mentioned pianist...

What was outrageous and reprehensible is that at the very moment that the film started to get interesting due to its dénouement, all

334 Don Juan, "Campo Libre," *El Comercio*, November 6, 1929.

335 Un espectador, "El cine en Quito," *El Comercio*, November 12, 1929.

of a sudden, the screening was interrupted and someone shouted 'it's over' and the lights went on. The public remained astonished, not knowing what was going on; the pianist, scared, closed his clavichord and started a speedy run, leading the audience to believe that the spectacle had finished.³³⁶

The unsatisfactory live music of the cinemas was also seen as a consequence of the poor state of the instruments:

There have been frequent occasions on which prices have been raised for an orchestra performance and, to mock the public even more, usually not even one sound comes out of the piano until after half the film. It would be better if they suspended those piano beatings and programmed music performances only for the nights when the company decides to offer a serious orchestra. All the so-called pianos are real monstrosities.³³⁷

These local reports were probably fired by what contemporaries read in the press about the situation overseas since there the live musical accompaniment of the silent screenings allowed even blind people to follow the story told by the moving images: "I am going to the movies, a blind little 10-year-old kid tells me. You? What for? For the music because thanks to that, I understand well when there is a fight, when soldiers pass, when there is sadness and many other things."³³⁸

However, the situation in Quito seems to have been different since, taking as evidence the accounts above-mentioned, it can be inferred that in Quito, nobody — not to mention the blind — could follow the story told by the musical accompaniment of silent cinema. What is more, the live musical accompaniment actually told a completely unrelated story, thus confounding what was shown on screen.

In addition, the account referring to the situation overseas tells us that it is highly possible that, abroad, the accompaniment of live music at silent screenings eased the integration of blind people into the silent cinema audience. Without disregarding the possibility that blind people were also part of the audience in Quito, the fact that the music did not follow the story on the screen, but rather told not only a different story, but a

336 Nick Carter, "También en el cine hay espantadas," *El Comercio*, December 26, 1929.

337 Rafael Flores, "El cine de Don Jorge," *El Comercio*, November 9, 1929.

338 Maurice Rouvroy, "El cinema público y la infancia," *El Comercio*, November 18, 1929.

unrelated to that of the moving images, it is likely that blind people were indeed not part of the moviegoers, and if they were, the possibility that they could follow the story told by the moving images was small or non-existent. The possibility that the blind were already integrated into silent cinema screenings in Quito is, of course, an aspect that requires further investigation and that could even further our understanding of the role of sound in the silent cinema screenings. All in all, in relation to Quito, these complaints stand as evidence that there was a demand for a correlation between the story told by the moving images and the story told by sound. These claims are part of the demands made for sound cinema at the time.

All this raises the question as to whether, for the blind, the arrival of sound cinema did not affect their attendance at the cinema screenings but boost it. Not being able to see the images, but being able to hear well, the advent of sound cinema must have been a good reason for the blind to continue going to the screenings. However, in terms of the senses and how people consumed early sound cinema, this raises the question as to whether the deaf in Quito lamented the advent of sound cinema, since their understanding of the film depended primarily on the visuality of silent cinema. In the United States, the Philadelphia's Speech Reading Club motivated the deaf to demand the return of silent films or, at least, the inclusion of captions on the screen of the scenes of sound films so that they could read the plot.³³⁹ Since Hollywood did not want to lose the deaf audience, after the demands, Paramount included special hearing systems for the deaf in 30 seats of its Brooklyn theater.³⁴⁰

Physicians encouraged the deaf to go to the cinema on the grounds that sound cinema and making the effort to listen to the sounds created by this technology might cure them.³⁴¹ In other words, it was now suggested that their motivation could be the hope for a possible solution to their medical condition. Sound cinema was in this sense regarded as a medicine for the deaf, or as mentioned in the title, as a "blessing for the deaf." That is, the blind and the deaf both had motivations, although different ones, for moviegoing.

Except for the completely deaf, who cannot hear at all because their eardrum is destroyed, going to the cinema for some deaf people has a curative value. [This physician] points out that in

339 De Gaiza, "American Films in Latin America," 143-144.

340 De Gaiza, "American Films in Latin America," 144.

341 "Una bendición para los sordos," *El Comercio*, July 24, 1930.

fact, the deaf can better perceive [the sound of] the natural human voice because the practice of listening to the dialogues of the movies stimulates the auditory organs.³⁴²

At the time, the local press also echoed some foreign accounts describing how not only because of the lack of synchronization between the live music and the moving images, but also in general, understanding silent cinema had become impossible for them after having experienced the first sound films in the United States:

But the other night we went to see a great American movie recently made. What a disappointment! We noticed with some sorrow that our psychology of not very frequent moviegoers had changed completely. It was like watching a deaf-mute making signs, or like being a deaf-mute and guessing a musical composition by the movements of the baton of the orchestra conductor.

Even still, our sensation was of emptiness, of worry and of dissatisfaction overall. We felt as if we were thinking that our faculties were not complete; in vain we were listening without hearing and in vain we were looking without realizing completely what we were seeing. Would we conceive a locomotive without noise or murmur?³⁴³

As is evident, after attending sound screenings, comprehending silent films became, for those who could see and hear, a feeling that one of the senses was missing.

In conclusion, it is clear that, in the late 1920s, the existing sound in cinemas, that of live orchestras, no longer satisfied the audiences, as they did not provide the synchronized, recorded sound that they had read existed in other parts of the world. People therefore demanded that live orchestras be silenced and synchronized, and recorded sound be introduced into the movies. In addition to these demands for more recorded sound in the movies, there was another demand — a demand for more silence in the cinema venues, as people were asking that women with babies not be allowed to attend the screenings. All in all, two aspects seem to suggest that control had also been exercised in the area of sound in cinema: contemporaries wanted to enjoy the synchronized and recorded sound of the movies in a more silent environment. In 1929, the practice of accompanying moving images

342 "Una bendición para los sordos," *El Comercio*, July 24, 1930.

343 Emilio Delboy, "La conquista del cinematógrafo parlante," *El Comercio*, November 27, 1929.

with local and live sound was criticized, thus putting an end to the period of several years, from 1908 to 1929, including the six years (1908–1914) dominated by traveling exhibitors in Quito, when musical accompaniment was mostly live and provided locally. To conclude, it is clear that sound cinema already dominated the cinema sphere in Quito, even though no sound film had yet been shown.

2.5.1 *The First Purpose-built Sound Cinema*

Even though it did not appear in the heat of the debate, the construction of the first purpose-built sound cinema in the city is another outcome of the discussion in late 1929. On March 1, 1930,³⁴⁴ the very same owners of *El Comercio* made public their desire to build a new cinema in Quito, which they named the Bolívar Theater. Was this the first time that the owners of this newspaper had openly expressed their wish to participate in the cinematographic business? Indeed it was, but this was not the first time that the two brothers had been involved in the cinematographic screenings, since their daily had inaugurated a conference and cinema screening room inside the newspaper's building early in 1930.³⁴⁵ One of these screenings was even accompanied by an orchestra.³⁴⁶ This moving picture exhibition is also a reminder that the screenings were no longer confined to the official venues, but could also be shown at other non-theatrical places of the time. The announcement of the construction of the theater was highly praised by the Ecuadorians.³⁴⁷

But seeing the emergence of the Bolívar Theater, as the Mantillas named the new theater, as part of a longer process, early 1930 was not the first time that the intention of constructing a theater was mentioned in *El Comercio*. As early as 1927, one of the letters to the editor signed under the pen name of 'Amable Observador,' had already pointed out that the capital would need a replacement theater, which could be called Bolívar

344 "El cine parlante en Quito," *El Comercio*, March 1, 1930.

345 "En los salones de este diario se proyectaron ayer las vistas de los proyectos laureados en el concurso promovido en París para el monumento al Libertador," *El Comercio*, January 31, 1930. See also "Exhibición cinematográfica de los proyectos presentados para el monumento al Libertador Bolívar," *El Día*, February 1, 1930. See also "Proyección de la película de carácter militar 'España en Marruecos,'" *El Comercio*, January 8, 1930. See also "Voto de reconocimiento a 'El Comercio,'" *El Comercio*, February 7, 1930.

346 "En los salones de este diario se proyectaron ayer las vistas de los proyectos laureados en el concurso promovido en París para el monumento al Libertador," *El Comercio*, January 31, 1930.

347 Quiteño, "Un teatro para Quito," *El Comercio*, March 3, 1930. See also L. F. Borja, "Las ventajas del cine parlante," *El Comercio*, June 27, 1930.

Theater, for the Sucre Theater, the opera theater in the city built in the late 19th century. This, as far as I have been able to determine, is the first time that the idea of founding the Bolívar Theater was conceived and that the idea was made public in the city's newspapers. Contrary to the newspaper's stance in 1930, in 1927 the letter suggested that the Bolívar Theater should be a state-owned theater that could accept the productions of secondary category companies. In this way, the productions of the most famous companies would continue to be seen at the Sucre Theater.³⁴⁸ That is, the Bolívar Theater would compete not with the silent cinema venues, nor indeed with the cinema venues, but with the opera theater. In other words, the Bolívar Theater was conceived of in 1927 as a venue for opera and theater performances, not for cinema showings, as it became later in the early 1930s.

The involvement of *El Comercio* in the screenings and the fact that both accounts, that of 1927 signed under the pen name of 'Amable Observador' and that of 1929 entitled 'Two Sucres for the Stalls Tickets,' were anonymous and published in the same newspaper *El Comercio* raises suspicion about the anonymity. In the end, it seems plausible that even though it is not known for sure who demanded the construction of the Bolívar Theater, it is clear that *El Comercio* was the main supporter of the building of this venue in the capital. In the following paragraphs, I examine how the materiality and physical space of the Bolívar Theater was planned, which is part of the conceived space of sound cinema.

The Mantilla brothers planned the building of the first purpose-built sound cinema in Quito from different perspectives. First, for instance, they bought two houses in the city center, just a few meters from the government palace, where the new venue was to be built. The cost of the land — it is not specified how many square meters — was two hundred thirty thousand sucres.³⁴⁹ The price was three times higher than that paid by the State for the new airport outside the city center. The location of the future Bolívar Theater was seen as excellent. In fact, it was said that the location could not be better.³⁵⁰ The fact that this venue would be in the city center was highlighted.³⁵¹

The buying of that particular place for the new cinema was not

348 Amable Observador, "Cine y Teatro," *El Comercio*, September 18, 1927.

349 "El cine parlante en Quito," *El Comercio*, March 1, 1930.

350 Quiteño, "Un teatro para Quito," *El Comercio*, March 3, 1930.

351 "Sucesos de la semana," *El Comercio*, March 9, 1930.

random. Several aspects of procurement can be analyzed, but one in particular is of notable importance with reference to Lefebvre's concepts, including the use value.³⁵² In other words, when one buys a space, one also purchases other characteristics that add value to the ways in which people are going to use that space. That is why, in purchasing a space, one is also buying distinction, and in addition to this:

This is not all, however: also purchased is a particular *distance* - the distance from the purchaser's dwelling-place to other places, to centers of commerce, work, leisure, culture or decision. Here time once more has a role to play, even though a space that is both programmed and fragmented tends to eliminate it as such.³⁵³

Besides distinction and distance, the author sees that when one buys a space, one also buys something else. One also buys time. Therefore, the author sees it is as important to also study the use people make of a certain place, because one also understands the temporality of the past.³⁵⁴ In addition to the above-mentioned, the buyer of a certain place also purchases a daily schedule. In relation to this, the author sees that every schedule has its advantages and disadvantages, as it is the losing or saving of time, "and hence something other than signs - to wit, *a practice*."³⁵⁵ In other words, when the Mantilla brothers bought that place for the first purpose-built sound cinema, they also bought, for instance, distinction, distance to other places, the past, and the practice of the daily schedule of the area.

In addition to planning the location of the new theater, the Mantilla brothers also thought about the design of the blueprints and decided that an American company would be in charge of making them. This was also seen as a positive aspect, considering, as they said, the experience of North American professionals in the construction of such venues.³⁵⁶ The Philadelphia theater architects Hoffman-Henon were in charge of the blueprints' design. Hoffman-Henon Co. had an excellent reputation for constructing theaters in the United States.³⁵⁷

The blueprints were designed by the Hoffman-Henon Co. of the

352 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 339.

353 Ibid.

354 Ibid., 356.

355 Ibid., 339.

356 Quiteño, "Un teatro para Quito," *El Comercio*, March 3, 1930.

357 "Algunas características del Teatro 'Bolívar' y su acondicionamiento acústico," *Nariz del Diablo*, April 1933.

United States, and the construction of the new venue was conducted by the German architect Augusto Ridder. This architect had a long trajectory in the construction of buildings in the city, including the Eugenio Espejo Hospital, which was to be inaugurated later that same year, the Palacio de Comunicaciones, and also the building of *El Comercio*.³⁵⁸ With regards to local workers, the theater was decorated by the artist brothers Ciro and Octavio Pazmiño.³⁵⁹

Right after the Mantilla brothers made public their decision of building the first sound cinema, an account was published where one could see that people were expecting sound cinema:

It should be celebrated on the other hand, that sound cinema, which is displacing former films, is going to be premiered in the venue that is going to be built. In other South American countries, even in second category cities such as Cali ‘sound cinema venues’ are already working [...?]³⁶⁰

As is clear, not having sound cinema was regarded as the trait of unprogressive places, as by this time the absence of this technology was seen as a direct consequence of being a backward space.

In conclusion, the construction of the Bolívar Theater was regarded as a solution to three problems: First, it would solve all the problems related to cinema that had been pointed out in the public discussion of late 1929, such as hygiene, comfort and sound; second, it would be a solution to the absence of theatrical companies, which had not come to Quito due to the lack of an appropriate space to perform; and, third, the venue would allow the arrival of sound cinema, which had not been heard in the city until then.³⁶¹

It can be inferred that the public debate of late 1929 had one single goal: to highlight the lack of appropriate cinemas and cinema regulations in Quito. This explains why the discussion ended with the announcement of the Mantilla brothers that the first theater devoted to sound screenings was to be opened in Quito.³⁶² This announcement had both short and long-

358 “Señor Augusto Ridder,” *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

359 Un Quiteño, “El Teatro Bolívar,” *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

360 Quiteño, “Un teatro para Quito,” *El Comercio*, March 3, 1930.

361 Quiteño, “Un teatro para Quito,” *El Comercio*, March 3, 1930. See also L. F. Borja, “Las ventas del cine parlante,” *El Comercio*, June 27, 1930.

362 “El cine parlante en Quito,” *El Comercio*, March 1, 1930.

term consequences in the cinematographic sphere of the city. Among the short-term consequences was the shift in *El Comercio*'s discourse from the early 1930s onwards, since instead of requesting the prohibition of children from watching movies, *El Comercio*, ever since that time, focused almost entirely on how this new technological innovation was transforming the cinematographic sphere in Hollywood and the great efforts that were being made to produce sound films. As for the long-term consequences, this meant the entrance of a new family into the cinematographic sphere, and the end of a period during which Jorge Cordovez had retained the monopoly over movies in Quito since the early 1910s.

All in all, the massive transfer of different aspects to the cinematographic sphere that were being discussed in the city allowed the daily to gain more supporters willing to fight for their particular interests. Recognizing the benefits of better hygiene, and in general a healthy environment for children, among other things, no one would have questioned the points made by the newspaper.

The pivotal role played by the *El Comercio* newspaper in the creation of a new perception of cinema is also clear. This was achieved by encouraging discussion, that is, through language. Even though these situations had existed before, by discussing them, *El Comercio* not only transformed the perception of the cinema sphere in the city, but also it helped the new perception materialize in different ways, for example in the law and in the infrastructure of the venues. The announcement in March 1930 of a new site for cinema, a modern place correcting the older mistakes, suggests that the debate was created in order to have a floor for the announcement of a modern cinema venue. All these aspects lead me to argue that *El Comercio* newspaper had further motives for reviving the discussion in late 1929.

Since the public debate was founded on an interest in making the body live longer through hygiene and at the same time there was an interest in ensuring that children would live longer, not only through physical hygiene, but also through mental hygiene by censoring the films, it is clear that this discussion is a good example of the replacement which, according to Foucault, had taken place in the last few centuries — of “a power that is organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death.”³⁶³ Therefore, the public debate appealed to people because it claimed to be based on the defense of life rather than on restriction,

363 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 147.

imposition and control. To Foucault, “the disciplines of the body and the regulation of populations constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed.”³⁶⁴ These two poles took the form of power from around the seventeenth century onwards. Foucault links the emergence of demography to the regulation of the populations, and what he calls the “management” or “administration” of life.

Regarding the case of Quito, I consider that control over children and the ‘crowd’ can also be seen in this perspective as mechanisms of power addressed to have control of the body and the social body. I see the interest in controlling children and the crowd not only in terms of demography, but also in terms of discipline and regulation. These two bodies were in fact targets of order and control.

364 Ibid., 139.

Chapter 4 Sensitivity to Sound: The Construction of a Feeling

1. Noise Made by Children Becomes Bothersome in Cinema

But any investigation that considers only people's consciousness, their "reason" or "ideas", while disregarding the structure of drives, the direction and form of human affects and passions, can from the outset be of only limited value.³⁶⁵

Interest in controlling sound in cinema was not raised by the public debate of late 1929; in the case of Quito at least, it had actually already emerged earlier with attempts to control children's noise and speech in the screenings in the early decades of the 20th century. In fact, the moviegoing ordinance that addressed women with babies and pregnant women in 1930 was nothing more than the crystallization through law of a long public debate on the problem of the presence of children in cinema in the late 1910s and early 1920s.

For instance, from 1917 onwards several complaints began to be published with increasing emphasis in *El Comercio* on the misbehavior of children in cinema,³⁶⁶ which was regarded as something that could be solved by the presence of either police officers³⁶⁷ or their parents, who could monitor their behavior.³⁶⁸ Until this point, it had been clear that children's manners, including their audible, in other words, sound-related manners³⁶⁹ such as noise and speech,³⁷⁰ had made cinema a bothersome place to be for the rest of the audience. In spite of this, none of these accounts

³⁶⁵ Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 99.

³⁶⁶ "Escándalo entre menores," *El Comercio*, June 25, 1917. "Accidente sin desgracia," *El Comercio*, November 21, 1918. "Esos vagos," *El Comercio*, February 7, 1919. Oscar Ruiz de Grol, "El cine," *El Comercio*, June 14, 1919.

³⁶⁷ "Insoportable," *El Día*, April 27, 1919.

³⁶⁸ "Pájaros sueltos," *El Comercio*, June 14, 1919.

³⁶⁹ To Elias, speech is "nothing other than human relations turned into sound". See Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 99.

³⁷⁰ "Galanterías?," *El Comercio*, March 12, 1918. "Estarán arrepentidos," *El Comercio*, February 12, 1919.

implied banning children from cinema. In the late 1910s, in addition to children's bothersome behavior, cinema came to be described as having a bad influence on the underaged as it had allegedly turned a young boy into a thief.³⁷¹ In other words, cinema was not only unsafe because of the presence of children, but the films started to be considered harmful to the underaged.

In 1919, the local press commented on the prohibition of children's moviegoing for the first time. However, all children were not denied entrance to the movies; only those who were not accompanied by their parents:

During the past two nights some policemen have been positioned at the doors of the 'Puerta del Sol' (we do not know this is if due to an order from superiors) and have been searching for all under 12-year-old ragamuffins who have 'passes' to gallery seats and who, of course, every night attend without their parents.³⁷²

Three aspects deserve to be highlighted here: First, the reason why children were not admitted had nothing to do with their noise, but because they were without guardians; second, children of the low social classes had started to go out alone in the city; and third, it is notable that children were banned by only one—not all—of the cinemas, one of the lowbrow venues.

Inspired by Norbert Elias, I argue that in the late 1910s, in Quito, a transformation of human relations was taking place. At the core of this transformation, I argue that the aspect of controlling sound was crucial. Controlling sound concerned not only oneself; it was also a matter of making others control their sounds. This was understood as consideration, respect for others, and a matter of behavior in society. The effort to more carefully control audible manners forms part of contemporaries' attempts to become more civilized. In other words, the motivation was that of achieving a more civilized and modern way of life in Quito.

A contemporary caricature shows how fathers were uncomfortable with the resolution of prohibiting children's moviegoing (Fig. 11):

371 Oscar Ruiz de Grol, "El cine," *El Comercio*, June 14, 1919.

372 "Pájaros sueltos," *El Comercio*, June 14, 1919.

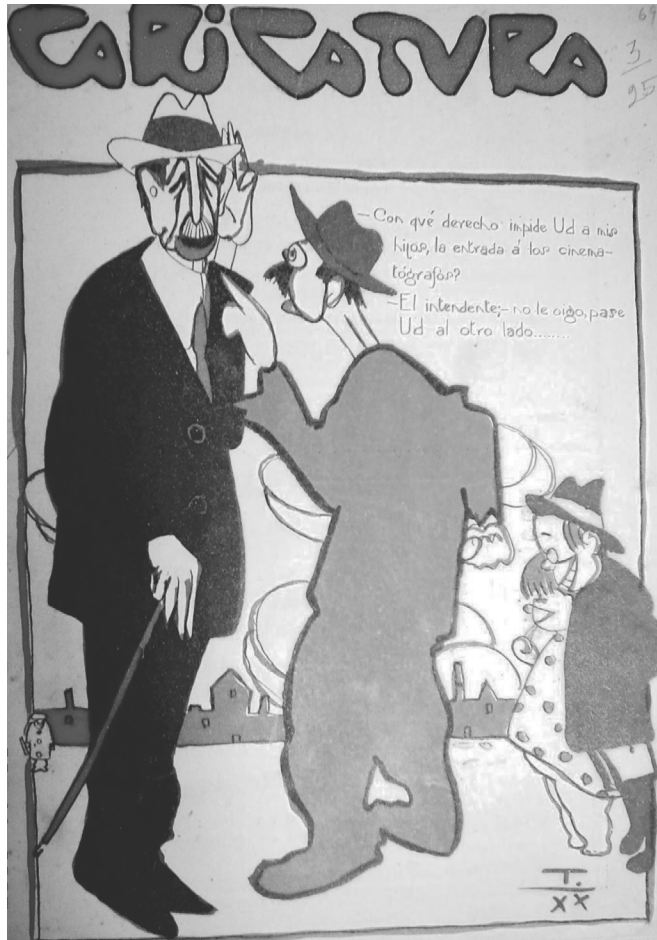


Figure 11: Caricature in 1920

“By what right do you ban my children’s admission to the cinematograph?”

The Intendant: I can’t hear you; please go across to the other side...”³⁷³

Until this date, the behavior of the underaged and youngsters was fairly much discussed in *El Comercio*, but nothing was said about children’s noise being the reason for banning them from cinema, nor was it said that mothers should be denied admission if they had their children. In 1921, both things arouse in Quito: First, children’s noise was considered a reason to ban them from the cinema, and second, for the first time, the moviegoing of mothers with their children was considered worth banning:

³⁷³ *Caricatura*, May 30, 1920.

That the number of tickets sold in the ticket office of cinemas should not be greater than that of the existing seats, as happens in the nights on which movies are screened in series in Sunday matinées or other holidays.

That the admission of women with children be prohibited because, especially at the Variedades Theater, together with the piano, their noise turns into a series of beatings and dangers to the human ear. That at the Puerta del Sol Theater, selling box seats in duplicate should be prohibited, because some families who secure theater box tickets are forced to look for other box seats or to go down to the stalls;

that smoking in the gallery section should be prohibited because there are individuals who are so uneducated that they throw cigarette butts into the stalls, ruining the attendants' clothing and burning their faces or hands;

that police commissioners be obliged to inspect and enforce the order in those places; and finally that machine operators should be advised not to play the film so quickly because it does not work like that.³⁷⁴

The fact that sound was regarded as a reason for banning children and mothers for the first time in 1921 does not mean that this was the first time that children's noise inside cinemas was publicly discussed, as it has already been said;³⁷⁵ but that it was the first time that it was considered a reason to ban children from the cinema. In comparison to the comment of 1919, it becomes clear that in two years, things had changed, since in 1921 children being accompanied by someone to be able to go to the movies was no longer enough, as it had been in 1919. Besides, the justification had shifted from suggesting not letting them in because they were alone to that of their banning for being too noisy, which demonstrates the change of thinking in contemporaries' minds.

After this, in 1923, the suggestion of prohibiting the admission of mothers with suckling children was reinforced:

Kids in the cinema venues

It is necessary that the police insist on not allowing mothers to attend the movies if accompanied by suckling children, because

374 El Repórter Cinemático, "Para la empresa del cine," *El Comercio*, July 16, 1921.

375 "Insoportable," *El Día*, April 27, 1919. See also Oscar Ruiz de Grol, "El cine," *El Comercio*, June 14, 1919.

besides being annoying for the audience, there have already been several cases in which babies have been suffocated by the crowd and have had to be taken out for some air.³⁷⁶

Even though this account seems similar to that published in 1921, there is an enormous difference between the two, as this second reference described children not only as bothersome for the rest of the audiences because of their noise, but also that cinema was not considered a safe place for them. Simply put, this account shows us that contemporaries' way of thinking about children had shifted from being one in which children were the ones who were bothersome in cinema to one in which they had to be protected from cinema.

As is evident, cinema was pictured not only as a harmful place for children by screening films with a bad influence, but also for babies, because they could suffocate. In other words, cinema was harmful to the minds and bodies of children regardless of how old they were.

When did this change begin? This is difficult to answer, but there is evidence that from 1922 onwards there was a shift in the way the local press portrayed cinema and children in comparison to the late 1910s, when the idea that prevailed was that children had made cinema a risky place to be in since they had appropriated its surroundings for play and they had filled the cinema with noise. From 1922 onwards, this idea was given less emphasis and was replaced by the concept that the cinema was dangerous for children of both sexes.

To reinforce the idea that mothers should not take children of any age to the cinema, the local press informed their readers that in the United States, for instance, mothers did not attend cinema with their babies, but in order to solve this problem, an entrepreneur had come up with a creative idea:

The director of an American theater has come up with a very original idea. He knew that many young mothers claimed that they had stopped going to the movies since they did not want to be away from their young children, and this, obviously had significantly decreased the number of moviegoers.

Why, he thought, should this baby situation be an obstacle for mothers to forgo such an honest and recreational option for

376 "Guaguas en los cines," *El Comercio*, July 24, 1923.

entertainment?

And this man has impressively solved the problem by setting up a special large room, with all the elements of a daycare center, which included accredited nursemaids, medical personnel, good and plentiful bottles of milk for those fond of them, and toys. Nothing was missing for the children, who were left there to be completely comfortable while their mothers peacefully enjoyed the show.³⁷⁷

As this solution did not exist in Quito, it is clear that the message to mothers was not to bring their children with them to cinema because it was regarded an inappropriate place for children of all ages. In addition to this, this account reveals that the non-attendance of mothers had considerably reduced the size of cinema audiences in the United States, which leads me to raise the question of whether in Quito the criticism raised against mothers' and children's attendance had the diminution of the cinema audience as its motivation in order to bankrupt the cinema business, which was monopolized at the time by Jorge Cordovez. In order to answer this question, *El Día* should be analyzed in order to see how much criticism was raised in this daily in the late 1910s and early 1920s in comparison to *El Comercio*.

In 1923, in addition to considering cinema a crowded location that put babies in danger, movies continued to be regarded as having a negative influence on children:

Do police thrillers have anything to do with this?

Minors José Vicente Estrella y Gerardo Castañeda, along with César Ibarra and Jorge Salazar, also underage, have committed eleven thefts from last mid-March up to April 3 of the current year. They have perpetrated these thefts more frequently during the night but also during daytime by entering rooms that have been found open. (...) The correction of minors is strictly enforced to prevent greater misconduct.³⁷⁸

As is clear, cinema was being blamed for the delinquent acts of children. Estrella, 'a recurrent thief,' had escaped from prison five times.³⁷⁹

In summary, the feelings of fear toward cinema as a negative place

377 "Los bebés," *El Comercio*, August 14, 1923.

378 "¿Tendrán su parte las películas policiales?," *El Comercio*, April 22, 1923.

379 "Fuga cinco veces," *El Comercio*, June 18, 1923.

were reinforced in 1923, either because children made cinema a bothersome place to be in or because the movies were having a negative impact on children. Ultimately, although the reasons had shifted, the result was the same: children had to be kept out of cinemas.

Four years after the account from 1923 entitled 'Kids in the cinema venue,' the censorship law of 1927 was issued, which also mostly regarded children as spectators to be protected from the bad influence of cinema. Could it be argued that the censorship law regarding cinema in Quito was not only implemented because cinema was dangerous for children, but also because children had made cinema a dangerous place to be in and no-one could simply admit this? Could the decree of the early 1930s which prohibited women's admission to cinemas be understood to have reached babies in the final stage because before this, the censorship law of 1927 seems not to have affected babies at all and, therefore, they continued to be cinemagoers along with their mothers?

In the early 1930s, the venues continued to be regarded as inappropriate and risky places for children, but this time an additional element was added: the rest of the audience was considered dangerous to children:

Nowadays pedagogy has focused so much on the moral formation of children, and yet it is unfortunate to see how young and even old people gather in theaters to curse in front of the children who are there for wholesome and honest recreation. The guards, who are meant to look out for the order and morality in these places, instead of impeding such abuses, share the depraved insolences of these uncultivated people, and if any decent young boy writes down their information to report it later to the relevant authority, he is apprehended. This is what happened last Sunday in the *matinée* at the Variedades Theater between guard No. 53 and the [lit.] undersigning teacher.³⁸⁰

It is interesting to notice that the audible bad manners that were considered harmful were no longer those of the children but rather those that the youngsters and older people displayed in cinemas in front of the children. Besides, those who gathered outside the cinema venues were no longer the children, but rather youngsters and older people.

380 D. J. Calderón, "Los cines en pugna con la pedagogía," *El Comercio*, April 27, 1931.

Since this issue is outside of the timeframe of this monograph, how the complete shift was made concerning the presence of children in cinemas moving towards a more contemporary idea of cinemas as inappropriate places for children and how this idea matured in 1923 to 1928 is not analyzed in this study. However, I hope that by studying the main points in relation to this issue from 1917 to 1923 we will gain a clearer idea of the construction of the image between children, mothers, sound, and cinema. Initially, children were seen as bothersome to cinema; cinema was then regarded as a dangerous place for them because of the content of the films, crowdedness, and even the audible manners of people older than them.

To conclude, it also becomes evident that these attempts to control children's audible manners in cinema should alert us to the emergence of a new relationship to sound. Did these publications help to construct a new sensitivity to sound in Quito? Had people become more sensitive to sound? I believe so. Therefore, I consider that by constantly mentioning the audible manners of children in pejorative terms, people had started to develop an aversion to sound, and therefore a new relationship to sound was emerging in the city; a new sensitivity to sound. To support this idea, it should be noted that prior to the late 1910s, children's noise was commented upon mostly in positive terms:

The general appearance of the theater was really beautiful, adorned by the colorful garments of the children who attended the screening in the boxes and the stalls. The 'ugly sex' children [boys] filled the gallery as well as the rest of the theater, with their loud shouting and applause caused by the 'views' that were projected onto the screen.³⁸¹

This aversion to sound continued in the early 1930s, but the issues around which this was built were different.

1.1 Mother's Day

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, it is clear that the relationship between mother and child rose to the forefront of the public debate in Quito. During this period, one more aspect was added to this scenario, as the foreign celebration of Mother's Day arrived in the city. What were the motivations behind bringing this festivity to Quito at this time? In addition to reinforcing

381 "El Matinée del Domingo," *El Comercio*, April 23, 1912.

the affection between mother and child, part of the motivation to establish this day in the calendar in Quito was, without doubt, to fight against women's decreasing desire to become mothers:

Christian mothers do not avoid the responsibilities of motherhood, nor the hardships and solicitous care involved in the upbringing of their children as well as their personal and direct education, whom they never abandon especially in testing times of pain.³⁸²

Whether this desire to avoid maternity was new in the city or even more widely in Ecuador as a whole is hard to tell. However, an excerpt from 1918 already discussed the presence of this phenomenon in terms of cinema in Quito:

Sadly, right here in Quito it is not a secret that some married couples refrain from having children; besides the arduous duties of maternity, the disastrous trend and the deplorable imitation of what is done elsewhere has corrupted customs and degenerated the most delicate sentiments.³⁸³

In this account, the author was referring to the bad influence that the film *Dónde están mis hijos?* (unknown) may have on young girls. The problem with this movie was not actually that the film directly attacked maternity, as it ultimately praised it, but the newspaper showed concern about how it would be understood by young ladies:

The film undoubtedly has a moral purpose since, in the end, it proclaims and dignifies motherhood as one of the most sublime attributes of women. However, it is known that the end does not justify the means and, to take advantage of this, it is essential that the viewing public is as exclusive as possible. Because what an old philosopher or a moral husband can watch without any apprehension would not be good for an inexperienced girl or even for a married woman who fulfills her duties as she understands them and does not know of those refinements that are really crimes created by elegant vices.³⁸⁴

At this time, there was no censorship board or law in the city. However, the newspaper assumes this role on this occasion by suggesting

382 "El Día de la Madre," *El Debate*, May 25, 1930.

383 "¿Dónde están mis hijos?," *El Comercio*, October 31, 1918.

384 "¿Dónde están mis hijos?," *El Comercio*, October 31, 1918.

that mothers should not send their daughters to the cinema that night.³⁸⁵

All in all, it is clear that Mother's Day was established in the calendar to boost women's desire to become mothers in Quito. Religious people participated in bringing this tradition to the city in 1929.³⁸⁶ Among the promoters of this celebration in Quito were the 'Comité de Acción Social Católica' composed of aristocratic women in Quito³⁸⁷ and the director of the religious newspaper *El Debate*.³⁸⁸ One year later, in 1930, when the celebration of this day covered the entire nation,³⁸⁹ even the Gobierno Eclesiástico de la Arquidiócesis published a message to women and children about this day in the press.

The involvement of representatives of the Church in this day extended even as far as the Vatican, as the Pope himself sent his blessings through a cablegram to a Mexican woman to congratulate her on having had the most children in that country. "She gave birth to eighteen children, all of the same marriage and all alive. There are other mothers with more children, but not all living or of the same marriage."³⁹⁰ From this quote, it becomes clear that Mother's Day motivated women to have children, which was supported by the Church.

In conclusion, I argue that this celebration reinforced the affection between mother and child, and by doing this it upheld the contemporary affective structure. In other words, in addition to maintaining the affection between mother and child, it was possibly reinforcing the social structure. The motivation for bringing this tradition to Quito was not to praise women, but rather to fight against women's desire to decline motherhood and to be included more in the public cultural sphere of the time. What is more, this also reinforced the portrayal of women as mothers who were an endless source of love and care; hate and envy were not emotions for a true model Christian mother.³⁹¹ It could also be claimed that Mother's Day boosted women's religiousness and confinement to the domestic field.

385 "¿Dónde están mis hijos?," *El Comercio*, October 31, 1928.

386 "Para el Día de la Madre," *El Comercio*, May 7, 1930. See also "El Día de la Madre," *El Día*, May 27, 1929. The press also recognizes that other people attempted to establish Mother's Day in the city, but they were less successful.

387 "El Día de la Madre," *El Día*, May 27, 1929.

388 Rosa Matilde Hurtado de Flores and Laura Terán y Robalino, "Agradecimiento," *El Debate*, May 30, 1930.

389 "El Día de la Madre," *El Debate*, May 25, 1930.

390 "El Día de la Madre en México," *El Debate*, June 5, 1930.

391 "El Día de la Madre," *El Debate*, May 25, 1930.

2. Aversion to the Sounds of the Gramophone

The attempts to control sound in Quito in the early 1930s targeted not only humans, but also machines. In fact, at this time, the center of contemporaries' attention was an interest in controlling mechanical sound such as that of gramophones. The control of the mechanical sound of the gramophones was based on three aspects: First, taking as an example the standards of foreign countries on sound control; second, the dissemination of the concept of consideration or respect for others; and third, noise being seen as a threat to health.

Regarding the first point, it is notable that the news of how mechanical sound was being controlled in Paris, where it was already prohibited to play gramophones after 10 pm, had an impact. People in London, after discovering this, were also trying to obtain the same control.³⁹²

The United Press correspondent in London reports that a great crusade has started against the gramophone music after ten o'clock at night in that city, and that it is very likely that they would succeed [in their demands] in just a few days.

The crusade started motivated by the edict of the police of Paris, by which, the use of Victrolas [a form of gramophone] was forbidden after ten o'clock at night.

Numerous people in that city went to their newspaper offices to denounce their annoyance due to the gramophone music in their neighborhoods when they returned home.³⁹³

After the appearance of this information complaints against the gramophones emerged a few months later in Quito in 1930:

Victrolas, electorales, or whatever they are called, are fine when they provide a deep spiritual pleasure, when they converse with aesthetics through their classical pieces, when national airs delight us and refresh our memory of the homeland. But do not despair us with that preserved music, which is deafening and causes indigestion. (...)

We do not know the extent to which it is tolerable that some public establishments, from morning to night, drive the neighborhood crazy by grinding music on ramshackle devices, through an endless succession of disks, or rather, an eternal repetition of the same ones. (...)

392 "En París y en Londres no puede tocarse grafófonos después d' las 10 p.m.," *El Día*, January 5, 1930.

393 "En París y en Londres no puede tocarse grafófonos después d' las 10 p.m.," *El Día*, January 5, 1930.

A friend of ours, who was tempted to commit suicide, had to move out of the neighborhood because a music grinding machine had enraged him. If I hallucinated, he told us, in the battle against a fever, I would believe that the Victrolas were following me, and that I was being buried among records.³⁹⁴

The significance of this publication, entitled ‘Máquinas de moler música y destrozar oídos,’ was enormous at the time because it triggered various complaints about gramophones.³⁹⁵ What is more, as I explain in the following, even years later, various accounts referred to this, all claiming of course, to be unable to stand the repetitive sound of the gramophones in the city any longer.

In addition to following the same standards for controlling mechanical sound as in other parts of the world, the control of the mechanical sound of gramophones in Quito continued to be constructed around the idea of consideration or respect for others. In the early 1930s, the activities that were apparently most affected by the sound of the gramophones were work,³⁹⁶ reading and sleep. At the time, gramophones were condemned for their mechanical characteristic of repetition and their ability to play non-stop.³⁹⁷ The mechanical characteristic of repetition of gramophones was emphasized in various accounts.³⁹⁸

In addition to disrupting work, reading and sleep, the misuse of gramophones by those who could not use them appropriately was interfering

394 Uno del vecindario, “Máquinas de moler música y destrozar oídos,” *El Comercio*, Abril 29, 1930.

395 Angel Neira, “Impresiones,” *El Comercio*, August 18, 1930.

396 Angel Neira, “Impresiones,” *El Comercio*, August 18, 1930.. “... And work to the beat of Pollo Ortiz’s “Alma en los labios,” or of Ojeda’s “Alma Lojana,” or of “Siga la Farra” by I do not know by whom... In the quiet and peaceful studio, many times one wishes to take out one’s handkerchief and dance, forgetting all worries... and book-keeping, the numerical work, or the meditated writing sometimes has a final touch of ‘pasillo or tango.’ (...)”

397 Un vecino de cinco estancos, “A toda hora,” *El Comercio*, May 24, 1930. “... And this is precisely what is happening in some parts of the city, where all of those who do not want an honest job, all those friends of Bacchus’, all those who want to make money by exploiting the vices of others seem to have converged.

It is not possible to work, read, sleep, or anything with such an incessant, monotonous, imperturbable, bewildering and truly infernal noise, at all times, every hour, every day, every week, month after month, ever since these devilish boxes flooded the town. (...) Always the same cheesy pasillos, the same unfortunate waltzes, the same impertinent sonatas; blend of noises, menace to Art, poisons for Harmony.”

398 Angel Neira, “Impresiones,” *El Comercio*, August 18, 1930. “From the moment at which the demon Edison invented these music grinding machines, as someone called them. From the moment in which these steamrollers of pasillos, yaravies and sanjuanitos spread throughout the world, I have no tranquility, I am not calm anymore. Not only with road rollers can one turn a mortal into a sandwich; it can also be done by the monotony of a disc that from eight in the morning to six in the evening, is as they vulgarly say, ‘playing over and over’ in all the stores of the neighborhood.”

with other customary practices in the city, such as “the first meal, the morning and night prayer, at dinner, rest time, and at night”: These were all considered to be threatened by the sound of these devices. In addition, some other religious traditions, such as Easter, Good Friday and the silence of Christmas were also affected by the novel sound of these devices,³⁹⁹ which demonstrates how religious and profane practices clashed with each other at this time. The sound of these devices prevented even the sick from resting.⁴⁰⁰

As suggested by Elias, it is noticeable that the demand for control of sound is also evidence of a demand for the pacification of the environment. That is, it can be argued that, in the early 1930s, people were requesting that they not be bothered by any kind of sound; that is, in general they wanted consideration and tranquility. Anything that did not adhere to this was considered an intrusion of privacy:

Anybody at his own home (or store) has the right to do as he jolly well pleases, but this has to have a limit or restraint, which should be dictated by a principle of consideration for others. The inhabitants and homeowners of Quito also have the right to live, sleep, rest, and get ill. They, as the rest of mortals, can do as they please in their homes: they can work, meditate, pray, write, etc., and no one has the right to interrupt them.⁴⁰¹

In addition to this, freedom was considered to have a limit; dictated by consideration for others. Not doing this was considered abuse.⁴⁰² “Where someone else’s right is attacked, the noise must stop; otherwise this becomes abuse.”⁴⁰³ Did the concept of consideration help mark a division between the public and private sphere?

Why did consideration become so important during these years? Drawing on Elias, one possible explanation for this is the increase in residential density: “People, forced to live with one another in a new way, became more sensitive to the impulses of others. Not abruptly but

399 Un vecino de cinco estancos, “A toda hora,” *El Comercio*, May 24, 1930.

400 “Por caridad debe desaparecer ese ruido,” *El Día*, September 10, 1930.

401 Un vecino de cinco estancos, “A toda hora,” *El Comercio*, May 24, 1930.

402 Un vecino de cinco estancos, “A toda hora,” *El Comercio*, May 24, 1930. “Freedom must have a limit in these cases; that limit is the relationship with one’s neighbors. If we disturb, bother and make our neighbors uncomfortable at all times; if we attack their mental balance and if we interrupt their work, we are simply inflicting abuse.”

403 Angel Neira, “Impresiones,” *El Comercio*, August 18, 1930.

very gradually the code of behavior became stricter and the degree of consideration expected of others became greater."⁴⁰⁴

Put simply, consideration, the expectation of respect from others, is increased by aspects of crowding. This is why it is important to highlight the extent to which Quito was exhibiting signs of crowdedness in the late 1920s and early 1930s:

Thousands of poor families bitterly regret about their homes since they lack the indispensable services to have a hygienic life. The daily topic of conversation of the tenants is none other than complaining about the discomforts of their homes, and asking for news [about available habitations], hoping to get a better one.

Not only is it difficult to find a comfortable room, but it is impossible for those who are unable to pay a higher monthly rent. As can be seen, for those who can pay a high rent there is no problem because to them it is easier to find apartments that are relatively more comfortable. The difficulty arises for the workers who, since they have such meager wages, are forced to pile up in a dark, damp, unventilated and unlit hole.

This scene is unfortunately very common among us. It is inhuman, unbearable and completely at odds with civilization.

The depopulation of the countryside and the concentration of the populace in large cities is a typical phenomenon of the century, and has spread to almost all the nations of the globe.⁴⁰⁵

It is evident that in the early 1930s, the increase in the population of Quito had caused the close cohabitation of the different classes to reach a crux.⁴⁰⁶ As a result, it seems that the feeling of consideration was boosted because crowdedness had increased in the city.

The concentration of labor workers and other classes was regarded as putting public health and comfort at risk,⁴⁰⁷ thus being at odds with civilization. To solve the problem of such crowding, the press proposed the planning of massive working-class neighborhoods with multi-story buildings, because the model of a single house for each family was considered impractical:

404 Elias, *The Process of Civilization*, 69.

405 Argos, "El inquilinato," *El Debate*, May 25, 1930.

406 "El problema del inquilinato," *El Debate*, June 29, 1930. See also "Más sobre el inquilinato," *El Debate*, June 30, 1930.

407 "El único modo de remediar el problema de la vivienda en Quito," *El Debate*, May 15, 1930.

In relation to the first, it [El Día Newspaper] points out as suitable places the surroundings of Plaza Marín and Túnel de la Paz, and as for the second aspect, since the municipality has no surplus funds, they say that [the City Hall] could resort to a loan, (...).

What is more, they are already concerned about the type of buildings that would be recommendable. Constructing three-or four-story buildings has been suggested, with several apartments suitable for rent, rather than separate houses for only one family which turn out to be more expensive and have several disadvantages, such as modest families not being able to acquire them even with accessible payment terms.

It is claimed that this is the system adopted in Europe and the United States, which has had very good results for the main goal pursued: reducing housing construction costs, and hygienic independent housing, attainable through the control of its owner, which in this case would be the municipality.⁴⁰⁸

Hygiene, comfort and airing were also considered important to have at home instead of luxury decorations, which is further proof that a new house architecture was emerging at the time:

The essential aim is to prioritize hygiene, light, air, comfort, and services over useless details, luxury and decorations, by means of correct distribution and intelligent use of space. (...)

Light, hygiene, and comfort for all social classes, and criteria adjusted to all possibilities and resources: these are the standards of humane housing when faced with modern requirements.⁴⁰⁹

All in all, it is evident that the considerable increase in population in the early 1930s in Quito influenced the degree of sensitivity to others' sounds, not only those produced by humans but also those produced by machines. In fact, in this period, many voices expressed their preoccupation with the massive amount of not only people but also machines in the city, as contemporaries felt that the city was overcrowded with appliances: "A time such as ours, which is overcrowded by men and machines, is logically accompanied by an art that springs from a machine. That is why cinema today has the indisputable strength of fate."⁴¹⁰

408 "Sigue discutiéndose el problema de la vivienda en Quito," *El Debate*, May 21, 1930.

409 'Conferencia acerca de la habitación humana dentro de las exigencias de la vida moderna,' *El Día*, June 15, 1931.

410 Jorge PATRON Y., "El cine y nuestro tiempo," *El Comercio*, July 4, 1932.

Looking back at history, we can see that overcrowding by machines is not particular to the late 1920s or early 1930s, as phonographs were already being pictured in terms of invasion in the late 1910s:

Around those streets
 ... Wise foresight the Colombian had, which should be emulated
 in Quito, a city in which people suffer the terrible consequences
 of the invasion of phonographs.⁴¹¹

In addition to following the standards of other places, and the centrality of the concept of consideration, the control of sound was also constructed over medical claims outlining the danger that noise represented to health: "The first report of the Commission for the Reduction of Noise, some time ago appointed in this city, contains a summary of the health hazards of loud noises, and a list of the preliminary measures that must be taken to suppress or reduce the noise in this city."⁴¹²

Consequently, noise was seen not only as bothersome, but also as one of the social causes of illness,⁴¹³ including deafness⁴¹⁴ and even death.⁴¹⁵ In line with Elias' argument, I argue that rational motivators such as hygiene or health were emphasized in this period.

In addition to the above-mentioned aspects, it should be also noted that the aversion to gramophone sound was prompted by emphasizing the misuse of these appliances by the lower classes:

The inventor of the phonograph and of Victrolas, that unique and wonderful mechanism, could not realize that, in time, they would become ill-fated and fateful instruments destined to disturb the entire order and disrupt tranquility. At most, he might have foreseen the immense flattery and the refined and complete pleasure that people of good taste, friends of art, would experience with the music of the Victrolas.⁴¹⁶

The idea of the sound of the gramophone being associated with the lower classes was reinforced by connecting it to taverns and alcohol: "What

411 "Por esas calles," *El Comercio*, April 13, 1917.

412 "El ruido afecta el cerebro más que las drogas," *El Debate*, October 8, 1930.

413 "Los peligros del ruido," *El Día*, January 3, 1930.

414 "El peligro que entrañan los ruidos," *El Debate*, October 27, 1930.

415 "El ruido y sus consecuencias," *El Debate*, February 22, 1931.

416 Un vecino de cinco estancos, "A toda hora," *El Comercio*, May 24, 1930.

is admirable and astonishing is that certain landlords, in exchange for a few more sucres [local currency at the time], tolerate these indecent orgies, these street scandals, inevitably produced by these harmful factors: liquor, [and] Victrolas.”⁴¹⁷

Alcohol was not only connected to the sounds of gramophones, but also to crowding, because the high density in which the working class was living and the difficult living conditions of the majority of workers was not ascribed at the time to their low salaries but to alcohol:

The sad situation of many workers lies in the fact that their salary is not enough to support them, let alone to meet other needs. They drink their salary, and they drink it satisfied, with the hope that payday will come again tomorrow, and then they will be able to cover the urgent needs which they are concerned about at that moment.

There is no other way to explain so much poverty among the working classes. (...)

As one can see, with 200 sucres one can modestly meet the conditions of a small home without depriving oneself of the satisfaction of covering the needs confronted on a daily basis. (...)

One can assert with complete certainty that irreligion, the misery, the degeneration of the race and the recrudescence of crimes and madness result from alcoholism... (...)

This is the immense scourge of our workers, [;] this [is] the destructive moth of salaries, of private savings, of public health in other words.⁴¹⁸

As we can see, alcohol was held responsible for the poor living conditions of the working class. In addition, the alcoholism of the working classes was attached to a political group:

The socialists, who apparently are the ones who sympathize the most with the working class, the ones who live by making so much literature (and nothing more than literature) out of their pains and sufferings, do not say anything about the worst enemy of the proletarians, which leads us to believe that for them the enemy is the most coveted friend.⁴¹⁹

417 Un vecino de cinco estancos, “A toda hora,” *El Comercio*, May 24, 1930.

418 Argos, “El salario del obrero y el alcoholismo,” *El Debate*, May 21, 1930.

419 Argos, “El salario del obrero y el alcoholismo,” *El Debate*, May 21, 1930.

Lastly, during this period of time, the regulation of noise or the reign of silence was also connected to the contemporary policy of political silence imposed by Mussolini: "Silence is imposed on those who rule as well as on those who are ruled, so proclaims Mussolini. Enough of Victrolas and rattles."⁴²⁰ This seems to illustrate the politicization of silence. In addition to this, it should be mentioned that in Quito, at the time, the regulation of sound in the city was seen as an aspect that should become a matter of the state because there were voices requesting the intervention of the police to regulate the issues related to sound.⁴²¹

This opposition to the sound of gramophones was not new in the late 1920s and early 1930s: Interest in regulating not only human sound, but also mechanical sound in Quito existed as early as the late 1910s and early 1920s, though to a lesser degree. However, the situation in the 1930s was different, as the emphasis was on regulating mechanical sound rather than human sounds in the city. In the late 1910s, the standard of behavior in foreign countries, mostly published in the press, already served as motivation to set the standards of behavior for those in locally high social positions. For instance, it was mentioned that Quito should imitate what was done in Bogotá, Colombia, in relation to gramophones.⁴²² A certain sign had been placed there when renting an apartment: "Place to rent; among other comforts, it includes the luxury of not having phonographs in the neighborhood."⁴²³

This quote shows us that a quiet neighborhood had already acquired increased value as far back as the late 1910s. That is, silence was considered a plus in terms of comfort. Silence and comfort were pretty much linked to one another. Moreover, the mechanical characteristics of repetition attributed to a machine like the gramophone were already being emphasized as something negative:

There are streets in which the traffic is impossible, not only because of the reparation of the sidewalks, but also because of the unbearable noise of the phonographs that day and night, rain or shine, remain playing 24 hours a day, tirelessly, unbreakable, like rubber toys, annoying those who have the misfortune to pass by

420 Angel Neira, "Impresiones," *El Comercio*, August 18, 1930.

421 Angel Neira, "Impresiones," *El Comercio*, August 18, 1930. See also un vecino de cinco estancos, "A toda hora," *El Comercio*, May 24, 1930.

422 "Por esas calles," *El Comercio*, April 13, 1917.

423 "Por esas calles," *El Comercio*, April 13, 1917.

the neighborhood.⁴²⁴

The excerpt clarifies that back in those days not all neighborhoods had these appliances and even further, not individuals. At the time, the intervention of the police was also required to control this mechanical sound-based situation, just as it had been to control children's audible manners: "Shouldn't the tranquility of the peaceful inhabitants who have no phonographs deserve the refuge and protection of the police? Is it possible to have any regulation for these apparatuses?"⁴²⁵

In 1917, in addition to the promotion of the controlled audible manners of higher social ranks and of controlled mechanical sound spaces, sensitivity to sound was already being constructed around the sound of gramophones in taverns:

Some neighbors from Maldonado Street have come to ask us to suggest that the police authorities ban phonographs playing in taverns late at night and in the early morning, as it is customary in that neighborhood, where the musical beating starts from 6 pm and goes on until 5 am.⁴²⁶

Additional evidence that phonographs were mostly in taverns at the time is confirmed by the following excerpt:

That the owners of taverns amuse their customers at all hours of day and night with *certain particular* musical pieces -on their phonographs- is fine, since the police does not care to prohibit it, but man! Playing the national anthem so that the drunk can dance without consideration of anything whatsoever is too much. There is no common sense at all and it should be strictly forbidden.⁴²⁷

Thus, in the late 1910s, tranquility was already demanded; however, it is clear that in the late 1920s and early 1930s tranquility was demanded through the emphasis in the idea of consideration which had become central. In the late 1910s, sensitivity to sound or the aversion to sound began to be constructed around the concept and feelings of consideration but to a lesser degree.

424 "Por esas calles," *El Comercio*, April 13, 1917.

425 "Por esas calles," *El Comercio*, April 13, 1917.

426 "Ya es mucho," *El Comercio*, May 29, 1917.

427 "Es el colmo," *El Comercio*, October 23, 1917.

In conclusion, it is important to mention that this aversion to gramophone sound was part of a desire to become more civilized. First, people followed what was done in other, influential countries. Simply put, reading what was done in other places provoked a similar desire in Quito to acquire new sound-related manners and a concern to decrease the sound levels in the city. Second, the aversion to the sound of gramophones was constructed by claiming the importance of consideration and third, by claiming medical reasons. Moreover, the enjoyment of the unpleasant sound of gramophones was regarded as a trait of the lower classes. Some of these aspects had already existed in the late 1910s.

Furthermore, the expansion of wanting to reject noise and the expectation of reaching a more controlled sound cityscape were disseminated by Quito's newspapers and magazines. It is clear that the newspapers played an important role in how people identified themselves at the time. In other words, this stands as evidence of the role played by newspapers in the emergence of identifying with one another; in how culture was constructed.

Finally, consideration in the late 1920s and early 1930s reached not only the audible manners of children and other people, but rather objects; concretely, the sound of the gramophones.

Why did following the standards of others become so important? Emphasizing the particular patterns followed by other influential groups of human beings, as noted by Norbert Elias, is one way of setting the boundaries of differentiation. In the late 1910s, when the encounters between different social classes expanded to more public spaces, such as those of the cinema, the need for differentiation of the higher ranks of society increased simultaneously.

2.1 Restricting Mechanical Sound in Times of Economic Crisis

Contrary to what may be expected, in the late 1920s and early 1930s the reasons that led contemporaries to finally restrict the spread of gramophone sound were ultimately not very closely related to what was done in the United States or Europe, nor to the concept of consideration and respect for others. None of the above-mentioned aspects were mentioned in the wording of the decree that restricted the import of gramophones.

The motivation to put a final end to the import of gramophones was, in fact, connected to the economic crisis during the years of the Depression, which had an impact on Ecuador as it did on other parts of the world. Consequently, the restriction on gramophone imports had two goals: on the

one hand, it aimed to prevent the emergence of ‘unhealthy feelings’ in the lower classes provoked by the import of luxury devices for the wealthiest. On the other hand, it aimed to protect Ecuadorians and the nation. This is why I argue that instead of consideration for others, the law to control mechanical sound in Quito was based on consideration for oneself and on nationalist feeling.

Regarding the first aspect, the restriction of gramophone imports aimed to prevent the rise of envy, among other emotions, in the lower ranks:

... the exaggerated propensity for luxury and waste, which at the same time drags individuals to ruin and misery may very well cause in the masses that have no fortune, an unhealthy feeling of envy, resentment and rebellion. Who knows if in many cases they also feel contaminated by the affluent classes’ trends towards luxury and ostentation, resorting to that end either to crime or to the laxity of moral and good customs.⁴²⁸

From this account, we can infer that to contemporaries, not all social classes felt the same way. That is, in terms of feelings and emotions, social class mattered. Some emotions identified people’s social status. For instance, the poor envied and were resentful and rebellious. In addition to this, the environment of the poor was seen as a suitable field for rebelliousness and demands to easily grow. To solve this situation, prudence and modesty were invoked from the upper social classes.⁴²⁹

The excerpt also provides evidence of how the contemporaries’ emotions were attached to the concept of health; that is, there were also unhealthy emotions. What is more, these emotions contaminated people. The interesting aspect is that the emotions of the lower classes were unhealthy, but only in relation to and as long as they desired what the rich had. The rich’s desire to have luxury things was not considered unhealthy.

In relation to the second aspect, at this time there was also a strong feeling of self – regarding not only the individual alone, but the group of individuals named the nation:

428 Leonidas R. Dávalos, “Proyecto de Ley por el que se prohíbe la importación de Artículos de Lujo,” *El Comercio*, August 27, 1930.

429 Leonidas R. Dávalos, “Proyecto de Ley por el que se prohíbe la importación de Artículos de Lujo,” *El Comercio*, August 27, 1930. “The luxury and ostentation of the wealthy classes represent insult and humiliation to the poor, a hotbed of rebellion and future vindication. Let’s be fair, prudent and moderate.”

If among individuals it occurs that the one that produces little and spends a lot goes rapidly straight towards misery and destruction, it is logical to assume that the collectivities called nations - which are no other than the sum of individuals - can await the same fate. (...)

The exaggerated import of liquor, silk fabrics, gramophones, glassware and other unnecessary items contributes tangibly to the emigration of capital and the consequent impoverishment and economic imbalance in the country. (...)

Let's be patriotic and selfless, sacrifice a present of waste and vanity for the sake of a future of wealth, prosperity and national venture. If we appreciate the value and economic situation of a country, we have but to open the pages of a statistical country to see that the amount of imports exceeding its exports is synonymous with a poor and backward country; a country whose exports exceed its imports, is a rich, happy and prosperous country.⁴³⁰

Under this framework, the Congress accepted the initial proposal for a law and decreed that:

Art. 1.- The entry of silk fabric or silk manufactures into the country is prohibited. Similarly, the import of alcohol is prohibited.

Art. 2.- Victrolas, gramophones, fine glassware, furniture, manufactured dresses and other unnecessary items or those that are produced by the national industry shall pay the highest tariffs on luxury items in the Customs of the Republic; (...)⁴³¹

In 1931, the import of gramophones, among other objects, was finally restricted by law. To conclude, it would seem that in the early 1930s, the economic crisis made contemporaries understand that civilization would come to the city not only through manners and behavior. Civilization or, what is more, being progressive included other elements, such as having more exports than imports in economic terms. It was not enough to receive technology; it was important to produce it since this would bring income to the country and halt the enormous flow of capital abroad. Here, there is a change: it is not only a matter of being civilized through good manners; one should also strive 'not to be a backward country.' Thus, we see that attached

430 Leonidas R. Dávalos, "Proyecto de Ley por el que se prohíbe la importación de Artículos de Lujo," *El Comercio*, August 27, 1930.

431 Leonidas R. Dávalos, "Proyecto de Ley por el que se prohíbe la importación de Artículos de Lujo," *El Comercio*, August 27, 1930.

to the concept of civilization and its diverse meanings and sentiments, there would be one more: producing technology.

2.2 The Discursive Sounds of the Gramophone

The fact that the import of the gramophones was restricted on the grounds of it being a deluxe item reveals that it was the wealthy who had access to them and the majority of people could not afford these appliances. How then can one explain the large number of complaints about gramophones everywhere in the city? This contradiction leads me to question the ubiquity of gramophones in Quito during this period.

There is considerable evidence to support the idea of the gramophone as an expensive device. First, had the gramophones not been a luxury item, there would have been no decree restricting their import. They were classified among the most expensive appliances in the city.⁴³² Second, the Conservatory did not have a gramophone until the mid-1930. This is the reason why, for instance, the Russian cellist Bogumil Sykora and the local pianist Isabel Rosales de Zaldumbide gave a concert - a fundraising campaign - to collect money to buy one for the institution.⁴³³ Third, at that time gramophones were considered a gift compared to diamonds for weddings:

Today, if one wants to give a significant gift instead of giving diamonds or emeralds, one should give a full kitchen that has a good set of pots and pans, cupboards and modern machines, or a refrigerator, a car, or a gramophone. Fancy clothes are most suitable too.⁴³⁴

These three aspects are at odds with the contemporary complaints of the early 1930s against the gramophones in Quito, which suggested that these devices were in the hands of everyone, or at least that they were everywhere.

In order to illuminate the extent to which these so-called luxury devices were present in Quito, I pay close attention to the description of the spaces from which the sounds of the gramophones came. That these

432 "Proyecto de Ley por el que se prohíbe la importación de Artículos de Lujo," *El Comercio*, August 27, 1930.

433 Advertisement for the Teatro Sucre, *El Comercio*, August 20, 1930

434 "Los regalos de casamiento," *El Debate*, June 8, 1930.

devices were not everywhere in the city in the early 1930s, but only in particular neighborhoods and especially in taverns, becomes evident in an excerpt from an author whose pen name claimed him to be ‘a neighbor of five taverns.’⁴³⁵ That is, even though the sound of gramophones was not heard in all the neighborhoods of Quito, the problem was that in any one neighborhood, or probably even in any one street, there could be as many as five liquor stores. Additionally, at this time, gramophones were not only played in taverns but in different kinds of stores, where they were used to attract customers’ attention:⁴³⁶

We do not know the extent to which it is tolerable that from morning to night some public establishments madden the neighborhoods by grinding music in ramshackle devices with an endless succession of discs, or rather an eternal repetition of the same ones. All in moderation.⁴³⁷

In addition to this, it becomes clear that the times of playing the gramophones had expanded in Quito, since these appliances were now played not only at night in taverns but during the daytime as well: “From eight in the morning until six in the afternoon, they are ‘playing over and over’ as said vulgarly in all the businesses of the neighborhood.”⁴³⁸ That gramophones played during the daytime in public stores is also confirmed.⁴³⁹

Even in 1932, people continued complaining more about the sound of the gramophones coming from particular stores, such as the Columbia store, than about the widespread nature of the sound of these devices:

The plea that we make to the above-mentioned ‘Columbia’, for the tranquility of the neighborhood and also for compassion, is to not always play the same annoying sad music. [This petition is] because, Mr. Director, it seems that they have no other repertoire than that of sad pieces, which in this time of hardships, increase the tedium and boredom of life.

In other civilized places, the police take action in these issues, and until now, it seems that nothing has been done to control the propaganda in these places.⁴⁴⁰

435 Un vecino de cinco estancos, “A toda hora,” *El Comercio*, May 24, 1930.

436 Angel Neira, “Impresiones,” *El Comercio*, August 18, 1930.

437 Uno del vecindario, “Máquinas de moler música y destrozár oídos,” *El Comercio*, April 29, 1930.

438 Angel Neira, “Impresiones,” *El Comercio*, August 18, 1930.

439 Uno del vecindario, “Máquinas de moler música y destrozár oídos,” *El Comercio*, April 29, 1930.

440 Vecinos, “Se pide música, pero alegre,” *El Comercio*, March 16, 1932.

All in all, it becomes evident that even though the gramophone was a luxury item, its sound was present in public places such as taverns and shops that used these devices to gain customers' attention. Thus, not only had the number of spaces from which this mechanical sound came increased, but also its daily hours, both aspects that seem to have influenced the perception of contemporaries in relation to sound.

In addition to the above, it becomes evident that even though gramophones were definitely a luxury item, these appliances were in the possession of different social classes in the early 1930s, including the lower classes. As mentioned by Ortega y Gasset, the 1930s was the period during which "we see the multitude, as such, in possession of the places and the instruments created by civilization":⁴⁴¹ "The inventor of the phonograph and of the Victrolas, ... (...) at most might have foreseen the immense flattery, and the refined and complete pleasure that people of good taste, friends of art, would experience with the music of Victrolas."⁴⁴² This demonstrates that to some people, the sound of these appliances was not bothersome per se, but the manner in which it was used had become difficult to bear in contemporary Quito: Such as repetition of the same disc at high volume.⁴⁴³ It seems that the sound of these devices was despised as long as it was used by the lower class as an accompaniment to drink and was played aloud.

In conclusion, the bothersome sound of the gramophones was mostly confined to particular neighborhoods in Quito; and that they were played in public stores. This raises the question as to what extent the linguistic presence of this appliance, through public discussion and advertisements in the local press, was greater than the actual number of gramophones in Quito. This suggests that the vexing nature of these devices was more present in the press than it was in Quito.

It seems then clear that sensitivity to gramophone mechanical sound was heavily disseminated in the city through the Quito newspapers, with the expectation of becoming more progressive by making the city more civilized, modern and cultural. Did people become bothered because they felt it was *necessary* to feel bothered in order to become part of the civilized world? All in all, the bothersome nature of sounds (both human and mechanical) was also a constructed phenomenon.

441 Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, 5.

442 Un vecino de cinco estancos, "A toda hora," *El Comercio*, May 24, 1930.

443 Uno del vecindario, "Máquinas de moler música y destrozar oídos," *El Comercio*, April 29, 1930.

Comparing this period to the late 1910s, we can see that earlier the sound of these devices was also confined to certain streets:⁴⁴⁴

There are streets in which the traffic is impossible, not only because of the repairing of the sidewalks, but also because of the unbearable noise of the phonographs that day and night, rain or shine, remain playing 24 hours a day, tirelessly, unbreakable, like rubber toys, annoying those who have the misfortune of passing by the neighborhood.⁴⁴⁵

What were these streets? The report is not explicit in this respect. All we know so far according to the evidence is that one of the places from which the sound of the phonographs came was Maldonado Street: "Some neighbors from Maldonado Street have come to ask us to suggest that the police authorities banned the phonograph-playing in taverns late at night and in the early morning, as is customary in that neighborhood, where the musical beating starts from 6 pm and goes on until 5 am."⁴⁴⁶ In other words, the sound of these devices in the late 1910s was also mostly confined to certain neighborhoods and, as has already been pointed out, to taverns.⁴⁴⁷

444 "Por esas calles," *El Comercio*, April 13, 1917.

445 "Por esas calles," *El Comercio*, April 13, 1917.

446 "Ya es mucho," *El Comercio*, May 29, 1917.

447 "Es el colmo," *El Comercio*, October 23, 1917.

3. International Voices Against Sound Cinema

The aversion to sound and in general the control of sound from machines continued being constructed in the local press in the early 1930s by exploiting feelings of fear of sound cinema, which began to surface as this technology expanded around the world. Fear of sound cinema with respect to the global expansion of the English language was mostly expressed in international accounts that were published by local dailies. This technological innovation was seen as a threat to local languages and dialects.

The local press did not publish much on the regional concerns raised in Latin America with respect to the English language. Nonetheless, it was mentioned that Argentina, for instance, had asked for the adoption of different strategies to solve the threat of English-language films such as paying a high tax on English-language talkies “as was done in Europe.”⁴⁴⁸ They did this since they considered the talkies a threat to the music and imagination of the local ordinary people. In fact, they saw them as a risk to the “national spirit and the language.” Argentinians also warned of the introduction of ‘barbarisms’ and ‘foreignisms’ to the Spanish-language films.⁴⁴⁹

Mexico also asked for the prohibition of sound films in English.⁴⁵⁰ This petition was made by the actors, musicians, drama authors’ guilds and theater personnel, for whom the English-language sound films were “one way in which Hispano-America was being north-americanised” and also because the adoption of sound films would increase unemployment among the members of the guilds. In 1931, Mexico raised the taxes levied on non-Spanish language films:

Mexico City, (CIS) - In order to counteract the influence that the contiguity with the United States has on the spreading of the English language throughout the entire country as well as the impact of sound films in that language, the Mexican government has decreed the fixation of very high customs duties on movies that are not spoken in Spanish.⁴⁵¹

In addition to this, the press informed that the ‘Congreso

448 “El idioma inglés en las películas habladas es un peligro para el castellano,” *El Día*, June 1, 1930.

449 “Contra las películas mal habladas,” *El Día*, July 4, 1930.

450 “En Mejico se pide prohibir la exhibición de películas parlantes en lengua inglesa,” *El Día*, November 16, 1929.

451 “Medidas de defensa del idioma castellano,” Pichincha Gráfico, August 15, 1931. No. 5.

Hispanoamericano de Cinematografía,' which was to take place in Seville, in late 1930, had a goal:

... to counteract the influence and dominance of the talking pictures in English as much as possible in the market that is represented by the countries of the Spanish culture, the only civilized peoples that defenselessly surrender to the American conquest, without a big production of their own. It defends the language, the customs and national traditions, until now almost not respected and frequently violated. It wants to prevent the constant ridicule and scorn suffered by the Hispanic nationalities from the Mexican border to Cape Horn -the dark 'traitor' against the Saxon hero- and the imperialist preaching that a strange language is imposed on us in moments of solace.⁴⁵²

The English-language American talkies were not seen with caution in only non-English speaking countries. In England, they also encountered resistance by conservatives and nationalists, who insinuated that there was a risk that American pronunciation would become popular there.⁴⁵³ Although not discussed in the Ecuadorian press, similar concerns had also been found in Australia. According to Joy Damousi, "the debate in Australia about the arrival of sound film centered on the nature of the accent, pronunciation, and voice. The American 'twang' caused great offense, while what was identified as the eloquence of the British voice was to be promoted and emulated."⁴⁵⁴ As is clear, in addition to concerns regarding the expansion of the English language, there was also preoccupation concerning the expansion of dialects.

England and Australia were not the only countries worried about the spread of an accent that was not theirs, since similar preoccupations are found in Spain with reference to the Spanish spoken in Latin America and its dissemination through sound cinema. In 1930, as stated by Peruvian intellectual Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre in his article published in Quito, the inclusion in sound films of the Latin American Spanish language had raised criticism in Spain and the European dailies had given wide space to this discussion. In the opinion of the author, one of the problems was that it was unbearable for Spain that the 'COLONIAL' form of Spanish could

452 Fernando G. Mantilla, "El cinema español," *El Debate*, July 8, 1930.

453 Haya de la Torre, "Film sonoro y guerra de idioma," *El Comercio*, July 21, 1930.

454 Joy Damousi, "'The Filthy American Twang': Elocution, The Advent of American 'Talkies,' and Australian Cultural Identity," *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 2 (2007): 395.

triumph over the 'crystalline' metropolitan one.⁴⁵⁵ That is a triumph of the spatiality of the American Spanish-speaking countries over Europe in a special sense, as well as in terms of temporality, as the triumph of colonial time over modernity.

Haya de la Torre reports that various Spanish newspapers referred to the Latin American Spanish used in sound cinema. One of these newspapers was a Seville daily that referred to the Latin American intellectuals who stood up for the use of Latin American Spanish in the sound films as a "non-significant group of pseudo-intellectuals."⁴⁵⁶ It was also mentioned that even minor dailies pointed out that the Spanish of Latin America was 'just a dialect.' Among other aspects, which cannot be explored here in detail, according to de la Torre, the inclusion of the Spanish of Latin America was regarded in Spain by some people as a threat to culture. To him, the daily *A B C* mentioned that Latin American people spoke without syntax.

Regarding Ecuador, up until mid-1930, there was no sign of rejection of the English language in sound films. Instead, someone rejected his local Spanish-language dialect. That is, even though the author of this comment expressed his strong desire to have films in Spanish, he did not want them in Quito's dialect, but in the one from Spain because, to him, Quito's dialect, his own dialect, was the worst.⁴⁵⁷ Unlike other countries where the desire to have one's own dialect on sound film evoked passion, this voice in the local press displayed the contrary, considering Quito's accent unbearable.

Resistance to sound cinema appeared not only as a result of the spread of particular dialects and languages, but also because sound cinema was regarded as a replacement of the emotions of the gesture of silent cinema by the voice. It was seen as the dominance of the machine over the human being.⁴⁵⁸

At the end of 1929, some recognized that they had been mistaken in their opposition to sound cinema.⁴⁵⁹ Laura Galaviz, for instance, admitted that she later realized just how much sound films offered:

There is nothing as esthetic as admiring the beauties of nature with your eyes: the greenness of the fields, the blue of the sky, the

455 Haya de la Torre, "Film sonoro y guerra de idioma," *El Comercio*, July 21, 1930.

456 Haya de la Torre, "Film sonoro y guerra de idioma," *El Comercio*, July 21, 1930.

457 César E. Arroyo, "La hegemonía del idioma español," *El Comercio*, January 1, 1930.

458 "La transformación de la cinematografía y la mecánica por un crítico," *El Día*, February 5, 1930.

459 Laura Galaviz, "Las películas habladas en el extranjero," *El Debate*, December 28, 1929

immensity of the oceans, the brightness of the day, the prettiness of women, the handsomeness of men, etc.; but how many good and beautiful things can we admire through our hearing...! The singing of birds, the roar of the seas, the burbling of brooks, the songs that come from afar and the sweet, harmonious music that we listen to for enjoyment of our spirit. And as for the voice, what is more convincing than the spoken word; who does not feel conquered before a plea or flattered by a promise...? And all of this, which in silent movies we could only read or imagine, now we can hear as we watch the scenes, feeling much more impressed.⁴⁶⁰

In conclusion, even though a sound film had yet to be screened in Quito, international voices of resistance against the expansion of this technology were heard through the local press. These voices of resistance were in contrast to the enthusiasm with which this novel technology was first discussed, and we can see that in addition to the voices of enthusiasm, voices of fear and rejection began to emerge once the technology began to spread.

In addition, the roots of these attempts to control sound in the city can be found in two apparently contradictory currents: one is explained by Michel Foucault in relation to the control of sound, both from human beings and technology; and the other by Norbert Elias in relation to the control of 'sonic manners' as a mark of distinction concerning the lower ranks of society, with the expectation of becoming more civilized.

As explained by Michel Foucault, the emergence of the sonic devices in the 19th century is none other than a consequence of Victorian beliefs, among others, wanting to know what people say, think, and do. Victorian practices provoked the emergence of various sonic apparatuses in the 19th century: "Incitements to speak were orchestrated from all quarters, apparatuses everywhere for listening and recording, procedures for observing, questioning, and formulating."⁴⁶¹ In simple terms, this 'incitement to speak' caused the onset of different sound technologies in the nineteenth century, which leads me to argue that sound cinema can also be considered a consequence of this incitement to speak, which originated in Europe centuries ago.

Overlapping with this position, although from a rather different

460 Laura Galazviz, "Las películas habladas en el extranjero," *El Debate*, December 28, 1929.

461 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 32-33.

perspective, Norbert Elias analyzed that around the 16th century, various feelings such as those of fear, shame, repugnance, and consideration somehow molded people's behavior in a particular direction. The author regarded that these feelings, among other aspects, incited people to control their 'audible manners' to establish distinctions between the upper and lower ranks. This way of controlling behavior according to certain emotions, Elias called the civilizing process.

Cinemagoing decree that addressed pregnant women and women with babies is evidence of the encounter of these two processes explained by Foucault and Elias. Thus, I argue that the decree of the early 1930s restricting women's admission with babies was rather a *legal* manifestation of a different sensitivity to sound in Quito that arose from these two very old historical roots explained by the above-mentioned authors. This new attitude toward sound did not just emerge suddenly; it was part of the long process of the spread of ideas and beliefs that molded manners and behavior that emerged centuries ago in Europe but reached Ecuador at a later point in history. In addition to having very old roots, the law demonstrates that the way in which contemporaries perceived sound had changed.

Since the aversion to sound in the cinema sphere was constructed through fears regarding children's audible manners in cinema and through the dislike of the sound of the gramophones and sound cinema, among other aspects, it is clear that the dissemination of fear was pivotal in constructing the new relationship to sound. But how was fear understood at different times? What elements were required in order for fear to be credible? In relation to sound, which is the main aspect of this study, I have found that sound was intertwined with the feeling of fear in different ways and at different times. In other words, the interrelation of those two elements varied depending on the time. Emotions are not connected to the same elements as in a constant manner. For example, in the late 1910s, children were at the core of the relationship between fear and sound in the cinema sphere, but later fear was linked to the expansion of English language sound cinema.

Why, though, were children's noise and speech connected to fear? Perhaps because the control of audible manners was regarded at the time as part of what was understood as being civilized. Since in the late 1910s, Quito was considered by locals to be a city with a 'medium level' of civilization, the city was preoccupied with how to achieve a higher level. This is why, to become more civilized, the press promoted new ways of behavior that were considered elsewhere in the world to be in tune with

civilization. The outcome of these features generated, as already noted, an aversion to sound and, with this, the value of silence. The ability to control sound and silence became, both in the cinema sphere and in the city, one of the main characteristics of being civilized.

Overlapping with the revulsion to sound and the centrality assigned to silence, were those going in the opposite direction, that is, those who embraced sound and sound technology in the urban area. They looked forward to the future that technology could bring to science. For instance, they saw the educational value of sound cinema as well as that of the use of the gramophone in musical teaching. I examine this opposite attitude towards sound in Chapter 5. These two positions, anti- and pro- sound, form what I have called the dual relationship towards sound.

Can all this lead us to interpret that contemporaries in the late 1920s and early 1930s were moved to act (constructionism)⁴⁶² because they accumulated certain feelings over a number of years (1917–1928) and they had certain feelings (emotionalism)?⁴⁶³ I raise this question to see if it is possible for this analysis, and others, to unite these two models used in qualitative research.

As I am arguing that the feeling of aversion to sound was something constructed, I must emphasize two aspects: First, feelings and emotions not only have a history, but can be constructed. That is, in addition to studying emotions historically, I am suggesting that one could also study the features that have led to experiencing certain emotions at particular times and in particular contexts. In addition to this, emotions have not been emphasized with the same intensity throughout history. What is more, emotions are not constantly connected to the same elements in the same way. The intertwining of these features has also varied over the years.

It should be mentioned that ironically the death of silent cinema coincided with attempts to make the city more silent. But this longing to make a more silent city seems to be born from a desire to control sound in the city rather than to eradicate sound altogether from the city. In addition to this, the arrival of sound technologies was at the time considered a clear trait of modern places. The late 1920s and early 1930s allowed us to witness a unique aspect: in the late 1920s what was disappearing was an

462 David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 10-11.

463 *Ibid.*, 10-11.

uncontrolled and unregulated sound in the city and what was emerging was not a random sonic space, but rather controlled sound, for example, sound according to particular images.

Chapter 5 Welcoming Mechanical Sounds

Beyond Hollywood: Sound Cinema in Everyday Life

Overlapping the demand of more control of sound by silencing humans and artifacts in the city were requests for the presence of more control of sound by bringing more sound to the city. In the end, both proponents asked for more control of sound, but in different directions. What is more, both made these requests by claiming that one or the other would make Quito a more civilized city.

The embracement of sound and sound technologies was not done on the basis of feelings of fear, but rather of confidence and optimism, as I examine in the coming pages. This different attitude towards sound appears at first sight contradictory, but when analyzed more closely, they are in fact complementary. This enthusiasm for sound, just like the demand for silence, is not particular to only this time period; it is also very old. In fact, I see it as a consequence of the encouragement to talk, initiated well before the fin de siècle, as mentioned by Michel Foucault in Chapter 4.

Why did people want to bring more sound to their everyday lives? This was because the advent of recording moving images with sound, unlike what was happening in the area of the sound films in which fear of the English language had emerged, was highly recognized as beneficial in, for example, the judicial, educational, political, medical, and agricultural areas. In each of these realms, the different features of this novel technology were highlighted in the first half of 1930. As we can see, the positive impact of sound cinema reached different areas of everyday life.

Sound cinema in the field of justice

In the judiciary area, for instance, recording both moving images with sound was seen as a step forward in terms of evidence, in fact, as a new type of evidence since recording *simultaneously* moving images with sound offered something completely different to the kind of evidence offered until then by other technologies such as photography, phonograph and silent

cinema:

In the original house of Robert Browning in London, which is preserved as a historical literary monument, there is a hidden phonograph, thanks to which visitors can hear the most known verses of the poet, recited by himself.

From here on out, we can go even further regarding the preservation of historical records when sound and image are combined to bring to the sight and ear the reproduction of events and important people of a period already gone.⁴⁶⁴

As is clear, this technology was seen as a possibility to make contemporaries' time available to future generations. One can already notice here the awareness among contemporary people of the possibility to preserve of the simultaneity of sound and image as evidence of history.

In addition to this, the local press echoed that in the United States and in Paris people considered that, thanks to this innovation, the audible aspects of the interrogation process of criminals and their body language would be heard and seen afterwards, which would stand as evidence for the public to witness that criminals were not mistreated during those trials:⁴⁶⁵ "... all the questions that they ask, as well as all the answers of the accused, would be reproduced, in addition to even the slightest gestures and moves of everyone."⁴⁶⁶

The use of sound recordings, albeit with no moving images, was not new in the judicial field in the early 1930s. The desire to leave sound evidence in wills, for instance, with the help of the phonograph was already expressed in the local press in 1921:

Earl H. Reynolds, a member of South Bend Elevator Company, and a gentleman who belongs to the Chamber of Commerce, issued their respective wills by recording them on phonographic discs.

To legalize the 'signature', it was voiced by the lawyers James E. And Francis Callahan after the above-mentioned individuals finished declaring their last will.⁴⁶⁷

464 "La película parlante y la instrucción pública," *El Día*, July 15, 1930.

465 "El cine parlante como auxiliar de la justicia," *El Día*, June 20, 1930.

466 "El cine parlante como auxiliar de la justicia," *El Día*, June 20, 1930.

467 "Testamentos hechos por medio de un fonógrafo," *El Día*, January 8, 1921.

The use of sound recording in the early 1920s was considered of pivotal importance to prove the mental and physical condition of a dying person:

Lawyers have argued the effectiveness of this very new and practical procedure, which, according to the attorneys of Chicago, will offer many advantages, such as disclosing the mental and physical conditions of the testator at the moment of declaring his will before the judge in front of whom the talking will is being read. In addition to this, the people favored by these kinds of wills will have the undeniable pleasure of hearing the voice and accent of the one who leaves them his legacy.⁴⁶⁸

The rise of the simultaneous recording of moving images with sound as a modern kind of evidence reminds us of the impact that photography had in the nineteenth century when it began to be used to identify criminals. According to Tom Gunning, in the nineteenth century, photography provided “the most powerful form of modern identification.” Together with this, a modern concept of evidence appeared.⁴⁶⁹

Sound cinema's influence in education

In addition to being regarded as a new kind of evidence, the union of moving images and recorded sound was seen as a new teaching method since, for instance, the screening of scientists' explanations could be disseminated without the necessity of the speakers being present.⁴⁷⁰ In respect of this point, the inclusion of recorded sound was regarded a booster of what was shown visually:

Had the speakers been present [in the conference], the audience would not have been able to see or hear virtually anything else. In fact, it could be said that they might have seen less due to the fact that thanks to the use of the ‘cinematographic amplification’, the conference on the screen allows everybody to observe the details of the experiences as if they were next to the person speaking. The spectators who are located in even the most remote corners of the venue are in this way as well placed as those who are sitting in the

468 “Testamentos hechos por medio de un fonógrafo,” *El Día*, January 8, 1921.

469 Tom Gunning, “Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, eds. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 22.

470 “La película parlante y la instrucción pública,” *El Día*, July 15, 1930.

front row.⁴⁷¹

The combination of these two elements, aided by the wide canvas, was thus seen as enhancers of not only hearing, but actually of sight. Besides the dissemination of science through recorded sound and moving images, this innovation was regarded as a tool to train people in different procedures such as those of industry and business.⁴⁷²

Cinema being considered an educational tool did not begin with the arrival of sound to cinema. Silent cinema was actually regarded already in this way in the early 1910s in Quito. In the case of Ecuador, for instance, cinema was seen as part of learning with fun:

El Comercio and El Día assert that the honest recreation [provided] by cinema is a form of entertainment that is essentially educative.

The enthusiasm of these two newspapers is worthy of all praise because they encourage and wish all spectacles to provide teaching with delight. This old formula will be eternally true.⁴⁷³

Being cinema silent, the visuality of cinema was highlighted as an educational tool:

So, [the cinema company] Ambos Mundos must not forget that what is learned visually is better retained and assimilated, and, therefore, we hope that it [the company] will offer the public, as it has up to now, films that are appropriate for their [children's] psychology, as theater is a school of customs that contributes to the formation of national culture.⁴⁷⁴

The arrival of sound boosted the image of cinema as an educational tool, because in addition to the moving images, recorded sound could also be disseminated in this new state of affairs.

The local press also echoed how sound cinema was also pictured as a tool to study the economic aspects of agriculture in the United States. This is the reason why the institution in charge of agriculture in that country pointed out that they would start producing sound films in spite of the fact

471 "La película parlante y la instrucción pública," *El Día*, July 15, 1930.

472 "Notas cinematográficas," *El Debate*, February 14, 1930.

473 G.B., "La vida de Quito," *El Día*, November 27, 1914.

474 "Espartaco," *El Comercio*, November 24, 1914.

that representatives of the agricultural area in the United States could not yet use those films due to the cost of the sound equipment:⁴⁷⁵

They have the certainty that the screening of sound films that depict the perspective of the agricultural situation will effectively contribute to the recent efforts for inducing farmers to study in advance the possible demand of their products so that they can suitably adjust their production.⁴⁷⁶

This was not the first time that cinema was used to promote agriculture, in fact, this practice had already been used at the time of the magic lantern in Quito:

There was a time when the views screened with the magic lantern along with their accompanying conference were the only means that the Government could use to graphically show agricultural production and sales. Then came the cinematograph. The films were not a big deal at first, but with the construction of a modern cinema in the Ministry of Agriculture in Washington (...) they have produced a good number of excellent films. (...) Many foreign governments interested in the North American farming methods have exhibited these films in their respective countries.⁴⁷⁷

Sound cinema and politics

In addition to this, the new technology offered the possibility for politicians to exchange messages with moving images and sound. This was the case of the president of the United States, Herbert Hoover, who received the recorded message of the General Dámaso Berenguer, head of the government in Spain. In his message, recorded in Spanish, Berenguer sent his greetings to Hoover and manifested his desire that both countries would continue their amicable relationship.⁴⁷⁸

Several discourses of political figures had taken place with the help of the new technology: for instance, the speech delivered in The Hague by the Austrian Chancellor, Mr. Schober and the King of England on the reduction of navy weaponry.⁴⁷⁹ Thanks to this innovation, it was even

475 "Noticias cinematográficas," *El Debate*, January 23, 1930.

476 "Películas parlantes de propaganda agrícola," *El Comercio*, August 3, 1930.

477 "Películas parlantes de propaganda agrícola," *El Comercio*, August 3, 1930.

478 "Película parlante proyectada ante el Presidente Hoover," *El Comercio*, July 12, 1930.

479 "El film parlante y la política," *El Día*, July 12, 1930.

possible to capture the politicians' messages outdoors: "Many delegates of different countries were filmed while they were walking by the gardens of Downing Street. Each one of them said a few words in their own mother tongue using the microphone."⁴⁸⁰

In addition to this, recording moving images with sound was not only seen from the point of view of recording and storage, but also of storage and subsequent dissemination. As Gunning reminds us, all that appeared in the mid 19th century can be regarded in terms of 'circulation.' Circulation is a crucial concept in modernity. Cinema was one of the technological media that helped to achieve this purpose.

The benefits of disseminating or circulating moving images with recorded sound were also seen in the field of music. Although the arrival of sound film has mostly been studied from the point of view of the negative effects due to the firing of live musicians from cinema screenings, artists such as Franz Lehar regarded the new technology as an option for disseminating the opera.⁴⁸¹ Vienna, Berlin, Munich and Dresden announced the next propagation of the operas of Wagner, Mozart and Strauss through sound cinema.⁴⁸²

It is important to mention that contrary to other places in the world where there were negative feelings towards the firing of live orchestras from cinemas due to the arrival of sound technology, in Ecuador, the local press allocated little or no importance to this aspect. One rare report was that in Colombia there was concern for the situation of musicians.⁴⁸³

In the field of theater, some representatives of this area in the United States saw the potential of the new technology and wanted to use it to disseminate their theatrical plays.⁴⁸⁴ This occurred even though there was disdain in this field towards the arrival of sound film, considering it a threat to theater.

Sound cinema in medicine

In terms of medicine, as already mentioned, sound cinema was seen as a tool to cure deaf people, since it was argued that the practice of

480 "El film parlante y la política," *El Día*, July 12, 1930.

481 "Franz Lehar compondrá para los cines parlantes de EE.UU," *El Día*, January 12, 1930.

482 "Film sonoro y las óperas clásicas de Wagner," *El Día*, August 22, 1930

483 "Por el arte y los artistas," *El Día*, August 28, 1930.

484 "Noticias cinematográficas," *El Debate*, January 23, 1930.

listening to the dialogue in the cinema stimulated the audible organ. This did not apply to those with severe damage to their eardrum.⁴⁸⁵

In addition to this, sound cinema opened the possibility of hearing the beats of the human heart, which constituted a great advancement towards the study of the problems of such a vital organ.⁴⁸⁶ The dissemination of the recording of operations of vital organs such as the heart was considered by contemporaries as a possibility to serve as guidelines for instruction on the process of such medical procedures.⁴⁸⁷

Sound cinema in trains

In addition to the areas already mentioned, transportation was also seen as benefitting from sound cinema. As early as 1930, an entire sound picture was test exhibited for the first time on the Chicago and North Western, a Class I railroad. The audience was composed of representatives of railways, engineers, and press members, among others. The film shown was *Second Wife* (1930) starring Lila Lee and Conrad Nagel: "The test results were so promising that the railway company decided to order the immediate installation of six sets of equipment in the luxury wagons of the trains running between Omaha, Denver and Minneapolis."⁴⁸⁸

This seems to be an early example of the union of sound films and trains. In the case of England, for instance, it was "on June 3, 1935, during Britain's holiday season, the LNER and British Pathé unveiled the cinema coach."⁴⁸⁹ This is in reference to the talkies and trains, as in Great Britain the junction between moving images and trains dates back already to 1924, that is, the years of the silent era.

In addition to this interest in combining sound films and mobility, there were contemporary aspirations of making sound cinema a mobile feature, as attempts were made to produce portable sound cinema equipment.⁴⁹⁰ In relation to this point, the invention of the microphone Beam was considered a serious contribution to the filming of pictures inside trains:

485 "Una bendición para los sordos," *El Comercio*, July 24, 1930.

486 "El cinematógrafo como auxiliar de la medicina," *El Día*, October 1, 1930. This perception did not occur during the first half of 1930, but rather in late 1930.

487 "El cinematógrafo como auxiliar de la medicina," *El Día*, October 1, 1930.

488 "Se exhiben películas sonoras en trenes rápidos," *El Día*, August 3, 1930.

489 Rebecca Harrison, "Inside the Cinema Train: Britain, Empire, and Modernity in the Twentieth Century," *Film History* 26, no. 4 (2014): 34.

490 "Noticias cinematográficas," *El Debate*, February 14, 1930.

'By using the microphone, it is possible to record human voices and any other sound on board the trains and other locomotive means in full motion. The invention of this Beam microphone belongs to Scientific Laboratories R.K.O.'⁴⁹¹

Sound cinema in Hollywood

In addition to the feelings of confidence in and optimism regarding the impact of sound cinema on everyday life, positive emotions were attached to the advent of sound in the cinematographic area. Russia was as an example of the enthusiastic expansion and reception of sound cinema around the world, even in a country under the Soviet government: "The implementation of sound film in Russia is carried out with complete 'motivation and enthusiasm.'⁴⁹²

The talkies were also expanding to different countries such as Great Britain. At this time, British producers were also pouring all their energies into producing the talkies.⁴⁹³ Even though the local press discussed the expansion of sound cinema in the United States and Europe, it is important to point out that not all the countries of Europe were covered to the same extent. Some countries were given more relevance than others. However, they were all branded under the tag of Europe as a progressive continent. The disparities in the expansion of this innovation in Europe were not commented on in length. This probably led contemporaries to think that sound cinema was already equally existent abroad. So much so that it seems that to the dailies, silent cinema only existed in Ecuador and Quito at the time.

Sound cinema is more real

The positive feelings attached to the advent of sound cinema were also due to the perception of realism that, according to contemporaries, had been added to cinema: "Very reliable reproducer of movement, endowed with the resource of word and susceptible of copying colors, now it only needs to get into Einstein's relativity theories."⁴⁹⁴

In fact, in terms of the level of the illusion of realism reached by contemporaries cinema was seen as almost perfect:

491 "Un micrófono revolucionario," *El Debate*, July 12, 1930.

492 "La película sonora en Rusia," *El Día*, February 17, 1930.

493 "Las películas parlantes," *El Día*, March 2, 1930.

494 "El próximo futuro del cinematógrafo," *El Día*, April 11, 1930.

Recently, a film company screened a scene depicting a harvest of oranges in California. The film was of natural colors. The performing girls sang a romantic melody. The air from the ventilators smelled like orange blossom flowers... The illusion was almost perfect. However, some mocked it: 'American tricks!' they exclaimed. It is likely that the illustrious Pirandello would have protested indignantly if he had been present!⁴⁹⁵

As we have seen, the positive feelings attached to the arrival of sound and particularly to the advent of sound cinema in Quito were not only confined to the cinematographic field; they also reached diverse aspects of everyday life.

The embracement of mechanical sound and sound technologies was characterized in terms of emotions mostly by feelings of confidence in and optimism regarding the future. These feelings were mostly attached to the confidence in science and technology, which were regarded at the time, judging from contemporary foreign accounts that circulated in the city, as conveyors of progress and civilization.

As noted by Norbert Elias, science and technology are also part of the characteristics that participate in the civilizing process. This is crucial to understand, as the author finds that in addition to the traits of self-control and the suppression of emotions, science and technology are at the heart of the civilizing process. These traits were established, according to him, even before the concept of civilization itself.⁴⁹⁶ Inspired by Elias, I argue that contemporaries in Quito embraced the civilizing process and spread this in the early 20th century in Quito in two different ways, regarding sound at least: first, by highly attached to the idea of control of sound, human and mechanical; and second, by embracing sound as a trait of science and technology.

Interestingly enough to Elias, technology is not the cause of this behavior, but: "... what we call 'technology' is itself only one of the symbols, one of the last manifestations of that constant foresight imposed by the formation of longer and longer chains of actions and the competition between those bound together by them."⁴⁹⁷

495 "El próximo futuro del cinematógrafo," *El Día*, April 11, 1930.

496 Elias, *The Process of Civilization*, 384.

497 Ibid.

This, as I have examined, also applies to the arrival of sound cinema. In other words, the entire phenomenon of the advent of sound cinema cannot be only viewed in itself, but also in connection to the network through which it arrived. Seeing it only in its technological aspects shows us its importance, but only a small fragment of what it meant to contemporaries. What is more, to Elias, technology was more an outcome of something that occurs before and not afterwards. In his mind, feelings and behavior probably led to the emergence of objects and technology.

Part II The Perceived Space of Sound Cinema

The Interplay of the Conceived and Perceived Space of Sound Cinema in Quito

It is evident that in the press, prior to 1930, sound cinema in its discursive presence – verbal and figurative – coexisted with silent cinema. However, while sound cinema's presence was in the press, that is, in the conceived space, silent cinema occupied three spaces: the conceived, the perceived, and the lived spaces. That is, prior to 1930, silent cinema occupied three spaces whereas sound cinema occupied only one, which does not erase the fact that already at this point, sound cinema was part of the perceived space, as it circulated in the perceived space of the press.

The fact that sound cinema was part of the conceived space does not mean that it was not experienced or lived. Had people not experienced in this way what the press said, what they read, they would not have demanded sound cinema. But they did.

After the public discussion of late 1929, silent films continued dominating one hundred percent of cinema showings' schedules, but the image of silent cinema had been severely struck by the public debate. In other words, while the permanent screenings of silent films may lead us to believe that silent cinema was enjoying a strong position in late 1929 Quito, the fact is that silent cinema was being challenged in the discussions in written texts, and its authority was already fatally decaying. It was so much so that by late November 1929 without seeing any screenings, the local press echoed the possible death of silent cinema:

Sound cinema increasingly prevails, while its predecessor, the silent cinema, is dying in the shadow of its last strongholds. Rarely in the history of the evolution of customs have we seen a more abrupt transmutation. Only a few months have passed and yet its step is firm and the gap deeper. It is all the old psychology of the cinematograph that is changing. (...) He who listens to the characters on the screen talking for the first time, will be puzzled; but once the visual and acoustic sentiments have been identified, as sound and movement are synchronized today on the 'screen', the illusion is so perfect that our old habit disappears and we acquire a new interest in what we thought we would never gladly accept.⁴⁹⁸

498 Emilio Delboy, "La conquista del cinematógrafo parlante," *El Comercio*, November 27, 1929.

As is clear, by late 1929, sound cinema was ruling the public discursive realm. The area gained by silent cinema over the decades was being lost in people's minds, and most interestingly this was occurring without having one single venue wired and without the sounds of the films having yet been heard in Quito.

By this time, sound cinema was also discussed as progressive. This can be evidenced in the following press report of the arrival of sound cinema in Lima:

Talking cinema has opened its way in various countries already. (...) in Lima the theater company offered this service and made it public at the Colón Theater under the name of sound cinema. In that city, according to some news that we took from the local press, a curious case occurred. The audience, or rather a certain audience, believed that a sham was taking place through the use of phonographs that worked behind the screen at the same time the movie was playing. Faced with the insistence with which the rumor spread, Mr. Rodrigo, the manager, had to give a categorical explanation, inviting the attendees to verify the veracity of the installation of sound cinema, in which 'the sounds and orchestrations that the public hears are transmitted through the films, which have everything printed in themselves and are reproduced by means of a beam of light, as is everywhere else. This new equipment, of ingenious combination, has already revolutionized cinematography in other places.⁴⁹⁹

The role played by newspapers in the dissemination of sound cinema before the screening of sound films was such that even the word talkies preceded the screening of sound films:

Americans, who are known to abbreviate their spoken language and who refer to the cinematograph, use the difficult-to-explain contraction 'movies', which comes from 'moving pictures' (pictures with movement). They have now come up with the word 'talkies', which in Spanish is pronounced 'toquis', to refer to talking cinema, the word coming from the noun talking, which is the action of speaking.⁵⁰⁰

499 "El cine sonoro," *El Comercio*, December 21, 1929.

500 "Nuevo término del cine," *El Día*, May 22, 1930.

To conclude, it is evident that all the above-mentioned information on sound cinema was shaping the minds of contemporaries. They knew fairly well what sound cinema was, and were expecting it, without even having seen and heard sound films.

All in all, after the public debate of late 1929, silent cinema came to be regarded not only as silent; it actually came to represent the obsolete and non-progressive entertainment, indicative of a non-civilized place. It becomes evident that it was not only the silent aspect of films that had made silent cinema a thing of the past, but also the space in which it was shown, characterized by a lack of comfort, hygiene, censorship, and smoke-free environment, among other factors.

Consequently, it can be argued that the sonic aspect of films was no longer enough for the recognition of bringing progressive cinema to Quito. In other words, bringing sound cinema to the city would only partially solve the aspect of what was being requested. Hence, it was necessary to bring sound films to the city, but the venue must offer comfort and hygiene. This partly explains the difference of the reception of the first sound films in the former silent cinema venues, and the reception of the first purpose-built sound cinema, which raised more comments and congratulations in the local press than the arrival of sound films. I say partly, because one has to take into account that the context in which the first sound films were shown in 1930 varied considerably in comparison to 1933 when the first purpose-built-sound cinema opened. With the screening of the first sound films in late 1930, sound cinema moved from the conceived to the perceived space.

Right after the screenings of the two first sound films *Sombras de gloria* (1930) and *El gran Gabbo* (*The Great Gabbo*, 1929) no sound exhibitions were held in the city. However, newspapers continued publishing information about the advancement of this technological innovation around the world, which demonstrates how an old media such as a daily helped to keep alive the memory of the new technology in peoples' minds. In addition to this, the melodies of *Sombras de gloria* continued being played by orchestras in Quito.

In this chapter, I examine how what was debated publicly in the press was put into stone in the Bolívar Theater. In other words, I analyze how the others' present and future cinema became the present in Quito, and how through this, the future was crystallized. I also examine how a series of objects such as sound films, records, the radio, monuments, and technological equipment were also disseminators of communal feelings.

Chapter 6 The First Sound Film Exhibitions

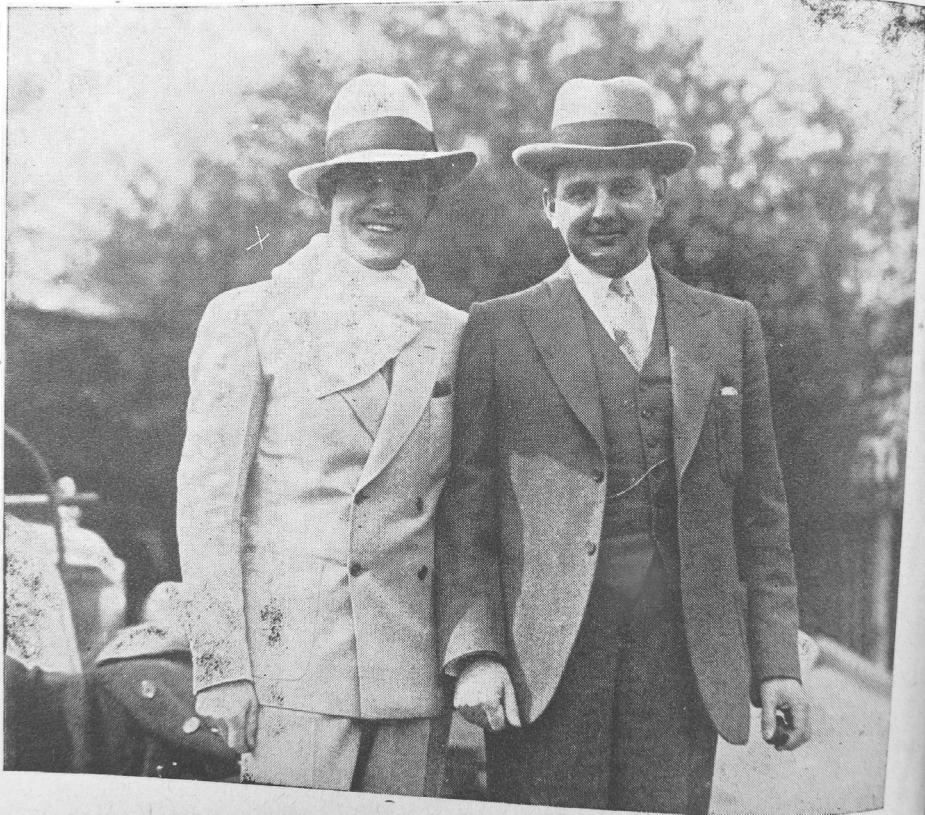
The Discursive Arrival of José Bohr

The first two sound films that were shown in Quito in September 1930 were *Sombras de gloria* (1930) and *El gran Gabbo* (*The Great Gabbo*, 1929). Regarding *Sombras de gloria*, prior to the screening of the film, nothing was mentioned in the local press about it or its leading characters José Bohr and Mona Rico, even though the local press reported on the Hollywood production of the Spanish-language alternate versions. The only reference to *Sombras de gloria* and José Bohr prior to September 1930 that I have found so far in Quito is the reference in the magazine *Espirales* where three aspects were published: First, an incident that occurred to the actor; second, photos of him; and third, Bohr's letter in which he discussed *Sombras de gloria*.

With respect to the first point, the magazine mentioned that at the border between the United States and Mexico, José Bohr was taken into custody for a few days due to an error in his passport. Consequently, the actor had to stay in Ciudad Juárez until the error was corrected. This occurred when the actor was trying to return to the United States from the premiere of *Sombras de gloria* in Mexico. When Will Hays found out about this, he immediately took care of the issue and helped him solve the problem. However, until then, José Bohr had to spend five days at the border city. The authorities of the city of El Paso, trying to soften his pain, consoled him by telling him 'Así es la vida,' meaning 'Such is life'. This phrase stuck in Bohr's memory; he considered it appropriate as the name for his upcoming Spanish-language film, which indeed he entitled *Así es la vida* (1930).

Concerning the second aspect, photos of the actor depict him filming *Así es la vida* (Fig. 12 and Fig. 13):⁵⁰¹

501 *Espirales*, June, 1930.

MUNDO CINEMATOGRAFICO

El célebre artista argentino don José Bohr departiendo en Hollywood con su representante

Figure 12: “The famous Argentinian artist Mr. José Bohr chatting with his representative in Hollywood.”



Figure 13: "Argentinian actor José Bohr, in front of the powerful microphone during the filming of the first Spanish-speaking sound film titled "Así es la vida"."

In addition to this, regarding the third aspect, which had to do with Bohr's letter, the local magazine published the following letter written by José Bohr himself. Notice that the caption of the previous photograph indicates that *Así es la vida* was the first sound film in Spanish, even though in the letter Bohr made it clear that his first Spanish-speaking movie was *Sombras de gloria*, which was also the first movie directed in Spanish:

A Mysterious Letter

Hollywood, May 1, 1930

Mr. Director of 'Espirales'

Quito-Ecuador

Dear Director:

I kindly request the publishing of the following open letter:

To my friends and enemies:

I have been attacked.

I am being attacked.

I will continue to be attacked.

Why?

Because I was the first who had the courage to give the artists of [our] race the place they deserve to have in the world of speaking cinema, with my film *Sombras de Gloria*, the first production ever made entirely and directly in the Spanish language.

I do not care that I have been attacked.

I do not care that I am being attacked.

I do not care if I continued to be attacked.

As the first ones we have always been attacked.

I will continue moving forward, fighting for one single dream: 'that sound cinema may not be the apple of discord, but an efficient means to bring Spanish-speaking countries together.'

Sincerely,

JOSE BOHR

In production, the second all Spanish-language film

Así es la vida

(A Sono-Art film)⁵⁰²

This letter appeared in a context in which contemporaries were not able to understand José Bohr's words, as nobody knew about *Sombras de gloria* or about the problems that the author was referring to in his letter. For this reason, I will analyze this letter later in the subchapter on the

502 José Bohr, "Una carta curiosa," *Espirales*, June, 1930.

arrival of sound films in Quito.

With respect to *Así es la vida*, it should be mentioned that this is the alternate-language version of *What a Man* (1930).⁵⁰³ In Quito, *Así es la vida* premiered on a Sunday, in which this film was screened four times.⁵⁰⁴ The film's opening in the city was very successful,⁵⁰⁵ which led exhibitors to screen two more days at the first run theater, the Edén.⁵⁰⁶ Altogether, this feature was screened eleven times in six days.⁵⁰⁷ Unlike other films in Spanish, the emphasis in the advertisements of *Así es la vida* was not on the Spanish language of the film, but on the actors, particularly José Bohr.⁵⁰⁸

This film made a comeback a few months later in December 1932.⁵⁰⁹ *Así es la vida* was screened again in the city due to public demand.⁵¹⁰ This time the film had only three runs in two days. *Así es la vida*'s last screening in 1932 took place on 3 December.⁵¹¹

One aspect that deserves to be highlighted is that in Quito, the weekly screening program was structured according to the success or failure of a film's premiere. In other words, the showings of a film and the period of screening of a certain picture depended heavily on the people's reaction towards the premiere. If the film's debut succeeded, it was exhibited again the following day at the Edén, Quito's first run theater. This of course shaped the daily screenings after the premieres. If a film was not successful, it did not last long in the programming. This partly shows that the amount of sound film importation was not standardized.

As Bohr's first sound feature *Sombras de gloria*, this Sono Art picture was also an alternate language version of an originally English-language film.⁵¹² Both of these early sound films succeeded at the box office.⁵¹³

503 Lisa Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-Language Filmmaking: Out from Hollywood's Shadow, 1929-1939* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 18.

504 This film premiered at the Edén and the Variedades on 31 July, 1932. That is, with two screenings each.

505 Advertisement for *Así es la vida*, *El Día*, August 1, 1932.

506 Advertisements for *Así es la vida*, *El Día*, August 1 and 4 1932.

507 *Así es la vida* premiered on July 31, 1932. The last screening of that period took place on August 8, 1932.

508 See *El Día*'s advertisements from July 26, 1932 until August 8, 1932.

509 Advertisement for *Así es la vida*, *El Día*, December 2, 1932.

510 Advertisement for *Así es la vida*, *El Día*, December 2, 1932.

511 Advertisement for *Así es la vida*, *El Día*, December 3, 1932.

512 Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-Language Filmmaking*, 28.

513 *Ibid.*, 30.

The First Sound Films

After the arrival of *Sombras de gloria* through the printed written texts and photographs of the film's main actor, *Sombras de gloria* was screened in Quito in September 1930.⁵¹⁴ This film, produced by independent Sono-Art Productions, starring José Bohr and Mona Rico, was the first sound film to be exhibited in the city.⁵¹⁵ *Sombras de gloria* is considered "the second-ever Spanish-language feature and the earliest dual-version film in Spanish and English".⁵¹⁶

Although it may appear to us that the first sound film arrived late in Quito considering that in the United States sound films had already premiered in 1926⁵¹⁷ and *The Jazz Singer* - considered to be the first feature film that included not only music, but most of all synchronized dialogue - in 1927, sound cinema did not premier late in the city. In fact, in no other place than in the United States was sound cinema screened in 1927.⁵¹⁸ This technology only really spread around the world in 1928. For example,

514 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 3, 1930. *Sombras de gloria* premiered for a public audience in Quito on September 3, 1930. The test screening of this film for local press reporters took place on September 2, 1930.

515 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Debate*, September 3, 1930.

516 Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-Language Filmmaking*, 18.

517 *Don Juan* (1926), the first music synchronized film premiered in 1926 in the USA.

518 For work on year 1927, see Janet Bergstrom, "Introduction: The Year 1927," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 163-167; Kevin Brownlow, "Annus Mirabilis: The Film in 1927," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 168-178; Schawn Belston and Rob Easteria, "Fox 1927: A Year in Pictures," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 179-186; Janet Bergstrom, "Murnau, Movietone and Mus-solini," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 187-204; Douglas Gomery, "What Was Adolph Zukor Doing in 1927?," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 205-216; Ross Melnick, "Station R-O-X-Y: Roxy and the Radio," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 217-233; Richard Korszarski, "'It's No Use to Have an Unhappy Man': Paul Fejos at Universal," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 234-240; Jan-Christopher Horak, "Sauerkraut & Sausages with Little Goulash: Germans in Hollywood, 1927," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 241-260; Tony Guzman, "The Little Theatre Movement: The Institutionalization of the European Art Film in America," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 261-284; James Hahn, "'Sorrell and Son': Difficult Viewing," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 285-288; Christophe Gauthier and Laure Brost, "1927, Year One of the French Film Heritage?," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 289-306; Lea Jacobs, "Men without Women: The Avatars of 'What Price Glory'," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 307-333; Laurent Véray and Bill Krohn, "1927: The Apotheosis of the French Historical Film?," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 334-351; Richard Abel, "Memory Work: French Historical Epics, 1926-1927," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 352-362; Hiroshi Komatsu, "The Foundation of Modernism: Japanese Cinema in the Year 1927," *Film History* 17, no. 2/3 (2005): 363-375.

England,⁵¹⁹ Australia⁵²⁰ and Cuba⁵²¹ screened the first sound films in 1928.

According to Usabel de Gaizca, by the end of 1928, the boom of the wired theaters was not happening in the rest of the world.⁵²² For various countries in Europe, 1929 is considered the first year of sound-film exhibition.⁵²³ In Finland's case, for instance, the first sound film was screened on 11 February, 1929.⁵²⁴ In Sweden's case, the first sound film was shown in early 1929.⁵²⁵ By early 1929, "the only sound equipped cinema in LA [Latin America] was PAR's Havana showcase."⁵²⁶ Throughout 1929, sound cinema arrived in Latin America — specifically in Brazil,⁵²⁷ Mexico,⁵²⁸ Argentina, and Perú.⁵²⁹ Chile⁵³⁰ and Ecuador received this technology in 1930.

This global spread of sound cinema after 1928 and mostly from 1929 occurred even though dubbing as a method for overcoming the language barrier was not available. It was in early 1930s when dubbing succeeded

- 519 Robert Murphy, "Coming of Sound to the Cinema in Britain," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 4, no. 2 (1984): 146. For work on the first British talkies, see Robert Murphy, "English as She is Spoke: The First British Talkies," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 32, no. 4 (2012): 537-557. See also Janet Moat, "The Aileen and Michael Balcon special collection: an introduction to British cinema history, 1929-1960," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 16, no. 4 (1996): 565-575. See also Geoff Brown, "The Euro-British Flagship That Sank: The short life and lingering death of Associated Sound Film Industries, 1929-1936," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 33, no. 2 (2013): 187-213.
- 520 Damousi, "'The Filthy American Twang,'" 415.
- 521 Ana María López, "Film and Radio Intermedialities in Early Latin American Sound Cinema," in *The Routledge Companion to Latin American Cinema*, ed. by Marvin D'Lugo, Ana M. López and Laura Podalsky (London: Routledge, 2018), 317.
- 522 De Gaizca, "American Films in Latin America: The Case History of United Artists Corporation, 1919-1951," 137.
- 523 Charles O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound: Technology and Film Style in France and the U.S.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 22.
- 524 Hannu Salmi (Professor, Department of Cultural History, University of Turku), interview by the author, Turku, January 2016. See also *Internet Movie Databe (IMDb)* http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0018578/releaseinfo?ref_=tt_dt_dt
- 525 Christopher Natzén, *The Coming of Sound Film in Sweden 1928-1952: New and Old Technologies* (Sweden: US-AB, 2010), 144.
- 526 "Rush For Sound Movies," *The New York Times*, February 6, 1929 in de Usabel, "American Films in Latin America: The Case History of United Artists Corporation, 1919-1951," 137.
- 527 De Gaizca, *American Films in Latin America*, 141. *The Patriot* was the first sound film screened in Brasil on April 13, 1929.
- 528 De Gaizca, *American Films in Latin America*, 141. *The Singing Fool* was the first sound film shown in Mexico on May 14, 1929.
- 529 "El cine sonoro," *El Comercio*, December 21, 1929.
- 530 Gaizka de Usabel, "American Films in Latin America: The Case History of United Artists Corporation, 1919-1951 (PhD diss., The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1975), 141-142.

and in fact, “in 1932 there was a major breakthrough in solving the language problem, when dubbing was introduced as the standard method of translating talking pictures in major languages, while subtitling became the solution for minor language regions. The dubbing technique had taken four years to develop.”⁵³¹

Given that dubbing still had technical problems in the late 1920s,⁵³² making the same film again with the actors speaking a different language was put into practice as a translation technique. Regarding Spanish, the first to rush into the production of Spanish-language filmmaking were the independent studios in 1929.⁵³³ That is, they did it slightly before the major studios did so in 1930. According to Kristin Thompson, in mid-November 1929, MGM studio announced a large investment into producing foreign language films,⁵³⁴ which means that the major studios had already decided by late 1929 to engage in the production of foreign language film versions.

Of the first sound films screened in South America, *The Jazz Singer* was almost nowhere in the region. What is more, which sound films were first screened in the area depended on the country. In Argentina, for instance, the first sound film was *The Divine Lady* (1929).⁵³⁵ This film premiered on June 12, 1929 at the Grand Splendid Theatre in Buenos Aires. In Chile, *The Broadway Melody* (1929) opened in March 1930. In Ecuador, the first sound film was *Sombras de gloria*.

In 1930, along with the exhibition of *Sombras de gloria*, another sound film was shown in Quito. This film was *El gran Gabbo*,⁵³⁶ which was a sound film in English with written translation into Spanish. It was the second sound film to arrive in Quito. As mentioned in its advertisement, it was not only the second, but also the last sound film to arrive in the city.⁵³⁷ By this, the advertisement was informing people that there would be no more sound films for a long time in Quito, and indeed this is what occurred. After

531 Karel Dibbets, “The Introduction of Sound,” in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 214.

532 Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market 1907-1954* (London: British Film Institute, 1985), 160. See also Lea Jacobs, “The Innovation of Re-Recording in the Hollywood Studios,” *Film History* 24, no. 1 (2012): 7.

533 Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-language filmmaking*, 27.

534 Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 160.

535 Nicolas Poppe, “Sitieseeing Buenos Aires in the early Argentine sound film *Los tres berretines*,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 26, no. 1 (2009). DOI: 10.1080/08873630802617150

536 Advertisement for *El gran Gabbo*, *El Día*, September 7, 1930.

537 Advertisement for *El gran Gabbo*, *El Día*, September 7, 1930. See also advertisement for *El gran Gabbo*, *El Debate*, September 7, 1930.

Sombras de gloria and *El gran Gabbo*, sound films from abroad only came to the city a year later, in August 1931. To complete the exhibition of *El gran Gabbo*, three other short sound films were shown: *Dos gatos locos*, *Las últimas novedades de Broadway* and one newsreel of Pathé's worldwide events.⁵³⁸ This is the earliest example of exhibitions of moving animals with recorded synchronized sound in Quito that I have been able to find. As I analyze in the coming paragraphs, *El gran Gabbo* was screened for only one day, unlike *Sombras de gloria* which was shown on many days.

With regard to the reception of the first foreign sound films in Ecuador, the only book that mentions *Sombras de gloria* as the first sound film in Quito is *Breve historia de los servicios básicos en Quito*.⁵³⁹ Unlike this book, *Historia del cine en el Ecuador* does not clearly distinguish which was the first sound film exhibited in Guayaquil or Ecuador. It only mentions that: "Guayaquil, as always, was the first city that was subjected to new influences, the Parisiana Theaters Company (...) announced the opening of its sound cinema venue, with the film 'El Desfile del Amor', (...)"⁵⁴⁰ Wilma Granda's *Cine silente en Ecuador* erroneously claims that the first Spanish-language sound film screened in Quito, in November 1931, was the movie *Galas de la Paramount*.⁵⁴¹

The First Sound Films' Tours and Prices

Regarding the venue where the first sound film was shown in Quito, contrary to what one would expect, *Sombras de gloria* did not premiere in one of the silent purpose-built cinemas, but at the Sucre Theater, that is, in Quito's opera theater. Curiously enough, the decision to premiere *Sombras de gloria* in this non-cinematographic place was made by the cinema company itself, which ran the four cinema venues. Why did this company decide to premiere the film in a different venue to the four cinemas they already had for screenings? In order to answer this question, I start by examining who was behind the arrival of *Sombras de gloria* in Quito.

Although it is not self-evident that it was the cinema company that brought *Sombras de gloria* to the city, some evidence nevertheless confirms this. "The company 'Cines de Quito,' proudly presents this wonderful advance of science and proclaims that it is the legitimate and authentic

538 Advertisement for *El gran Gabbo*, *El Día*, September 7, 1930.

539 Mario Vásconez et al., *Breve historia de los servicios básicos en Quito*, (Quito: Ciudad, 1997).

540 Vásquez et al., *Historia del cine en el Ecuador*, 133.

541 Granda, *Cine silente en Ecuador*, 152.

sound cinema, which is the latest trend of this superb invention,"⁵⁴² claimed one of the advertisements of this movie. In addition to this, another piece of evidence that the cinema company of the city was behind the exhibition of the first sound film is the fact that the tickets were sold in the cinema ticket office of the city that belonged to the above-mentioned cinema company.⁵⁴³ Even though evidence indicates that the cinema company was behind the arrival of the film to the city, the arrival of sound cinema in Quito was also attributed to a certain business man named Rossini.⁵⁴⁴

Now that I have shown that the cinema company was in charge of bringing this innovation to the city, I examine three hypotheses about why the first sound film was first exhibited in the opera theater. First, it seems plausible to argue that the cinema company screened at the opera theater so that they could charge more for the ticket prices of the first sound film. I argue this since the most expensive tickets paid for the first sound film were for the screenings held at the opera theater. For example, stalls tickets cost six sucres, and the gallery seats were two sucres⁵⁴⁵ at the Sucre Theater. The prices charged in the opera theater for the screening of the first sound film were justified by saying that the film, the sound equipment, and the hiring of special technicians to operate them⁵⁴⁶ were all very expensive. The kind of projectors or devices that were used to screen the film remain unknown.

When *Sombras de gloria* moved into the purpose-built cinemas, one can see that the ticket prices progressively dropped. For example, the ticket prices decreased to four sucres for the stalls and one sucre for the gallery when the film was shown at the Edén⁵⁴⁷ only four days later. When *Sombras de gloria* was shown at the Popular Theater, the prices were lower than at the other two theaters: three sucres for stalls tickets, one sucre for the preference seats, and eighty cents for gallery places.⁵⁴⁸ These prices

542 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 3, 1930. See also advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Debate*, September 5, 1930. See also advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 5, 1930.

543 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 1, 1930.

544 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Debate*, September 13, 1930.

545 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 3, 1930. This film was shown at the Sucre Theater from September 3 to September 5, 1930.

546 Advertisement, *El Día*, September 3, 1930.

547 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 6, 1930. See also advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Debate*, September 7, 1930. At the Edén, *Sombras de gloria* was shown on September 6 and September 7, 1930.

548 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 8, 1930. See also advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 9, 1930. At the Popular, *Sombras de gloria* was shown on September 8 and September 9 1930.

continued decreasing when the movie was shown in the theater located in the populous area of Quito, the Puerta del Sol, since there the price was two sucres for the stalls and eighty cents for the gallery.⁵⁴⁹

Second, it is plausible that *Sombras de gloria* was shown in the opera venue because the cinema company had occupied four venues for the screening of the film, which was the number of cinemas that were available in the city. Had the cinema company shown the film at the Variedades and the opera venue, this would have made five theaters, which were probably too many venues for a relatively small city like Quito. In other words, in addition to the screening at the opera venue, *Sombras de gloria* also toured at three of the four cinema venues, but not at the Variedades. In total, in all of these venues, the film was screened for the open public sixteen times in twelve days, from September 3 to September 14, 1930. The pattern followed for these first sound exhibitions was hierarchical, in that they started in the most expensive theater and ended in the most popular and cheapest theaters.

Third, we cannot exclude the fact that the screening of the first sound film at the Sucre Theater shows the authority of this venue in the city. In other words, the Sucre Theater was worthier of inaugurating the sound cinema in the city than any of the silent cinema venues.

With respect to *El gran Gabbo*, the second sound movie screened in Quito, this film was shown twice on only one day and only in one theater. The place in which *El gran Gabbo* was screened was not the opera theater, but rather one of the highbrow cinema venues in the city, the Edén.

The prices charged to see *El gran Gabbo*, the English-language sound film and the comedies screened with it, were lower than those charged for the premiere of the Spanish-language *Sombras de gloria*, as the stalls tickets were three sucres; children's tickets were 1.5 sucres, and the gallery tickets were eighty cents.⁵⁵⁰ In any case, the prices were lower, but not as low as the prices charged for the silent screenings. The prices were also probably lower due to the fact that the screenings were in the morning.

Sombras de gloria made a comeback just over one year later in late 1931.⁵⁵¹ The local press wrote about the success of the film's premiere the

549 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 10, 1930. See also advertisements for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 11, 12, 13, 14, 1930.

550 Advertisement for *El gran Gabbo*, *El Día*, September 7, 1930.

551 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, November 27, 1931.

previous year,⁵⁵² which made the local cinema company bring this picture back to the silver screen.⁵⁵³ This rerun premiere was very successful.⁵⁵⁴ During those days, this film was screened for the first time in Otavalo, a city in which the majority of the population was at the time, and still is, made up of indigenous Ecuadorian people. In fact, *Sombras de gloria* was the first sound film ever exhibited in that city. This film initiated the sound cinema period in Otavalo.⁵⁵⁵

Concerning the history of the Sucre Theater (1886) with moving images and in particular with the screening of moving images with recorded sound, two aspects deserve attention. First, this was not the first time that the old opera theater had presented screenings. Second, this was also not the first time that moving images with recorded sound had been screened there. Regarding the first point, the Sucre Theater was one of the first places to show cinema in the city. It was the main place in which moving images were shown from 1906 to 1914. Cinema screenings declined in this venue after the opening of the Variedades Theater (1914), the first purpose-built cinema in Quito, and the Sucre Theater only sporadically hosted cinema exhibitions.

Regarding the second aspect, as already mentioned, 1930 was not the first time that moving images with sound, and moreover with synchronized recorded sound, had been presented at the Sucre Theater, or even in Quito. The relation between the Sucre Theater, moving images and recorded sound in Quito dates back to 1908. It was during this year that the traveling exhibitor A. Casas⁵⁵⁶ screened the 'singing views' in the city as part of his repertoire, as already examined in Chapter 1.⁵⁵⁷

It is important to notice, however, that the way in which moving images with recorded sound arrived in Quito in the late 1920s and 1930s was very different to the way in which they arrived in the early 20th century. In 1908, when we witnessed the arrival of moving images with recorded sound, materiality preceded the discussion. Twenty years later,

552 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, November 25, 1931.

553 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, November 27, 1931.

554 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, November 28, 1931.

555 KETTY, "Noticias de Otavalo," *El Día*, December 14, 1931.

556 "Biógrafo," *El Comercio*, May 30, 1908.

557 "Teatro Gramo - Synchronisme Paris," *El Comercio*, June 4, 1908. The time span that has been researched so far in search of the screening of the 'singing views' begins in 1906 in *El Comercio*. Therefore, it is still unknown whether more of these films were screened in Quito in earlier years.

the discussion preceded the materiality of sound cinema. What happened during those twenty years between the first arrival and second arrival of sound cinema may be key to more deeply understanding the arrival of the accompaniment of recorded sound to moving images.

The First Sound Films' Schedule

In 1930, *Sombras de gloria* was shown sixteen times in eleven days in the four venues already mentioned. This is many more showings in comparison to *El gran Gabbo*, the second sound movie screened in Quito, which was shown only twice in one single day and only in one venue.⁵⁵⁸ The exhibition program of *El gran Gabbo* was accompanied by three other short sound films. This was basically the schedule of the first foreign sound films that were screened in Quito.

Although the screening of the first sound films did not alter the silent cinema schedule, there is one aspect regarding the screening of *El gran Gabbo* (1929) that deserves further explanation. First, the premiere of this film did not occur at the usual premiere showing that most first run movies used to be exhibited at during that period, at night. Rather, this film premiered in the morning. Second, this film did not debut on the usual day that first-run pictures used to be presented on in those days, that is, on Wednesdays or Fridays. Instead, *El gran Gabbo* debuted on a Sunday, which was uncommon. All in all, *El gran Gabbo* premiered unusually on a Sunday, and most of all in the morning.

To complete the strangeness of this is the fact that *El gran Gabbo* was a sound movie in English. That is, it was screened in English at a time with a mostly child audience. The public was informed that even though the dialogues of the film were in English, the plot could be read on the very same film in Spanish.⁵⁵⁹ In spite of this, it is difficult to conclude whether the film was subtitled or cut in captions were used. In addition to *El gran Gabbo*, the very same day, and as part of the program to complete the film, the local press mentioned that three more short sound films 'of very funny comedies' would also be screened. It was not mentioned, however, whether they had translations. Thus, in September 1930, two sound films were shown in addition to short three sound films.

558 Advertisement for *El gran Gabbo*, *El Día*, September 7, 1930. *El gran Gabbo* was shown at the Edén's vermouth at 10:30 and then at its matinées at 2:30 pm.

559 Advertisement for *El gran Gabbo*, *El Día*, September 7, 1930.

In addition to the difference of the venue, day and hour at which *Sombras de gloria* and *El gran Gabbo* were screened in September 1930, one of the biggest differences between these two films lies in the reception of these two moving pictures from the exhibitors' and critics' point of view. In relation to the first, unlike *Sombras de gloria*, the exhibitors immediately withdrew *El gran Gabbo* from the screening schedule. In fact, *El gran Gabbo* never came back to Quito until April 1933 when the period of this monograph ends. Regarding the reviewers of the film, they said nothing about *El gran Gabbo* despite the fact that its content was available in Spanish.

With respect to the modes of solving the language barriers posed by sound film, although only two sound films were shown in Quito in September 1930, it is important to highlight that with these two films brought two modes of translating sound moving pictures. First, multilingual production and second, 'titling,' as contemporaries called this way of translating the plot of the film. To end this part, I would like to mention that I will analyze the reception of the sounds of *Sombras de gloria* later as part of the lived space.

Although the reaction of the audience to the English-language productions and 'titling' of *El gran Gabbo* is unknown, since nothing is written in the local press on the reception of *El gran Gabbo*, the fact that the exhibitors did not continue showing this film due to a negative audience response to *El gran Gabbo* being in English cannot be disregarded. This would reveal that the fact that *Sombras de gloria* was in Spanish and *El gran Gabbo* in English made a big difference. Beyond the sound novelty, language mattered. The absence of comments on this movie can also be taken as part of the reception given to this film.

As a result, until this point, sound screenings did not alter the former silent film schedule; they were adapted to it.⁵⁶⁰ The schedule of the first sound films in 1930 differs completely from the sound films' schedule of 1933 when the first purpose-built cinema opened. Here we see a variation in the schedule of the screenings, and how the screening of sound films changed the former silent schedule. The schedule of the showings, however, was not established all of a sudden in 1933, neither was it only altered because of the opening of the new theater. Rather, it was a consequence of various

560 The only change registered in 1930 regarding the schedule screenings is the inclusion of a Sunday morning screening at 10:30 at the Popular Theater. The Vermouth in this theater targeted children and can be found in an advertisement in *El Día*, October 5, 1930. Ticket prices for the stalls were 50 cents, preference 20 cents, children 20 cents and the gallery 10 cents.

aspects that occurred during the three years for which the transition from silent to sound cinema lasted. This is the reason why I argue that in the case of the arrival of sound cinema, it is pivotal to distinguish between the very early phase when the breakthrough of this innovation occurred and the later years of the transition. Even though the transition in most cases lasted only a few years, from three to five depending on the country, the earlier stages of the transition cannot be viewed through the same lenses as the later ones. After the exhibition of these films came the screening of a local 'semi-sound' movie. This was followed by a year-long pause of sound screenings until August 1931.

Chapter 7 The First Ecuadorian 'Semi-Sound' Film

Local Production of a 'Semi-Sound' Film: *Guayaquil de mis amores* (1930)

The encounter with *Sombras de gloria* motivated Quito's inhabitants to screen their first local 'semi-sound' production, and one of the earliest sound films in South-America⁵⁶¹ and in the whole world. The convergence of several aspects in Quito allowed locals to give the film *Guayaquil de mis amores* the status of a sound film. For this to happen, four elements were necessary: the public discussion on sound cinema, the exhibition of the first sound film *Sombras de gloria* in the city, the recording of the song "Guayaquil de mis amores," and the production of the local silent film *Guayaquil de mis amores*.⁵⁶²

Recording the "Guayaquil de mis amores" song

In May 1930, the duet Ibáñez-Safadi gave a farewell concert at the Parisiana Theater in Guayaquil. The reason for the artists' leaving was no other than the fact that the famous Columbia Phonograph Company had hired them to produce recordings in the United States with Ecuadorian music. The following quote was part of the departure letter from the artists:

Soon to be leaving this beloved city (...) we would like to express in everybody's hearts our gratitude for the generous reception manifested toward our effort, which has been for us as a noble stimulus to reach the success that fills us with pride, and that belongs entirely to our generous public of Guayaquil.

We consider the strings of our guitars and the applause of our dear audience the most valued emblem and award.

561 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 20, 1930.

562 *Guayaquil de mis amores* (1930) premiered in Guayaquil on September 22, 1930. See for this information Rodríguez, "Causa interés el estreno de una película nacional," *El Comercio*, September 22, 1930. See also Rigel, "Estreno de una nueva película nacional en Guayaquil," *El Día*, September 21, 1930.

And we also take, in the most intimate part of our souls, the noble and sincere desire for an even bigger and sonorous applause in faraway lands for our beloved Ecuador.⁵⁶³

Part of the program presented by the artists that night in Guayaquil included several new pasillos, among them, the one titled “Guayaquil de mis amores:”

Second part

The beneficiaries will premiere the following pasillos:

1. Señorita Ecuador, written by Maquilón and Gandú, music by N. E. Safadi.
2. La Canción del Olvido, written by C. Maquilón Orellana, music by N. E. Safadi R.
3. Alma Herida, written by Carlos Alberto Flores, music by N. E. Safadi R.
4. Guayaquil de mis amores, written by Laura Dávila, music by N. E. Safadi. R.⁵⁶⁴

After this concert, the duet left for the United States. Months later, in September 1930, Quito’s press reported the release in the near future of new recordings including that of “Guayaquil de mis amores.”⁵⁶⁵

The announcement of the next arrival of the disc titled “Guayaquil de mis amores” coincided with the screening of the first sound film *Sombras de gloria* in Quito. Soon after this, Quito’s inhabitants heard that in Guayaquil, a film entitled *Guayaquil de mis amores*, that is, a silent film with the same title of the pasillo that debuted in May 1930, had just premiered in that city.⁵⁶⁶

Screening a ‘Semi-Sound’ Film: Guayaquil de mis amores (1930)

As a result, Quito inhabitants became aware of three events: they got to know about the upcoming “Guayaquil de mis amores” disc, the first sound film screening of *Sombras de gloria* was taking place in the city, and they learnt about the screening of the silent local production *Guayaquil de mis amores* in Guayaquil. One month after these events, on October 22, 1930,

563 “Despedida del dueto nacional Ibáñez-Safadi,” in advertisement, *El Comercio*, May 16, 1930.

564 “Despedida del dueto nacional Ibáñez-Safadi,” in advertisement, *El Comercio*, May 16, 1930.

565 Advertisement for Casa Columbia, *El Comercio*, September 5, 1930.

566 Rodríguez, “Proyección de la cinta nacional Gquil de mis amores,” *El Comercio*, September 20, 1930. This was *Guayaquil de mis amores* test screening in Guayaquil.

Quito's press reported that the "Guayaquil de mis amores" disc had arrived in the city.⁵⁶⁷

The arrival of records with the pasillo "Guayaquil de mis amores," the screening of *Sombras de gloria* and the information of the exhibition of the silent local production titled *Guayaquil de mis amores* led to the unexpected in Quito. These three elements led Quito's inhabitants to announce the exhibition of the first 'semi-sound' film titled *Guayaquil de mis amores* (1930). This film was promoted in the city as the first semi-sound film in Ecuador and in all South America (Fig. 14).⁵⁶⁸



Figure 14: "The Wonder of the Year - National blockbuster *Guayaquil de mis amores*. The first South-American semi-sound film sung by a duo from Quito and synchronized by an orchestra of 20 maestros."

At the time when *Guayaquil de mis amores* was advertised as a semi-sound film in Quito,⁵⁶⁹ Ecuador had no sound equipment to actually produce a talkie. Several countries in the world did not have it either. However, having read locals that one of the systems to screen sound films was Vitaphone, which was made up of "a special phonograph mechanically coupled to a projector,"⁵⁷⁰ something similar was done in Quito. Consequently, the screening of the silent movie *Guayaquil de mis amores* was combined with the just arrived Columbia disc that had been recorded by the two local singers.

Since the music from the record was not long enough to cover the entire film, *Guayaquil de mis amores* also included, as any other silent film, a 'synchronized' live musical accompaniment. In fact, the film unusually included three different ways of musical accompaniment:⁵⁷¹ First, the live

567 Advertisement for Columbia, *El Comercio*, October 22, 1930.

568 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 20, 1930.

569 "For historians the object named all too often possesses those who do the naming," Lucien Febvre, "How Jules Michelet invented the Renaissance," in *A New Kind of History and other essays*, ed. Peter Burke (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 258.

570 Buhler, Neumeyer, Deemer, *Hearing the Movies*, 285.

571 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 23, 1930.

singing by a duet, whose names had not yet been identified, the live music by an orchestra of twenty musicians,⁵⁷² and the music from the record. Simply put, to solve the problem that the song “Guayaquil de mis amores” was an ordinary contemporary disc and not a large recording of the Vitagraph system, the first semi-sound film had live musical accompaniment - orchestra and duet - in addition to the disc. It was for these reasons that *Guayaquil de mis amores* was not considered entirely a sound film, but a ‘semi-sound’ one, as only part of the moving images were covered by recorded sound and the rest by live music.

The interplay of these different aspects to screen the ‘first sung national production’ were also highlighted at the time, as it was mentioned that among the factors that contributed to the screening of *Guayaquil de mis amores* were the recording of the song in the USA under the direction of Feraud Guzmán, the live accompaniment of twenty musicians, and the singing of the Quiteño duet, in addition to the photography, plot and the direction of Francisco Diumenjo.⁵⁷³

The musical repertoire of the film included a variety of genres. The first song that accompanied the program was the “Sombras de gloria” march, in a frank allusion to the recently shown sound film in the city.⁵⁷⁴ This is also a clear example that the sounds of the first sound film that was screened in Quito continued reverberating in the city not in recordings, but at least live music. In addition to the march, the musical accompaniment of *Guayaquil de mis amores* included other rhythms such as one steps, pasillos, san juanes, waltzes, marches, tangoes, paso dobles, the charleston, and others. That is, *Guayaquil de mis amores* clearly included local and foreign music, as can be evidenced in the following advertisement (Fig. 15):⁵⁷⁵

572 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 20, 1930.

573 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 19, 1930.

574 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 25, 1930.

575 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores* and Columbia, *El Comercio*, October 25, 1930.

46368 (p. 96)

0074 EL COMERCIO QUITO. Sábado 25 de Octubre de 1930

F. JIJENJO
presenta
Guayaquil de mis amores
UNA SUPERPRODUCCION NACIONAL



HOY ES EL DIA TAN ESPERADO POR TODO QUITO EN QUE SE ESTRENA PARA ORGULLO DE LA NACION ENTERA LA PRIMERA SUPERPRODUCCION ECUATORIANA

a las 9 p. m.

Guayaquil de mis Amores

BELLISIMO DRAMA QUE AL TRAVES DE SU ARGUMENTO, LLENO DE ESCENAS UNAS DE AMOR, PASION Y TRAGEDIA Y OTRAS DE COMICIDAD INFINITA, NOS HACE APRENDER UNA LECCION DE VIDA

Paseos de 19 y arriba \$ 15.00
Paseos de Plata 12.00
Luzeta 5.00
Galeria 0.50

SEPARA SU LOCALIDAD A TIEMPO A FIN DE QUE NO FALTE AL ESTRENO

FRANCISCO JIJENJO
DIRECTOR, FOTOGRAFO Y AUTOR DE SU ARGUMENTO LA PRESENTARA PERSONALMENTE

UN DUETO QUITERO
CANTA "GUAYAQUIL DE MIS AMORES" Y OTRAS CANCIONES NACIONALES

LA ORQUESTA "QUITO"
LA SINCRONIZA CON EL PROGRAMA MUSICAL QUE CONTIENE ESTE DISCO

PROGRAMA MUSICAL

- 1 Sombrosa de Clerto—Marcha
- 2 Héroicos—Que Dios
- 3 Héroicos—Pallito
- 4 Polka, Roma—San Juan
- 5 Identificación—Valse
- 6 Sento de España—Marcha
- 7 Identificación—Tango
- 8 Un Adios—Pallito
- 9 Musica Sacra—Tango
- 10 American Legion—Falso Doble
- 11 Danzón—Que Dios
- 12 Danza Oriental—Danza
- 13 Sempere tan— Coplas piano
- 14 No te engañes corazón—Tango
- 15 No te engañes corazón—Charleston
- 16 Ocas—Charleston
- 17 Club de Héroicos—Valse

LA INTERPRETACION CORRE A CARGO DE
EVELINA ORELLANA, CARLOS LANDIN, ADOLFO ANTERARA, ISAIAS MANRIQUE, RICARDO NEUMANE, LIDIA VARGAS

LA PAREJA HEAD—GAYELLE Y SONIA DE CLAIRE

Que Quito ha admirado bailar en esta película, así como los bailarines Cubanos NOVQA—ECHEVERRIA

ADEMAS GRAN CANTIDAD DE EXTRAS

JUICIOS DE LA PRENSA PORTENA SOBRE LA PELICULA:
He quedado gratamente sorprendido por la bondad de la obra. Su gran variedad de motivos le asegura el éxito "EL TELEGRAFO"

Los asuntos típicos, montuños, están admirablemente adoptados. La interpretación y fotografía es un campañazo de alarma de lo que producirá el arte nacional "EL UNIVERSO"

LA EMPRESA
AFIRMA, POR SU PALABRA DE HONOR, QUE ESTA PELICULA NO SE PASARA EN NINGUN TEATRO DE QUITO

TEATRO SUCRE

DISCOS DE GRAN EXITO

CONSAGRADO COMO EL MEJOR DE LOS SAN JUANES



ACUDA HOY MISMO POR SU DISCO

PROXIMAMENTE



MUSICA DE EXCLUSIVIDAD "COLUMBIA" DE ACUERDO CON LA PELICULA GUAYAQUIL DE MIS AMORES QUE SE ESTRENA RA ESTA NOCHE

CASA COLUMBIA
Almacén de Música de J. D. FERAUD GUZMAN
Venezuela N° 68

ANDEAN TRADING Cia.
Distribuidores de la Columbia
Fonograph Cia.



Figure 15: Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores* and for Columbia

The production of *Guayaquil de mis amores* reveals to us the contemporaries' understanding of sound film until that point. For them, sound film meant the junction of moving images and any recorded sound such as music, dialogue or sound effects. In addition to this, contemporaries saw the matching of moving images to recorded sound as a necessary

condition: "The show held at Sucre Theater turned out to be pleasant due to both the images of the national film and the music, forming a synchronized set."⁵⁷⁶

Concerning the music of the film, I must highlight one particular aspect. The music of the film was not only disseminated by the live performance of musicians and the record; the music of the local semi-sound was also screened in text on the film as the following account shows:

Creole music, pasillos, popular tunes, in the tone of the following verse, which by chance we could read in one of the scenes of the production:

'I do not know how to chop onions
but I swear to the cross
that your clothes and mine
will be safe in my chest.⁵⁷⁷

Thus, in addition to the disc and the two kinds of live musical accompaniment, the film's music was also disseminated in written text on cinema, which is evidence that silent movies also disseminated music in this way. In addition to this, the song was also disseminated, as we can see from the previous advertisement in the local press.

Guayaquil de mis amores was composed of eight reels with a plot, and images of the coastal city of Guayaquil and the surrounding areas.⁵⁷⁸ The film premiered on September 22, 1930 in Guayaquil. *Guayaquil de mis amores* was filmed at the Zoraida farm, owned by Geo Chambers Vivero, Chief of the Fire Department.⁵⁷⁹ *Guayaquil de mis amores* exhibited aspects of Guayaquil's everyday life, such as moving images of the Vermouth screening at the Olmedo Theater, and of local horse races and bullfights:⁵⁸⁰

The film begins on a coastal farm, amid the exuberance of the nature of those fertile regions. Then, the views of Guayaquil with its social scenes can be seen and popular songs that reveal the atmosphere are heard as well. (...)

It is always pleasant to contemplate the things seen on the screen

576 "Guayaquil de mis amores," *El Comercio*, October 27, 1930.

577 "Una película nacional," *El Comercio*, October 19, 1930.

578 Rodríguez, "Proyección de la cinta nacional Gquil de mis amores," *El Comercio*, September 20, 1930.

579 "Una película nacional. Guayaquil de mis amores," *El Comercio*, October 19, 1930.

580 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 25, 1930.

that closely concern us, scenes that would be called part of tropical life, put together into a love story and the principles of the plot. *Guayaquil de mis amores* represents an advance in our cinematography, taken within an authentic frame.⁵⁸¹

The actors were Evelina Orellana, Carlos Landín, Adolfo Antepara, Isaías Manrique, Ricardo Neumane, and Lidia Vargas. The dancers Head and Gavelle and Sonia de Claire also appeared in the film. Head and Gavelle were a well-known dancer couple in Ecuador who had performed in Quito. Cuban dancers Novoa and Echeverría also appeared in the film. In addition, a large number of extras appeared in the movie.⁵⁸²

As is clear, the production of *Guayaquil de mis amores* allowed contemporaries to continue constructing their own identity, which is in tune with de Certeau's analysis of production since to the author production includes at the same time the production of oneself. Drawing on Lefebvre's analysis that materiality, in this case the movie, produces an accentuation of local particularities "by making use of them," I arrive at the same conclusion. That is, based on de Certeau and Lefebvre, it is possible to claim that the encounter with *Sombras de gloria*, which resulted in the production of *Guayaquil de mis amores*, led locals to continue building their own Equatorianity, with particular characteristics of their period. To Hall, the inclusion of new aspects in a human's identity occurs because identity is not something that is fixed:

... instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematizes the very authority and authenticity to which the term, 'cultural identity', lays claim.⁵⁸³

As is clear, identity is not something closed, but open, which changes throughout time:

Identity becomes a "movable feast": formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us (Hall, 1987).

581 "Guayaquil de mis amores," *El Comercio*, October 27, 1930.

582 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 25, 1930.

583 Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 222.

It is historically, not biologically, defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self.' Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identification is continuously being shifted about.⁵⁸⁴

To Hall, it is this characteristic of change what allows history to take place in the concept of identity, since new ways of understanding the world can be incorporated into people's identity. Furthermore, Hall finds the coexistence of various identities at the same time in different periods of time.⁵⁸⁵ To him in the late modern societies, the old identities of the past become articulated in the new ones.

Contrary to what I have found, for the authors of *Historia del cine en el Ecuador*, the movie *Guayaquil de mis amores* was not a sound film but rather an expression of the intentions of contemporaries in producing sound films.⁵⁸⁶ This fact leads to the authors of this book to affirm that Ecuador did not produce sound films in the early 1930s but rather in the late 1940s and early 1950s:

In this way we begin to point out the productions corresponding to the years of 1949-1950, when we had just started producing sound films. The delay seems to be obvious. The central figure again is Alberto Santana, now with the production company 'ECUADOR SONO FILMS', which now has 'NATIONAL SOUND FILMS' annexed to its letterhead. (...)

'SE CONOCIERON EN GUAYAQUIL' is this company's first movie. It is the first national sound film, (...)

The leading characters were Paco Villar and Carmen Rivas. The photography and technical direction (of course also in sound) was by Alberto Santana. (...) It premieres on December 23 of the same year at the Olmedo Theater and México Theater.⁵⁸⁷

The recognition of *Se conocieron en Guayaquil* as the first sound film made in Ecuador places in this way the production of the first sound film in Ecuador way behind that of other countries, including neighboring countries:

584 Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in *Modernity: an Introduction to Modern Societies*, eds. Stuart Hall et al. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 598.

585 Ibid., 559-600.

586 Vásquez et al., *Historia del cine en el Ecuador*, 122.

587 Ibid., 166-167.

... As soon as the 1930s began, it is possible that some Latin-American countries started producing sound films, for instance Mexico in 1931, Argentina and Chile in 1933, Uruguay in 1936, Venezuela in 1937, Colombia in 1938 and Ecuador with a delay in 1949; (...) ⁵⁸⁸

As already mentioned, *Guayaquil de mis amores* was not only an attempt to produce sound films in Ecuador, but rather contemporaries regarded it as the first 'semi-sound' film in the country's cinema history, at least in the case of Quito. This fact places Ecuador in a pioneering position in the production of sound films worldwide rather than being one of the last, as argued in the above-mentioned book. Just as in *Historia del cine en el Ecuador*, Wilma Granda in *Cine silente en Ecuador* also considers the late 1940s and early 1950s as a key period for sound cinema in Ecuador. Furthermore, the author sees the transition from silent to sound cinema as taking place during those years: "the 'difficult and problematic' transition from silent to sound took place in Ecuador in the late 1940s." ⁵⁸⁹

In *Historia del cine en el Ecuador*, just as with *Guayaquil de mis amores*, other contemporary films such as *La divina canción* (1931) and *Incendio* (1931) are seen by the authors as part of the attempts to produce sound films, ⁵⁹⁰ due to the live musical accompaniment provided by singers. To them, the inclusion of live singing combined with moving images ⁵⁹¹ is evidence that these movies were attempts to make sound films.

Even though *La divina canción* has been regarded by other scholars as one of the first films to have synchronized voice, ⁵⁹² this is unfortunately not mentioned in the Quito press. In fact, in the case of Quito, *La divina canción* (Fig. 16) ⁵⁹³ and *Incendio* were both regarded as silent films:

588 Ibid., 122.

589 Granda, *Cine silente en Ecuador*, 131.

590 Vázquez et al., *Historia del cine en el Ecuador*, 130-132.

591 Ibid., 130. "The musical element is the link between the previous production, "GUAYAQUIL DE MIS AMORES" and this one, "LA DIVINA CANCION". The presence of today's most prestigious singers is evidence of the search for a resource of expression that helps capture the taste of the public. It was, as in the whole world in general, the immediate possibility of capturing sound, or, as in our case, at least of imitating it, through lip-synching."

592 Ulises Estrella, "El cine que entonó Gardel," *Al tresma desde la Mitad del Mundo*, November 1990, 31.

593 Advertisement for *La divina canción*, *El Día*, May 26, 1931.



Figure 16: Advertisement for *La divina canción*

The film *Incendio*, according to the local press, was also a silent film, since its showing was accompanied by an orchestra.⁵⁹⁴

In conclusion, during this period, for identification of one another, the connection between the song “Guayaquil de mis amores,” which belongs to the musical genre of pasillo, to two kinds of technology was crucial: films and records. This was not the first time that this musical genre was connected to discs, but apparently it was the first time that pasillo was linked to films in Quito. This, however, should be further investigated. Moreover, drawing on de Certau’s concept of appropriation, which to the author is the production of something similar but not the same, it is evident that the appropriation of *Sombras de gloria* in Quito was also manifested in the production of *Guayaquil de mis amores*.

Just as *Sombras de gloria*, *Guayaquil de mis amores* premiered at the old opera theater and not in any of the four cinema venues in Quito. However, unlike the first talkies, this local semi-sound was not shown in any of the cinemas in the city, but only in the opera theater.

The fact that *Guayaquil de mis amores* (1930) was called a ‘semi-sound’ film in Quito does not mean that this was also recognized as such in the rest of the country, for instance, in the port of Guayaquil. In fact, it is possible that this movie, produced as a silent, was referred to as a silent in Guayaquil despite the film being partly screened in synchronization with a disc in that city.⁵⁹⁵ This can be inferred from the local Quito newspapers, which do not refer to the exhibitions of this movie as sound screenings

594 Advertisement for *Incendio*, *El Día*, August 5, 1931.

595 Hugo Delgado Cepeda, “¡Ecuador hizo cine en 1922!,” *Ariel*, November 24, 1981, 76.

in that city. A second piece of evidence that *Guayaquil de mis amores* was probably not regarded as a sound film in Guayaquil is that this film was not referred to as a sound movie by scholars who had worked with primary sources of the film that were published in Guayaquil.⁵⁹⁶ However, this should be confirmed in Guayaquil's contemporary newspapers. The film *Guayaquil de mis amores* thus reveals the difference between production and exhibition as well as between production and consumption.

Venue and Schedule of the Semi-Sound film

Guayaquil de mis amores premiered in Quito in October 25, 1930. The film was not shown in any of the purpose-built cinemas in the city, as planned: "The company asserts that, to honor its word, this film will not be shown in other theaters in Quito."⁵⁹⁷ By this, the company in charge of the screening of the film, which is not revealed in the sources, meant that this moving picture would only be shown at the Sucre Theater, the opera venue. The motivations for this action were not stated. Local reviewers regarded the film as an improvement of local cinematography.⁵⁹⁸

Guayaquil de mis amores was screened only twice in Quito, a test screening and the premiere.⁵⁹⁹ The situation differed in Guayaquil, where the film was screened for five consecutive nights at the Edén Theater, and all of the screenings were full. There, the ticket prices were gradually reduced over the days.⁶⁰⁰

Memory and Written Records: Silent or Semi-Sound?

It is clear that those who were behind the screening of *Guayaquil de mis amores* in Quito wanted this movie to be remembered as the first Ecuadorian semi-sound film. In addition to even calling this technological innovation 'semi-sound,' two more aspects show that contemporaries wanted this film to be remembered as a sound film more than a silent one: contemporaries musicalized *Guayaquil de mis amores* with a record, and they included the march "Sombras de gloria", music of the first sound film shown in Quito, as part of the extensive musical program of *Guayaquil de mis amores*.⁶⁰¹

596 Vázquez et al., *Cronología de la cultura cinematográfica (1849-1986)*, 123-124.

597 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 25, 1930.

598 "Guayaquil de mis amores," *El Comercio*, October 27, 1930.

599 "Guayaquil de mis amores," *El Comercio*, October 27, 1930.

600 Rodríguez, "Estreno de una película filmada por Ernesto Vilches," *El Comercio*, September 26, 1930.

601 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 24, 1930.

However, in spite of their efforts, surprisingly *Guayaquil de mis amores* has not been recognized as the first sound film in Ecuador. In fact, this movie has mostly been remembered as a silent film.

Two illuminating aspects in respect to why *Guayaquil de mis amores* has not been considered by film scholars in Ecuador as the first sound film are the lack of research of contemporary newspapers in relation to this film, and second, the influence of the memories of one of the leading actresses of *Guayaquil de mis amores*. Regarding the second aspect, fifty years after the release of *Guayaquil de mis amores*, Evelina Orellana, one of the main characters, described the film as silent in an interview she gave to a magazine in the early 1980s.⁶⁰² She regarded *Guayaquil de mis amores* as a silent movie even though she remembered that the film was synchronized in Guayaquil with the record of “Guayaquil de mis amores”⁶⁰³ and the live performance of the duet Ibáñez-Safadi, who sang this song behind the theater curtain. This alerts us to the possibility that the film was indeed not regarded as a sound film in Guayaquil. All this of course would need more investigation of the newspapers of the port city.

The fact that Orellana remembers the film as a silent raises a question. To what extent can memory be regarded as the only evidence of the past? Thus, to what extent had the context in which Orellana was living in the 1980s influenced her memories of the film *Guayaquil de mis amores* and the early 1930s? In other words, to what extent do new experiences of a different temporality make people see the past from a new perspective.

Another point of contradiction between memory and the written documents of this case can be evidenced in relation to the producers of the film. According to contemporary written sources, the film was produced by the Diumenjo company.⁶⁰⁴ This information contradicts the statement made by Orellana, years later in the early 1980s, when she claimed the film was made by the Ecuador Sono Films and directed by the Chilean, Alberto Santana. However, in other aspects, Orellana’s interview coincides with the contemporary information regarding the film; for instance, the fact that the Argentinian Francisco Diumenjo was the cameraman. However, according Orellana, Diumenjo also wrote the script.⁶⁰⁵ Contemporary sources of the 1930s mention Diumenjo as being the director, operator (cameraman) and

602 Delgado, “¡Ecuador hizo cine en 1922!,” 74-76.

603 Ibid., 76.

604 RIGEL, “Estreno de una nueva película nacional en Guayaquil,” *El Día*, September 21, 1930.

605 Delgado, “¡Ecuador hizo cine en 1922!,” 76.

entrepreneur of *Guayaquil de mis amores*.⁶⁰⁶ The film was also said to be an adaptation of José Antonio Campos' "Cosas de mi tierra."⁶⁰⁷ In the 1980s, Orellana also remembered this film as a national film.⁶⁰⁸

It should also be highlighted that, according to Orellana, the duet Ibáñez-Safadi sang in Guayaquil to accompany the film, which differs from the case of Quito since the duet who sang in this city was from Quito and is still unknown.

At the same time that *Guayaquil de mis amores* was being screened in Guayaquil, Ernesto Vilches' talkie, possibly *Cascarrabias* (1930), was expected to premiere at the Olmedo Theater.⁶⁰⁹ The tickets for this film cost four sucres for the stalls and one sucre for the gallery. *Guayaquil de mis amores* continued being screened at the Edén Theater in that city. The tickets for this film were two sucres for the stalls and fifty cents for the gallery, or half the price of Vilches' sound film. Since this aspect is beyond the geographical area of my research, I will not examine how those two films were received there.

The Influence of Music and Film: 'Guayaquil de mis amores'

Guayaquil de mis amores, in addition to being the first semi-sound movie, could be regarded as the first example of an Ecuadorian film promoted by a local song. This seems plausible, since the music of the film, the pasillo "Guayaquil de mis amores," was introduced earlier than the movie. In fact, as already mentioned, the song was presented live earlier in 1930 in Guayaquil and was immediately discussed by the press of Quito. A sample of the disc had already arrived in Quito in early September 1930. In relation to this song in recording, a sample of the disc had arrived in Quito already in early September 1930,⁶¹⁰ but the live presentation of the song in Guayaquil occurred earlier that year.

In addition to this, it is clear that the fame of the "Guayaquil de mis amores" pasillo was boosted by the screening of a film under the same title. Would this pasillo have become so famous as only a disc? Possibly not, since this was not the first pasillo to be recorded by Columbia and arrive

606 "Una película nacional. Guayaquil de mis amores," *El Comercio*, October 19, 1930.

607 RIGEL, "Estreno de una nueva película nacional en Guayaquil," *El Día*, September 21, 1930.

608 Delgado, "¡Ecuador hizo cine en 1922!," 76.

609 Rodríguez, "Estreno de una película filmada por Ernesto Vilches," *El Comercio*, September 26, 1930.

610 Advertisement for Columbia, *El Comercio*, September 5, 1930.

in the city on disc. An example of another is the “Horas de dolor” pasillo, which was also recorded in November 1929.⁶¹¹ This pasillo was written by C. Maquilon Orellana, and the music was by Nicasio Safadi. Therefore, it was not the disc that made the “Guayaquil de mis amores” pasillo special: It would probably not have become so famous without the film under its title.

This cooperation between songs and films is not exclusive to Ecuador. In those times in the United States, previously disseminated songs were linked to films, and films already released were connected to songs in order to guarantee the success of the song or the film. I will explain this in the coming paragraphs. Since in Ecuador at that time, the radio was just making its entrance, and newspapers and in general the trade press were used to promoting songs.

Sombras de gloria and Guayaquil de mis amores as Disseminators of Songs

While there is no evidence that the music of *Sombras de gloria* circulated in the city before the exhibition of the movie, the local film *Guayaquil de mis amores* was preceded by the live presentation of the pasillo “Guayaquil de mis amores” in Guayaquil and also by the song disc. In spite of this difference, both films worked well as disseminators of songs in Quito. As we have seen, the march “Sombras de gloria” was reproduced by local musicians in different live performances. Regarding the music of *Guayaquil de mis amores*, the local pasillo continued reverberating in the city via live musicians as well as in a recorded format.

With the exception of *Guayaquil de mis amores*, which was a local production, it is clear that in 1930, based on the two foreign sound films that were shown in Quito, songs did not open the way for the introduction of sound films, but rather sound film became a platform for the dissemination of songs from the very beginning of the advent of sound screenings in the city. For example, in the case of *Sombras de gloria*, the songs of the film were promoted through local advertisements two days after *Sombras de gloria*'s debut. The songs advertised were “Bienvenidos,” “Arullo militar,” “Oh, París,” “Si la vida te sonríe,” “Canoe” and “Roja rosa de amor.”⁶¹²

That the songs of *Sombras de gloria* continued being played after the film's exhibitions can be evidenced by the fact that later, the “Sombras

611 Advertisement for Columbia, *El Comercio*, November 4, 1929.

612 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 5, 1930.

de gloria” march was included in the musical repertoire of the local film *Guayaquil de mis amores*. In addition, the music of *Sombras de gloria* was played in the inaugural session of the bullfights in Quito.⁶¹³ As we can see, live orchestras also played a crucial role in keeping live sound cinema in people’s minds.

El gran Gabbo, the second sound film shown in the city, was also not preceded by reference to a particular theme song of the film, so there is little to comment on this.

Examples of sound cinema being used as a platform to disseminate music can also be found in other places in the late 1920s and early 1930s. According to Richard Barrios, songs had already been part of films in different ways even before the advent of sound cinema.⁶¹⁴ However, a turning point in the history of music and the film industry occurred when both songs and films became intertwined in a different way to previously. This key moment happened when two Dolores del Río’s characters became titles of hit songs. The tune “Charmaine” became popular, because its success had been predetermined by the Broadway hit *Glory* and by del Río’s character in *What Price Glory* (1926). As for “Ramona,” this song had been disseminated through radio, dances and cover recordings before the premiere of the film *Ramona* (1928). The way in which this film was introduced ensured it was a hit.⁶¹⁵ In spite of this, with respect to the advent of early sound cinema, according to Barrios, the arrival of movie musicals showed that hit songs could come out of movie houses. Other studios followed this idea. As a consequence of this, in the first two years of the talkies, Hollywood produced a large number of songs.⁶¹⁶

From Barrios’ analysis of the songs “Charmaine” and “Ramona,” two aspects are clear. In the late 1920s, movie characters inspired the production of songs like “Charmaine,” and songs were first introduced in different ways in order to secure the success of a movie in the United States, as in the case of “Ramona.” In the case of *Ramona*, the film: “... one would have had to live on Neptune not to know that song. It was everywhere – radio, dances, countless cover recordings – and by general acknowledgment made a hit out of a so-so movie.”⁶¹⁷ In other words, the “Ramona” song had

613 “Tardes bailables en el hipódromo de Quito,” *El Comercio*, Octubre 15, 1930.

614 Richard Barrios, *A Song in the Dark: The Birth of the Musical Film*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 101-102.

615 Ibid., 102.

616 Ibid., 103.

617 Ibid., 102.

been disseminated through other means before the premiere of the film, paving the way for it to become a hit.

In the case of Quito, it is clear that in 1930, something similar to the case of “Ramona” in the United States occurred in the case of the local ‘semi-sound’ film *Guayaquil de mis amores*, as the film was preceded by a song that was disseminated by live performances and a record. So, why this did not happen with the film *Sombras de gloria*? The songs of *Sombras de gloria* were not disseminated prior to the screening of the film in 1930 due to two reasons. First, the diffusion of a particular song of the film through discs would have required a systematic and effective way of bringing records to the city in a short period of time. Due to the precariousness of transportation to Quito, this was not possible at the time. Second, the songs of *Sombras de gloria* could not be promoted through live shows in the city because they were scarce in those days, and promoting these songs in advance would have had to match the arrival of the sound film. In short, it is hard to believe that it would have been possible to disseminate *Sombras de gloria*’s songs in advance in Quito, as it had been in the United States.

In spite of this, contemporaries may possibly have heard the songs of the film on the radio, because at the time, even though there was only one radio station in Quito and radio sets were not widespread items in the city, those who had radio sets could listen to foreign programs such as those from the United States. The local press, however, does not mention whether *Sombras de gloria*’s music was known by locals before the screening of the film.

This technological context, highly tied to the geographical location of Quito, forced cinema exhibitors to find different ways to promote sound cinema. Unlike the United States and other countries in the world, where the sounds of sound cinema were promoted using other sound technologies for that purpose, in Quito the songs of the sound films were endorsed by using a silent source, the newspaper. Therefore, the main source for advertising the songs of sound cinema was the written media.

In 1930, *Sombras de gloria* was not previously disseminated via songs through different sound technologies or even through the dailies; the film itself became a disseminator of music in the city after the first screenings. In 1931, two aspects shifted in comparison to 1930: exhibitors promoted the songs of sound films through the newspapers prior to their screening, and

this became the year when musicals were first shown.⁶¹⁸

As for the first aspect of promoting songs prior to film screenings, this, as we have seen, was non-existent as a practice in 1930 and was still almost non-existent in 1931, but a few films used this method in 1931. *La revista Fox follies* (*Fox Movietone Follies of 1929, 1929*), *Galas de la Paramount* (1930), *El pagano* (*The Pagan, 1929*), *Sombras de gloria*, *La canción del gitano* (*The Rogue Song, 1930*) and *La revista de Hollywood* (*The Hollywood Revue of 1929, 1929*) were films whose imbedded songs were highlighted in the press to entice the audience. For *La revista Fox follies*, the public was invited to listen to “That’s You Baby,” “Walking with Susie,” “Breakaway,” and “Por qué no seré como tú.”⁶¹⁹ For *Galas de la Paramount*, Maurice Chevalier’s song “Los tejados de la luna” was presented as an international hit song in an international review published by a local reviewer.⁶²⁰ “La canción del gondolero”⁶²¹ and “La tempestad,”⁶²² interpreted by Nino Martini and Juan Pulido, respectively, were also promoted. *El pagano*’s song “Amor pagano” by Ramón Novarro was promoted through the local press.⁶²³ *El pagano* “allowed film audiences to hear Novarro’s voice for the first time—singing “The Pagan Love Song” on the sound track.”⁶²⁴ As for *Sombras de gloria*, unlike its first run, there were various songs promoted through local cinema advertisements previous to its second rerun. *La canción del gitano* Lawrence Tibbett’s songs “Vivir y amar,” “Cuando te estoy mirando,” “Palomita blanca,” and “La canción del gitano” were advertised in advance.⁶²⁵ The only song that was actually promoted for *La revista de Hollywood* was Charles King’s “Madre nuestra” or in English “Your Mother

618 In 1931, in addition to *El desfile del amor* (*The Love Parade, 1929*), other films of this genre were also screened: *Monte Carlo* (*Monte Carlo, 1930*), *La danza de la vida* (*The Dance of Life, 1929*), *La revista Fox Follies* (*Fox Movietone Follies of 1929, 1929*), *Dulcísima* (*Sweetie, 1929*), *Galas de la Paramount* (1930), *La canción del Gitano* (*The Rogue Song, 1930*), *La revista de Hollywood* (*The Hollywood Revue of 1929, 1929*)

619 Advertisement for *La revista Fox follies*, *El Día*, September 17, 1931.

620 W.L., “Quito en vísperas de un acontecimiento artístico,” *El Día*, November 4, 1931.

621 Advertisement for *Galas de la Paramount*, *El Día*, November 6, 1931.

622 W.L., “Galas de la Paramount,” *El Día*, November 6, 1931.

623 Advertisement, *El Día*, November 18, 1931. See also advertisement, *El Día*, November 21, 1931. Novarro’s transition to sound cinema was already commented in local press in early 1931 by Miguel de Zarraga, well before the actor’s sound films were screened in the city. It was mentioned that his first sound performances were in English. Then, the actor erupted into the Spanish filmmaking through *Sevilla de mis amores*, making it possible to hear him also singing in Spanish, his mother tongue. See Miguel de Zarraga, “Ramón Novarro en su *Sevilla de mis amores*,” *El Comercio*, January 11, 1931.

624 André Soares, *Beyond Paradise: The Life of Ramon Novarro*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2002), 146.

625 Advertisement for *La canción del gitano*, *El Día*, December 3, 1931.

and Mine.” The rest of the advertisement highlighted the actors who sang the songs more than the songs themselves.⁶²⁶

In 1931, it was claimed that the voice of La Argentinita, which was screened in *Galas de la Paramount*, was not unfamiliar to the audiences in Quito. It was mentioned that her voice had been recorded on discs and the author implies that for this reason her voice had already circulated. However, this does not mean that a particular song of those discs was linked to the film *Galas de la Paramount*. But it is interesting to see how artists' voices were promoted in cooperation between discs and films:

We begin with Ernesto Vilches, a figure well known by the public of this very noble and very loyal city of San Francisco de Quito. La Argentinita cannot be unknown either, since her harmonious and delicate voice has been recorded on discs.⁶²⁷

In 1932, there are also examples of films whose songs were disseminated in the local press prior to their premiere. This was the case with *El sueño que yo viví* (*Sunny Side Up*, 1929), starring Janet Gaynor, considered one of Fox's most important resources in 1933 when the studio was in financial troubles.⁶²⁸ This film is also regarded as one of the films with which the former silent film star Janet Gaynor managed to make the transition successfully through to sound film:⁶²⁹ "... JANET GAYNOR singing, alongside the handsome CHARLES FARREL, the widely known song "Sunny Side Up." (...)"⁶³⁰

This quote raises two points. First, as already mentioned, it is proof that the song was promoted in the local press right before the screening of the film. Second, it also shows that the film's song was already known by the public, which means that in 1932 the dissemination of particular songs from sound films were circulating in the city prior to the screening of the sound films, even though this was not a practice per se. By this year, the circulation of songs prior to the screening of sound films could have been bigger for two things. First, several sound films were introduced to the city years later than they were in the United States, when some records probably

626 Advertisement for *La revista de Hollywood*, *El Día*, December 10, 1931.

627 W.L., "Galas de la Paramount," *El Día*, November 6, 1931.

628 Frank W. D. Ries, "Sammy Lee: The Hollywood Career," *Dance Chronicle* 11, no. 2 (1988): 174-175.

629 James Wierzbicki, "The Hollywood Career of Gershwin's *Second Rhapsody*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60, no. 1 (2007), 135.

630 Advertisement for *El sueño que yo viví*, *El Día*, May 3, 1932. The film premiered on this day.

reached the city far before the screening of the sound films. Second, the city was more technological than in 1930. In spite of this, I have little evidence that the dissemination of a film was preceded by the release of a song to a large extent in Quito.

It could also be possible that by 1932 the practice from 1930 had changed because exhibitors had noticed that sound films were great disseminators of music and they tried to convince music importers and distributors to bring particular songs of certain films to disseminate them in the city prior to the screenings.

This quote can also be understood as a way of promoting songs by mentioning that audiences would hear [at last] the famous song of *El sueño que yo viví*. In this case, this would not indicate that the song of the film was already heard in the city, but that people had heard of it, for instance, through newspapers. Further research should be conducted in the musica field that circulated in the city through records. Whether this particular case of *El sueño que yo viví* was different is something to be studied in more details. From these two cases, the important conclusion is that sound films disseminated songs prior to screenings. Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell were considered one of the musical acting teams of the time, and De Sylva, Brown and Henderson composed three hits for their film: the first one was that of the film title, the second was "I'm a dreamer (Aren't We All)", and the third one, "If I Had a Talking Picture of You."⁶³¹

In addition, this example may also be a sign of the strong influence of the guidelines of advertisements from abroad on the local cinema advertisements. Exhibitors also adapted the information of these guidelines to the context in Quito. For instance, in the case of *Casados en Hollywood* (*Married in Hollywood*, 1929), *The New York Times* mentioned that:

... an audible pictorial adaptation of Oscar Straus's tuneful operetta with additional music by Dave Stamper and Arthur Kay, [that] has the distinction of being the first screen translation of a superior type of musical composition that has not been presented in this country.⁶³²

The above-mentioned aspects were underlined in *The New York Times*,

631 Arnold Shaw, *Jazz Age: Popular Music in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 218.

632 "NOTES FROM STUDIOS AND THEATRES," *New York Times* (1925-Current File) February 9, 1930.

but in the case of Quito,⁶³³ three years later, the local press highlighted exactly the same features and other aspects regarding the music of that film. Among these, as mentioned before, was the remark that the “Bailando la noche entera” waltz, promoted as the sensation of that particular film directed by Marcel Silver, would be a sensation in the city and would be played all around Quito. In other words, this musical was going to disseminate a particular song in the city.

The liberty that exhibitors took at the moment of advertising a film even though they were movies shown long ago in the United States can also be evidenced in the case of *El Dandy (Puttin' On the Ritz, 1930)*, which was a 1930 production shown in Quito in 1932. In spite of this, it is clear that exhibitors promoted the songs as if they were current:

... And in which, the charismatic chansonnier is introduced for the first time in Quito, idolized on stages of New York, the spectacular sensation of Europe and America: HARRY RICHMAN, singing the sweetest and most passionate trendy songs, (...) ⁶³⁴

Casados en Hollywood is another example from 1932 of when songs were disseminated by sound films not prior to, but after their first screenings:

... Beautiful songs by famous singers; the lovely waltz of this operetta: ‘Bailando la Noche Entera’, is the sensation of this film that will cause frenzy in Quito and that will be played everywhere. All the music and songs of this operetta are recorded on the same film by the cutting-edge Movietone system. ⁶³⁵

The same was true for *Salga de la cocina* (1931):

... The novice actors make of this rejoiced sound film a work that can be watched and heard with most pleasure, with singing performances aimed and meant to be popularized in every Spanish-speaking country. ⁶³⁶

In addition to the above-mentioned, 1932 was the year in which music and films became unusually intertwined in local advertisements.

633 Advertisement for *Casados en Hollywood*, *El Día*, April 23, 1932.

634 Advertisement for *El Dandy*, *El Día*, June 24, 1932. The film premiered in Quito on this day.

635 Advertisement for *Casados en Hollywood*, *El Día*, April 25, 1932; see also advertisement for this film in *El Día*, April 26, 1932.

636 Advertisement for *Salga de la cocina*, *El Día*, March 13, 1932.

Luces de Buenos Aires (1931) was the first foreign sound film that promoted a song prior to the screening of the sound film, but it also promoted a song for the first time by fully quoting its lyrics and not only its title (Fig. 17).⁶³⁷ This song was the tango “Tomo y obligo” interpreted by Carlos Gardel:



Figure 17: Advertisement for *Luces de Buenos Aires*

This way of disseminating a song to moviegoers can be regarded as the equivalent of releasing the film’s song prior to its premiere in order to entice moviegoers. That is, this was the moment when sound cinema clearly served as a platform to introduce songs in the city prior to their screening. Additionally, at the same time, this was the first time when the entire lyrics of a song were disseminated to promote a sound film, but in this case, the dissemination occurred through the newspaper; that is, the situation adjusted to the technological context in Quito.

This case raises the question as to whether this could be paralleled to the case of *Ramona* in the United States, but instead of two sound technologies helping each other and promoting one another, in Quito, a printed medium helped promote the song of a sound medium.

Luces de Buenos Aires premiered on October 9, 1932, in Quito. The advertisement pointed out that this was the first time that Carlos Gardel was introduced to the public in Quito. In spite of this, he was presented as the ‘King of the Sentimental Tango.’⁶³⁸ Was this the first time that Carlos Gardel had been heard in Quito? This I am unable to answer at this time.

637 Advertisement for *Luces de Buenos Aires*, *El Día*, October 9, 1932.

638 Advertisement for *Luces de Buenos Aires*, *El Día*, October 9, 1932.

The portrayal of Gardel by *El Día* as the ‘King’ of this music was based on two facts: first, the screening that they had attended to; and second, based on the authoritative opinion of *La Prensa* of Buenos Aires, once again showing the influence of the newspaper.⁶³⁹ Note that in addition to being the vehicle of Argentinian sentimentality, Gardel’s sound film was promoted as singing to the entire Hispano-American ‘race’:

Carlitos Gardel, the exquisite interpreter of the sentimentality of ‘gauchos’, singing the most passionate slum tangoes... Sofía Bozán and Gloria Guzmán, the Argentinian soul that sings... The glorious film that is a hymn to the Hispanic-American race.⁶⁴⁰

This added a sentimental value to the region to the Spanish-speaking world of the Spanish-speaking community in the area. In other words, the image portrayed around the sound film *Luces de Buenos Aires* can be seen as crucial to understanding Latins in terms of lovers.

By October 13, four days later, the film had been screened nine times with filled screenings.⁶⁴¹ By October 22, the film had been shown twenty-two times with full venues.⁶⁴² In October 23, the Sucre Theater hosted an event in which, in addition to a comedy play, the audience could hear the tangos that appeared in the film *Luces de Buenos Aires*.⁶⁴³

By October 24, 1932, *Luces de Buenos Aires*, Gardel’s first film for Paramount⁶⁴⁴ in Joinville, the studio “where Carlos Gardel would move from the stage to the screen,”⁶⁴⁵ had been shown thirty times in Quito.⁶⁴⁶ The following day, this number increased to thirty-one exhibitions. According to the advertisement, the number of exhibitions of the film in Quito showed it was the season’s most successful film in the city.⁶⁴⁷ The success of *Luces de Buenos Aires* is not an isolated event because this film “was also a success throughout the Spanish-speaking world, from Barcelona to

639 Advertisement for *Luces de Buenos Aires*, *El Día*, October 9, 1932.

640 Advertisement for *Luces de Buenos Aires*, *El Día*, October 8, 1932.

641 Advertisement for *Luces de Buenos Aires*, *El Día*, October 13, 1932.

642 Advertisement for *Luces de Buenos Aires*, *El Día*, October 22, 1932.

643 Advertisement for *Teatro Sucre*, *El Comercio*, October 23, 1932.

644 Rielle Navitski, “The Tango on Broadway: Carlos Gardel’s International Stardom and The Transition to Sound in Argentina,” *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 1 (2011): 29

645 Nicolas Poppe, “Made in Joinville: Transnational Identitary Aesthetics In Carlos Gardel’s Early Paramount Films,” *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies: Travesía* 21, no. 4 (2013): 482.

646 Advertisement for *Luces de Buenos Aires*, *El Día*, October 24, 1932.

647 Advertisement for *Luces de Buenos Aires*, *El Día*, November 17, 1932.

New York to Guatemala City.”⁶⁴⁸

The feeling of Hispano-Americanism was at least intensified through identification with Gardel’s tango singing, although tangoes in general had already been heard in the city before Gardel. A quick look at the presence of this music in Quito reveals that even in 1914, the tango had already reached the city. When the tango began to be heard in Quito is a question I cannot answer, since it extends beyond my research focus.

In addition to this, it should be highlighted that until this point, diverse forms of art had been used to promote sound cinema, because besides music, poetry was also used to promote sound films. This can be seen in the promotion of the Spanish-language production, *Hombres de mi vida* (1932):⁶⁴⁹

Daring men came to me,
Awake was their sense and burning their phrases,
With the hypocrisy of lied affairs,
The same in every aspect, all alike
And all fallacious...

Consequently, it is clear that not only music, but another art form, such as poetry was used to promote sound cinema, another art. In this period, sound cinema was even recognized by contemporaries as comprising several arts:

And thus, ‘Mute Art’ comprises all arts today. Music: the best composers write music for cinema; literature: good authors write the plots and conduct the dialogues, and they are followed by singers, illustrators, scenarists, photographers and good painters. If we add to this the wideness that outdoor scenes especially have on the screen, which show us the beauties of nature exhibited in all its splendor, even with its own color and the art it implies, we are much more convinced that cinema is today ‘THE ART OF ARTS’.⁶⁵⁰

In fact, far from considering that sound cinema had killed off theatrical artists, sound cinema was discussed as an art that had taken these

648 Simon Collier, *The Life, Music, and Times of Carlos Gardel*, (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P., 1986), 183 in Nicolas Poppe, “Made in Joinville,” 484.

649 Advertisement for *Hombre de mi vida*, *El Día*, December 9, 1932.

650 Laura Galaviz, “El arte de artes,” *Espirales*, March 1930.

artists into account:

Mute art or the art of the screen, as still two years ago we used to refer to this spectacle, seemed to have been born only for us to see movements and gesticulations, without us imagining that one day it would surprise us so much. But then one day the portrayed figures on the screen started to talk, and their voices, their laughter, their tears, the music and all their sounds could be heard. (...), and then, far from overthrowing the artists of theater, cinema has summoned thousands and thousands of them, and they have enlisted in their ranks and with all their talent, they have demonstrated to us all that cinema gained upon breaking its silence, and all that we, the ones who can appreciate it, have won as well.⁶⁵¹

In conclusion, even though the technological context of Quito made it difficult for exhibitors to disseminate a particular song before the premiere of the film through other sound technologies, this did not prevent them doing it with the elements they had at their disposal, which in this case was newspapers.

Furthermore, it can be stated that sound cinema was a medium that offered up-to-date music to contemporaries and, in general, just music. Sound cinema was also used in this way in the United States when the introduction of sound cinema was taking place. According to Katherine Spring, “sound cinema brought new commercial appeal to the film medium by introducing new songs to mass audiences, and it rivaled radio, Broadway, and the vaudeville stage as the country’s most important platform for popular music.”⁶⁵² The difference between the United States and Quito was that in the United States, certain music could be heard through other means such as Broadway, records and the radio, whereas in Quito, this was not the case.

Music was one of the main attractions in a city like Quito, as Quiteños could rarely get foreign artists to the city or travel to see them perform. This was a different experience to that which records, for instance, offered. Radio offered those who owned radio sets the possibility to listen to music, but these were not so many. Thus, this is what sound cinema meant for contemporaries in Quito in its early phase.

651 Laura Galaviz, “El arte de artes,” *Espirales*, March 1930.

652 Katherine Spring, *Saying It With Songs: Popular Music and The Coming of Sound to Hollywood Cinema*, (New York: Oxford, 2013), 2.

The Role of Sound Technologies in the Construction of Identity

The encounter of the city's audience with *Sombras de gloria* provoked the almost immediate screening of the first Ecuadorian 'semi-sound' film, *Guayaquil de mis amores* (1930), which soon came to be regarded as a national film:⁶⁵³ "The show held at the Sucre Theater turned out pleasantly due to both the images of the national film and the music, forming a synchronized combination."⁶⁵⁴ In other words, *Guayaquil de mis amores* played a crucial role in the emergence of communal feelings of nationalism (Fig. 18).⁶⁵⁵ In addition to this, the film *Guayaquil de mis amores* can be regarded as an example of what Kristin Thompson regards as the "nationalistic approaches to production resurfaced to a considerable extent" in part of the world by the arrival of sound cinema.⁶⁵⁶



Figure 18: Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*

653 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 25, 1930. *Guayaquil de mis amores* premiered in October 25, 1930 in Quito. The emphasis on nationalism in relation to this film can be also seen in its advertisement, *El Comercio*, October 24, 1930.

654 "Guayaquil de mis amores," *El Comercio*, October 27, 1930.

655 Advertisement for *Guayaquil de mis amores*, *El Comercio*, October 19, 1930.

656 Kristin Thompson, "National or International Films? The European Debate during the 1920s," *Film History* 8, no. 3 (1996): 295.

Sound cinema was not the only sound technology that played a crucial role in the emergence of communal feelings of nationalism at the time; records and phonographs were also considered in these terms:

And, in this way, we observe how in Quito, pasillos, eminently coastal and tropical - those rhythmical pasillos that until a few years ago were exclusive of low-level villages close to the sea, have now risen to the heights and have strongly and lovingly ignited the people from the highlands.... (...).

Pasillos have climbed up to the mountain ranges, and the indigenous musical genre, even the rhythm of 'fox' and 'one step', is now going down to warm up under the sun of the tropics. (...)

And perhaps we owe a big part of this beneficial influence to that plethora of musical devices and records that have invaded our towns. (...)

Because we cannot help but assume that national music, through records, entered first in the cities, towns and villages and infiltrated itself into the popular spirit before imposing itself everywhere as if in its own home.⁶⁵⁷

It is clear that to the author of this excerpt, the emergence of communal feelings of nationalism and of unity was attributed to sound technology; in particular, to phonographs and their records, as it was through them that regional music was disseminated to different parts of the country.

In addition to the phonographs and records, the author of the account attributed the emergence of communal feelings to the economic crisis during this period. These emotions were ones of pain in the highlands as well as in the coastal region.⁶⁵⁸ In other words, these feelings of pain were seen as feelings that united the people of a country, as they noticed that the feelings they were developing in one region were also felt in another:

There is nothing that brings people together like common pain. And never before has this bitter life caused a more painful association between peoples born at over three thousand meters above sea level and those who saw the first light sea level as it is

657 El Caballero de Lagardere, "La música y su influencia en la unión nacional," *El Día*, July 15, 1930.

658 El Caballero de Lagardere, "La música y su influencia en la unión nacional," *El Día*, July 15, 1930.

now.⁶⁵⁹

Consequently, to El Caballero de Lagardere, the people's feeling of unison, arising from the communal feelings that the dissemination of music and the economic crisis, was annulling the separatist sentiments of the period.⁶⁶⁰

By attributing national unity to phonographs, it seems that sound technology was creating this unity in Ecuador, or so it was felt at least. It is clear that the unification was not attributed to the political leaders, but to the mechanical. In other words, what the political field had not been able to reach was being reached by phonographs:

Thirty-second notes, sixty-fourth notes and eighth notes are doing in the country what politicians and those who prosper the most were undoing. (...) We had never seen art's influence so powerfully. We had never noticed until now the coming together that has been slowly occurring between the Coast and the Highlands. And it is well known that when spirits get close, matter is consolidated.⁶⁶¹

It is clear that in Ecuador in the early 1930s, sound technologies also helped people to identify with one another. For example, phonographs, gramophones, sound films, discs, and buildings in which sound technology was installed aroused communal feelings in people that made them recognize themselves as Ecuadorians, or as pertaining to a certain group. In other words, these objects and the emotions that arouse from interacting with them allowed locals to feel united and to identify with each other. This is not to say that all social classes and people of different ages and sex, for example, felt the same way. The feelings of unity in the country, of belonging to more than one region, arose in different social classes.

The excerpt that saw phonographs and recorded music in this sense was immediately echoed in another local newspaper the following day:

The CABALLERO DE LAGARDERE reappears in the same fellow newspaper making a very curious argument: the influence

659 El Caballero de Lagardere, "La música y su influencia en la unión nacional," *El Día*, July 15, 1930.

660 El Caballero de Lagardere, "La música y su influencia en la unión nacional," *El Día*, July 15, 1930.

661 El Caballero de Lagardere, "La música y su influencia en la unión nacional," *El Día*, July 15, 1930.

of national music is eliminating the separatist and regionalist ideas that produce so much concern from time to time in the national soul.

In Quito, the pasillos from the coastal region and, in Guayaquil, the music from the mountains, argues the CABALLERO, have penetrated into the innermost soul of the people, producing a community of feelings equal to the common ones that currently exist in all the regions, and equal to the influx of the numerous crises that are affecting the country;

strange theory that can provoke many disquisitions of creole psychologists and sociologists.

And who has carried out this beneficial propaganda? This author attributes it directly to... the phonographs, which on the one hand, with their invasion have produced many headaches and have spoilt good taste with their reproduced noise of the "jazzband", and on the other hand have made the miracle of favoring national unity.

The author also acknowledges the contribution of popular music composers to this case, such as Paredes in Guayaquil and Canelos and others in Quito, to whom he expresses his gratitude, and reveals his wish for a demonstration of understanding and support between peoples through music.⁶⁶²

The awareness of the crucial role played by sound technology in the strengthening of national feelings in the late 1920s and early 1930s raises the question as to whether, in Ecuador, in addition to an imagined community inspired by printed texts, as argued by Benedict Anderson in his celebrated book *Imagined Communities*,⁶⁶³ sound technology should also be seen as having played a pivotal role in the strengthening of national sentiment. This question seems pertinent because Ecuador may be seen as the case of an area in where people felt separated, despite of the printed texts, since Ecuador existed by law since the Constitution was issued in 1830, and newspapers circulated there since the eighteenth century. In other words, creating Ecuador as a State on paper and the circulation of newspapers were not enough for contemporaries to recognize it as a unified nation as such, even until the early 1930s when separatism and regionalism were clearly striking the country. They needed something else to see it, to construct it and feel it as united as a country.

662 "Los fonógrafos como factores de la unidad nacional," *El Debate*, July 16, 1930.

663 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York: Verso Books, 1991), 1-206.

The recognition of phonographs as the achievers of national unity in the early 1930s, even over the newspapers, may be due to the fact that at the time newspapers faced two problems in Quito: even though they existed, dailies remained prey of transportation, and not everybody read them as shown in the following quote:

In Quito, Capital of the Republic, there is a very small minority of citizens who, being able to read and write and even being educated people, bother to read the newspaper every morning. If from the city we go to the smaller towns, and from there to the villages, this scene gets sadder and more distressing.

The newspaper of Quito hardly visits a few houses of the adjacent provinces' capitals; the daily of Cuenca is unknown in Quito; if the newspapers of Guayaquil reach certain circulation in the interior of the Republic, it is due to the attractiveness of the information provided through telegrams, and not to the national problems analyzed in them.⁶⁶⁴

This account thus shows a second missing point in Benedict Anderson's argument attributing the creation of national feelings mostly to written material such as newspapers and books and entirely disregarding the conditions of the mobility and transportation of these objects from one place to another in different periods.

Simply put, this reminds us of the importance of considering the space, the terrain and the facilities of mobility in order to take into account Anderson's argument that newspapers, or rather the simultaneous reading of newspapers in one place and another, created the national feeling. For some technologies it was easier to create communal feelings than for others, but this depends on the context.

In addition to this, the above-mentioned account alerts us to the fact that being able to read and write did not necessarily mean that contemporaries read and wrote on a regular basis. That is, the statistics of literacy may be mistaken in assuming that because people can read and write, they necessarily read and write. Researchers should further investigate this.

In addition to sound films, discs, and phonographs, in the early 1930s, music record brands such as Columbia were recognized as disseminators

664 "La Prensa," *El Debate*, July 11, 1930.

of Ecuadorian feelings: "The Only House, true transmitter of Ecuadorian people's feelings."⁶⁶⁵

Another sound technology that participated at the time in the creation of communal feelings was the radio, since it was the first sound technology to be used by a president to simultaneously address the entire nation. The attempts of President Isidro Ayora to speak to the whole country using the radio were during the opening of the first local experimental radio station broadcast⁶⁶⁶ in May 1930. An excerpt of the account of the president's first speech transmission is the following:

The President of the Republic said more or less [the following]:
I am pleased to send from the "Feria Internacional de Muestras" [International Fair of Samples] a warm greeting to the compatriots who are listening to me, and at the same time, with unshakeable faith in the future, ask them to continue working for the progress of the country by means of the encouragement of agriculture, commerce and industries.⁶⁶⁷

Even though the president addressed the entire nation, this first speech caused frustration among the radio fans in Guayaquil who did not hear the radio's program due to the fact that in addition to the short power of the radio station, there was confusion about the schedule of the president's speech. At the port they expected it to be at 5 pm, not at 4 pm, at which time it actually aired.⁶⁶⁸ This situation raises the question as to whether people felt united by sound, but not by time. In addition to the speech, those who had radio sets were able to hear national music.⁶⁶⁹

The radio station used by Ayora was installed by Luigi Rotta,⁶⁷⁰ whom the Ecuadorian government had already hired years ago to teach about radio.⁶⁷¹ In 1927, taking advantage of this, *El Comercio* hired Rotta to write articles explaining everything that had to do with radio every

665 Advertisement for Columbia, *El Comercio*, Octubre 22, 1930.

666 Advertisement for Feria Internacional de Muestras, *El Día*, May 17, 1930. See also "Feria Internacional de Muestras," *El Comercio*, May 17, 1930.

667 "Ayer se inauguró solemnemente el servicio de radiotelefonía en el Palacio de la Ferida de Muestras," *El Comercio*, May 18, 1930.

668 "No fue escuchada la audición de radio en Guayaquil," *El Comercio*, May 18, 1930.

669 "La estación transmisora de radio en la Feria de Muestras," *El Comercio*, May 17, 1930. See also "Ayer se inauguró solemnemente el servicio de radiotelefonía en el Palacio de la Feria de Muestras," *El Comercio*, May 18, 1930.

670 "La estación transmisora de radio en la Feria de Muestras," *El Comercio*, May 17, 1930.

671 "La radiotelefonía y el profesor Rotta," *El Comercio*, November 6, 1927.

Sunday. These publications were meant to help the dissemination of radio in Ecuador:

With a series of articles that will be published in this newspaper on Sundays, and which we will illustrate opportunely with diagrams and photo prints, we are aiming to disseminate radiotelephony. If readers kindly assist us with their will, we will likely succeed.⁶⁷²

Thus, the newspaper also helped disseminate another sound technological innovation such as that of the radio.

It should be mentioned that even though the first local station was set up in 1930, people had heard different transmissions from abroad already before this:⁶⁷³

The first attempts to introduce radio sets for radio concerts in Ecuador, date back, if we are not mistaken, three years ago more or less. The devices imported at that time completely disillusioned the owners, (...)

whereas today, thanks to the increasingly more common use of shortwaves, it is possible to listen in Ecuador to radio-telephoned concerts as well as they do in Europe and in North America. (...) The shortwave stations that you can listen to in Ecuador with satisfactory results are especially those of General Electric Co. and of Western Electric Co. Installed at a short distance from New York, and respectively Schenectady and Pittsburg.⁶⁷⁴

In 1928, the music of the radio from abroad was used in a theatrical presentation in Quito: "On Saturday night... a short adaptation of Mauricio Renard's novel "El que no mató" was staged, and among its scenes we listened to radio music from good orchestras, but this required certain conditions of time and place to be appreciated properly."⁶⁷⁵

After the experimental radio of Rotta in 1930, a radio station named HC1DR⁶⁷⁶ was established at the Coliseum. The HC1DR was an effort

672 Luigi Rota, "Las recepciones de radioconciertos," *El Comercio*, November 6, 1927.

673 "Conferencia por radio," *El Comercio*, May 24, 1927.

674 Luigi Rota, "Las recepciones de radioconciertos," *El Comercio*, November 6, 1927.

675 "El radio en el Teatro Sucre. Una obra del teatro francés: 'La exaltación'," *El Comercio*, September 3, 1928.

676 "Radio audición musical de anoche desde El Coliseum," *El Comercio*, July 23, 1930. See also "La radiodifusora de onda corta de esta ciudad," *El Comercio*, July 24, 1930. See also "Estación de Broadcasting in Quito," *El Comercio*, September 7, 1930.

by the 'Sociedad de Comunicaciones', whose members belonged to the telegraphist staff of the city.⁶⁷⁷ This was a state owned radio station's⁶⁷⁸ acknowledged radio broadcast, which reached one thousand kilometers at a wavelength of 47 meters.⁶⁷⁹ This radio station was also heard in Pereira, Colombia.⁶⁸⁰ By November 1930, the HC1DR began broadcasting daily.⁶⁸¹ The time schedule was from 8 to 10 pm, except on Sundays. In November 1930, it was expected that the president would again address the nation.⁶⁸² Even though it was pointed out that this would be the first time the president would address the nation by radio, the fact is that this, as we have seen, it has already occurred earlier that year.

The radio broadcast of the Coliseum started to transmit the music played by the orchestras during the silent exhibitions in December 1930. This of course did not occur every day as the orchestra only played in particular silent screenings.⁶⁸³ An interesting case in the United States in relation to radio and sound cinema was that some leading radio stars were asked to act in sound films, as in the case of *Check and Double Check* (1930), starring leading personalities of radio shows such as 'Amos' and 'Andy'.⁶⁸⁴

Since radio was also regarded as part of progress,⁶⁸⁵ the plans to have a radio station broadcasting and increasing the presence of radio in the city was of permanent concern, and steps were taken in that direction.⁶⁸⁶ However, in spite of these efforts, by 1931, the radio was not a widespread technology in Quito:

These last days, numerous groups of people have been gathering from 5 pm until night time in front of one of the windows of the offices of The Electric Light & Power Company (La Empresa

677 "Estación de Broadcasting de Quito," *El Comercio*, September 7, 1930.

678 "Programa que la estación experimental radiodifusora de Quito 'HC 1DR', de propiedad del Estado irradiará en conmemoración del centenario de la muerte del Libertador Bolívar," *El Día*, December 16, 1930.

679 "Estación de Broadcasting de Quito," *El Comercio*, September 7, 1930.

680 "La radiodifusora de onda corta de esta ciudad," *El Comercio*, July 24, 1930.

681 "La estación radiodifusora de Quito trabajará todos los días," *El Día*, November 9, 1930. See also "Estación de Broadcasting de Quito," *El Comercio*, September 7, 1930.

682 "El Presidente de la República hablará por radio al país," *El Día*, November 16, 1930.

683 "Se gozará desde la casa de la música de los cines," *El Comercio*, December 4, 1930.

684 "Obras son amores y no buenas razones," *El Debate*, September 29, 1930.

685 "Escuelas de radio-telegrafía y radio-telefonía," *El Comercio*, June 19, 1930.

686 "Una importante mejora para Quito: la estación de radio," *El Comercio*, July 3, 1930. See also "Se ha autorizado al señor ministro del ramo para que celebre un contrato para la erección de una estación inalámbrica, preferentemente en Quito, radiotrasmisora," *El Comercio*, September 3, 1930.

de Luz y Fuerza Eléctrica), where we have been able to appreciate a great radio device 'RCA-Super-Heterodine' by the 'Radio Corporation of America', whose model is of very recent manufacture. (...)

We are pleased to see that perfect devices have been imported to the Capital. Our public, the large public who does not have the economic means to acquire an appliance of this kind, is able to either admire and be moved with the holy word of eminent priests, or enjoy themselves intensely by listening to great artists' concerts performed in cities like New York, Chicago, Rome, etc., [and] to listen to conferences given by prominent men of science and renowned politicians of great intellectual communities in America and Europe, (...) ⁶⁸⁷

Thus, as most people did not have radio sets at home, audiences were forced to gather in public places to hear radio transmissions, which leads me to argue that in addition to having created communal feelings, the radio actually forced people to gather as a community: the radio was initially a communitarian practice due to economic reasons. On one occasion, while listening to the transmissions, the audiences heard about an event that was taking place at that very same moment in Spain. This of course was something new to contemporaries and therefore did not go unnoticed:

... of the latest most striking events that happen in the world, just as they occurred, according to the information given to us by the fans of the radio who were at the Eléctrica [office], on the day in which the political movement of the proclamation of the Republic of Spain took place, who unexpectedly were surprised by a station that was communicating such sensational news. ⁶⁸⁸

This was all discussed in the local press, while in Italy for instance, people were already thinking of installing radios on the railway system. ⁶⁸⁹ Trains were not the only mechanical means of transportation being equipped with radios at the time, so were automobiles. ⁶⁹⁰ In Ecuador, of course, people acknowledged that in relation to radio broadcasting, the country was way behind other populations: "In Ecuador, the fight against

687 "Los aparatos de radio de la Eléctrica permiten escuchar música del exterior, sermones y conciertos," *El Comercio*, April 21, 1931.

688 "Los aparatos de radio de la Eléctrica permiten escuchar música del exterior, sermones y conciertos," *El Comercio*, April 21, 1931.

689 "Radiotelefonía en los trenes," *El Día*, October 10, 1930.

690 "Automóviles con radio," *El Día*, November 7, 1930.

these parasites has not yet started. The group of fans is still so limited and the national broadcasting so precarious that we could say that even in this, an invention so universalized, we are still in diapers.”⁶⁹¹

Even by 1933, there were doubts about how widespread radio sets were in Ecuador:

A statistic of the number of radio receivers of diverse brands that are scattered throughout Ecuador has not been developed yet. (...) Espinosa Palacios claimed that the estimated number of devices throughout the whole country was a little over one thousand. (...) We are sorry for not being able to provide a figure that could be more convincing to everyone. We say this because in one of the pieces of news that we received, Ecuador appears as a nation that has very few radio receivers, in the last place after Bolivia. It is said that in the Republic there are hardly a hundred, in spite of the fact that the same information source manifests that the population is three million inhabitants. (...) In Quito alone there are many more than the hundred that the publication states, and even the number of broadcasting studios has increased.⁶⁹²

In conclusion, the fact that *Sombras de gloria* was consumed differently in Quito than in other places reminds us of the relevance of de Certeau's analysis that even though an object can be transferred to a certain location, the ways of using and consuming a certain text are impossible to transfer, as these ways are particular to the context in which the object arrives.

Additionally, in the early 1930s, instead of identifying oneself with only a particular region in Ecuador, people seem to have experienced a feeling of belonging to more than one place. In this process of recognition, sound technology played a crucial role. That is, identity in relation to space seems to have been boosted by sound technology.

Regarding the late 1920s and early 1930s, I must add something in relation to one of the uses that people gave the word 'identity' at this time. 'Identity' was used during these years in connection to the ID cards, or in Spanish, the 'cédula de identidad.' This document was part of the method of identifying a person by their genetic lines in the fingers known as

691 "La guerra contra los 'parásitos del radio,'" *El Comercio*, Mayo 17, 1931.

692 "El radio en el Ecuador," *El Comercio*, May 6, 1933.

dactyloscopy, which had replaced the former anthropometry. The following excerpt explained to the readers some of the particularities of the office of identification that was already working at the time in Quito:

... fingerprint identification is based on something anthropological, non-transferable, indelible and unforgeable as are the papillary ridges that everyone has from the sixth month of having been conceived in the womb until complete rottenness after death, especially in the palmar side of the last phalanx of the hands. These ridges or fingerprints are collected on paper by using lithographic ink; they are studied, analyzed and classified through special symbols...⁶⁹³

In the account it is noticeable how the anthropological is compared to genetic characteristics. Both were seen as something impossible to change. That is, aspects such as knowing or not knowing how to read and write that were described in this identification document seem to have also been regarded as permanent. Thus, it is possible that people regarded the new system of identification, as producing the perception that cultural characteristics are permanent.

693 "El gabinete central de identificación," *El Día*, May 6, 1930.

Chapter 8 One Year Without Sound Screenings

According to Kristin Thompson, for most of the big studios, 1930 was the high point of the production of foreign language versions,⁶⁹⁴ which were a solution to translating English-language sound films into other languages. For instance, regarding the Spanish-language films, “in 1930, thirty ‘Hispanic’ films were made, a figure that went up to over forty in 1931...”⁶⁹⁵ Despite this, and after the arrival of the first two sound films in Quito in September 1930, there were no more sound film screenings in the city during that year, until August 1931. However, sound cinema continued being heard of through the press. Thus, in the absence of sound screenings, the press kept the new invention alive in people’s minds for a year. The sounds of sound cinema, although not material in their sonic aspect in the movies, had materialized in written texts. In this chapter I examine how the discussion in the three dailies also contributed to the emergence of communal feelings during the absence of sound screenings.

El Comercio, whose owners had announced the construction of the first purpose-built sound cinema, focused particularly on the international discussion about sound cinema. *El Comercio*’s position is understandable, as they had to find a way to maintain and increase the audiences’ interest in sound cinema because this was to be their future business. Contrary to their focus on this novel technology, *El Comercio*’s pages did not even mention the local silent and sound screenings after the public debate of late 1929 until April 1933. They commented the local exhibitions only on rare occasions. Unlike *El Comercio*, *El Día*, the contemporary liberal daily, discussed sound cinema very little and focused on local silent screenings by publishing cinema announcements daily.

As is evident, the two dailies handled two temporalities of cinema: One was the sound cinema, meaning other countries’ present and former future of Quito, manifested in the so-called independent *El Comercio*; the other was the silent cinema, that is, the past and the present, a cinema that was in architecture, paper and other material forms, pictured by *El Día*. Two

694 Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market 1907-1954* (London: British Film Institute, 1985), 161-162.

695 John King, *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America* (London: Verso, 1990), 32.

different cinemas thus coexisted in the city: One was in the mind through the dailies and oral speeches, and the other was the old, stone cinema. This shows the bias and positions of both dailies, which were still handled by humans and their positions and emotions, among other aspects, as we will see. These two points of view are complementary and give us a clear picture of the local cinema in Quito in relation to the international situation.

As for *El Debate*, from May 1930 to April 1933, this daily did not publish any cinema advertisements except when the first sound film *Sombras de gloria* premiered in September 1930. During this period, *El Debate* only published some information on the situation of cinema abroad, and very little or almost nothing on the screenings in Quito. *El Debate* started publishing cinema advertisements in late April 1933 when the Bolívar Theater opened.

How these three dailies handled sound cinema gives us a clear picture of how contemporaries' mental images of these two kinds of cinema was taking shape. At the same time, the local press' different treatment of silent and sound cinema shows the coexistence of the various temporalities of cinema, which I discuss more in depth in Chapter 10. Although this occurred in relation to the temporalities depicted in the newspapers, the temporality of silent cinema was also present in the silent screenings that dominated the city in buildings.

What is Spoken in Latin America?

From the second part of 1930 until August 1931, having received the first two sound films in the city, sound cinema continued arriving in Quito solely through the press. Unlike Quito, in Guayaquil, according to Quito's newspapers, another sound film *Cascarrabias* was shown in late September 1930.⁶⁹⁶ This film, however, did not arrive in Quito until years later. The reasons for this are still unknown. The cessation of sound cinema exhibitions may have had something to do with the lack of wired venues to show it, and in general with the missing infrastructure to screen sound cinema, but it was certainly not a consequence of the audiences' interest.

The lack of sound film screenings after *Sombras de gloria* contrasts the amount of information published about the talkies in the press, since in the second part of this year the amount of information on sound cinema increased considerably in *El Comercio*. This enormous display in the press

696 RIGEL, "Se estrena en Guayaquil la película parlante en que figura Ernesto Vilches," *El Día*, September 26, 1930.

may have had something to do with the fact that the first talkie had been exhibited in the city and had received a warm reception. However, such a wide variety of accounts also intended to maintain people's interest in sound cinema.

In the second part of 1930 and the first half of 1931, the public debate on sound cinema had new viewpoints on how people regarded this innovation in Ecuador, or around the world. In other words, in such a short period of time, only a few months, one can notice a variation in the meanings people attached to this technology. The new perceptions of sound cinema went hand-in-hand with the expansion of sound cinema on a worldwide scale. The meanings people attached to this innovation could not have been the same as the perceptions attached before since sound cinema continued its dissemination and expanded globally.

One of the aspects that expressed this continuation and variation of meanings was the opposition to foreign languages and dialects. For instance, the local press informed the public that the Mexican journalist Ramírez Aguilar had affirmed in the Mexican daily *El Universal* that fifteen language academies of Latin American countries had threatened to cut relations with the Royal Academy in Madrid and establish different representatives for the language in their own countries.⁶⁹⁷ They were willing to take this action if the Spaniard Serafín Álvarez Quintero, member of the body that regulated the Spanish language, did not rectify his alleged claim that Latin American people did not speak Spanish but only dialects "with a certain vernacular flavor."⁶⁹⁸ By this he had alluded to the inclusion of the Spanish of Latin America in the talkies.⁶⁹⁹ Álvarez immediately denied having said this.⁷⁰⁰

In this period, the English language continued facing resistance in the public and among film producers in France. The screening of English-language movies had not motivated French entrepreneurs to produce sound cinema. However, once films in French were screened, the opposition to this innovation decreased to the extent that producers, after seeing the potential of this novelty, started the production of French movies to cover the extensive demand, as people had already filled the cinemas in Paris. According to the local press, until then, thirteen films had been screened. In

697 "¿Se habla o no el castellano en América?," *El Día*, September 16, 1930.

698 "¿Se habla o no el castellano en América?," *El Día*, September 16, 1930.

699 "El idioma español y lo que se habla en la América," *El Día*, September 18, 1930.

700 "El idioma español y lo que se habla en la América," *El Día*, September 18, 1930.

the coming autumn, they expected to have at least fifty-nine more.⁷⁰¹ This increased interest in sound cinema probably had something to do with the opening of the Paramount studio in France. As is well known, Paramount opened a studio at Joinville, close to Paris, in early 1930.⁷⁰² According to John King, the purpose of the studio was to produce foreign-language versions of Hollywood films in five languages. However, “by working a twenty-four-hour schedule it increased its language capacity to twelve. The experiment, which lasted some three years, was a disaster.”⁷⁰³ Even though the large studio belonged to Paramount, all the major American companies used it to produce multilingual versions.⁷⁰⁴

The English-language films and the variety of Latin American accents were not the only ones having trouble being accepted. German talkies were also rejected in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Sound films in German were suspended there. After several months of this policy, the cinema owners claimed that the reduction of money due to the non-exhibition of the talkies in German was economically disastrous for their business,⁷⁰⁵ and later that year, they restarted the exhibition of such films. Czech ultra-nationalists attacked not only the talkies in German, but also the German theater of Reinhardt. German cafeterias and restaurants were also struck.⁷⁰⁶

Only then, right after the screening of *Sombras de gloria* and after the press had referred to the rejection of Latin American accents, could José Bohr’s letter published in June 1930 be read in a clearer context. That is, José Bohr’s comments could be better interpreted once the local press reported just a few months later that the Spanish-language accent of the sound films was at the core of a controversy for some Spanish authorities that regulated Spanish language use. When Bohr’s letter was published in Quito, Bohr only mentioned that he had been attacked for being the first one to perform in the sound films. However, he did not specifically mention what these attacks were related to. Who exactly was attacking him? Was it because he was Latin American?

701 “Cobra ímpetu la producción de películas parlantes en Francia,” *El Debate*, September 29, 1930.

702 Karel Dibbets, “The Introduction of Sound,” in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 213.

703 John King, *Magical Reels*, 32.

704 Robert Murphy, “Coming of Sound to the Cinema in Britain,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 4, no. 2 (1984): 155.

705 “Se exhibirá nuevamente las películas sonoras alemanas,” *El Debate*, December 11, 1930.

706 “La introducción de películas sonoras alemanas en Checoeslovaquia provoca resistencias y reclamaciones,” *El Comercio*, September 26, 1930.

Miguel de Zarraga, who wrote the comments on sound cinema in *El Comercio*⁷⁰⁷ and was a Spanish writer and director,⁷⁰⁸ was of the opinion that the different nuances of the variation in Spanish should be highlighted.⁷⁰⁹ Later on, he pointed out that the problem of the accents and the words used in the sound films could be solved by speaking a neutral Spanish in Spanish-language productions.⁷¹⁰ De Zarraga believed that dialogue writers and actors should be hired from Spain as well as from other countries whose mother tongue was Spanish⁷¹¹ because to him, the predominance of actors from only Spain, Argentina and Mexico put all Spanish-filmmaking production at risk.⁷¹²

In general, de Zarraga showed concern for not having native Spanish-speaking personnel at the top of Spanish-language filmmaking. He advocated the inclusion of native Spanish-language speakers to direct Spanish-language films in the big studio.⁷¹³ This is why he praised the designation of Carlos Borcosque, who was appointed technical director of the MGM studio, to conduct Spanish-language films. Borcosque, born in Chile, was the first Latin-American appointed as director. MGM studios made this decision based on Ramón Novarro's success directing *Sevilla de mis amores* (1930). According to de Zarraga, the studios had previously translated the texts into Spanish using unskilled writers.⁷¹⁴ To him, they also only cared about the physical resemblance to the actors of the original version, and not about the art as such.

Sevilla de mis amores was first discussed in the local press on October 3, 1930, and one and a half years later the film was screened on August 5, 1932 in Quito.⁷¹⁵

The Andalusian capital shows us Manolas, flashy women (chulas) and bullfighters with all their typical beauty. (...) RAMON NOVARRO delightfully sings IN SPANISH wonderful bits

707 Miguel de Zarraga, "La cinematografía parlante en español," *El Comercio*, Octubre 3, 1930.

708 *Internet Movie Database (IMDb)*, s.v. 'Miguel de Zarraga,' http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0959178/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm According to IMDb, Miguel de Zarraga was born in Spain and was a writer and director, known for *Las fronteras del amor* (1934), *La cruz y la espada* (1934) and *Verbena trágica* (1939).

709 Miguel de Zarraga, "Quiénes escriben las películas parlantes?," *El Comercio*, October 7, 1930.

710 Miguel de Zarraga, "El idioma de las películas," *El Comercio*, January 5, 1931.

711 Miguel de Zarraga, "Virginia Fabregas en el cine parlante," *El Comercio*, January 20, 1931.

712 Miguel de Zarraga, "Virginia Fabregas en el cine parlante," *El Comercio*, January 20, 1931.

713 Miguel de Zarraga, "Un director hispano," *El Comercio*, January 23, 1931.

714 Miguel de Zarraga, "Un Director Hispano," *El Comercio*, January 23, 1931.

715 Advertisement for *Sevilla de mis amores*, *El Día*, August 5, 1932.

of the musical Iberian soul. You cannot miss the premier of the admired gallant's first Spanish-language production.⁷¹⁶

When *Sevilla de mis amores*, the Spanish version of *Call of the Flesh* (1930),⁷¹⁷ was screened, several points were highlighted such as the fact that locals could finally hear Ramón Novarro: "The victor of the silent period, the idol of women, the prince of gallant young men: RAMON NOVARRO, will appear in his first production totally spoken in Spanish."⁷¹⁸

The fact that Ramón Novarro was a Mexican did not matter, neither did whether or not he spoke perfect Andalusian. All that mattered was that the audience could hear music from Spain and most of all that the already enormous silent star would talk in Spanish. Whose Spanish? It did not matter in Quito. People now felt part of a wider community, the Spanish-language speaking community. In addition to this, the fact that one of the actresses, Rosita Ballesteros, had performed in Quito before was also noted.

The Spread of Sound Cinema and its Consequences

In addition to the language issue, two more aspects were discussed during this period with no sound film screenings: The expansion of sound cinema in different countries and the Americanization of the world because of the talkies.

With respect to the first issue, the Ecuadorian press discussed at great length the expansion of sound cinema around the world. For instance, regarding South America, according to the local dailies, in Brazil, fifty-four venues out of one thousand four hundred cinemas had been wired. The majority of these theaters were located in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.⁷¹⁹ In Colombia, even though silent films were still on the screens, the public attendance of these films had decreased considerably.⁷²⁰ During this time, sound cinema was only available in the big cities, but the plan was to spread it throughout the entire Republic.

In Chile, where the talkies had also arrived, sound film screenings

716 Advertisement for *Sevilla de mis amores*, *El Día*, July 28, 1932. The film premiered in Quito on August 5, 1932.

717 Miguel de Zarraga, 'Las próximas películas de Ramón Novarro,' *El Comercio*, March 18, 1931.

718 Advertisement for *Sevilla de mis amores*, *El Día*, August 5, 1932. This film premiered on this day.

719 "Los cinematógrafos en el Brasil," *El Debate*, September 28, 1930.

720 "Las películas sonoras en Colombia," *El Debate*, November 13, 1930.

were opened by *The Broadway Melody* in Santiago,⁷²¹ where sound equipment modified by the local Alejandro Soza was used to enhance sound screenings. In fact, Soza had made an apparatus to correct the following issues:

... rectifying its main and characteristic defects, such as the noise of the needle and the poor synchronization of the disc during the running of the machine without interrupting the screening of the movie. (...)

The actresses' voices in their natural high-pitched state could be heard without stridency, just as it was desired, and the changes of tone in the dialogues and songs were perceived perfectly, (...)⁷²²

In Europe, according to the local dailies, sound cinema had almost completely replaced silent cinema.⁷²³ With respect to Africa, the lack of wired venues posed no problem to the expansion of sound cinema. For example, the African Films Limited company equipped trucks to bring sound cinema to the rural areas of Africa to overcome the absence of screening places there.⁷²⁴ Otherwise, sound cinema would have remained confined to the big cities in Africa. These trucks, which had their own electricity generator, were expected to provide entertainment for two thousand people in one show. Trucks being used to screen sound cinema was part of the integration of sound cinema to means of transportation. For instance, already in 1930, the sound film *Second Wife* was shown on the luxury express train between Chicago and Milwaukee.⁷²⁵ "At an average speed of 75 miles per hour and for the first time, an entire sound film was screened before a select audience made up of directors of railways, radio-electrical engineers, members of the press, etc., with the train running at full speed."⁷²⁶

In Ecuador, even though Quito contemporaries had mostly read about sound cinema and had only experienced a few sound films screened in the city, by 1930 locals regarded sound cinema to be a successful technology. In fact, by late 1930, in locals' minds silent cinema was already dead:

... It is fair to say that in Quito, which enjoys the comforts of the best cities, the distractions that allow an hour of rest are scarce;

721 De Gaizca, *American Films in Latin America*, 141-142.

722 "Un mecánico chileno y el cine sonoro," *El Debate*, December 11, 1930.

723 "Aumenta la exportación de películas cinematográficas en los Estados Unidos," *El Día*, October 25, 1930.

724 "Camiones cinematográficos," *El Debate*, September 30, 1930.

725 "Se exhiben películas sonoras en trenes rápidos," *El Día*, August 3, 1930.

726 "Se exhiben películas sonoras en trenes rápidos," *El Día*, August 3, 1930.

we could almost say that they do not exist. (...)

And, therefore, we can say that the only permanent kind of entertainment that Quito has is cinema. Nevertheless, we have not had the fortune yet, as is happening in other cities in America, to attend the screenings of selected sound films, since silent films, however aesthetic and picturesque they may be, seem to have entirely given way to the other type of movies, which give us a more alive impression of reality because of voice.⁷²⁷

It is interesting to note how silent cinema was seen as an entertainment form that had lost space in relation to sound cinema, even though locals had only seen a few sound film screenings in the city. Furthermore, this comment was published during the period when no sound film was being shown in Quito.

I take this as evidence of the impact on contemporaries of what they read in the printed press of how the series of reports published by local newspapers during these years instilled the expansion reached by sound cinema in locals' minds. This quote shows, in the same manner, the extent to which the audiences were shaped not only by moviegoing, but by what they read in the dailies. Proof that the audiences were referring to the experiences of sound cinema lived somewhere else is the fact that the author of the account uses the word *seems* to refer to the new technology's effect of realism. In other words, he was not really sure what the experience would be.

In addition to the spaces in which sound cinema was being introduced, the local press talked about the expansion of this technology in terms of the amount of production of sound films. That is, the expansion of sound cinema was discussed in two ways: First, the dissemination of this technology in different countries, urban and rural areas, cinema venues; and secondly in relation to the production of these films.⁷²⁸ In reference to the latter, it was pointed out that the export of sound and even of silent films from the United States had increased in the first semester of 1930 in comparison to 1929. The biggest market for American films was Europe.⁷²⁹ Not only had the exportation of films increased, but the number of moviegoers in the

727 "Tardes bailables en el hipódromo de Quito," *El Comercio*, October 15, 1930.

728 "Obras son amores y no buenas razones," *El Debate*, September 29, 1930.

729 "Aumenta la exportación de películas cinematográficas en los Estados Unidos," *El Día*, October 25, 1930.

States rose in 1929 in comparison to 1928.⁷³⁰ This recovery was principally regarded as a consequence of the arrival of sound cinema.

Once sound cinema continued its introduction in different parts of the world, new perceptions of this technology emerged. For instance, sound cinema was seen as one of the causes of 'Americanization,' particularly in Europe. To Manuel Bustamante, an Ecuadorian writing from Ginebra, the Americanization that was taking place in Europe was mostly due to three facets: the arrival of the talkies, tourism, and advertisements.⁷³¹

With respect to the talkies, Bustamante pointed out that sound cinema was teaching American English to the world and predicted that this language would become universal.⁷³² Curiously, to Bustamante, the music, rather than the dialogues of the sound films was the main feature through which English was gaining foothold. This was occurring since music was an element that was appealing to the multitude and forced them to learn the language. According to Bustamante, the expansion of English was also due to tourism, as locals in Europe had learnt English to serve American visitors and to make them feel at home. The author also discussed the presence in Europe of various products such as the automobile which he regarded a consequence of advertisements. The perception of an Americanization process linked partly to the arrival of sound cinema was not isolated. In Australia as well "there was concern about an increasing Americanization of Australian culture, (...)"⁷³³

Screening Soundless Languages

Even though I have so far mostly stressed the sonic aspect of the advent of sound cinema, the arrival of this technology did not place only the aural aspect of languages in the forefront. In fact, sound cinema, in addition to bringing the sounds of different languages, also screened the silent languages, such as that of the deaf. In other words, sound cinema was not only about sound, but also about gesture:

The latest novelty in the field of cinema is this brand new film, which at the same time is silent and a TALKIE. And it is not, just in case, anything ultra-scientific or supernatural; it is a film

730 "El desarrollo del cine en los Estados Unidos," *El Comercio*, November 2, 1930.

731 Manuel Bustamante, "La americanización de Europa," *El Comercio*, September 29, 1930.

732 Manuel Bustamante, "La americanización de Europa," *El Comercio*, September 29, 1930.

733 Damousi, "The Filthy American Twang," 395.

in which the dialogs are carried out exclusively by means of sign language. It has been edited by the Union of the Deaf of New York, and the theme it develops is the history of the foundation of said society, which is narrated by its president, Mr. Samuel Fránkenheim, in the digital language.

The success of the film was so great that Mr. Max Lubin, president of the Literary Committee of the Union, hopes that soon amateur theater performances will be organized in which both actors and spectators are hearing impaired. In addition, soon other SPOKEN films like the above-mentioned will also be edited.⁷³⁴

As is clear, sound cinema had not only explored the *spoken* dialogue, but also the visual dialogue, not expressed in words, but in signs. Even though films for deaf people were soundless, people considered them talkies due to the integration of deaf dialogue sequences.

Another sound film that was regarded as portraying all the languages of the world silently through mimicry was Charles Chaplin's *Luces de la ciudad* (*City Lights*, 1931):

The work itself does not need praise; it has been the object of laudatory adjectives in all languages, not finding until now one that best fits. The thing is that in the mimicry of Chaplin, the silent one, it is the throat that enunciates emotion in all the languages. *City Lights* is understood by everybody. The initiated will find that it embodies a sublimely painful satire in the midst of roaring laughter.⁷³⁵

In addition to this, to Adolphe Menjou, with the arrival of sound film, Hollywood realized that, in addition to speaking the language of the people they were representing, actors should also learn body language: They should learn not only the sounds of the language of their characters, but the body language of the cultures from which their characters came:

The spoken word, having obtained a permanent role in the cinematograph, has come to demonstrate the urgency of a change of orientation and procedure. It is no longer only about the characters in a play speaking in French or Spanish, but what they

734 "Películas para sordomudos," *El Debate*, January 22, 1931.

735 Advertisement for *Luces de la ciudad*, *El Día*, March 17, 1932. *Luces de la ciudad* premiered in Quito on March 18, 1932.

say and the way in which they say it must agree with the spirit of the people whose language is spoken.

(...) But, there is something else. Just as there is a national language and miming, or racial if you will, there is a culture that is exclusive of each group of people. This provokes a specific attitude towards life, which must always be taken into account in order not to offend it.' (...)

This is particularly true concerning love. It is difficult for a Latin, and it makes sense, to accept the camaraderie that is common in the Anglo-Saxon world between people of the opposite sex. For Latins a kiss, as a demonstration of affection, necessarily presupposes the existence of loving relationships between the parties. That is why it is shocking and frowned upon when people who are not bound by love in some way would kiss or interchange any kind of demonstration of affection, which for Latins do not involve only love, but in most cases, an established tie.

In *Amor Audaz* there is an example that illustrates very well the difference between Latins and Anglo-Saxons in this matter. In the development of this film we see two love stories: one that has Barry Morton and Carmen Guerrero as principal actors and the other in which the leading roles are interpreted by Rosita Moreno and myself.

The first one is a typically American romance, in which all the liberties are fit for a flapper and a school-boy. The relationships between Rosita Moreno and I are the other side of the coin, in which there is no kissing without a previous mandatory declaration of love.⁷³⁶

Menjou thus considered that the arrival of the word in cinema had made producers see that the talkies were not only about sound, since people did not only speak with words, but also about body languages, which are also part of talking. *Amor audaz* (1930), Menjou's film mentioned in the previous quote, premiered in Quito more than one year after this account appeared in the local press.⁷³⁷

736 "Hollywood tiene que aprender a amar a la latina," *El Debate*, February 23, 1931.

737 *Amor audaz* premiered in Quito on May 6, 1932. See the advertisement for *Amor Audaz* in *El Día*, May 6, 1932.

The Un/hidden Opposition of Ernesto Vilches

One opponent to having Latin American actors because of their native accents was the Spaniard performer Ernesto Vilches.⁷³⁸ “He objected to the mix of national and regional accents used by his costars and adopted the tactic of interjecting an obscenity into every scene that he felt violated the ‘purity of our language.’”⁷³⁹ Many who worked with Vilches described him as difficult, arrogant and overbearing. Not all of his colleagues agreed with his point of view regarding the situation in Hollywood.⁷⁴⁰

Ernesto Vilches was one of many actors who had left Spain to go to live in Hollywood and Paris to make Spanish-language films.⁷⁴¹ By the time Ernesto Vilches started to work in Hollywood, he was not unknown in Quito. In fact, the actor had visited Quito five months before he started to act in Hollywood. The history of Vilches in Quito is rather long because local audiences were already familiar with him, as the actor had performed on stage years before.⁷⁴² For instance, Vilches had been in Quito in 1921 (Fig. 19):⁷⁴³

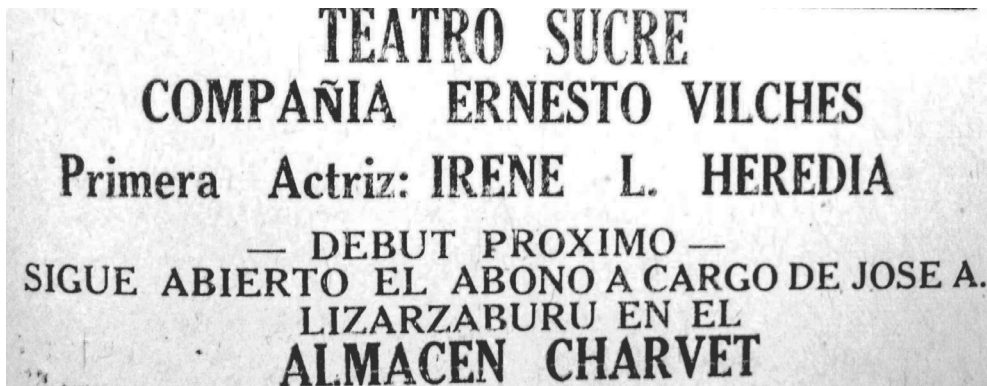


Figure 19: Advertisement for Compañía Ernesto Vilches

On this occasion, Vilches’ company was granted permission to

738 Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-language Filmmaking*, 49.

739 Ibid., 48.

740 Ibid., 48.

741 “La desbandada hacia Hollywood,” *ABC*, May 28, 1930 in *El Día*, July 27, 1930 under the title “Numerosos autores y artistas españoles en los cinematógrafos norteamericanos.”

742 Advertisement, *El Día*, February 2, 1932.

743 Advertisement for Compañía Ernesto Vilches, *El Comercio*, December 6, 1921.

give fifteen presentations at the Sucre Theater.⁷⁴⁴ Already in that year, the actor presented “Wu Li Chang,” promoted as ‘the British tragedy of Chinese traditions,’ and as ‘Vilches’ genius creation.’⁷⁴⁵ Even though this seems to be the first time that “Wu Li Chang” was staged in Quito, locals were already familiar with the play because they had read about it in the press.⁷⁴⁶ A plaque was placed at the Sucre Theater in memory of this theatrical season.⁷⁴⁷

Vilches returned to Quito in late 1929 and early 1930, and continued presenting his shows at the Sucre Theater.⁷⁴⁸ Five months after this visit, locals found out that Vilches had been hired by the Metro Goldwyn Mayer studio to produce Spanish-language sound films.⁷⁴⁹ Later on, it was mentioned that Vilches would begin working at Paramount, where he would act in *Galas de la Paramount*, the Spanish-language version of *Paramount on Parade* (1930).⁷⁵⁰ Another film Vilches made for Paramount was *Cascarrabias*, the foreign language version of *Grumpy* (1930).⁷⁵¹ Of this film it was reported that:

... CASCARRABIAS, performed in the theater more than two thousand times... Vilches, who did not even have knowledge of this play, has had to act in it with only eight days of restless study, being submitted to the inarguable judgment of the director who was assigned to him.⁷⁵²

Less than one month after publishing this information, *Cascarrabias* was screened in Guayaquil, where stalls tickets cost four sures and gallery seats one sucre.⁷⁵³ This movie was promoted as starring Ernesto Vilches. However, it was not shown in Quito.

In addition to the above-mentioned films, the local press also

744 “De teatros,” *El Comercio*, December 11, 1921.

745 Advertisement for *El corazón manda*, *El Comercio*, December 12, 1921.

746 “Wu Li Chang,” *El Comercio*, December 14, 1921.

747 “Ernesto Vilches y la especial fisonomía de su teatro,” *El Día*, January 6, 1930.

748 Advertisement for *A la sombra del Harem*, *El Día*, December 19, 1929. See also advertisement, *El Día*, December 21, 1929. See also advertisement, *El Comercio*, January 3, 1930.

749 “El actor Vilches contratado para el cine,” *El Día*, May 23, 1930.

750 “Ernesto Vilches iniciará sus trabajos cinematográficos en la Paramount,” *El Comercio*, June 16, 1930.

751 Miguel de Zarraga, “Vilches in Hollywood,” *El Comercio*, August 31, 1930.

752 Miguel de Zarraga, “Vilches in Hollywood,” *El Comercio*, August 31, 1930.

753 Rodríguez, “Estreno de una película filmada por Ernesto Vilches,” *El Comercio*, September 26, 1930. See also Rigel, “Se estrena en Guayaquil la película parlante en que figura Ernesto Vilches,” *El Día*, September 26, 1930.

echoed the premiere of *Wu Li Chang* (1930), another of Vilches' movies, which premiered in Los Angeles. To Miguel de Zarraga, the *Wu Li Chang* of the cinema was not the same as that of the stage. It did not even attempt to be so.⁷⁵⁴ This comment contrasts that of the Spaniard Josep Carner Ribalta, who despite being an admirer of Vilches' work, stated "... that Vilches simply did not understand the crucial differences between theater and film."⁷⁵⁵

Vilches himself was not satisfied with *Wu Li Chang*. He did not even want to remember working on two Paramount films, one of which was *Wu Li Chang*.⁷⁵⁶ On the day of the premiere, the actor pointed out that he did what the "English-speaking director" had told him to do, as he had not directed *Wu Li Chang*, limiting himself to the acting. In fact, on that day, Vilches "blamed the studio for its inadequacies..."⁷⁵⁷ Consequently, he made it clear that he had nothing to do with the outcome of the film. To Miguel de Zarraga, the work of the director was worthy of praise because the film's impersonation of *Wu Li Chang* was the most perfect in Spanish-language film production, and he believed that Vilches should be satisfied with the movie.⁷⁵⁸

Two years after these comments were published, the film premiered in Quito on February 2, 1932,⁷⁵⁹ when premiere days were changed to Tuesdays instead of Wednesdays and when Trendy Days began to take place on Tuesdays and Fridays.⁷⁶⁰ *Wu Li Chang* was advertised as starring a group of Spanish stage stars.⁷⁶¹ According to the local dailies, this was not the Spanish-language version of the English-language sound production, but of the silent one, *Mr. Wu* (1927), performed by Lon Chaney⁷⁶² and released in 1927.⁷⁶³ To de Zarraga too, *Wu Li Chang* was a Spanish

754 Miguel de Zarraga, "Las nuevas producciones de cine parlante. El 'Mr. Wu' (Wu-Li-Chang) de Ernesto Vilches," *El Comercio*, November 29, 1930.

755 Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-language Filmmaking*, 49.

756 C. A. Martin, "Ernesto Vilches," *El Comercio*, February 14, 1931.

757 Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-language Filmmaking*, 49.

758 Miguel de Zarraga, "Las nuevas producciones de cine parlante. El 'Mr. Wu' (Wu-Li-Chang) de Ernesto Vilches," *El Comercio*, November 29, 1930.

759 Advertisement for *Wu Li Chang*, *El Día*, February 2, 1932.

760 W.L., "Wu Li Chang," *El Día*, January 31, 1932. Trendy Days began to take place on Tuesdays and Fridays. This was the new structure of the screening schedules. In addition to this, the cinema company reduced the stalls ticket prices on the Trendy Days from early February 1932, which meant that instead of two sures, these tickets cost 1.50. See advertisement for cinema schedule, *El Día*, February 14, 1932.

761 Advertisement for *Wu Li Chang*, *El Día*, February 2, 1932.

762 W.L., "Wu Li Chang," *El Día*, January 31, 1932.

763 *Wikipedia*, s.v. 'Mr. Wu,' https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr._Wu

adaptation of the American *Mr. Wu*.⁷⁶⁴

Due to his dissatisfaction with some studios, Vilches stated in early 1931 that he would make his own productions, which would be distributed through Paramount. His goal was to direct his own films.⁷⁶⁵ In April 1931, Ernesto Vilches resigned from his contracts with MGM and Paramount studios to produce his own films independently at the Columbia studios in Hollywood.⁷⁶⁶ His plan was to embody Sullivan's role in *El comediante* (1931). According to *El Comercio*'s critics, Vilches was not suitable for this role as he was too old to play a charming young character capable of making women fall in love with him:

... Sullivan is a handsome thirty-to-forty-year-old actor who is capable of making romantic young girls fall for him with only his figure and manly posture.

Vilches entirely lacks the Sullivan type. He is sickly, old and very worn out. Without much effort and with very light characterization, he could play 'Cascarrabias.'

Only a miracle will allow him to acceptably embody Sullivan.⁷⁶⁷

El comediante, made after three films for MGM in which Vilches co-directed, failed at the box office.⁷⁶⁸ Carlos F. Borcosque and Nick Grinde directed the film.⁷⁶⁹ Ernesto Vilches, José Crespo, Angelita Benítez, and Marcela Nivón, among others, were part of the cast. The film was inspired by Louise Jordán Milo's novel.⁷⁷⁰ *El comediante* debuted in Quito on September 18, 1932.⁷⁷¹ On January 24, 1933, another one of Vilches' films premiered in Quito: *Su última noche* (1931).⁷⁷²

In early 1931, it was pointed out that due to the success of the first sound films made at MGM, this studio would begin large-scale production of Spanish-language films.⁷⁷³ Moreover, it was claimed that Hollywood would probably increase its production of Spanish-language films.⁷⁷⁴ This decision would be

764 Miguel de Zarraga, "En plena producción," *El Comercio*, October 3, 1930.

765 C.A. Martin, "Ernesto Vilches," *El Comercio*, February 14, 1931.

766 "Vilches se independiza," *El Comercio*, April 28, 1931.

767 "Vilches se independiza," *El Comercio*, April 28, 1931.

768 Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-language Filmmaking*, 49.

769 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0184040/> (September 10 2016)

770 W.L., "Wu Li Chang," *El Día*, January 31, 1932.

771 Advertisement for *El comediante*, *El Día*, September 18, 1932.

772 Advertisement for *Su última noche*, *El Día*, January 23, 1933.

773 "Éxito logrado por la Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer," *El Comercio*, February 24, 1931.

774 "La producción futura," *El Comercio*, March 18, 1931.

made after analyzing the results of the first group of Spanish-language talkies, considering the big Spanish-language market, and that Spain or Latin-America did not pose any restrictions to American films, as did France and Germany.

During this time, however, the local press began mentioning signs of problems with Spanish-language production. For instance, of the thirty-five people who were hired in the Spanish-language department of the MGM studio, only a few would be hired again.⁷⁷⁵ Hal Roach allegedly decided to stop producing short films in French, German and Spanish due to the rumors created by the actors who played them.⁷⁷⁶ In addition, the actress Dolores del Río stated that if she filmed Spanish-speaking films, she would only do so with Mexicans, because in Hollywood, hiring the Spanish had left many Mexicans unemployed.⁷⁷⁷ On the topic of the firing of Spanish-language actors, it was also reported that some Spanish-language actresses who had left Hollywood, such as Rosita Moreno and Luana Alcaniz, had been hired in Europe.⁷⁷⁸

The End of Spanish-language Production

According to Thompson, the production of the foreign language versions, a solution to translating English-language sound films into other languages, declined during 1931.⁷⁷⁹ In April, MGM shut down its foreign units and dismissed most of its personnel. Fox's Spanish unit, which operated until 1935, was by May 1931 the biggest in Hollywood.

The end of the Spanish-language production, also discussed in the local press in 1931, was seen from different angles. First, to Baltasar Fernández Cué, some producers stopped the Spanish-language film production based on an alleged lack of profits of the Spanish-language films, which was mostly attributed, according to him, to how the studios had managed the production of the foreign language versions.⁷⁸⁰ To

775 "Hollywood al día," *El Comercio*, April 7, 1931.

776 "Por insoportables," *El Comercio*, April 7, 1931.

777 C.B., "Noticias cortas de interés," *El Comercio*, May 7, 1931.

778 "Actrices españolas contratadas para Europa," *El Comercio*, May 31, 1931.

779 Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 162.

780 G.A., "La situación en la producción de las cintas hispanoparlantes en Hollywood," April 7, 1931. To Baltasar Fernández Cué, poor profit was the consequence of the low quality of the Spanish-language versions, which, to him, were mostly caused by four factors: first, the productions were chosen by people who did not know the taste of the Spanish-language audience; second, the translators of the Spanish-language versions did not speak English well enough, or even Spanish in some cases; third, the cast was appointed by directors and supervisors who did not have good knowledge of Spanish. Sometimes even the dialogue directors did not know Spanish well enough. Fourth, actors had to make the film during the same period of time as the English version was being made. That is, they had to work day and night.

others, the end of Spanish-language production at MGM, for instance, was a consequence of the rumors and criticism by MGM's very own Spanish personnel against the firm,⁷⁸¹ which was believed to be the hardest critique against MGM⁷⁸²:

... But there is something even more serious. Everything suggests that the managers of the studio are outraged by staff behavior. It seems they have not abided by the standards of seriousness and cooperation to which the firm was entitled. The most poisonous comments against the Spanish production by Metro always came from the Spaniards of Metro.⁷⁸³

With respect to this, for instance, it was pointed out that Neville did not congratulate de Zarraga for *Olimpia* (1930) and that, when *El presidio* (1930) premiered, de Zarraga openly criticized Landa's acting.⁷⁸⁴ Even Gregorio Martínez Sierra had also reportedly taken wrong steps in this regard. In addition to this, the cessation of Spanish-language production at MGM was also regarded as an outcome of the lack of unity and discipline among the Spaniards and Latin American personnel.

In spite of these interpretations, the end of the Spanish-language production was not explained as the possible consequence of the improvement of other methods of translating English-language films, such as dubbing and subtitling, which would offer a cheaper solution to the foreign language versions.⁷⁸⁵ Rather, it is clear that underneath the anger towards the end of Spanish-language production was also a rejection of the use of dubbing, referred to as 'synchronization,' as this was not regarded as an appropriate method to translate Spanish-language movies.⁷⁸⁶

Actors capable of expressing themselves and intoning with the intensity and sensibility that the action requires should not be so stupid to work as if their names weren't being made public to the audience. In addition to this, synchronization involves a twisting and stretching of phrases since these must have the same

781 "El fracaso de varios actores de habla española," *El Comercio*, April 28, 1931.

782 Fernando Rondón, "La semana en Hollywood," *El Comercio*, May 31, 1931.

783 Fernando Rondón, "La semana en Hollywood," *El Comercio*, May 31, 1931.

784 Fernando Rondón, "La semana en Hollywood," *El Comercio*, May 31, 1931.

785 Karel Dibbets, "The Introduction of Sound," 214. "The dubbing technique had taken four years to develop," according to Dibbets. By 1932, dubbing and subtitling offered solutions to the problem of translating the sound films.

786 Fernando Rondón, "La semana en Hollywood," *El Comercio*, May 31, 1931.

number of syllables as the English ones - which is a real threat to our language and consequently to our culture.⁷⁸⁷

While this enormous discussion on sound cinema was being held in the local press, in the cinemas of Quito, silent films continued to completely dominate the schedule. To be able to screen mostly silent films at a time when Hollywood was already producing talkies, local exhibitors used a number of tactics. For instance, first, they imported the famous silent productions that had not been shown in Quito. The silent films shown in 1931 were a mixture of old and new silent productions. In this period, for instance, silent films, such as *Ben-Hur* (*Ben-Hur*, 1925), were screened in the city for the first time.⁷⁸⁸ In addition to this, films such as *El crucero Potemkin*⁷⁸⁹ (*Battleship Potemkin*, 1925) produced in 1925 and *Los tres mosqueteros* (*The Three Musketeers*, 1921),⁷⁹⁰ made in 1921, were also exhibited in the early thirties. It was pointed out that *Los tres mosqueteros* should not be confused with the earlier version that had arrived in Quito. Several other similar examples exist, not only from Hollywood, but also from Universal Film (UFA), such as *La Carmen de los muelles* (*Docks of Hamburg*, 1928).⁷⁹¹ Even in late 1931, famous silent films continued arriving in Quito. One example of this was *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (*Don Quixote*, 1926).⁷⁹²

In addition to screening famous silent films that had never been shown in Quito, exhibitors also reran some silents such as *Marinero de agua dulce* (*A Sailor-Made Man*, 1921) starring Harold Lloyd, which had already been shown eight years ago in the city.⁷⁹³ Despite being a rerun film, people crowded the screenings.⁷⁹⁴ The permanence of the silent screenings raises the question of the extent to which the economic crisis influenced the exhibitors' decision to maintain silent screenings, as the tickets for silent films were cheaper. The screenings were a total success despite being old silents.

A second way to continue screening silent cinema in a period of sound film production was screening the silent version of films that had two

787 Fernando Rondón, "La semana en Hollywood," *El Comercio*, May 31, 1931.

788 Advertisement for *Ben Hur*, *El Día*, January 23, 1931. *Ben Hur* premiered in Quito on this day.

789 Advertisement for *El crucero Potemkin*, *El Día*, May 8, 1931.

790 Advertisement for *Los tres mosqueteros*, *El Día*, January 16, 1931.

791 Advertisement for *La Carmen de los muelles*, *El Día*, May 13, 1931.

792 Advertisement for *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, *El Día*, December 16, 1931. Pat & Patachon's film *Don Quijote* premiered in Quito on this day.

793 Advertisement for *Marinero de agua dulce*, *El Día*, July 3, 1931.

794 "Éxito sin precedentes *Marinero de agua dulce*," *El Día*, July 5, 1931.

versions, one silent and the other one sound. Consequently, in the first half of 1931, when the film had two versions, the silent was probably the one screened in the city. This was the case with, for instance, *Evangelina* (*The Man I Love*, 1929) which premiered in Quito in early February 1931,⁷⁹⁵ *Amor, eterno amor* (*Eternal Love*, 1929) in which the Mexican artist Mona Rico starred,⁷⁹⁶ *Vino tinto* (*Red Wine*, 1928),⁷⁹⁷ and *Mendigos de vida* (*Beggars of Life*, 1928).⁷⁹⁸

The screening of silent films during the first half of 1931 clearly shows the exhibitors' resistance - whatever the reasons - to the arrival of sound films. This should also be considered a contemporary example of the rejection of sound cinema in Quito. In these cases, the aversion to mechanical sound did not come from the moviegoers, but from the exhibitors. However, since the screening of the films was decided by the exhibitors, the entire city had to adjust to their taste and decisions.

A third manner to keep the silents on screen while the production was mostly talkies was to screen sound films as if they were silents. This can be inferred from the advertisements, because the fact that these films were actually sound films was never mentioned. What is more, the ticket prices for these films were the same as those for the silent films. In some cases, these films were accompanied by an orchestra. Examples of films that were actually sound films but were shown as silent films in Quito are *La rueda de la vida* (*The Wheel of Life*, 1929),⁷⁹⁹ *Vidas opuestas* (*A Man from Wyoming*, 1930),⁸⁰⁰ *Su mejor amigo* (*The Virginian*, 1929),⁸⁰¹ *Noche loca* (*One Hysterical Night*, 1929),⁸⁰² *El príncipe de la melodía* (*Weary River*, 1929),⁸⁰³ *Inmolación* (*Dames Abov*, 1930),⁸⁰⁴ *Después de la niebla* (*After the Fog*, 1929),⁸⁰⁵ and *Su amada arisca* (*Courtin' Wildcats*, 1929).⁸⁰⁶

795 Advertisement for *Evangelina*, *El Día*, February 9, 1931. See also advertisement for *Evangelina*, *El Día*, February 13, 1931.

796 Advertisement for *Amor, eterno amor*, *El Día*, May 22, 1931. This film premiered in Quito on May 22, 1931.

797 Advertisement for *Vino tinto*, *El Día*, July 17, 1931. This film premiered in Quito on this day.

798 Advertisement for *Mendigos de vida*, *El Día*, January 3, 1931.

799 Advertisement for *La rueda de la vida*, *El Día*, February 7, 1931.

800 Advertisement for *Vidas opuestas*, *El Día*, February 16, 1931.

801 Advertisement for *Su mejor amigo*, *El Día*, February 28, 1931.

802 Advertisement for *Noche Loca*, *El Día*, March 12, 1931.

803 Advertisement for *El príncipe de la melodía*, *El Día*, April 22, 1931.

804 Advertisement for *Inmolación*, *El Día*, Mayo 11, 1931.

805 Advertisement for *Después de la niebla*, *El Día*, Mayo 18, 1931.

806 Advertisement for *Su amada arisca*, *El Día*, July 11, 1931. This film premiered in Quito on this day.

The second time Quito received a talkie was in mid-August 1931. It took almost one year for the third sound film to arrive in the city after *Sombras de gloria* and *El gran Gabbo*. *El desfile del amor* (*The Love Parade*, 1929), a Paramount production starring Maurice Chevalier, Jeanette MacDonald and Lupino Lane,⁸⁰⁷ was the third foreign sound film to be screened in Quito.⁸⁰⁸ This film was one of the twenty feature films that the Empresa Cines de Quito had planned to show in the second sound film season.⁸⁰⁹ Unlike *Sombras de gloria*, *El desfile del amor* was an English-language production translated into Spanish possibly with subtitles since in the advertisement it was mentioned that “the film has in each scene translation into Spanish.”⁸¹⁰ The film, which had music and dialogues,⁸¹¹ was very successful.⁸¹² People packed the screenings. In fact, tickets sold out.⁸¹³

El desfile del amor generated mixed comments in the press. To *El Comercio*, the dialogue of the film was imperfect due to the quality of the equipment, and having English instead of Spanish in the film made the spectacle less appealing:⁸¹⁴ “This movie provoked some interest, due to its plot, but the perfection in the sound of the words was not complete because of the deficiency of the device; also, the fact that the film was made in the English language somewhat reduced the attraction to the spectacle.”⁸¹⁵ Despite these issues, *El Comercio* acknowledged that it was good to have these kinds of shows in the city as people were very fond of them. Contrary to *El Comercio*, *El Día* praised the screening of *El desfile del amor*.⁸¹⁶

El desfile del amor was exhibited about two months earlier in Guayaquil than in Quito. In that city, by mid-June 1931, the Parisiana Theater had already installed costly equipment to screen the talkies,⁸¹⁷ where *El desfile del amor* premiered after a test screening. On that occasion, *El Comercio*'s reporter gave a good review of the equipment acquired by this theater.⁸¹⁸ The daily also praised the fact that that film had been shown for ten days in

807 *Internet Movie Database (IMDb)*, s.v. ‘The Love Parade,’ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0020112/>

808 Advertisement for *El desfile del amor*, *El Día*, August 14, 1931.

809 ‘La temporada de cine parlante,’ *El Día*, August 8, 1931.

810 Advertisement for *El desfile del amor*, August 16, 1931.

811 Advertisement for *El desfile del amor*, *El Día*, August 7, 1931.

812 W.L., “El desfile del amor,” *El Día*, August 15, 1931.

813 Advertisement for *El desfile del amor*, *El Día*, August 15, 1931.

814 “Presentación del cine parlante efectuada ayer,” *El Comercio*, August 15, 1931.

815 “Presentación del cine parlante efectuada ayer,” *El Comercio*, August 15, 1931.

816 W.L., “El desfile del amor,” *El Día*, August 15, 1931.

817 Rigel, “Cine parlante en un teatro de Guayaquil,” *El Día*, June 18, 1931.

818 Rodríguez, “De Teatro,” *El Comercio*, June 20, 1931.

a row.⁸¹⁹ Curiously enough, on that occasion, *El Comercio* did not comment on the fact that the film was in English. The Parisiana Theater was not the only one being wired for sound films in Guayaquil. Soon after it, the Olmedo Theater was also making arrangements to install powerful, modern equipment.⁸²⁰ To do so, it obtained the assistance of L. Penak, an expert engineer who installed Vitaphones, who was visiting Ecuador at the time. In addition to these theaters, the newborn Cine Infantil had also acquired first-class sound film equipment to screen sound films for children.⁸²¹ In conclusion, in this second period of sound cinema, the talkies started to make a steady entrance into Guayaquil about two months earlier than in Quito.

The Sound Film of an Ecuadorian Actress in Hollywood

During these days, the local press also echoed the presence of an Ecuadorian actress in Hollywood: Araceli Rey. It was pointed out that the actress was striving to get into the film industry: "There is a beautiful Ecuadorian girl in Hollywood: Araceli Rey. She is striving to make her way. Ecuador's name has not been heard yet among the stars of cinema, and yet there is an artist of purest strain, determined to climb the rough path."⁸²²

819 Rodríguez, "Sigue el éxito de las películas parlantes," *El Comercio*, June 22, 1931.

820 "Adecuación de teatros para el cine parlante," *El Día*, July 20, 1931.

821 Rigel, "Películas parlantes para entretener a niños," *El Día*, August 15, 1931.

822 Met. de Villazar, *Ondas Sonoras*, (no date), in *El Comercio*, "La única Ecuatoriana en Hollywood," April 7, 1931.



Figure 20: Photo of the actress Araceli Rey published by *El Telégrafo* in 1925⁸²³

By 1931, according to the information published in the local press, Rey had not been given a role yet in the moving pictures. In spite of this, the reviewer of Rey's work acknowledged the actress exceptional capability to perform:

And I believe that a [good] vision of the business should make Hollywood producers search personnel of all the countries to touch the nationalistic and patriotic sentiment that they only can wake up. If, in addition to that coincidence, those artists have, as in the case of William Yanquez and of Araceli Rey, exceptional abilities for the screen, then [they] would have found perhaps more than one attraction of "box office," they will have discovered a future star."⁸²⁴

823 Granda, *Cine silente en Ecuador*, 90.

824 Met. de Villazar, *Ondas Sonoras*, (no date), in *El Comercio*, "La única Ecuatoriana en Hollywood," April 7, 1931.

Later on, Araceli Rey managed to get into the foreign film industry, as she acted in one of the first Spanish language films: *Soñadores de la Gloria* (*Dreamers of Glory*, 1932).⁸²⁵ This movie was one of the first Spanish language film productions made in Mexico and distributed in Latin America by United Artists.⁸²⁶ *Soñadores de la gloria* was a production by the Mexican Miguel Contreras Torres: “He wrote, directed and starred in the film.”⁸²⁷ According to de Gaizka, parts of the film were shot in Morocco and Spain.⁸²⁸

Soñadores de la gloria was not the first film in which the Ecuadorian actress had performed, as Araceli Rey had already acted in the Ecuadorian silent production *Un abismo y dos almas* (1925).⁸²⁹ This film was made by the local Ecuador Film production company. The roles and actors were the following: Angélica by Araceli Rey; El Patrón by A. Van Den Eenden, Dn. Luciano by H. Dorado Pólit, and El Indio Juan by Augusto San Miguel.⁸³⁰ This film reran on March 19, 1925 due to public demand.⁸³¹ Araceli Rey, according to Wilma Granda, studied together with the actress Evelina Macías, who acted in *Guayaquil de mis amores*, in the short life “Arts Film” academy located in Guayaquil and founded by the Italian Carlo Bocaccio.⁸³²

825 *Dreamers of Glory* (1932) <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0212529/>

826 De Gaizka, “American Films in Latin America: The Case History of United Artists Corporation, 1919-1951,” 189.

827 De Gaizka, “American Films in Latin America: The Case History of United Artists Corporation, 1919-1951,” 188.

828 De Gaizka, “American Films in Latin America: The Case History of United Artists Corporation, 1919-1951,” 188.

829 Advertisement for *Un abismo y dos almas*, *El Comercio*, March 2, 1925. This film premiered in Quito in March 3, 1925.

830 Advertisement for *Un abismo y dos almas*, *El Comercio*, March 2, 1925.

831 Advertisement for *Un abismo y dos almas*, *El Comercio*, March 19, 1925.

832 Granda, *Cine silente en Ecuador*, 94.

Chapter 9 Sound Films are Here to Stay

The first time that more than fifty percent of the venues screened sound films instead of silents in Quito in the afternoon and night screenings was late December 1931.⁸³³ On this day, the Edén, Variedades, and the Puerta del Sol screened sound films while only the Popular showed a silent movie. Three-venue sound exhibitions did not occur often. In fact, they took place again in late January 1932 when the Variedades, the Puerta del Sol and the Popular had sound screenings and the Edén exhibited a silent movie.⁸³⁴

It is interesting to see how, in spite of the fact that in the city there had been sound screenings in three out of the four cinemas, they were still not permanent. The permanent screenings of sound films in three venues in the afternoon as well as night screenings started on April 12, 1932.⁸³⁵ The reasons for the starting of the three-venue sound exhibitions are unknown, but the possibility that the cinema company had acquired a third set of sound equipment to exhibit films is the most plausible explanation. The cinemas that screened sound films were the Edén, Variedades, and the Puerta del Sol. The Popular did not screen silent films but opened a skating rink. The period of three cinema venue screenings lasted around one month until May 10, 1932, when it was announced that the sound equipment located at the Puerta del Sol, one of the three venues, was damaged.⁸³⁶

As soon as the slight damage is fixed, sound cinema season will start over.

These sound devices are very precise and any connection that is not perfectly isolated is cause for their irregular functioning.⁸³⁷

A few days later, on May 15, 1932, instead of the Puerta del Sol resuming sound screenings, sound screenings started at the Popular, which means that with the Edén and Variedades, three screening venues continued showing sound films.⁸³⁸ From then on, the Popular and the

833 Cinema advertisement, *El Día*, December 28, 1931.

834 Cinema advertisement, *El Día*, January 28, 1932.

835 Cinema advertisement, *El Día*, April 12, 1932.

836 "En la Puerta del Sol," *El Día*, May 10, 1932.

837 "En la Puerta del Sol," *El Día*, May 10, 1932.

838 Cinema advertisement, *El Día*, May 15, 1932.

Puerta del Sol alternated with each other to host sound screenings until late August 1932⁸³⁹ when there was gunfire in Quito. Until then, when the Popular or the Puerta del Sol did not show sound films, they hosted either silent exhibitions or live events.

As already mentioned, in late August 1932, there was an outbreak of gunfire in Quito, which forced all theaters to close their doors.⁸⁴⁰ This outbreak occurred as a consequence of the Congress' removal of the President of Ecuador, Neptalí Bonifaz, who was accused of being Peruvian and therefore not qualified to govern Ecuador. This tragic event known as 'La guerra de los cuatro días' or 'The War of Four Days,' lasted from August 29 to September 1, 1932. Since I could find no newspapers from August 27 to September 3, 1932 in the archives, I was not able to study these days.

On September 4, the 'Empresa Cines de Quito' indicated that they would reopen their theaters the following day, after having to close them due to the merciless and tragic burst of shootings that took place in Quito. Although it remains unknown for how long cinemas were closed, it was probably from August 28 or 29 to September 4, 1932.⁸⁴¹

In September 1932, after the political problems, three cinema venues sometimes screened sound films in the afternoon and night schedules, but this was not common.⁸⁴² In that month, however, this situation changed with the installation of new sound equipment at the Edén, which allowed the four cinemas to screen sound films in Quito for the first time.⁸⁴³

In this afternoon's screening at the Edén Theater, and with the film 'Ingagi', a new sound equipment acquired by Empresa Cines de Quito, will be inaugurated, which is new, important progress that has to be added to the many that the mentioned company has been offering this dedicated and select public.⁸⁴⁴

Contrary to what one may think, with the arrival of the fourth set of sound equipment, the silent screenings did not disappear in the city,

839 Cinema advertisement, *El Día*, August 25, 1932.

840 "Al Público," *El Día*, September 4, 1932.

841 "Al Público," *El Día*, September 4, 1932

842 September 16 to September 22 was the only week when three cinemas screened sound films in Quito.

843 Cinema advertisement, *El Día*, September 23, 1932.

844 "Inauguración de un nuevo equipo parlante en el Edén," *El Día*, September 23, 1932.

because, for instance, in early October 1932 silent shows were still being screened on certain days of the month.⁸⁴⁵ The four cinemas showed sound films on other days too,⁸⁴⁶ but this was not permanent in October in spite of the arrival of the new sound hardware.

In November 1932, the silent screenings continued in the city. However, that month the silents were only shown in one theater. That is, for most of the month, only one silent screening took place daily. Of course, on some days the four cinema venues screened sound films,⁸⁴⁷ and on one day, when instead of silent films, a live presentation took place.⁸⁴⁸ In contrast to November, on most days in December 1932, the four cinema venues in the city showed sound screenings. Consequently, silent screenings were only shown in a few theaters, with one silent exhibition on certain days.⁸⁴⁹ There were also days when sporting events,⁸⁵⁰ live performances, or even New Year's dances⁸⁵¹ took place instead of films.⁸⁵²

In 1933, the screening of sound films continued from mid-January 1933 onwards with almost no interruptions.⁸⁵³ In April 1933, facing the upcoming opening of the first purpose-built sound cinema, in a desperate move, the cinema company unexpectedly disposed of the luxury Edén Theater, and consequently stopped administering this venue. The reason for this was probably due to the fact that because Quito was small and did not have a large population, the owner of the cinema company assumed that people would prefer the Bolívar Theater to the Edén, both of them highbrow theaters. Another possibility is that since the Edén was a rented theater, it was easier for Jorge Cordovez to dispose of this venue in case the opening of the Bolívar Theater caused a reduction in income. Two weeks later, on April 12, 1933, Cordovez again used the Edén Theater and screened *Cristus* (unknown) in this venue as well as in his three other cinemas. However, this did not last long because on April 14, the Edén was again closed for renovation. By the time the Bolívar opened, on April 15,

845 Cinema advertisement, *El Día*, October 5, 1932. See also, for instance, cinema advertisements until October 15, 1932.

846 Cinema advertisement, *El Día*, October 21, 1932. See also cinema advertisements until October 27, 1932.

847 See cinema advertisement, *El Día*, November 11, 12, and from November 14 to November 17, 1932. See also cinema advertisement, *El Día*, November 30, 1932.

848 See cinema advertisement, *El Día*, November 19, 1932.

849 Cinema advertisement *El Día*, December 4, 26, 28, 29, 1932.

850 Advertisements, *El Día*, December 11, 17, 1932.

851 Advertisement, *El Día*, December 30 and 31, 1932.

852 Advertisement, *El Día*, December 22, 24, 25, 27, 1932.

853 Advertisement, *El Día*, January 17, 1933.

1933, Cordovez was administering not four but three cinemas. During the first half of April 1933, prior to the opening of the Bolívar Theater, either a silent or a live event was sometimes presented in some of the cinemas.⁸⁵⁴

The second half of April represented a marked division from the first half of the month, and indeed from other months, because after the opening of the Bolívar not even one silent was screened in any of the purpose-built cinemas of the city until late April 1933, when this monograph ends. This is more evidence that the opening of the first purpose-built cinema had an enormous impact in different ways on the cinematographic sphere in Quito.

On May 8, 1933, it was made public that the Edén had been granted to another person: "Since the first of May, Damián Miranda has been in charge of the Edén Theater. Mr. Miranda has started the repairs and cleaning in order to open its doors to the public after the long lease that the cinema company had."⁸⁵⁵ With the opening of the first purpose-built sound cinema, Cordovez had three cinemas, and the opening of the Bolívar marked the birth of a new cinema company in the city: That of the Mantilla brothers.

Translating the English-language Films

The second season of the arrival of sound films in August 1931 in Quito did not begin with a Spanish-language movie, but rather with *El desfile del amor* (*The Love Parade*, 1929), which was in English, and "included translations into Spanish on each scene of the film."⁸⁵⁶ This film was one of the various films in English that were imported from 1931 to April 1933, and the predominance of films in English over the movies in Spanish became evident. The massive importation of films in English could be explained by Kristin Thompson's argument about what South American audiences would rather prefer in 1931: "English sound pictures made by first-class actors with titles in Spanish to a Spanish talkie done by poor actors."⁸⁵⁷ However, in the case of Quito, the analysis of the sources suggests that other aspects must be examined to understand whether Thompson's statement applies to the case of Quito.

First, there is evidence that people did not see as a plus, for instance,

854 Only two silent screenings took place during April: see Advertisement, *El Día*, April 1, 1933 and Advertisement, *El Día*, April 3, 1933. This month there were also two live events instead of screenings: Advertisement, *El Día*, April 10 and 11, 1933.

855 "Teatro Edén," *El Comercio*, May 8, 1933.

856 Advertisement for *El desfile del amor*, *El Día*, August 16, 1931.

857 Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 162.

that *El desfile del amor* was in English and not in Spanish:

This movie provoked some interest, due to its plot, but, the perfection of the sound of the words is not complete because of the deficiency of the device; also, the fact that the film was made in the English language somewhat reduced the attraction to the spectacle... (...) ⁸⁵⁸

The reason for the success of an English language film such as *El desfile del amor* in Quito seems to lie somewhere else. This can be seen when analyzing the reviews of *El desfile del amor* in comparison to those of a Spanish-language film such as *Un hombre de suerte* (1930), exhibited right after *El desfile del amor*: “Un Hombre de Suerte,” all in Spanish, is an especially funny film with little music but very pleasant. The nicest and most attractive figure is Rosario Pino, who visited Quito a few years ago.” ⁸⁵⁹

From the aforementioned, it becomes clear that music was the determining reason for why *El desfile del amor*, a musical, was mostly praised and finally made the difference between this film and *Un hombre de suerte*, a non-musical. In addition to this, it is noteworthy that Rosario Pino was not described as a ‘poor actress,’ but was rather highlighted for her closeness to the audiences in the city. Something similar occurred in 1930, with the reception of *Sombras de gloria* and *El gran Gabbo*, as already examined in Chapter 6, since the Spanish-language film *Sombras de gloria* had a wonderful reception compared to the one given to the English-language movie *El gran Gabbo*, which was taken out of screening almost immediately, even though its leading actors were the already known Erich von Stroheim and Betty Compson.

The same was true in Colombia where, according to Quito’s press, people also tolerated some dialogue in English, but the most appealing feature for Colombian audiences was the music. “The main attraction is the music, but the public does not object to a reasonable amount of dialogue in English, provided that this is in concord with the musical theme. Movies featuring opera musical compositions and no dialogue are highly popular.” ⁸⁶⁰

In spite of the comments that circulated in the local press which

858 “Presentación del cine parlante efectuada ayer,” *El Comercio*, August 15, 1931.

859 “La temporada de cine parlante,” *El Día*, August 21, 1931.

860 “Las películas sonoras en Colombia,” *El Debate*, November 13, 1930.

made the audiences' position towards the first English-language films clear, it remains unclear why so many more English-language films were imported than Spanish-language movies. In fact, this did not only occur in 1931; but the same happened in 1932 and even up until April 1933, when the time period of this monograph concludes, as shown in the next lines:

From August 1931 to December 1931, 20 films were sound films in English and 7 were in Spanish; from January 1932 to December 1932, 86 films in English were screened while 35 were in Spanish; and from January 1933 to April 1933, 48 sound films were in English and 7 in Spanish.

The high import of English language films in comparison to the Spanish language movies occurred in spite of the fact that in the multilingual studios the production of Spanish language films was high. For example, 'in 1930, thirty 'Hispanic' films were made, a figure that went up to over forty in 1931...' ⁸⁶¹ This raises the question as to whether English-language films were less an indicator of the audiences' preferences, and more of the decisions made by those in charge of importing the films to Ecuador. Another possible explanation is also that with dubbing and subtitling being available in the early 1930s as methods of translating the films in English, English-language films were not seen as a problem in Ecuador.

Since most films shown in Quito during 1931 were in English, different ways were put into practice for making locals understand these films. One of the ways used to solve the language barrier was to screen the English-language films with some sort of written text in Spanish. Written texts in Spanish, something that according to the descriptions seems to be early attempts of subtitling, were not referred as subtitling in the local press. For example, as for *La expiación del Dr. Fu Manchu*, there were three different names to describe the inclusion of texts with the film: the texts in Spanish were described as 'titles,' ⁸⁶² in another advertisement, they were called 'explanatory titles,' ⁸⁶³ and it was also said that the film was going to be screened with 'leyendas' or short stories in Spanish. ⁸⁶⁴ A similar description was given for the texts used in the musical *Dulcísima* and *Debajo de la máscara*. It was said that *Dulcísima* would have 'letreros' or explanatory signs in Spanish. ⁸⁶⁵ *Debajo de la máscara* was advertised with 'letreros' or

861 John King, *Magical Reels*, 32.

862 Advertisement for *La expiación del Dr. Fu Manchu*, *El Día*, August 30, 1931.

863 Advertisement for *La expiación del Dr. Fu Manchu*, *El Día*, September 3, 1931.

864 Advertisement for *La expiación del Dr. Fu Manchu*, *El Día*, September 2, 1931.

865 Advertisement for *Dulcísima*, *El Día*, September 22, 1931.

signs in Spanish.⁸⁶⁶

There were other films in which even though the advertisements wooed moviegoers to hear the actor's voice,⁸⁶⁷ they mentioned nothing about whether they had a mode of translation or not. Such was the case with *La danza de la vida* (*The Dance of Life*, 1929),⁸⁶⁸ *La revista Fox follies*,⁸⁶⁹ and *Monte Carlo* (*Monte Carlo*, 1930).⁸⁷⁰ In addition to these, the mode of translation in non-musical films such as *El carnaval de la vida* (*A Woman of Affairs*, 1928), *Orquídeas salvajes* (*Wild Orchids*, 1929),⁸⁷¹ *El puente de San Luis Rey* (*The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, 1929), *Los cuatro diablos* (*4 Debits*, 1928), *Viejo amor* (*Lover Come Back*, 1931), *El pagano* (*The Pagan*, 1929), *Venganza del desierto*⁸⁷² (*Desert Vengeance*, 1931), *La divina dama* (*The Divine Lady*, 1929), *Viva el peligro* (*Welcome Danger*, 1929), and *Romance* (*Romance*, 1930) was also not mentioned.

Translating films by using texts in Spanish was not something new in 1931, given that this mode of translation was already used at the very beginning of sound screenings of *El gran Gabbo* in 1930. Even though this film had this mode of translation, as already pointed out, *El gran Gabbo* was only shown twice in Quito.

In addition to texts, there were other ways in which to translate English-language films. For example, *Africa habla* (*Africa Speaks*, 1930) signaled the use of another strategy used to overcome the language barriers posed by sound film in Quito. This film, advertised as if it were in Spanish,⁸⁷³ was accompanied by a recorded narration in Spanish. As explained by Donald Crafton, the film "... preserved the old-fashioned separation of sound from the picture by advertising itself as "an exciting feature" . . . accompanied by a Movietone lecture."⁸⁷⁴ Moviegoers in Quito were warned about this in the advertisement since they were told in advance that "... you will not understand a word of the dialect spoken by the black Africans (...), but the accompanying narration, all-spoken in Spanish,

866 Advertisement for *Debajo de la máscara*, *El Día*, September 29, 1931.

867 Cinema advertisement, *El Día*, December 14, 1931. See also, cinema advertisement, *El Día*, December 28, 1931. See also cinema advertisement, *El Día*, December 29, 1931.

868 W.L., "La danza de la vida," *El Día*, September 13, 1931.

869 Advertisement for *La revista Fox Follies*, *El Día*, September 17, 1931.

870 Advertisement for *Monte Carlo*, *El Día*, September 4, 1931.

871 Advertisement for *Orquídeas Salvajes*, *El Día*, September 15, 1931.

872 Although *Venganza del desierto* was advertised as 'completely spoken,' nothing was said of its mode of translation into Spanish.

873 Advertisement for *Africa habla*, *El Día*, October 3, 1931.

874 Crafton, *The Talkies*, 388.

will explain widely what is going on, although to be honest no words are necessary to see how men fight against beasts and to observe the weird rites of these tribes (...)"⁸⁷⁵ To Crafton, although Hoefler claimed that all the animal sounds were original, it is clear that the sound is all post-dubbed.⁸⁷⁶ *Africa habla*, originally entitled UBANGI,⁸⁷⁷ was very successful in Quito. Thanks to the 'Dirección de Estudios,'⁸⁷⁸ the film was shown to more than one thousand children at the Popular Theater.⁸⁷⁹

Two more films that were advertised as completely spoken in Spanish, even though in the cast there is no Spanish speaking personnel, is *Por el Congo (Up the Congo, 1930)*⁸⁸⁰ and *Trader Horn (Trader Horn, 1931)*⁸⁸¹. According to the American Film Institute (AFI), *Por el Congo* has synchronized lectures available in English, Spanish, German, French, and Italian,⁸⁸² which suggests the possibility that the screening of this film was accompanied by a recorded lecture in Spanish in Quito. *Por el Congo*, a film about an expedition to Africa, was directed by the explorer Alice M. O'Brien. This Sono Art production⁸⁸³ was described as a rival to *Africa habla* in the local press.⁸⁸⁴

As for *Trader Horn (Trader Horn, 1931)*, it is important to mention that this is one of the first dubbed pictures produced by MGM. By the end of 1931, *Trader Horn* was dubbed in French.⁸⁸⁵ In Quito's press the film was billed as a picture in Spanish which evidences the fact that the film was shown with translation into the local's mother tongue, but it is unknown whether the film was shown accompanied with a Movietone lecture or dubbed into Spanish. *Trader Horn* is regarded as "the first non-documentary film shot on location in Africa"⁸⁸⁶ This fact was highlighted in local advertisements.⁸⁸⁷ Although *Trader Horn* was produced one year later

875 Advertisement for *Africa habla*, *El Día*, September 28, 1931.

876 Crafton, *The Talkies*, 388.

877 Crafton, *The Talkies*, 388.

878 "Los niños disfrutarán de la lindísima película Africa Habla," *El Día*, October 11, 1931.

879 "Africa habló ayer para nuestros niños," *El Día*, October 13, 1931.

880 Advertisement for *Por el Congo*, *El Día*, December 27, 1931. *Por el Congo* did not premiere in 1931, but on January 1, 1932 see advertisement for *Por el Congo*, *El Día*, January 1, 1932.

881 Advertisement for *Trader Horn*, *El Día*, August 12, 1932. *Trader Horn* premiered in Quito on this day.

882 <https://catalog.afi.com/Catalog/moviedetails/12980>

883 Advertisement for *Por el Congo*, *El Día*, December 27, 1931.

884 Advertisement for *Por el Congo*, *El Día*, January 1, 1932.

885 De Gaizka, "American Films in Latin America," 165.

886 *Wikipedia*, s.v. 'Trader Horn,' [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trader_Horn_\(1931_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trader_Horn_(1931_film))

887 Advertisement for *Trader Horn*, *El Día*, August 12, 1932.

than *Ingagi* (*Ingagi*, 1930), in the case of Quito the two films were shown at relatively the same time, which may have led the audiences to combine these two stories, which of course was not the intention of the Hollywood producers.

Besides these modes of translation into Spanish, films in Spanish were exhibited, which of course needed no translation. Some Spanish films had native Spanish-language actors, whereas others had English actors who performed in Spanish. In the latter case as in, for instance, *Estrellados* (1930), *Amor Audaz* (1930), *La vida nocturna* (1930), and *Su íntimo secreto* (*Her Private Affair*; 1929), seeing the big silent stars talk in Spanish, with no need for translation, was an appealing characteristic.

The information about translation into Spanish was no longer pointed out in many advertisements after 1931 even though the English-language films dominated the cinemas schedules. Thus, I refer to only 1931 in this part.

It should be also mentioned that the different people's reception of the two English-speaking films, *El gran Gabbo* and *El desfile del amor*, both of which seem to have been translated into Spanish, in less than one year is striking. Thus, what seems to have made the difference in the successful reception of *El desfile del amor* had more to do with the music that the film contained.

Silent Stars Who Spoke Spanish

The Spanish-speaking of the silent cinema stars, who were non-native actors, was used as a selling point to appeal to moviegoers. In Keaton's case, the appealing aspect was two-fold: First, the actor was known as 'Stone Face', meaning that he was a character that showed little expression on his face in his representations in silent films. Second, the fact that his spoken Spanish was imperfect was used as an attraction: "The man who never laughs, the great 'Stone Face' speaking Spanish with a touch of Yankee, will make the public crack up."⁸⁸⁸ With Keaton's Spanish-speaking, hilariousness was, therefore, guaranteed.⁸⁸⁹ Moviegoers were told that he would appear 'speaking in broken Spanish': "Two hours of continuous laughter. The height of heights! BUSTER KEATON jabbering in Spanish!"⁸⁹⁰

888 Advertisement for *Estrellados*, *El Día*, December 17, 1931.

889 Advertisement for *Estrellados*, *El Día*, December 17, 1931.

890 Advertisement for *Estrellados*, *El Día*, December 18, 1931. *Estrellados* premiered in Quito on this day.

According to Crafton, audiences abroad liked Buster Keaton's talkies better than the American audiences.⁸⁹¹ This can be evidenced in the reception of the original versions of Keaton's films. For example, although *Free and Easy* (1930), the original version of *Estrellados*, did well at the box office, Keaton's performance in the film was not praised.⁸⁹² As for *Doughboys*, the original version of *De frente, marchen* (1930), the film failed at the box office and the critique was not good.⁸⁹³

More than one year after Keaton's movie *Estrellados* was discussed in Quito's press,⁸⁹⁴ this film, billed as spoken and sung in Spanish,⁸⁹⁵ premiered in the city.⁸⁹⁶ After *Estrellados*, already in 1932, *Casamiento forzado* (*Spite Marriage*, 1929), another film by the actor, was screened in Quito.⁸⁹⁷ *De frente, marchen*, advertised as Keaton's best Spanish-language film, was exhibited in Quito in late 1932.⁸⁹⁸ In an account published in the local dailies, Buster Keaton, whose career "was terminated by the coming of sound,"⁸⁹⁹ analyzed the difficulties and differences silent comedians faced combining jokes with the arrival of sound. In April 1932, *El Comercio* published:

And it is true that with the new talking feature of the screen, funny incidents and comical ideas become scarcer and scarcer, insofar as the old jokes of pantomime do not work anymore for the purpose. Comical actors, consequently, are always on the hunt for daily life festive adventures, for journalistic jokes or for humorous incidents that some fertile brain came up with; in other words, they are where it is possible to extract an explosion of hilarity. "Sometimes, something funny that happens in real life gives us new ideas," says Buster Keaton. (...) The jokes of comedies in order to be really funny must be taken from real life. Words are more necessary for realism, affirms Keaton.

891 Crafton, *The Talkies*, 428.

892 *Ibid.*, 321.

893 *Ibid.*, 322.

894 Miguel de Zarraga, "La cinematografía parlante en español," *El Comercio*, October 3, 1930.

895 Advertisement for *Estrellados*, *El Día*, December 19, 1931. See also advertisement, *El Día*, December 20, 1931.

896 Advertisement for *Estrellados*, *El Día*, December 18, 1931.

897 Advertisement for *Casamiento forzado*, *El Día*, April 26, 1932. *Casamiento forzado* premiered on this day in Quito.

898 Advertisement for *De frente, marchen*, *El Día*, October 16, 1932.

899 Paul Grainge et al., "The Rise of the Studios and The Coming of Sound," in *Film Histories: An Introduction and Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 154.

“In a silent comedy I once saw a comical episode in which a charlatan ‘esteópata’ was entirely twisting the head of a man over his shoulders. Impossible, of course... but nevertheless, hilarious in the pantomime. In a sound film this would not even provoke a smile.

“In my opinion, the psychology of this issue is that words are a normal function, and that if they are accompanied by something abnormal, they destroy each other mutually.

The fact is that the humorous absurdities of other times now fail completely. Furthermore, audiences nowadays are more demanding. (...) They are more amused by credible gags with believable incidents.”

Keaton, who will soon begin his next comedy for the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, insists that since the advent of sound cinema, the farces that have been screened are comical by themselves. Indeed, *Estrellados*, *De Frente*, *Marchen* and others which will soon be playing, are quite witty, without having to resort to the exaggerations of old silent films.

“It is harder, perhaps, to make them,” declares the comedian; “but they have placed comedy on a higher level than the farces of other times. And the most comfortable thing is that one no longer needs to hit and get tremendous punches, for which by the way, one should certainly pat oneself on the back.”⁹⁰⁰

Evidently, to Keaton, the inclusion of words had forced cinema to become more real. Furthermore, comedy, according to scholars, “is also the genre that changed most with the coming of sound.”⁹⁰¹

There were also other non-native stars, such as Adolphe Menjou, who performed in the Spanish language, but their mastery of the language was not a cause of laughter: “It is not surprising that Menjou, the cynical Menjou, speaks Spanish so well. He is a complete artist who absolutely masters five languages.”⁹⁰² Menjou was considered one of the few lucky actors to whom “foreign-language films provided a fortuitous lifeline...”⁹⁰³ The famous actor’s Spanish speaking skills were even described as follows: “Adolphe Menjou and Rosita Moreno, in the purest Spanish, that is what

900 E. Mc. Near, “Los chistes en el cine parlante,” *El Comercio*, April 21, 1932.

901 Ibid., 153.

902 Advertisement for *Amor audaz*, *El Día*, May 6, 1932. This film premiered in Quito on this day.

903 Scott Eyman, *The Speed of Sound*, 333.

Amor Audaz (1930) offers.⁹⁰⁴ *Amor audaz* was the Spanish-language version of *Slightly Scarlet* (1930) starring by Adolphe Menjou and Rosita Moreno. *Amor audaz* was billed as Menjou's first Spanish-language picture. The rest of the cast was native Spanish-speaking⁹⁰⁵ billed as Hollywood stars.⁹⁰⁶

Laurel and Hardy were other non-native silent stars who performed in Spanish. Their film *La vida nocturna*, the alternate-language version of *Blotto* (1930),⁹⁰⁷ was the third Spanish-language film ever screened in Quito.⁹⁰⁸ In reference to Laurel and Hardy, producer Hal Roach said: "The prices we got in South American countries and Spain were fantastic, (...) A Laurel and Hardy short in the Argentine would be like a feature picture."⁹⁰⁹ These two comedians also performed in the musical *La canción del gitano* (*The Rogue Song*, 1930).⁹¹⁰ The parts in which Laurel and Hardy appear were intermingled throughout the film at the last minute to increase the picture's appeal.⁹¹¹

Sound films with foreign lead actors who performed in Spanish continued being exhibited in 1932. *El tenorio del harem* (1931), which was the alternate language version of *Arabian Knights* (1931), was one of them.⁹¹² *El tenorio del harem*'s main star, Slim Summerville, born in the United States, performed in Spanish. Universal wanted this comedian to act in Spanish because of his proficiency in various languages.⁹¹³ The film was billed as being completely spoken in Spanish.⁹¹⁴ Soon after the premiere of this film, *Oui, oui Marie* (*We! We! Marie!*, 1930), Summerville's English-language short film, was also screened in Quito.⁹¹⁵ This short film was actually

904 Advertisement for *Amor Audaz*, *El Día*, May 4, 1932.

905 Advertisement for *Amor Audaz*, *El Día*, May 7, 1932. See also advertisement for *Amor Audaz*, *El Día*, May 11, 1932.

906 Advertisement for *Amor Audaz*, *El Día*, May 14, 1932.

907 *Internet Movie Database (IMDb)*, s.v. 'La vida nocturna,' http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0211725/trivia?tab=mc&ref_=tt_trv_cnn

908 Advertisement for *Vida nocturna*, *El Día*, August 26, 1931.

909 Eyman, *The Speed of Sound*, 334.

910 Advertisement for *La canción del gitano*, *El Día*, December 4, 1931. *La canción del gitano* premiered in Quito on this day.

911 *Wikipedia*, s.v. 'The Rogue Song,' http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rogue_Song

912 *El Tenorio del harem* premiered in Quito on March 8, 1932. See advertisement for *El Tenorio del harem*, *El Día*, March 8, 1932.

913 'El Tenorio del harem,' *El Día*, March 6, 1932.

914 Advertisements for *El tenorio del harem*, *El Día*, March 7, 8 1932. In addition to Slim Summerville, Tom Kennedy was another American actor who was part of the cast. The rest of the performers were native Spanish-speakers. Summerville and Kennedy also performed in the English-language version *Arabian Knights* (1931).

915 Advertisement for *We! We! Marie!*, *El Día*, March 22, 1932. *We! We! Marie!* premiered in Quito on this day.

produced before *El tenorio del barem*. However, as indicated, it was screened afterwards in Quito. Since *Oui, oui Marie* was a short film, it accompanied the screening of other films such as the musical *Faldas cortas* (*Good News*, 1930),⁹¹⁶ starring Bessie Love, among others. In addition to these pictures, Summerville's *Lasca la amadora* (*Lasca of the Rio Grande*, 1931)⁹¹⁷ was also shown in the city. This Summerville film was combined with *Oui, oui Marie*, also with the same actor.⁹¹⁸ In *Lasca la amadora*, Summerville starred along with the American actor Leo Carrillo. This was Carrillo's first sound film in Quito. After this actor's movie, *Dos padres* (*Homicide Squad*, 1931) was screened in the city.

Airplanes and Sound Cinema

The arrival of sound cinema is connected in various ways to the spread and consolidation of air transportation in the city. To begin with, in 1933, the cinema company 'Empresa Cines de Quito' decided to use airplanes in order to bring the film *Cristus* as quickly as possible for Easter.⁹¹⁹ They used this means of transportation knowing that the brand-new competition would open the first purpose-built sound cinema venue, the Bolívar Theater, in one week with the premiere of the *Sign of the Cross* (1932). In this way, they could not afford to waste time and bring it via the ordinary route used until then - by boat to Guayaquil, the port, and from there by railway to Quito.

April 1933 was the first time that the local press reported the use of airplanes to transport films in general, particularly sound films (Fig. 21).⁹²⁰ Although it is not clear whether *Cristus* was transported by air directly to Quito or to Guayaquil only. It is possible that the film arrived by air to the port and then by land to Quito, which can be inferred from the characteristics of the mail transportation at the time. If, however, the film arrived directly to Quito, in addition to the role played by airplanes at the time and the speed of the arrival of films to the city, this event allows us to understand something else: In terms of the transportation of things to Quito and the dependence of Quito on the port of Guayaquil, airplanes

916 Advertisement for *Faldas cortas*, *El Día*, March 22, 1932. The film premiered in Quito on this day.

917 Advertisement for *Lasca la amadora*, *El Día*, April 17, 1932. *Lasca la amadora* premiered in Quito on this day.

918 Advertisement for *Lasca la amadora*, *El Día*, April 17, 1932. See also cinema advertisements, *El Día*, April 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 28 1932.

919 Advertisement for *Cristus*, *El Comercio*, April 7, 1933.

920 Advertisement for *Cristus*, *El Día*, April 7, 1933.

gave the capital independence from the port.

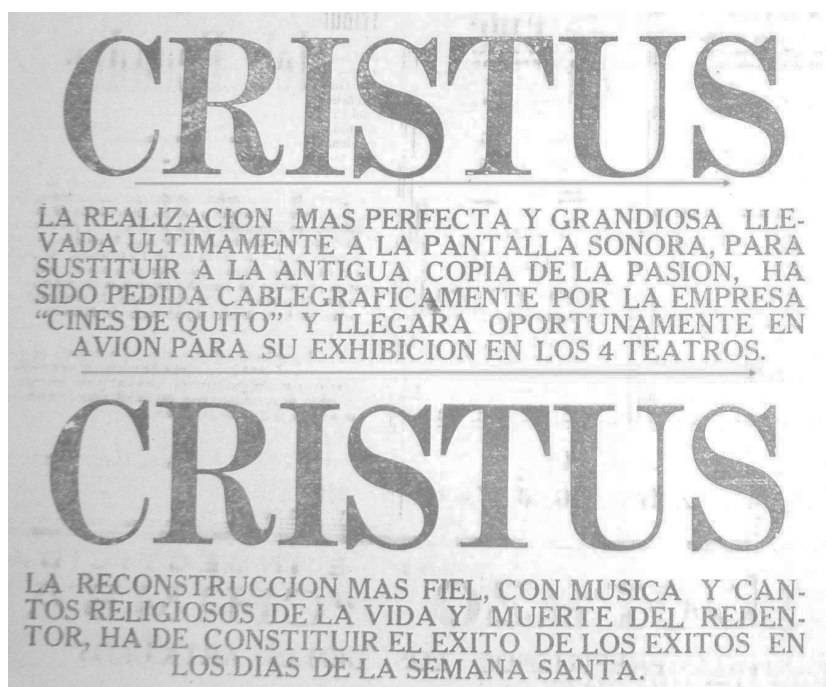


Figure 21: ‘Cristus, the most perfect and grandiose production that has been recently brought to the sound screen to substitute the copy of *The Passion* (unknown) has been ordered by cable by the company ‘Cines de Quito,’ and will arrive promptly on aircraft for its exhibition in the four cinemas.’

Before the use of airplanes to mobilize reels, transportation was different during the silent period, because cinema was highly dependent on the railway. Indeed, the screening of the films depended entirely on land transportation, which of course caused occasional delays. For instance, in 1932, *El rey vagabundo* (*The Vagabond King*, 1930) could not be shown on the appointed day since the film could not reach Quito because of an involuntary mistake by the person in charge at the main port.⁹²¹ The intersections of sound cinema and airplanes are further examined below.

In addition to bringing sound moving pictures more quickly and possibly directly to Quito, there is another intersection between sound cinema and airplanes. The first sound film exhibitions, which occurred in 1930, coincided with the starting point of the construction of this city’s

921 Advertisement for *El rey vagabundo*, *El Día*, June 17, 1932.

airport.⁹²² The airport was built far away from the city center in ‘Cotocollao.’ The land for this purpose was bought at around eighty thousand sucres.⁹²³ With the starting point of the construction of the airport in Quito, airplanes continued making use of the city’s airspace, as they had already been to the city years before, and, at the same time, they also started to conquer the space of the former silent cinema pictures, as *Sombras de gloria* represented the first time that the sound of airplanes were heard in cinemas.

In spite of the fact that the city did not have an airport yet, airplanes were already transporting cargo, but not yet people. This is illustrated in the following text of the early 1930s, in which the author expresses surprise about the transportation of humans to other places:

In many regions, airplanes can be used for the transportation of scholars to lakes and meadows. In this way, they are enabled to safely, easily and in just a few weeks cross zones and territories that would demand a difficult and dangerous trip by land during several months and seasons.⁹²⁴

In the late 1920s, airmail was still dependent on the railway system. For instance, in 1929, the ‘Compañía aérea de transportes Pan American Grace Airways Inc.’ or ‘Pan American Airline Company’ was in charge of airmail and it still transported Quito’s mail by railway to Guayaquil, and from there abroad by airplanes.⁹²⁵ In spite of the dependence of airmail on the railway in Quito, the perception of time and space was widely altered by the arrival of airplanes. In particular, what was constantly noted was the speed of events. This is evidenced in the following quote where in addition to the content of the message, what strikes the narrator the most is the fact that the letter was dated September 15, 1930, in New York and that he had seen it just ten days later in Quito: “Last night, a friend of ours received a letter by air mail, which was stamped in New York on the 15th of the current month, and from which we have managed to copy the following paragraphs.”⁹²⁶

The use of airplanes for airmail does not imply, for instance, that other products were transported by this means. For example, medicines continued coming by ship to the country and to Quito even in 1933 as

922 “Inicianse los trabajos del Campo aviatorio de Quito,” *El Comercio*, September 14, 1930.

923 “Terreno para el campo de aviación de esta ciudad,” *El Día*, August 28, 1930.

924 “Exploraciones científicas con aeroplanos,” *El Comercio*, January 25, 1930.

925 “Correo aéreo,” *El Día*, April 24, 1930.

926 “Las victrolas,” *El Debate*, September 26, 1930.

shown below (Fig. 22):⁹²⁷



Figure 22: “From the factory... to the pharmacy. Our supply is direct, incessant, and to scale. This is why we can always offer fresh, and legitimate medications at lower prices.”

In 1933, airplanes also allowed contemporaries to explore places that were otherwise difficult to access. For instance, airplanes were used to photograph the Incas’ archaeological place, ‘Cochasquí.’⁹²⁸ The R-4 aircraft was piloted by the Ecuadorian pilot Cosme Renella, who was accompanied by the photographer Heleodoro Donoso. The pictures had been requested by the ‘Ministerio de Guerra’ [War Ministry].

The photograph shoot was probably motivated by previous information published in local dailies which stated that aircrafts had been used to photograph archeological places in Yucatán, Mexico by the North American pilot Lindberg. The local newspaper reported:

927 Advertisement for Boticas Sucre, *El Día*, March 23, 1933.

928 “Desde el avión R-4 se tomó fotografías de las ruinas incásicas de Cochasquí,” *El Comercio*, January 20, 1933.

That the airplane is of an indisputable utility for the study of a place in its totality has become evident. It helps point out geographical features; the study of nature and the distribution and extent of the forests; to draw roads; and, in general, to mark areas by groups; to explore. (...)

By using the airplane, we have discovered ancient cities that have not previously been seen. How interesting it would be to explore our jungle by airplane.⁹²⁹

As part of the third point of the intersection between sound cinema and airplanes, it should be noted that airplanes, or rather the sound of these technological devices, played a crucial role in the promotion of the first sound films in the city. Right from the beginning of the first sound cinema exhibition in September 1930, the advertisements for sound films contained a description of the sounds of airplanes.

In addition to these three characteristics, there is one more point of intersection between, not sound but silent cinema and airplanes. In early 1930, when Ecuador was facing economic difficulties, cinema exhibitions took place in the city in order to collect funds to buy a national airplane.⁹³⁰

929 "Exploraciones científicas con aeroplanos," *El Comercio*, January 25, 1930.

930 "Función cinematográfica para coleccionar fondos para comprar un avión," *El Comercio*, July 29, 1930.

Chapter 10 First Purpose-built Sound Cinema Venue

Putting into Stone the Debate of Late 1929

Introducing Comfort and Hygiene in the Bolívar

The change in *El Comercio*'s discourse on cinema after the announcement of the opening of the Bolívar Theater⁹³¹ was striking, as it began to discuss this entertainment as a healthy and selected amusement⁹³² rather than describing it as the dangerous distraction it had been regarded for quite some time, as examined in Part I. With the opening of the Bolívar, the Mantilla brothers claimed that they had fixed all the problems of the silent cinemas in the new venue. In this way, aspects such as comfort, hygiene and the control of sound were emphasized in the Bolívar, which made of the new theater the embodiment of the demands of the public debate with respect to the infrastructure. With respect to the censorship of films, nothing was mentioned in *El Comercio*, when the Bolívar Theater opened.

As for the issue of comfort in the new venue, problems such as crowding, standing, and smoking were solved. For instance, it was mentioned that the Bolívar Theater was made large in order to avoid crowding, as it was located in a city whose population had clearly increased:

In a few hours, Quito is going to have a modern theater, in which spectators will be comfortable and free of disturbance. Thus, the painful sacrifice of spending hours and hours standing will have ended, as well as that unspeakable discomfort that one had to bear with resignation and deference because the considerations of regular theatergoers have always been underfunded.

The spacious building has been constructed in accordance with modern requirements, taking into account the daily increase of the population, without omitting any detail, in order to create luxury

931 "El cine parlante en Quito," *El Comercio*, March 1, 1930.

932 "El Teatro Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

worthy of a capital.⁹³³

In addition to avoiding crowding, the former problem of standing during the exhibitions was solved by offering a comfortable viewing position aided by the large size of the screen and its strategic location on the stage:

The screen, which dominates the stage, has been placed in such a way that it receives the projection so that any seat of the stalls, the preference high seats or the gallery has a clear view of the screen. This way the problem of comfortable viewing is resolved without the need to stand or to look for good seats ahead of time, since the moving pictures and the performances taking place on the stage can be clearly seen from every vantage point.⁹³⁴

The solution to the problems of crowding, standing, and the central location granted to the screen, which was of 7x9 meters,⁹³⁵ shows the importance given to the visual aspect in a place in which recorded sound was going to have a central position. In addition to those mentioned above, other aspects also contributed to enhancing the visualization, such as the fact that the floor was inclined: "Viewing considerations have also been the motive for the inclination of the theater floor, which appears to comprise three distinct gradients."⁹³⁶

As already pointed out, the reinforcement of the central place of visuality, even with the advent of sound, is noteworthy as it demonstrates that instead of replacing visuality, hearing boosted the visual elements such as the screen. In other words, hearing strengthened the former sense that was already relevant for contemporaries, that is, sight. Although it may sound contradictory, the fact is that with the installation of sound equipment, contemporaries expected to experience an enhanced viewing:

It will not be new among the audience that the Bolívar Theater at a certain moment in time be called a movie theater, given its legitimate, brilliant character of a theater for plays, suited for a polymorphic spectacle, inaugurated as a movie theater and, only yesterday, the excellent optics of its movie projector were explained to us by an expert. Since the installation of this projector is the correct choice, there is a well-founded expectation of perfect

933 Quiteño, "El Teatro Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

934 "El Teatro Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

935 "La inauguración del Teatro 'Bolívar' y la prensa de la República," *El Comercio*, April 19, 1933.

936 Enrique Espinosa Palacios, "La Sala del Teatro Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 16, 1933.

viewing.⁹³⁷

In addition to the above, the gradual lighting system adopted in the new theater was another aspect that helped improve visualization:

Immediately afterwards, the elegant velvet curtain was raised from the stage and the white projection screen appeared, framed by colorfully impressive decoration, the work of the renowned master decorator Mr. Beltrán.

The system of lights that go on and off in progression had the best results. In this way, the powerful lamps do not bother the sight of the moviegoers. Once it is dark, at intervals, dark color lights placed in the main aisles lightly reflect faint rays that guide late arrivals.

With the lights turned off, the projection and sound equipment first announce the trademark of the distinguished Klangfilm sound system brand and then the logotype of the Paramount movie studio, the producer of the great film *The Sign of the Cross*, (...) ⁹³⁸

Furthermore, to enhance viewing by avoiding the flickering of moving images, a power plant was installed that had two groups of converters.⁹³⁹ To perfect the visual, smoking was prohibited in this theater as it was considered something that made women uncomfortable.⁹⁴⁰ Also, the distance from one seat to another was adjusted, and other measures were taken into account:

Before discussing acoustics, and as a complement to this paragraph, we will add certain additional dimensions that complete our idea of the hall's accommodations. The width of the aisles: one meter twenty, one meter fifty; the distance among backrests of the seats from row to row, eighty-five centimeters; the width of each seat from one arm to the other, fifty centimeters. It just so happens that foreign building regulations specify precisely these measurements as comfortable. (To be continued)⁹⁴¹

From the latter, it becomes clear that these ideas of comfort had been

937 Enrique Espinosa Palacios, "La Sala del Teatro Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 16, 1933.

938 "La solemne inauguración del Teatro Bolívar fué un acontecimiento social," *El Comercio*, April 17, 1933.

939 "Vista total de los grupos eléctricos," *El Comercio*, April 1, 1933.

940 "El personal del teatro," *El Comercio*, April 1, 1933.

941 Enrique Espinosa Palacios, "La Sala del Teatro Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 16, 1933.

adopted from abroad and that these were replicated in Quito, following overseas standards and particularly from America:

This concept of the super comfort of American halls has now been reproduced in our city. An enormous effort, given the resources at our disposal and the poverty of our environment, has endowed the urban progress of the city with one of its best works.⁹⁴²

All these characteristics made the Bolívar Theater a comfortable venue.⁹⁴³ In addition to highlighting the comfort linked mostly to the visual aspect, the local press of course emphasized the acoustics of the first-purpose built sound cinema. In this way, not only sight, but also hearing was discussed when the new venue opened. Hearing, however, was mostly linked to adjectives of hygiene rather than to comfort in the assessment of the quality of the sound produced by the sound equipment: “We have read that the cinemas of the United States are wonderfully sumptuous, are very spacious, and have exceptional viewing and acoustic conditions that produce an exceptionally clear⁹⁴⁴ sound and image quality among today’s widespread sound cinema.”⁹⁴⁵

From this account, two details become evident. Contemporaries learned about the *acoustics* of the venues abroad, in addition to other features, by reading newspapers and magazines. This was the motivation to do in Ecuador what was done abroad. In addition, the discourse on hygiene had also reached sound. Hygiene was also used in relation to viewing: “The moviegoers of the Variedades will very soon enjoy everything to be desired in movie viewing: comfort, spaciousness, ventilation, sharpness⁹⁴⁶ of projection, perfect sound reproduction, and absolute absence of all external noise.”⁹⁴⁷

The same adjectives regarding hygiene were also used to refer to the projection of the Variedades Theater when Cordovez renovated his cinema right before the opening of the Bolívar:

The hall has been extended by several meters at the rear, thereby allowing an increase in the number of seats, which adds

942 Corina, “Teatro Bolívar,” *El Día*, April 18, 1933.

943 “El nuevo teatro de la capital,” *El Día*, April 17, 1930.

944 In the original quote it says: “... para la limpia nitidez del sonido...”

945 Corina, “Teatro Bolívar,” *El Día*, April 18, 1933.

946 In the original quote it says: “nitidez de proyección.”

947 Advertisement for the Variedades, *El Día*, March 29, 1933.

to the second-floor stalls. There is now room to comfortably accommodate SIX HUNDRED seats. To one side, there is a long balcony, a preference stall with capacity for seating thirty people. In addition, there is a spacious lobby in the front part of the theater, allowing comfortable access and exit to and from the auditorium, as well as preventing crowding, which our public is accustomed to when buying admission tickets.

Equipment of Western Electric dual brand dual completes the modernization of the hall, since these apparatuses are well known for the clarity⁹⁴⁸ of their projection and first-class performance. The screen has been enlarged in order to produce a bigger screening area since the projection booth is further away.

The installation of electric fans as well as large skylights will enable the maintenance of the circulation of fresh air at all times and keep the auditorium pleasantly cool. (...)

With this new hall, the public of Quito will have two first class cinemas: the Bolívar and the Variedades, which will be capable of satisfying the most demanding tastes in movie viewing.⁹⁴⁹

The Bolívar's Facade and Hygiene

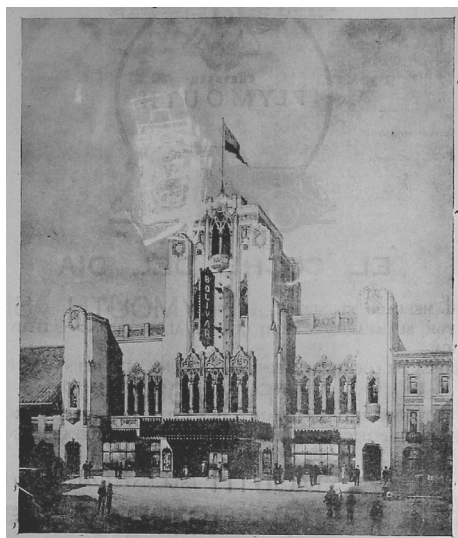


Figure 23: Artistic rendering of the facade of the Bolívar Theater⁹⁵⁰

948 In Spanish, "nitidez"

949 Arizona Kid, "La modernización del Teatro Variedades," *El Día*, March 30, 1933.

950 The facade of the Bolívar Theater, *El Comercio*, April 1, 1933.

The day that the Bolívar was inaugurated, the facade was not ready. This is why, prior to the opening, the Mantilla brothers did not issue a photograph of the facade of the theater but rather an artistic rendering of the front part. In spite of this, the discussion around the facade of this building was enormous in comparison to the debate of the facade of the silent cinemas in Quito, which signals the importance that facades had acquired in the late 1920s and early 1930s in the city.

Drawing on Lefebvre's analysis, according to whom both the facade and privacy were born with the coming of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisification of the nobility,⁹⁵¹ we can argue that the Bolívar's facade is certainly evidence of the expansion of the bourgeoisie in Quito as well as an expression of their power through monumentality. The Bolívar Theater thus stands as evidence of the strength gained by the bourgeoisie in the city. There is no doubt that the city was becoming more bourgeois at the time. According to the author, in the bourgeois building the outside dominates the inside, as what really matters is "what one sees and what is seen."⁹⁵² The facade is part of making things more visible and visual although they actually hide and blur something.⁹⁵³ This is why the Bolívar's facade can also be seen as a demand for more privacy.

In addition to being evidence of the expansion of the power of the bourgeoisie in Quito, the facade of the Bolívar Theater allows us to understand the change of concepts through architecture. For example, hygiene in the Bolívar Theater was confined to the interior, to the hidden and private part of the venue, and not to the front, as was claimed to be at the Variedades. In other words, the facade shows us how the concept of body hygiene in these kinds of public places had changed in Quito. In conclusion, the discourse on hygiene had expanded not only to sound and the quality of sound, but also to architecture.

Sound at the Bolívar Theater

Another feature that was demanded during the debate of late 1929 was synchronization between moving images and sound. In order to achieve this, the Mantilla brothers imported the Klangfilm A.E.G. Siemens, which was one of the best on the market:

951 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 314.

952 Ibid., 315.

953 Ibid., 315.

The brand of the theater equipment is the distinguished Klangfilm, A. E. G. Siemens with double projectors, the 1933 model, which is the latest technology in the improvement of this kind of machine. The sound equipment, consisting of two projectors, ensures the complete screening of the movie without the need for intermissions. The booth has several motors and auxiliary devices which, in total, weigh two and one-half tons of all the sound equipment. The distance of the projection of the lens from the screen on the stage is 56 meters, which requires special lenses. The screen measures 7 x 9 meters.⁹⁵⁴

The apparatus was regarded as the largest sound cinema equipment, manufactured by the German brand Klangfilm, in South America.⁹⁵⁵

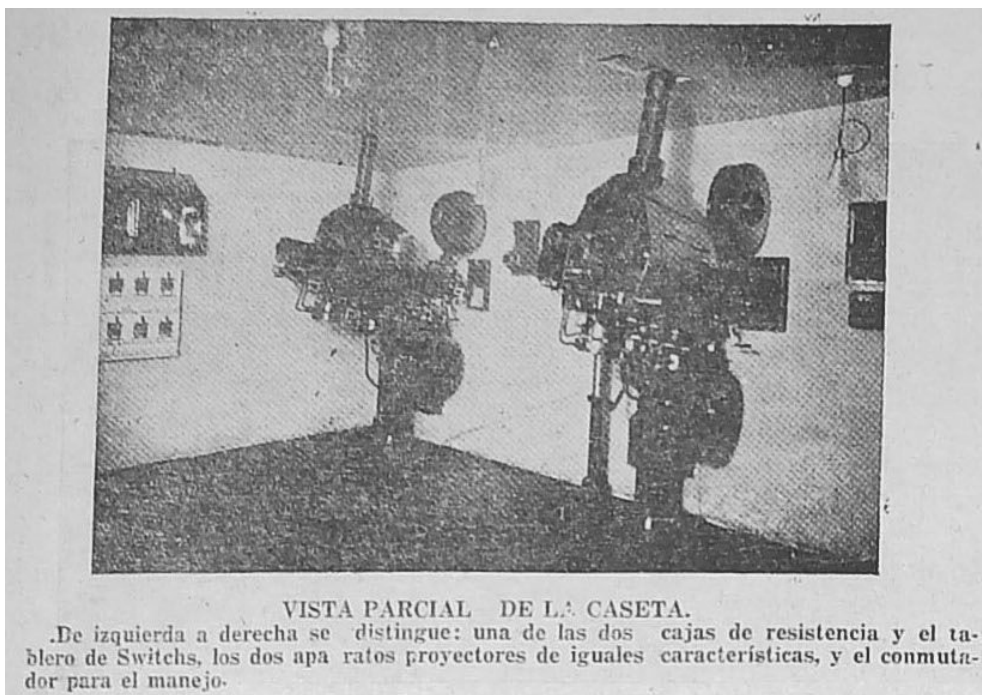


Figure 24: “Partial view of the booth. From left to right: one of the two resistance boxes and the switchboard, the two projectors with the same characteristics, and the handling switch.”⁹⁵⁶

954 “La inauguración del Teatro ‘Bolívar’ y la prensa de la República,” *El Telégrafo*, April 15, 1933 in *El Comercio*, April 19, 1933.

955 “El equipo de cine parlante para el Teatro Bolívar de esta ciudad,” *El Comercio*, January 20, 1933.

956 “El equipo parlante del Teatro Bolívar,” *El Comercio*, March 13, 1933.

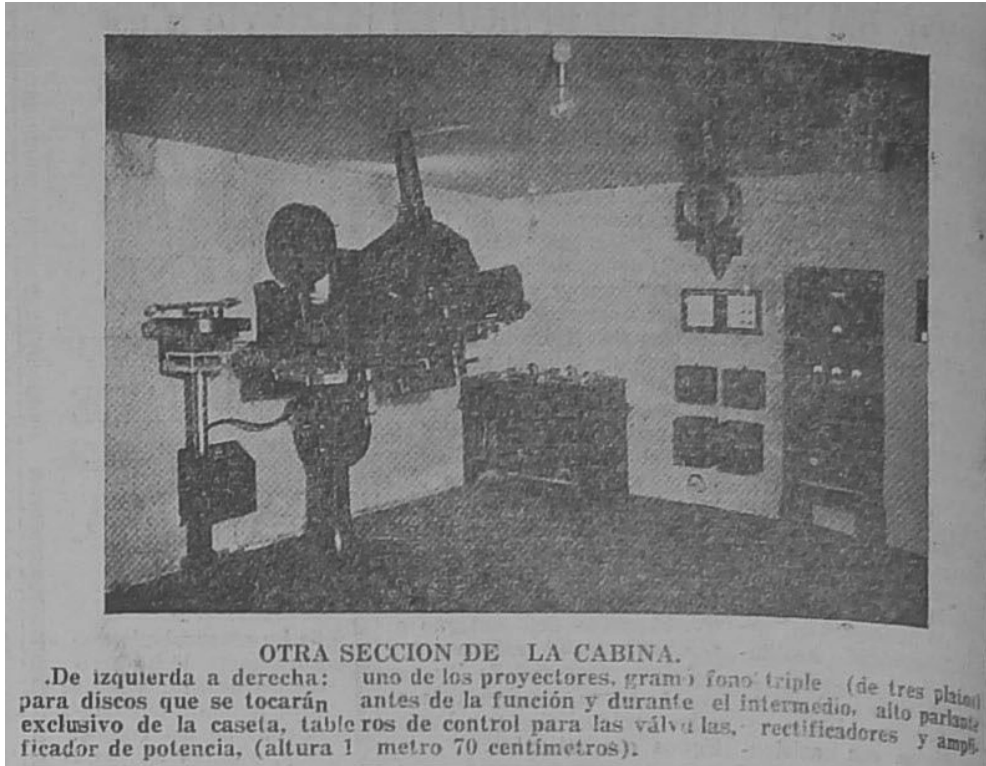


Figure 25: “Another section of the booth. From left to right: one of the triple record gramophone projectors (with three turntables) for records to be played prior to the screening and during the intermission, a loudspeaker exclusively for the booth, control panels for the valves, and power rectifiers and amplifiers, (height 1 meter 70 centimeters).”⁹⁵⁷

In addition to sound films, as the last quotation clarifies, the new equipment offered the possibility to play records. In this way, trendy discs⁹⁵⁸ were played prior to the screenings and during the intermissions. That is, the sound film equipment was used for a twofold purpose: First, exhibiting sound films, and, second, for providing recorded music to the audiences.

To guarantee the quality of sound in the theater, contemporaries did not only rely on the hardware, they also added some changes to the hall to make sure that the equipment would work as desired:

957 “El equipo parlante del Teatro Bolívar,” *El Comercio*, March 13, 1933.

958 José M. Ponce Yepes, “Interesantes datos acerca del Teatro Bolívar, próximo a inaugurarse, y de su equipo de máquinas,” *El Comercio*, March 13, 1933.

To improve the effect of the sound in the hall, some pieces of national cloth have been put, in places conveniently arranged that function as springs, and their purpose is to prevent the reflection of sound waves. This element also eliminates any interference that might exist between the waves that are emitted from the loudspeakers or reflected.⁹⁵⁹

In addition to this, in order to achieve a sharper sound, contemporaries manually controlled the volume of the equipment, depending on the amount of people in the exhibitions:

Depending on the number of attendees, it is necessary to vary the volume of the sound, and to this effect, there is a control box, in which there is a commissioned employee in charge of writing down the variations registered by the device and communicating them through a phone line connected to the booth. This way the operator can perfectly adjust the sound.⁹⁶⁰

One of the aspects of the equipment that was highlighted was the power of the sound system, which filled the entire hall:

Once the lights have been switched off, the projection and sound equipment first announce the trademark of the distinguished Klangfilm sound system brand and then the emblem of the Paramount movie studio, producer of the great film *The Sign of the Cross*, (...) Presented with the power of the sound system filling the hall and the clarity and luminosity of the projection on the huge screen of the theater, the large crowd of moviegoers breaks into sustained applause revealing the enthusiasm with which the audience has embraced these magnificent modern machines that have drawn forth sincere phrases of admiration from those in attendance.⁹⁶¹

In addition to its sound equipment, the Bolívar Theater was regarded as one of the best venues due to the way in which it had integrated both sound and silence since the Bolívar had carefully combined two features demanded

959 "Algunas características del Teatro 'Bolívar' y su acondicionamiento acústico," *El Comercio*, April 1, 1933.

960 "Algunas características del Teatro 'Bolívar' y su acondicionamiento acústico," *El Comercio*, April 1, 1933.

961 "La solemne inauguración del Teatro Bolívar fué un acontecimiento social," *El Comercio*, April 17, 1933.

from these kinds of buildings: Spaces had to be silent and, at the same time, be located in central areas where various kinds of sounds circulated:

Urbanism and monument, correlative ideas as a first requirement for the situation. It goes without saying that when it comes to the functional position of a theater like the Bolívar Theater, two perhaps antithetical and complementary requirements emerge: on the one hand, the theater must occupy a well-attended central place; and on the other hand, it is necessary to free it from the noises characteristic of such a place. As for this occurrence, we consider it a fortunate situation.⁹⁶²

From the aforementioned, we can infer that the longing of control and regulation of sound had reached recorded sound and its spaces. Additionally, the combination of sound and silence was also seen from another perspective, as the perfect combination of sound and moving images in conjunction with the darkness of the room allowed spectators to achieve a spiritual refocus which made them feel the emotions of the characters of the film:

Who has not entered a modern cinema, has not been amazed by the perfection of the latest films in which even the human voice has reached the point of being produced with the most natural nuance. Even theatrical dramas and novels have this level of subjectivity.

In the latter, every reader or spectator feels the emotions of the characters, as suggested by their specific temperament, but they do not identify or embody the characters themselves as in cinema. The perfect combination of sound and image, and even the spiritual reconcentration in the darkness has made all cinema spectators acquire the impression of being the character that palpitates with such intense life on the screen, feel their emotions, have the same perspective, go where they go; in sum, it has made them feel like they live the individual lives of the main characters as they live in their maximum hallucination.

In the two or three hours that the enervating cinematographic chimera lasts, we forget about the vulgarity of daily existence, taking refuge in the moving images of a wonderful world, (...) ⁹⁶³

962 Enrique Espinosa Palacios, "La sala del Teatro Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 16, 1933.

963 Corina, "Teatro Bolívar," *El Día*, April 18, 1933.

In other words, this secular urban space had combined the religious and secular aspects of life by bringing together moving images, sound and even a spiritual focus provided by the darkness of the hall. Spirituality, it seemed, was not only achieved at the time in church and in praying; cinema was also regarded as a space in which this could be reached.

Competing with the sound equipment of the Bolívar, the other cinemas installed machines of different renowned brands. For instance, the Variedades installed Western Electric equipment.⁹⁶⁴ This device, known as 'Equipo doble Western Electric (La voz de la imagen),' was claimed to be the first of its kind to arrive in Ecuador:

All connoisseurs of talking machines will be in agreement with us in categorically affirming that the WESTERN ELECTRIC equipment (the voice of the image) is unique in that its sharpness, the perfection of its fine detail and its impeccable projection make it first among all such equipment in the world. (...) ⁹⁶⁵

Another piece of sound equipment that arrived during those days in Ecuador was for a theater also called the Edén, which was located in another Ecuadorian city, Latacunga. This Edén Theater was owned by the entrepreneur Julio C. Almeida. The sound equipment for this venue came from the Baptista House in Chicago. The test screening, which was done in the Victoria Theater, was very successful.⁹⁶⁶

In the Edén Theater of Quito, the machine installed in 1932 was that of Radio Corporation P. G. 39:⁹⁶⁷ "We are dealing with an apparatus that is the most modern, has a unique clarity, and in which the most insignificant detail of noise is meticulously registered."⁹⁶⁸ The brand of the equipment used for screening the talkies for children installed by the Empresa de Cine Infantil in Guayaquil in 1931, is unknown.⁹⁶⁹

A Modern Building and Various Temporalities of Sound Cinema

The Bolívar Theater is a gigantic construction of art (...) that has combined all of the modern elements that technique offers,

964 Advertisement for the Variedades, *El Día*, March 29, 1933.

965 Advertisement for the Variedades, *El Día*, March 29, 1933.

966 "Equipo parlante para Teatro de Latacunga," *El Comercio*, March 14, 1933.

967 Advertisement for *Ingagi*, *El Día*, September 23, 1932.

968 "Inauguración de un nuevo equipo parlante en el Edén," *El Día*, September 23, 1932.

969 Rigel, "Películas parlantes para entretener a niños," *El Día*, August 15, 1931.

together with sober ornamentation and aesthetics, so that the conditions of spaciousness, comfort and acoustics satisfy the most demanding expectations. The optical properties stand out with the same care and richness of detail.⁹⁷⁰

As is evident, comfort, hygiene and recorded sound had made the Bolívar a modern monument. However, in addition to these features, the materials used in the Bolívar, which began construction on May 23, 1931,⁹⁷¹ also contributed to the Bolívar being regarded as a modern building: “The mountain of durable material that this modern, airy mass has consumed is eloquent proof of the effort that the construction of the Bolívar Theater signifies and of the victory that a work of such proportions, so expensive, so solid and so decorative represents.”⁹⁷²

The materials employed in the venue which had two thousand five hundred seats in total, divided into two floors, the upper and the lower one,⁹⁷³ were the following:

Wood Board	2542
Sand	17 202 barrels
Lime	6403.56 100 lb. bags
Cement	678 barrels
Nails	2107 lbs.
Wood planks	10 175
Hardwood flooring	809 m ²
Rebar	7476 lbs.
Large bricks	275 970
Standard bricks	148 750
Stone slabs	932 barrels
Marble	4200 lbs.
Rocks	20 745
Unfinished stone	200
Cornerstones	146
Carved stone	555.21 meters
Gravel	1736 m ²
4x4	172
Paint	1153.56 m ²

970 “Teatro Bolívar,” *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

971 “Algunas características del Teatro ‘Bolívar’ y su acondicionamiento acústico,” *Nariz del Diablo*, April 1933.

972 “El Teatro Bolívar,” *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.”

973 “Algunas características del Teatro ‘Bolívar’ y su acondicionamiento acústico,” *Nariz del Diablo*, April 1933.

Wire mesh

1250 sheets⁹⁷⁴

There is no doubt that the Bolívar was conceived and perceived as a modern monument due to several characteristics. However, the same can be said of the silent cinemas that had appeared in the city twenty years earlier, as each of them was regarded, due to its particular features, as modern buildings in accord with the time at which they were built. In other words, people regarded their monuments as embodiments of what was to be modern in their own period. Consequently, it was not that people were not modern in those days, but rather the concept of what was modern has varied throughout time. This can be understood by drawing on Lefebvre, to whom time is distinguishable but not separable from space:⁹⁷⁵ "... and this goes too for the relations between places and their respective times. Phenomena which an analytical intelligence associates solely with 'temporality', such as growth, maturation and aging, cannot in fact be dissociated from 'spatiality' (itself and abstraction)."⁹⁷⁶

In fact, according to Lefebvre, "time and space are not separable within a texture so conceived: space implies time, and vice versa,"⁹⁷⁷ which leads me to argue that space is the embodiment of time. If this is so, temporalities coexist everywhere, because not only space, but objects in general have temporalities. Hence, we are constantly surrounded by various pasts, presents, and futures.

How various temporalities and objects coexisted in the early 1930s can be seen in an example of this period when newspapers discussed different temporalities of cinema at the same time. For instance, *El Comercio* discussed the present of sound cinema in the countries that had this technology, but they did so in Quito, which had a different temporality with respect to sound cinema since sound films had not been screened yet in the city. At the same time, *El Día* discussed a different temporality of cinema since it mostly focused on the situation of this entertainment in the capital, i.e. silent cinema. In other words, *El Comercio* discussed the future, and *El Día* discussed Quito's cinema present and past, and in this way various temporalities coexisted at one period of time in the press and in people's minds.

974 "Algunas características del Teatro 'Bolívar' y su acondicionamiento acústico," *Nariz del Diablo*, April 1933.

975 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 175.

976 Ibid., 175.

977 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 118.

Seen from another perspective, the local press discussed the various temporalities of sound cinema by examining the infancy, maturity, and old age of sound cinema, taking as a basis the space in which this innovation arrived. For example, in the United States, in the early 1930s, sound cinema was in its childhood or even youth, but in several countries in South America, including Ecuador, sound cinema had the status of a newborn.

Unlike the temporalities discussed by the newspapers, monuments portrayed different temporalities of sound cinema in comparison to the temporalities shown by the dailies. First, the discussion about sound cinema was visualized in the press for a longer period of time than it was in monuments. Second, some dailies discussed a more mature and developed sound cinema than what locals were seeing in terms of architecture.

As for the monuments devoted to sound cinema in Ecuador, it can be argued that sound cinema had reached its maturity in the city center with the new Bolívar Theater, but this was not the situation in rural areas and equally not even in other neighborhoods in Quito. In relation to other cities in Ecuador, by 1933, in Quito and Guayaquil, sound cinema had reached an age of youth, whereas in the rest of the cities, sound cinema was a newborn and in some of them had not even been born yet.

All in all, newspapers portrayed different temporalities to those portrayed by monuments. This idea contributes to the understanding that in a given time, different pasts, presents, and futures coexist. Put differently, the fact that the three dailies dealt with cinema from different perspectives confirms that contemporaries and we live and have always lived in various temporalities at the same time.

When the first purpose-built sound cinema premiered in 1933, contemporaries were well aware that a different kind of architecture had emerged as a sign of modern urban culture. Drawing on Lefebvre's terminology, people were aware that various social spaces had been encountered in their present time. In this way, the present was loaded by a long process and history of spaces. *El Comercio* noted in April 1933:

When one visits the republics of the continent, entering their populous capitals, one is pleasantly surprised to find in the picturesque colonial city of Quito, which contains so many architectural treasures, especially those of past eras, a monument that, being the best of its genre in the entire length of the Pacific Coast, is a model of solidity, modernity and elegance that would

honor any city.⁹⁷⁸

Cinema is not dangerous

With the opening of the Bolívar, *El Comercio's* discourse on cinema further noticeably changed, and it began to describe it as a form of entertainment with an appropriate infrastructure, thanks to the Bolívar. However, nothing was mentioned about the censorship of films. Thus, cinema was no longer treated as an entertainment form that should be censored to guarantee a healthy social body. Furthermore, cinema was no longer discussed as the entertainment form that had become a focus for rats or bad habits and was corrupting peoples' minds. Cinema was now seen as an enormous source of culture:

... we see in this attitude of Messrs. Mantilla not so much a goal of immediate profit, nor of long-term profit, but rather a noble desire to see the city of Quito embellished, mounting each day one more rung on the ladder of progress.

(...) we have been assured that on one occasion Mr. César [Mantilla], referring to his theater, said that he was satisfied to endow Quito with a first-class theater whose sole purpose was to awaken or, even better, intensify the fondness of the public for spectacles, preferably cinematic ones, that in modern times represent the best source of dissemination of culture.

With respect to cinema as a disseminator of culture, it should be mentioned that both the building and the events that it hosted were seen as playing a pivotal role in the spread of culture. In relation to the building, it was pointed out that:

Very enthusiastic and deserved applause is due to the distinguished compatriots the Mantilla brothers for the triumph achieved with the culmination of a historic monument, the Bolívar Theater, that will serve to culturally educate our own citizens as well as foreigners about public and private customs; (...) ⁹⁷⁹

The image of the role of the monument as a disseminator of culture led to the Bolívar being compared to the newspaper:

978 "El Teatro Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

979 Centro Cultural Cívico de Guayaquil, "Aplausos de la Sociedad Bolivariana a los empresarios del T. Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 22, 1933.

If the palace of 'El Comercio', from which ideas and palpitations of the nation's life spill forth daily over all areas of the republic, is magnificent, the BOLIVAR THEATER, for the delicacy and severity of its architectural lines, for the noble purpose for which it is destined, will be from this day forward the venue of art and beauty, of theatrical culture, essentially educative and emotive.⁹⁸⁰

Evidently, it was no longer only books or newspapers that would disseminate ideas, but also architecture. That is, in the early 1930s, the monuments were also regarded as disseminators of culture because they conveyed messages and educated people. They were seen as massive tools for education. In addition to seeing the building as a disseminator of culture, the shows that this venue would host were also seen as part of this spread:

Such an effort makes you worthy of distinction by your fellow citizens and even by your compatriots, not only for what it means as a contribution to urban beautification, but also as an organ of cultural and artistic diffusion, since the screen and the stage are the best and most effective means for reaching the heart of the masses, hence their civilizing and cultural importance.⁹⁸¹

It becomes evident that not only the monument would serve to disseminate civilization and culture among the masses, but also the films themselves as well as the theatrical plays, or the events would help to achieve this purpose.

In the early 1930s, there is evidence of a shift in the contemporaries' understanding of what civilization was. Instead of seeing civilization mostly in terms of manners and behavior, as in the early decades of Quito, in the early 1930s, contemporaries gave more emphasis to becoming civilized by possessing, by having and not only becoming more civilized through manners as before: "Civilization is not only in the culture of man, but also in the transformation of cities and towns which, like the human being, need a return to the evolution and advancement that the 20th century gives us daily."⁹⁸²

Quito's contemporaries thus regarded culture as something inner;

980 "El Teatro Bolívar," *Ferrocarril del Norte*, April 22, 1933 in *El Comercio*, April 24, 1933.

981 Izquierda Pérez, "Felicitación del señor Ministro de Educación a los empresarios del T. Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 27, 1933.

982 "'La Prensa' de Guayaquil adorna sus páginas con la foto del Teatro 'Bolívar'," *El Comercio*, April 18, 1933.

as manners, behavior, and possibly related to education and cultivation; whereas they saw civilization as something material that at the same time embraced culture. It is also clear that contemporaries saw not only human beings as changing and transforming, but also cities and towns as evolving.

The distinction contemporaries made between culture and civilization also appeared in other contemporary quotes at the time:

a struggle, a dynamism hardly equaled among the people who squander money on trips to Europe without any benefit in order to return later to their country only to talk about what they have seen, the Mantilla brothers, who have also travelled, have made a study of these wanderings and thus knew to bring to Ecuador what it needed: a modern theater that was especially urgent so that the great companies visit our country and have a good impression and thus speak well of the Ecuadorian homeland.

We owe all this to Messrs. Mantilla, who receive our voices of applause for this beautiful work of culture and civilization and for the cultural improvement that it will have for the romantic city of San Francisco de Quito.⁹⁸³

The Bolívar Theater (1933)

Centrality

On April 15, 1933, the first purpose-built sound cinema venue, the Bolívar Theater, was inaugurated in Quito. In this way, the long-expected future materialized in the eyes of the people of Quito and Ecuador. In Koselleck's terms, people's future past, which had been discussed for at least three years in the local newspapers, became the present. Thus, the place in which contemporary people had imagined themselves to be, the dreamed space, what seemed to be impossible, was now crystallized. This was no longer a distant cinema in Hollywood, New York, Paris, Europe or in the neighboring South American cities. This was not in the port of the country either, where most people could rarely go due to the difficulties and expenses in transportation to leave the Andean city of Quito. This was just there, in the city center. In Foucault's terms it may be argued that the Bolívar Theater was the crystallization of a former non-place, or a utopia.

983 La Prensa, "Grandioso éxito en la cultura ecuatoriana," in *El Comercio*, April 21, 1933.

With respect to the location of the new cinema, the building was erected in the center of the city. In fact, the position of this venue was surrounded by bank institutions and luxury shops.⁹⁸⁴ Besides the new theatre's street, the Bolivia street, located between the Guayaquil and Flores' thoroughfares, there were banks such 'Banco del Pichincha,' 'Préstamos,' and soon there was going to open another one, the subsidiary of 'La Previsora.' In the same area, there was also the financial institution 'Caja de Pensiones.' In addition to those, next to the theatre there was the 'Le Chic Parisien' shop, and also City Hall departments and those of the Railway Company.⁹⁸⁵

Located in the heart of the city of Quito, a block and a half from the Plaza de la Independencia [Quito's main square], on a central trendy street, which has become a commercial and banking emporium, the Bolívar Theater rises majestically, architecturally showy for the capital of Ecuador and an obligatory meeting place for modern cultural events and for selective, healthy relaxation, that sweetens daily life while beautifully educating.⁹⁸⁶

Consequently, the new venue was regarded as part of the modern educational-entertainment sphere. In fact, the presence of the Bolívar added a cultural aspect to the financial realm. That is, the presence of the new theatre worked in both ways because shops and banks provided the Bolívar Theater a central location and, at the same time, the new venue contributed to the cultural atmosphere in the area.

The presence of the banks and of the new theatre, which were not far away from the political power represented by the Plaza de la Independencia, located in front of the Presidential Palace, had given a new meaning to the area. In fact, they provoked the emergence of a new concept of centrality in the early 1930s in Quito. The center in this sense was seen as a space in which politics, commerce, finance and culture met. All these together were the center or the heart of the city during this period.

Therefore, a new center was born, with the first purpose-built sound cinema, which replaced the former centrality. As argued by Lefebvre,

984 "Algunas características del Teatro 'Bolívar' y su acondicionamiento acústico," *Nariz del Diablo*, April 1933.

985 "El Teatro Bolívar, de Quito, que se inaugural hoy," *El Telégrafo*, April 15, 1933 in *El Comercio*, April 19, 1933 under the title "La inauguración del Teatro 'Bolívar' y la prensa de la República."

986 "El Teatro Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

centrality is movable.⁹⁸⁷ In addition to this, the emergence of a new centrality in the early 1930s, with the Bolívar Theater, made contemporaries reposition themselves and change their self-perception in comparison to South America,⁹⁸⁸ Europe, and the United States. One reason for this was that the new theater was not an adapted venue; it was actually built to be a sound cinema, which made it one of the best among first-class cities,⁹⁸⁹ and in the entire world:

As for the Bolívar Theater, the German engineer Mr. Emilio Pehnack has said that, contrary to what occurs in other movie halls that are mere adaptations, this is truly a Coliseum, offering magnificent acoustical conditions. It is the best of the theaters on the South American Pacific coast, he says, and can compete with the best of Argentina, Brazil, North America, and Europe. (...) Now not only Quito but Ecuador can say: we have a Theater.⁹⁹⁰

The new position of the Bolívar Theater was also recognized by foreign representatives of Paramount pictures: “We surely consider it a great honor if the largest and most modern theater of the western coast of South America, the Bolívar Theater, opens its doors to the public of Quito with the greatest movie of all times: *The Sign of the Cross*.”⁹⁹¹ In addition, the Bolívar Theater was itself considered an artistic monument that had filled the city with beauty:

The President of the Municipal Council respectfully greets his distinguished friends Messrs. César and Carlos Mantilla and is pleased to send them his enthusiastic and sincere congratulations for the opening of the sumptuous BOLIVAR THEATER a work which, thanks to the initiative and efforts of such distinguished gentlemen, will contribute significantly to the further embellishment of the capital of the republic.⁹⁹²

987 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 331-332.

988 “Coméntase en Guayaquil el adelanto de Quito con el nuevo Teatro Bolívar,” *El Comercio*, March 25, 1933.

989 K CHITO, “Honrosas felicitaciones,” *El Comercio*, April 18, 1933. “... for the unequalled success accompanying the opening of the sumptuous BOLIVAR Theater, a true apotheosis of individual and entrepreneurial effort.

We Quiteños should feel proud of the new theater that will put us in a preferred place among first class cities.”

990 “La inauguración del Teatro ‘Bolívar’ y la prensa de la República,” *El Telégrafo*, April 15, 1933 in *El Comercio*, April 19, 1933.

991 “Opiniones extranjeras acerca del Teatro Bolívar,” *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

992 Luis Aníbal Vega, “Honrosas felicitaciones por la inauguración del Teatro ‘Bolívar’ recibe la

Its central location and its beauty seemed worthy of admiration: “In summary: for its capacity, for the beauties that surround it, for its central location, it is a monument that honors Quito and is worthy of admiration in America.”⁹⁹³

According to de Gaizca, by 1932, that is, right before the opening of the Bolívar Theater, Ecuador had twelve wired venues for sound cinema out of 29 theaters. The following table shows the situation of the wired venues in the country in comparison with others in the region (Table 2):⁹⁹⁴

Country	Theaters Total	Wired
Argentina	1,608	530
Bolivia		8
Brazil	1,100	330
Chile	212	85
Colombia	220	30
Costa Rica	25	5
Cuba	400	123
Ecuador	29	12
Guatemala	28	9
Honduras	26	10
Mexico	701	265
Nicaragua	16	12
Panama	33	29
Perú	100	40
Puerto Rico	112	87
Sto. Domingo	25	15
Uruguay	125	110
Venezuela	125	24

Table 2

Displacement

Each period, each mode of production, each particular society has engendered (produced) its own centrality: religious, political, commercial, cultural, industrial, and so on. The relationship between mental and social centrality must be defined for each case. The same goes for the conditions under which a given centrality will come to an end, -whether it ruptures, explodes, or

empresa,” *El Comercio*, April 20, 1933.

993 “El Teatro Bolívar,” *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

994 De Gaizca, “American Films in Latin America,” 142.

is set apart.⁹⁹⁵

As pointed out by Lefebvre in the aforementioned quotation, each period has its own centrality. In the case of Quito, it is clear that what contemporaries considered the center of the city in the early 1930s should not be taken as the center for other periods of time. The center and centers of each period have to be analyzed by researchers according to the period under investigation. What the center of Quito was when the first purpose-built sound cinema opened its doors in 1933 has already been analyzed herein. So, what was the center before this occurred? It is hard to tell where exactly it was previously, but it is clear that the Hollywood of Quito did not crystallize around the Plaza del Teatro, where the Sucre and the Variedades theaters, or the opera theater and the first purpose-built silent cinema were respectively located:

And it pains us to see how La Plaza del Teatro (Spanish for The Theater Square) is losing prestige and being relegated to oblivion. People's ingratitude or the fatal law of time? We once believed that Quito's Broadway would be created there: a lot of light, a lot of cars, many theaters, many restaurants, plenty of cabarets and, from time to time, the occasional fuss at night. It even seemed to us that once the prestige of the street where the post office is ended, by inheritance the supremacy would go to Guayaquil Street. But God does not want it to be that way. Quito's Broadway is taking shape on Bolivia Street, from the corner of the Cathedral eastbound. In fact, Banco Pichincha breaks the line, the Baca Bros. Department Stores now begin to sparkle at night, the Caja de Pensiones (Spanish for Pension Fund Office) attracts half of the civilian and military population from its second floor, and on the ground floor, the Chic Parisién dazzles, (...). Ah, but a little further away, what a marvel! The BOLIVAR THEATER lighting its crystal pupils under the control of hundreds of electric bulbs, (...). Here and there, hotels everywhere. In short, the luminous Broadway of Quito has begun to make noises of sirens and applause from the theaters.⁹⁹⁶

It seems evident that the Plaza del Teatro was already losing prestige by 1933 due to the fact that a new center had been born in Quito. By the author's account, the way in which one place was replaced by another

995 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 331.

996 E. A. G., "La futura calle Broadway de Quito," *El Comercio*, April 20, 1933.

was attributed to two events: the ingratitude of people and the fatality of time. Drawing on de Certeau's idea of what transforms a place into a space and vice versa, it can be said that by *attending* the Bolívar Theater, people condemned the former cinemas to disappearance.⁹⁹⁷ In other words, the act of going to the new cinema had made the Bolívar into a space, and at the same time converted the former screenings into places. Consequently, attending the Bolívar displaced even the neighborhood in which some of the silent cinemas and the opera theater were located.

All in all, silent cinema had been displaced in three ways until this point: through the public debate of the local press, through the screenings schedule, and in terms of location. In the first way, silent cinema was displaced by *El Comercio*, when this daily condemned to oblivion the silent cinema entertainment in Quito by not publishing almost anything about it from December 1929 to early 1933. In spite of this, people could read about this entertainment in *El Día* and for some time in *El Debate*. In other words, one can condemn a space to oblivion not only by not attending it or walking to it, but also by not reading about it, not discussing it, and not publishing about it. That is, in addition to de Certeau's argument that one can condemn a space to become a place by not walking it, it is evident that spaces can be forgotten by not reading about them. Is it not the case that when we do not read about an event this equals not attending a screening, or a concert? We consume it, but in a different way, and with different purposes.

With respect to the second point, the displacement of the silent screenings from the schedule occurred steadily from August 1931 onwards when the sound screenings began to be exhibited in tandem with silent screenings. In the third way, from April 1933 onwards, the Bolívar Theater displaced the silent cinemas, as its emergence increased people's disregard of the silent cinemas because they no longer walked to them. The opening of the Bolívar provoked the emergence of a new rank in the theaters, as it was ahead of the older cinemas.

In addition to moving the center somewhere else, this venue also manifested displacement in another way. The Bolívar Theater was not seen as an appropriate building for Quito since the city was located in the Andes, simply far away from everything. In other words, this building was seen as not appropriate for a complex geographical city:

Ours is still a fledgling environment for these kinds of spectacles,

997 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 99.

perhaps partly because of the acute economic crisis that we have been enduring which gets worse by the day, without any hope of a prompt recovery. The decision, therefore, to construct a theater such as the Bolívar, for an Andean population located very far from the beaches of the sea and in which the communication channels have still not opened the doors to immigration which brings money and business to inject vital energy into the population, was an admirable enterprise...

We have heard highly favorable comments from many people on this undertaking of the Mantilla Brothers, but in fact some criticize it, and considering the theater too large for our city...⁹⁹⁸

Even though this theater was seen as both displaced in the city and from the present, it was regarded as an appropriate place for the future:

True, we have said, remembering some similar cases. However, the fact is that the businessmen of the Bolívar, with an intelligent vision, without ignoring the sacrifice that their crowning achievement entailed, created an architectural gem for the future, the criterion that should always be a priority for any talented builder. (...), and one day, which may well not be very long from now, the Bolívar theater, the gala of Quito, will be of sufficient capacity for the size of Quito's population.⁹⁹⁹

In spite of the fact that sound cinema had displaced the silent one from various angles, this should not be understood as saying that silent cinema disappeared entirely in Quito, since this entertainment was still alive at home, and in other non-theatrical spaces such as schools. This is why, even though the cinemas in the city continued screening sound films in 1933 when the Bolívar was inaugurated, silent cinema later coexisted with sound cinema in different ways.

998 "La inauguración del Teatro Bolívar," *Semana Teatral*, April 16, 1933 in *El Comercio*, April 19, 1933 under the title "La inauguración del Teatro 'Bolívar' y la prensa de la República."

999 "La inauguración del Teatro 'Bolívar' y la prensa de la República," *Semana Teatral*, April 16, 1933 in *El Comercio*, April 19, 1933.

Constructing the National around the Bolívar Theater

National identities, as we have seen, represent attachment to particular places, events, symbols, histories. They represent what is sometimes called a particularistic form of attachment or belonging.¹⁰⁰⁰

Together with *Guayaquil de mis amores*, the records and the phonographs, the first purpose-built sound cinema boosted the arousal of communal feelings, such as those of patriotism, nationalism, unity, and pride. Several facets of the Bolívar contributed to the emergence of the communal sentiment of patriotism. One of these was certainly the name of the venue, since as mentioned by de Certeau, names “are the stars directing itineraries”:¹⁰⁰¹ “A whole series of comparisons would be necessary to account for the magical powers proper names enjoy. They seem to be carried as emblems by the travelers they direct and simultaneously decorate.”¹⁰⁰²

The purpose of having named the new cinema Bolívar was made clear on the opening night by Carlos Mantilla, one of the owners of *El Comercio* and of the theater:

In taking the sacred name of the Liberator to name this building, its owners, consistent with the constant and sincere reverence for the Father of the homeland that Ecuadorians profess, have proposed to pay a new tribute to the Bolívar, to the teacher, the educator, the orator, the patriot.¹⁰⁰³

One of the main purposes of giving the theater this name was thus to strengthen patriotic feelings. The name of a place is not neutral; it is not innocent: In de Certeau’s point of view, it always pursues something.¹⁰⁰⁴ The use of the name of the Bolívar also reminded people of who Bolívar was, not only to contemporary generations, but also to future ones:

1000 Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity,” 598.

1001 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 104.

1002 Ibid.

1003 “La solemne inauguración del Teatro Bolívar fué un acontecimiento social,” *El Comercio*, April 17, 1933.

1004 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 105.

That the mere fact of having honored, with the name of Simón Bolívar, the Great Liberator of the five republics, a work which extols the greatness of Ecuadorian culture, is one of the sublime ideals that inspired its builders; that our people, on entering the grandiose space of the Bolívar Theater of the Capital, will evoke at once the memory of the greatest Americanist through history, who without equal, consecrated his youth, his studies, his fortune, his tranquility, his triumphs and defeats to the unique and powerful ideal of Great Colombia, (...)

DECREES: First- Very enthusiastic and deserved applause is due to the distinguished compatriots the Mantilla Brothers for the triumph achieved with the culmination of a historic monument, the Bolívar Theater, that will serve to culturally enlighten our own citizens as well as foreigners about public and private customs; (...)¹⁰⁰⁵

In addition to the feeling of patriotism, the sentiment of nationalism was also aroused by this monument. One element that contributed to seeing this monument in such a way was the use of local handwork in the construction of the building: "Laudable above all is to have used national manufacturers for most of the furniture and decoration, which proves once more the uncommon spirit of imitation and perfection that distinguishes the Ecuadorian craftsman."¹⁰⁰⁶

Second, in addition to the name and the use of local handwork in the construction of the feeling of patriotism and nationalism, the playing of the national anthem and the attendance of political figures on the opening night, including the president, was another element that boosted national feeling:

The select audience, including the president of the Republic and his family, the ministers of the State, the President and Municipal Councilors, members of the honorable Diplomatic Corps and the most distinguished members of our society, completely filled the spacious and elegant compartments of the Theater, giving a striking view full of elegance and distinction.¹⁰⁰⁷

1005 **Centro Cultural Cívico de Guayaquil**, "Aplausos de la Sociedad Bolivariana a los empresarios del T. Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 22, 1933.

1006 Corina, "Teatro Bolívar," *El Día*, April 18, 1933.

1007 "La solemne inauguración del Teatro Bolívar fué un acontecimiento social," *El Comercio*, April 17, 1933.

Third, the people themselves made the Bolívar Theater a national monument. People made this venue a national one by walking to the building from all over Quito and different parts of the country. In other words, as mentioned by de Certeau, walking was an important practice, in this case, in the construction of the Bolívar as a national building. That people from different parts of Ecuador went to Quito for the opening of this venue can be evidenced in the Royal Hotel's advertisement offering people from provinces good price deals due to the opening of the new venue (Fig. 26):¹⁰⁰⁸



Figure 26: “On the occasion of the opening of the Bolívar Theater, the Royal Hotel offers special prices to its provincial customers: interior rooms, 4 and 5 sucres. Rooms with a view of the street, 6 and 7 sucres. Rooms with a view of the street with bathroom and W.C. 8 and 10 sucres. DAILY, including breakfast, lunch, food, and bathroom. (...)”

Fourth, in addition to the pilgrimage from Quito and other parts of Ecuador making the theater a national building, different practices such as writing about the theater, reading in the newspapers about the theater, and commenting about it also made the Bolívar a meaningful place:

1008 Advertisement for Hotel Royal, *El Comercio*, April 12, 1933.

The owners of the Bolívar Theater have received numerous effusive congratulations from all social classes of the city in various forms: gifts of flowers, visits, brief letters, and telephone calls all of which have pleased the owners for the high regard in which their efforts are held. They have also received telegrams from various cities of the country and from theater entrepreneurs, as well as cablegrams from overseas, congratulating them and applauding them for this crowning achievement.¹⁰⁰⁹

Writings in Quito's press from different parts of Ecuador was pivotal for making the Bolívar Theater a national effort. The various accounts from other parts of the country showed that the monument was recognized as national, which stands as evidence of the impact of the building on the arousal of communal feelings of nationalism outside Quito: "Riobamba, April 16.- (Correspondent).- The solemn opening of the Bolívar Theater has had an impact on the entire Republic, as was natural, given the magnitude of the work and its cultural significance."¹⁰¹⁰

Riobamba's daily, *La Razón* also expressed its opinion of the new theater on its editorial page: "The Bolívar Theater is not only a success for its owners, but for the country and, of course, especially for Quito."¹⁰¹¹ Another example also from Riobamba:

ANTONIO ALVAREZ (...) is pleased to congratulate you on the opening of the Bolívar Theater, a magnificent building that enhances your personas. By offering it to the public, you have given a proof of how much individual effort it thus contributes to the beautification of this noble city, progenitor of Latin American freedom.¹⁰¹²

There were also accounts in Guayaquil.¹⁰¹³ In addition to this, the

1009 "La solemne inauguración del Teatro Bolívar fué un acontecimiento social," *El Comercio*, April 17, 1933.

1010 "Honrosas felicitaciones por la inauguración del Teatro Bolívar recibe la empresa," *El Comercio*, April 17, 1933.

1011 "Honrosas felicitaciones por la inauguración del Teatro Bolívar recibe la empresa," *El Comercio*, April 17, 1933.

1012 Antonio Alvarez, "Felicitaciones por la inauguración del Teatro Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 29, 1930.

1013 "Será inaugurado hoy en Quito el Teatro Bolívar," *El Universo*, April 15, 1933 in *El Comercio*, April 19, 1933 under the title "La inauguración del Teatro 'Bolívar'." "Not only Quito but also Ecuador can boast having a theater of the category of the Bolívar, the best, the largest and most modern of the western coast of South America."

monument was also seen as national because its opening was considered to have helped Ecuador's image abroad.¹⁰¹⁴

The conservative daily *El Debate* was the only outlet I found that questioned the fact that the new theater was a national deed and hinted that it was no more than a business:

We have often lamented in these very same columns that the most profitable businesses, the most indispensable public services, are in foreign hands, that although they tend to the advancement and COMFORT of the population and give jobs to the national workers, on the other hand they are a permanent drain on the national wealth which, in the end, suffers and produces a disequilibrium in the balance of payments.

The gold mines, the oil fields, the transportation companies, the production of basic necessities, the very same venues for spectacles, are businesses that enrich a few foreigners, many of whom do not even know our country. None of this is national, and not because there is a complete lack of capital or of an environment favorable for ensuring the businesses' profitability here, but rather because of a lack of initiative, of sufficient encouragement, of proven perseverance, of practical sense to study the public needs and meet them to the extent that is required, in an opportune way.¹⁰¹⁵

El Debate thus revealed the tension between a private building and its public use. For this daily, it was not enough for a business placed on Ecuadorian soil to receive the adjective of national, as various companies located in the country were in foreign hands and therefore only taking money out of Ecuador. In addition to this, it was also not enough to bring comfort to the population and work to the locals, and claim that because of this they should be called national as they were still removing the country's money and provoking a disequilibrium in finances.

This is why *El Debate* pointed out that the opening of the Bolívar Theater should be seen as a good example, but that the national industry should emerge so that the benefits of these businesses could go to the hands of compatriots and benefit the entire country economically:

1014 Carlos Dousdebés, "Honrosas felicitaciones por la inauguración del Teatro Bolívar recibe la empresa," *El Comercio*, April 19, 1930. "... All of these details, which have such a favorable impact abroad for the country, deeply satisfy the national fervor."

1015 "El ejemplo es oro," *El Debate*, April 20, 1933. See also "El ejemplo es oro," *El Comercio*, April 20, 1933.

What a pleasant impression it would make on us that, appreciating the value of this example, national business and industry in its different forms would emerge, and that all the restructured companies would be in the hands of compatriots, for the benefit of the country. This would be an era of true progress and national economic reconstruction.¹⁰¹⁶

The tension between a private building and its public use was raised by Carlos Mantilla, one of the Bolívar's owners on the night of the venue's opening. In an effort to bridge this tension, he explained the situation in the following terms:

If it is evident that most companies of this kind emerge from private efforts, it is also clear they are returned to the community and only the latter's sympathy or support can sustain them; for the same reason, the opening of public institutions like the Bolívar Theater belong even more to the society for which they have been created and for the city that embraces them.¹⁰¹⁷

As we can see, even though Mantilla was fully aware that the new theater was a private one, he considered the monument to nevertheless be a public building, since the public was the reason why the theater was built, and they would be the ones to use it. Furthermore, the responsibility of the survival of the new venue was no longer that of the Mantilla brothers, but entirely of the public. However, in spite of Mantilla's position and many contemporaries regarding the Bolívar as a public building in the sense that it was a building for all, there were voices who expressed that the new theater was a private one: "The owners deserve all sorts of congratulations and voices of encouragement for the great effort that they have made, expending their energy and money on a project that speaks well of individual effort."¹⁰¹⁸

Even though the Bolívar was seen as a private building constructed by the Mantillas, the theater continued arousing communal feelings throughout country. Among these feelings was that of pride:

Far from any kind of flattery, but strictly by way of judging things

1016 "El ejemplo es oro," *El Debate*, April 20, 1933. See also "El ejemplo es oro," *El Comercio*, April 20, 1933.

1017 "La solemne inauguración del Teatro Bolívar fué un acontecimiento social," *El Comercio*, April 17, 1933.

1018 Un Quiteño, "El Teatro Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

that are in plain sight, I must confirm in writing the pleasant impression I had when visiting the majestic edifice, pride of the City and pride also of those who have dedicated all their efforts to provide the Capital with a soon-to-be opened sumptuous theater.¹⁰¹⁹

The feeling of pride was felt not only in Quito, but in different cities in the country, such as in Guayaquil: “We have left for this day the tribute that “La Prensa” pays to the dean of the capital on the occasion of the opening of the magnificent and imposing building, today pride of Quito and all of Ecuador: the Bolívar Theater.”¹⁰²⁰ In fact, the feelings of pride were extended to other parts of the continent, as the following contemporary Argentinian voice shows:

... but also to highlight in a special way, my most ardent congratulations for the success you have both achieved by fulfilling in the broadest way the noble, patriotic and cultural goal that inspired you in giving real, tangible form to so cherished a desire.

The Company that you so worthily direct, as well as the hospitable and intelligent public of this city, can be profoundly convinced that the Bolívar Theater is the pride not only of those who planned it and gave it shape but also of all Ecuador, which from this day forward with deep satisfaction has the theater shining in its core, one of the most precious jewels of scenic and cinematographic art that exists in America for its luxury, its comfort and its scale.¹⁰²¹

Another communal feeling that emerged with the Bolívar Theater was that of progress not only for Quito, but for the entire country. This was felt in the lower social classes as well as in the upper ones, as evidenced in the following account signed by the representatives of the Banco del Pichincha, of which Cordovez was part: “... signifies for the Capital a true advance and a step forward for national progress.”¹⁰²² Also: “I have had the great pleasure of attending the opening of the sumptuous ‘Bolívar Theater’ and I hasten to address you to express my warmest congratulations for this work which has contributed to the ever-increasing advancement and progress of

1019 Un Quiteño, “El Teatro Bolívar,” *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

1020 “‘La Prensa’ de Guayaquil adorna sus páginas con la foto del Teatro ‘Bolívar,’” *El Comercio*, April 18, 1933.

1021 “Honrosas felicitaciones por la inauguración del Teatro Bolívar recibe la empresa,” *El Comercio*, April 18, 1933.

1022 Alberto Acosta Soberón, *El Comercio*, April 18, 1933.

this beautiful Capital.”¹⁰²³ Such was the praise, that the two brothers were granted the title of Progressive Citizens by the City Hall:

For having contributed to the beautification of the city, to the dissemination of culture among its inhabitants, with the modern construction of the BOLIVAR THEATER, artistic work in which your impetus can be appreciated, worthy of recognition by the Public Authorities, for which reason the city council declared you PROGRESSIVE CITIZENS of this capital.¹⁰²⁴

Thus, the Bolívar was soon seen as part of the other buildings constructed by the Mantilla brothers, such as the daily and the horse rink. All these monuments were regarded as big contributors to the progress of Ecuador.¹⁰²⁵

Messrs Carlos and César Mantilla directed their activities to giving the city, known as Light of America, a newspaper and triumphed fully, making of ‘EL COMERCIO’ one of the most prestigious voices of the republic and one of the best in South America. Its Palace, its machinery and branches fill Quito with pride, and afterwards they provided a splendid field for equestrian sports; now they provide a beautiful model theater that rivals the greatest of South America. If all this and the many other progressive activities of the Messrs. Mantilla, which cannot be denied, along with industriousness, skill and yearning for the cultural advancement of the Capital, are not worthy of praise and collective recognition, we do not know what could be.¹⁰²⁶

In addition to increasing the communal feelings of patriotism, nationalism, unity, pride, and progressivity, the Bolívar Theater in 1933 played the same role as that played three years earlier by the film *Guayaquil de mis amores*, the phonographs, and the sound films: It strengthened the feeling of unity in a country that was severely struck by regionalism.

1023 Julio Prado Valdez, “Honrosas felicitaciones por la inauguración del Teatro Bolívar recibe la empresa,” *El Comercio*, April 17, 1933.

1024 R. Jaramillo, “Honroso acuerdo del municipio de esta capital, ante la inauguración del Teatro ‘Bolívar,’” *El Comercio*, April 30, 1933.

1025 Mario Luque, “Honrosas felicitaciones por la inauguración del Teatro Bolívar recibe la empresa,” *El Comercio*, April 21, 1933. “You are of the kind of wealthy persons who elevate and transform countries; and yours is a patriotism that is effective, constructive and worthy of emulation for the happiness and progress of Ecuador.”

1026 “Honrosas felicitaciones por la inauguración del Teatro Bolívar recibe la empresa,” *El Comercio*, April 17, 1933.

Part III The Lived Space of Sound Cinema

Understanding the Lived Space of Sound Cinema

The last space, which completes the other two spaces in the social production of space, is lived space. Although it is the last one, it is very much connected to conceived space. According to Lefebvre, in fact, “the lived experience of the space is not divorced from theory.”¹⁰²⁷ The author sees no separation between how space is planned, built, and experienced; it is an interaction between them all.

On the contrary, lived experience partakes of the theoretical sphere, and this means that the division between conceptualization and life (though not the need to draw distinctions and exercise discernment) is artificial. The analysis of bourgeoisified space validates the theory of abstract space. What is more, inasmuch as this theory unifies the lived and the conceptualized it exposes the content of abstraction while at the same time reuniting the sensory and the theoretical realms. If the senses themselves become theoreticians, theory will indeed reveal the meaning of the sensory realm.¹⁰²⁸

From Lefebvre’s last quote, it can be inferred that this is a point of intersection between these spaces, where, if one studied only the materiality of sound cinema, one could also understand how it was conceptualized and planned. The same would happen if one studied only the planning or the experiences of the material space; one would be able to understand materiality as well, and so on. According to Lefebvre, another point of intersection of these three spaces lies in the fact that even though the conceived and perceived spaces interact with each other, this does not make them, as we have seen, a *socialized* space. To Lefebvre, for space to become experienced, a social subject must dwell in it:

Space is conceived of a being transformed into ‘lived experience’ by a social ‘subject’, and is governed by determinants which may be practical (work, play) or biosocial (young people, children, women, active people) in character.¹⁰²⁹

1027 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 316.

1028 *Ibid.*, 316.

1029 *Ibid.*, 190. graph.

Evidently Lefebvre sees an intersection between the conceived, the perceived, and the social subject who transforms the two former spaces in the lived space. Before moving forward, it is important to clarify that to Lefebvre, the term 'users' is a pejorative term. For this reason, the author prefers to talk about the lived or experienced space. However, the author utilizes the term 'users' in order to clarify for the reader the different social actors that participate in the process of the social production of space. In this monograph, I use this term in the same sense as Lefebvre and de Certeau. That is, I understand the social actors as people who experienced, conceived and perceived spaces.

Chapter 11 Living the Sounds of Sound Films

This part of the analyses covers the way in which the inclusion of recorded sound was publicly discussed in relation to the experience of contemporaries when watching the first sound film shown in the city, *Sombras de gloria*, the first films that screened the sounds of wild animals, and the first movies that made audiences hear airplane sounds.

1. The Reception of *Sombras de gloria* (1930)

Sombras de gloria received excellent reviews in the three local dailies after its test screening,¹⁰³⁰ and the audiences responded with a massive attendance to the showings.¹⁰³¹ Simply put, *Sombras de gloria* was a hit in Quito. This situation contrasts to the one analyzed by Colin Gunckel to whom many early films in the Spanish language were “met with the ridicule or indifference of local audiences” by the Spanish-speaking public in Los Angeles.¹⁰³² To achieve success for the film, in a time of economic crisis, exhibitors requested the solidarity of the inhabitants of Quito by evoking the future of the country: “The whole city of Quito has to make a maximum effort to contribute to the success of the first test screening, which will define the cinematographic future of the country.”¹⁰³³

As already mentioned, the three dailies positively reviewed the screening of the first sound film in Quito, including *El Comercio*, which had suspended cinema advertisements from November 1929 onwards. To the reviewer, the addition of recorded sound to moving images had allowed him to experience the movie with the same attention as if he had been in a theatrical presentation:

It is the World War that has given way to the development of so many lived episodes mixed with terror and despair.

1031 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Debate*, September 4, 1930. See also advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 4, 1930.

1032 Colin Gunckel, “The war of the accents: Spanish language Hollywood films in Mexican Los Angeles,” *Film History* 20, no. 3 (2008): 332.

1033 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, September 4, 1930.

But the lateness of the hour only makes us express that the screening of the first sound film is a success: the sharpness of the images and the sonority of the speeches of the main characters makes us follow with interest the development of all the events, as if a scenic drama were being witnessed.¹⁰³⁴

In *El Día*, it becomes evident that the inclusion of sound, according to the reviewer, had made gesture, movement and expression more palpitant:

The synchronization is perfect; nothing else fits with the modern technique of the procedure; gesture and sound are mixed up in one single act.

Triumphal pieces of music go well with the pompous parties, with the parades and with the dazzling theatrical evenings. Frightening noises deafen the ambience during scenes of war. Subtle modulations follow even the trivial incidents of everyday life. Faint delicate echoes of incomparable softness seem to slip along with the caresses. (...)

The shrieks of a war cripple provoke the feeling of a galvanic current going through our bodies. The soft liturgical music in a hospital brings an indescribable sedative to our tense nerves.¹⁰³⁵

In *El Debate*, as in *El Día*, the reviewer experienced recorded sound as a complete sensation of life:

A spectacle that... brought to light the perfection reached by modern inventions upon combining the human voice with the projections on the screen, which produced a complete sensation of life and movement. (...)

Sombras de Gloria is a magnificent production due to the touching and educational nuance of the plot, against the horrors of war, and the deficiencies of justice and of the human perceptions often subjected to big mistakes; it is a deeply moving production, (...)

The scenes in the trenches that take place throughout the screening, along with the crackle of the cannons and machine guns and with the storm-like noise of uninterrupted firing of rifles is something magnificent and frightening.

The episodes of exquisite sensitivity and tenderness as well as the greatness and self-denial that one can admire in the melodrama

1034 "Exhibición de la primera película parlante en Quito," *El Comercio*, September 3, 1930.

1035 "La maravilla del cine sonoro," *El Día*, September 3, 1930.

move us deeply.¹⁰³⁶

The combination of sound and moving images was also regarded as one of the aspects that kept the audience alert during the entire screening.¹⁰³⁷

In addition to the details of the experience of the inclusion of recorded sound, from the above-mentioned quotes, it also becomes clear that *Sombras de gloria*, the plot of which was set during WWI, also evoked other feelings. This can be seen in the reviews of the three dailies in which the reviewers discussed the emotions of horror and desperation, as in the case of *El Comercio*, and the feelings of fear, as in the case of *El Debate*. The emotions evoked by the film were rather gloomy can particularly be seen in *El Día*:

Immense, emotional and painful drama, with breathtaking sublimities; everything in it is life, palpitating life, from the everyday vulgar up to the infinite tragedies that have made the world tremble.

And in the brilliant development of the work, which revolves around a judicial process, an infinite range of sounds puts the throbbing breath of life in every gesture, in every movement, in every expression. (...)

Love, pain and anxiety; hate, compassion and fear; misery, cruelty and rejoicing; blood, tears and consolation; echoes of tragedy and clamors of victory; all the infinite progression of life, in its most exciting nuances, is expressed in this wonder called sound cinema, revealed to us for the first time in 'Sombras de Gloria'.¹⁰³⁸

The feelings of pain aroused by the film were seen in connection with the sounds of the movie, which shows that sound had made an impact on the audiences.

In addition to this, it is important to highlight that after the screening of *Sombras de gloria* to the public in Quito on September 3, 1930, *El Comercio* emphasized one feature in particular, the insertion of recorded music in sound cinema.¹⁰³⁹ In fact, after the exhibition of the first sound film in the city, *Sombras de gloria*, the audible aspect that caught one reviewer's attention was not dialogue, but music: "Musical moments enjoyed by

1036 "El cine parlante," *El Debate*, September 3, 1930.

1037 "El cine parlante," *El Debate*, September 3, 1930.

1038 "La maravilla del cine sonoro," *El Día*, September 3, 1930.

1039 "Éxito del cine parlante. Sombras de Gloria," *El Comercio*, September 4, 1930.

the listeners have been interspersed in “Sombras de Gloria” so that the possibilities of sound cinema are known in their full extent.”¹⁰⁴⁰ Music was not only highlighted by the critics, but also in local advertisements. After the premiere, advertisements mentioned that the public vibrated listening to José Bohr’s singing.¹⁰⁴¹

There are various reasons why music was highlighted in advertisements and press reviews. First, exhibitors’ advertisements emphasized music in order to appeal to moviegoers with commercial purposes because they knew that sound cinema offered people the possibility to have music for a cheaper price, particularly for those who did not have access to the already existing expensive technology such as gramophones and radio. Sound cinema allowed contemporaries not only to see, but also to hear the outside world for those who could not leave the complex city.

Second, from the local press reviews, it is clear that music was highlighted because the insertion of music into sound cinema had solved one of the most frequent problems of the Quito audiences regarding the live musical accompaniment during the silent cinema period. Sound cinema had set Quito’s moviegoers free from the dependence of live music at the movies. Additionally, it is evident that sound cinema was also described as a means which performed two tasks: It continued working as a provider of the former silent cinema, that is, moving images, but it also became a supplier of music:

... a varied act, one that not only contains attractions typical of cinema, but also musical compositions and songs by great artists, selected music appropriate to every single one of the scenes of the film shown.¹⁰⁴²

In other words, it becomes clear that at the time, silent cinema was considered a form of entertainment made up of only images. It can be also argued that sound cinema was seen as a combination of at least three sound technologies: the phonograph, gramophone, and the radio. The fact that sound cinema was seen as made up of different technologies at the time raises the question as to whether sound cinema was indeed regarded as ‘multimedia’ in Quito. This indeed seems to be the case. In other words, sound

1040 “Éxito del cine parlante. Sombras de Gloria,” *El Comercio*, September 4, 1930.

1041 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Debate*, September 4, 1930. See also advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 4, 1930.

1042 “El cine parlante,” *El Debate*, September 3, 1930.

cinema was seen as being made up of not only one, but several technologies, which were not only sonic such as the phonograph, gramophone and radio, but also silent like the photograph and silent cinema.

In this way, sound cinema was used in Quito not only as cinema with sound but also as a means to listen to music, which allowed those who had no economic resources to buy radio sets, which were otherwise expensive and not widespread in the city, to listen to music. The main attraction of sound cinema was music was also confirmed by Sixto Durán Ballén, who, as already mentioned, was the grandchild of the brother of the owner of the cinema company in Quito, Jorge Cordovez. In an interview Durán stated:

What I remember is that musicals were a novelty when they were screened in the city. The singing in those films started even from the slightest provocation. The possibility of listening to a chamber orchestra or to an orchestra, singers, tenors, and sopranos that we did not have was a benefit offered by sound film. That is why silent cinema was completely forgotten in a short time.¹⁰⁴³

The attraction of recorded music in sound cinema was so strong that when the Bolívar Theater opened, as already pointed out, trendy music records were played prior to the screenings and during the intermissions:¹⁰⁴⁴

One of these small motors is used for sound films, and the other one for screening silent and sound films, which are slightly damaged. The speed of the latter motor is adjusted using a rheostat as determined by the operator.

Each of the two projectors has complicated devices for the audio projection of discs (Vitaphone) and of band (Movietone). In order to avoid the vibration of the disc, there is a system of springs and a layer of oil. (...)

A TRIPLE GRAMOPHONE UNIT

The Agency of Victor Company and Columbia Company in Quito has offered discs that come with new music chosen for the screenings, which produce their sound by being placed on a triple gramophone unit that functions in connection with loudspeakers.¹⁰⁴⁵

1043 Sixto Durán Ballén (his father was brother of the owner of the cinema company in Quito), interview by the author, Quito, 2006.

1044 "El equipo parlante del Teatro Bolívar," *El Comercio*, March 13, 1933.

1045 José M. Ponce Yepes, "Interesantes datos acerca del Teatro Bolívar, próximo a inaugurarse, y de su equipo de máquinas," *El Comercio*, March 13, 1933.

The relevance of the inclusion of recorded music in sound cinema was not new in the early 1930s, but this was also noted in the local press very early on, in 1928, through international accounts:

Perhaps the most revolutionizing aspect is the musical part. For 25 cents, it will be possible to listen to an opera played by the biggest artists. This is currently not within the reach of the poor in theater, due to its high price, so even the village inhabitants will be able to listen to the music.

The musicians have already started to become alarmed. Since sound cinema also includes singing, which we will call 'an orchestrated act', the musicians who play in the cinema theaters, which are many and are unionized, have started a campaign against the new invention. They said that it will take their jobs away and have collected a fund to fight it, which is over a million dollars. (...)

The musicians have announced that they will not renew their contracts with the cinema theaters for less than five years; if orchestras are eliminated before that term, the musicians under contract shall receive compensation. They will be paid, but the right to use the new wonder will not be waived.

It may be possible that these musicians would rather have more work than now, since many operas, zarzuelas and songs will have to be 'filmed', and numerous orchestras might be needed. (...)

We have been promised an even more surprising wonder: talking pictures with songs by television, which by radio will allow us to watch and listen to them at home.¹⁰⁴⁶

2. The Sounds of Animals

The Coming of the Sound of Wild Animals

In the late 1910s and early 1920s, silent cinema offered people the possibility to see wild animals' movements for the first time in Quito. Most had only seen these animals in still pictures:

The first film was of such beauty and kept the children in a gentle astonishment. Did they imagine themselves walking with [other] children, visiting fountains, waterfalls and all the tenuous and

1046 Antonio Escobar, "Vitafono, Movitono y fotofono," *El Comercio*, October 8, 1928.

luminous pearls of a high crystal pool?

As an instructive film, showing the children so many animals suited them pretty well as they only knew them by name or by engravings; now on the canvas screen they saw them moving, gesticulating, doing their daily activities, playing, fighting; in a word, living.

The children had a very vague idea, but one of concern, when they contemplated a lion cage, in front of which appeared a phonograph.

Wouldn't a curious and intelligent boy have wondered if music influences even lions?

So, if music alters the beasts' nervous system, children may reasonably would enjoy it too, producing in them high and unknown emotions; kind and beautiful feelings for their spirit.¹⁰⁴⁷

From this quote, four points become clear. First, even though still images of wild animals circulated in Quito, people had not seen them move. They only saw this when silent cinema portrayed them. Until 1920, Quito's inhabitants knew about wild animals through two ways: either by name or by engravings, which is mostly linked to the drawings in books and magazines. This probably included paintings. Second, contemporaries acknowledged that the motion of the pictures had made them experience what they watched as more 'live'. Third, they came to better understand animals' customs. Fourth, even though so called sound effects were used for wild animals during silent screenings in different parts of the world, this account suggests that this was not the case in Quito, possibly because contemporaries did not know how those animals sounded.

In 1929, when sound cinema had already existed around the world for more than two years, the local press of Quito started to discuss the sounds of animals in films. One of the earliest references to animal sound in movies was to that of the lion 'Leo' of Metro Goldwyn Mayer: "... So, in addition to seeing it, soon the world will hear it in the sound films in which it will participate with one or two powerful roars."¹⁰⁴⁸ 'Leo' was indeed among the Hollywood animal and human stars. One of the lion's fans wrote: "I ask you the big favor of sending me a photo of the lion of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to add it to my collection of stars, both of people and of animals, which is surely impoverished without the portrait of Leo."¹⁰⁴⁹

1047 Rafael Coronel G., "La fiesta infantil del domingo," *El Comercio*, July 6, 1920.

1048 "Los admiradores de Leo," *El Comercio*, September 29, 1929.

1049 "Los admiradores de Leo," *El Comercio*, September 29, 1929.

Another way in which the sounds of wild animals arrived during this period in Quito was with the circus. A circus was not a frequent thing in the city, as one can imagine:

And men, women and children rush to enjoy the circus. Another one came so many years ago, which perhaps left fewer memories than the one that is now passing by! Nobody probably remembers anymore that a circus that once visited us.

It seems that now people are hungrier for laughing and being entertained at a circus. Life is so bitter! And even more so now that the crisis is supposedly overwhelming us. This is why we have seen night after night all the social classes of Quito walking to 'Plaza Belmonte', where the circus of the Atayde Brothers is located.

They do a great job! (...)

And what can we say about the animals? Starting with the feared lion Cesar, who is now getting ready to soon fight a bull; and the camel and the elephant also work and provoke emotions. What is more, the horses also inspire admiration as well as the beautiful dogs, who not only show their intelligence by being faithful to their masters, but also do incredible things.... (...)

And the old and the young, the rich and the poor, everyone finds satisfaction in going to the circus, (...)¹⁰⁵⁰

Even though sound films, as well as some circus presentations, had been shown by 1933, people commented that the circus allowed them to see some animals for the first time: "We have eagerly gone to where the Atayde Circus is placed... to observe the animals that we had only seen in the pictures of school books, the circus, with that grateful flavor of youth."¹⁰⁵¹ Circus presentations were also very old in the city.¹⁰⁵² They had no particular place to be shown. This is why they took place under a tent at the San Francisco square,¹⁰⁵³ for instance, or in the Marín square.¹⁰⁵⁴

The Public Discussion on Wild Animals' Sounds in Movies

Africa habla (*Africa Speaks*, 1930) and *El Dios del mar* (1930) were two sound

1050 Garrick, "Está en la ciudad el circo," *El Comercio*, March 26, 1933.

1051 Túpac Amaru, "El circo," *El Día*, March 22, 1933.

1052 "Estreno," *El Comercio*, June 12, 1907.

1053 "Circo Ziegler," *El Comercio*, November 8, 1907.

1054 "Circo Imperial," *El Comercio*, June 4, 1908.

films that screened the sounds of wild animals.¹⁰⁵⁵ The local advertisements encouraged the audience to hear "... the lions' roaring, the elephants' trumpeting and the tigers in their dens."¹⁰⁵⁶ People crowded the cinemas, because for the great majority of the population in Quito, these sounds were completely new. Even though Ecuador has a coastal and jungle region, these were out of the reach of the majority of Quito's inhabitants due to the difficulty of contemporary transportation. Consequently, most audiences heard the sounds of these animals through sound cinema for the first time.

Africa habla was an extremely successful movie in Quito. In fact, it was regarded as highly educative. It had such an impact that it was shown to more than one thousand children outside the cinemas. This movie was the first sound film exhibited in elementary schools:¹⁰⁵⁷

With the attendance of more than one thousand children, monitored by their respective teachers, the beautiful sound film *Africa Habla* was screened yesterday from 3pm to 4:30 pm. It is full of exciting passages and descriptive scenes of the customs of numerous and typical fauna that delights and makes audiences shiver, producing great agitations in the spirit. This screening truly filled children with joy as they paid special attention to every scene and demonstrated great enthusiasm.¹⁰⁵⁸

In spite of the fact that the audiences, particularly children, liked the film very much, wild animals were discussed as a source of fear. Marine animals were also talked about in the same terms as the wild animals of the jungle; as monsters, and they were considered weird as in the case of *El Dios del mar*.

Together with the fear of wild animals, in the early 1930s, the sound of sound movies continued being discussed in relation to civilization, as the sounds of the native people portrayed in these films were seen as the sounds of the savage:

The hidden sea treasures exhibited on the sound screen: you will be able to listen and watch how a diving fisherman hunting for pearls fights a marine monster, the weirdest animals of the oceans, (...) screams, roars of the savage that look like beasts, and a

1055 *El Dios del mar* was the alternate Spanish-language version of *The Sea God* (1930).

1056 Advertisement, *El Día*, September 25, 1931.

1057 "Africa habló ayer para nuestros niños," *El Día*, October 13, 1931.

1058 "Africa habló ayer para nuestros niños," *El Día*, October 13, 1931.

terrible storm in the open sea.

You will hear the wind blowing and a deafening explosion of thunder with such authenticity, as if you were the main character of the most sensational difficulty in the open sea.

If you watched AFRICA HABLA and felt moved by its hair-raising realism, you must watch and listen to:

El Dios del Mar (...) ¹⁰⁵⁹

Natives were also discussed as emotional people. The emotions attributed to them were those of jealousy, cruelty, vengeance, impulsivity, passion, and sincerity:

... although actually no words are needed to see how men fight hand to hand against wild animals, to observe the rites of those tribes or to understand the intensity of their jealousy, the cruelty of their revenge, the impulsiveness of their passions, and the primitive sincere of their romance affairs. ¹⁰⁶⁰

The inability to pronounce words, which was connected to fear and to the wild can also be seen in the descriptions of the film *Frankenstein* (*Frankenstein*, 1931). ¹⁰⁶¹ One of the characteristics of the monstrosity of *Frankenstein* was its babblings instead of words:

Truly, one cannot conceive how a man can become such a frightful creature as the actor who plays the role of the monster.

Apocalyptic electrical storms: the first babblings of a living creature made by a human, savage growls came from his throat. His hands joining in search of necks to squeeze, horror, fantastic horror.

Due to the terrifying condition of the film, we consider it is only for adults. ¹⁰⁶²

Frankenstein was considered profoundly scarier than two other silent horror films, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), ¹⁰⁶³ which is an indicator that the inclusion of recorded sound

1059 Advertisement, *El Día*, October 16, 1931. *El Dios del mar* was supposed to premiere in Quito on this day. Due to political conflicts, the premiere was postponed until October 23, 1931, as can be seen in the advertisement for *El Dios del mar*, *El Día*, October 19, 1931.

1060 Advertisement, *El Día*, September 28, 1931.

1061 *Frankenstein* premiered in Quito on July 1, 1932.

1062 Advertisement for *Frankenstein*, *El Día*, June 30, 1932.

1063 Advertisement for *Frankenstein*, *El Día*, June 30, 1932. This film premiered in Quito on July 1, 1932.

had increased the feeling of fear in the audiences. Recorded sound boosted the moving images of the monster and made them feel more frightened as shown in the following quote:

The film *Frankenstein* or *The Creator of a Monster*, was premiered at the Edén yesterday, and is a fantasy of terrible horrifying sensations. It is the kind of work in which our nerves keep twitching from the first scene to the last. An enormous imaginative force, a great variety of characteristics, traits and settings, and its boldest plot have made of *Frankenstein* a very interesting sound film.

Without reaching the perfection of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the formidable work that managed to embody the hallucinating visions of a madman, *Frankenstein* is nevertheless as impressive as the latter.

It is a multiple tragedy nuanced with enjoyable pictures, which had great success as can perhaps be confirmed by the ladies and young girls who did not suppress, in climactic moments, a scream of anxiety, and who might have dreamed of the Monster last night. The movie that we are reviewing could be considered a symbol. A very brief extract of the plot confirms this.¹⁰⁶⁴

In addition to the above-mentioned, women, young and old are here portrayed as emotional people, unlike men. It should be noted that women were also discussed as unable to suppress emotional reaction, that is, as unable to follow the civilized behavior of controlled manners. In fact, women were depicted as nervous, shouting, and fearful: "Indeed, it is the ultimate work of tragic and horrifying scenes; many times, the numerous females expressed with screams their nervousness and fear."¹⁰⁶⁵

Frankenstein was advertised as not suitable for children¹⁰⁶⁶ and overall promoted as "... not for weak people,"¹⁰⁶⁷ which leads us to believe that women and children were considered weak at the time, and *Frankenstein* was regarded as a film that should only be watched by men of a certain age. As a result, when referring to emotions, age, gender, and social class, among other qualities, mattered.

1064 "El creador del monstruo," *El Día*, July 2, 1932.

1065 Gilbert, "Frankenstein o El hombre que creó un Monstruo," *El Debate*, July 3, 1932.

1066 Advertisement for *Frankenstein*, *El Día*, June 29, 1932.

1067 Advertisement for *Frankenstein*, *El Día*, June 28, 1932.

Frankenstein, based on Mary Shelley's story written in the early nineteenth century,¹⁰⁶⁸ was a huge success in Quito¹⁰⁶⁹ as it was screened several times at the Edén, the first run venue, which was uncommon at the time.¹⁰⁷⁰ Local critics foresaw that the film would become an icon.¹⁰⁷¹ *Frankenstein*, together with *Dracula*, was a surprise hit for Universal.¹⁰⁷² Both films helped the studio a great deal financially.

The importance of mastering the voice instead of using screams and shouts was also emphasized in 1933 in the local press when they wrote about *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932). The control of sound as a sign of being civilized came to the forefront because by mastering sound, in particular, Tarzan's voice was able to master the "savage beasts" of the jungle:

The strange adventure of an expedition to the African jungle that meets a white man that never knew about civilization and suddenly meets his counterparts. Tarzan [is seen] fighting hand to hand with hungry lions and giant gorillas. He knew only the law of the jungle: taking what he wanted. Raised among apes, he lived among them and could dominate the wildest beasts with his voice. "Tarzan the Ape Man is a beautiful poem about a primitive man, shown in all its splendor."¹⁰⁷³

From this account, it can be inferred that what separates Tarzan from animals is the use of his voice. Put differently, civilization is regarded as the use of voice, not of noises. In addition to his voice, Tarzan beats animals by handling weapons:

The plot of the work is original, varied and full of exciting episodes: an expedition that crosses Africa, in search of a cemetery of elephants. In this caravan, Jane, the boss's daughter, an ideal young girl, educated in Europe, is kidnaped by Tarzan, a child who grew up among monkeys, whom he equaled in strength and skill, ignoring everything related to civilization, customs and language. Numerous episodes arise, such as the fights between Tarzan and a lion, the help that he repeatedly receives from a huge

1068 Boria Sax, "Sacred and the Symbolic," *A Cultural History of Animals in the Modern Age*, 35.

1069 'El creador del monstruo,' *El Día*, July 2, 1932.

1070 Advertisement, *El Día*, July 1, 1932. See also advertisement, *El Día*, July 2, 1932. See also advertisement, *El Día*, July 7, 1932.

1071 "El creador del monstruo," *El Día*, Julio 2, 1932.

1072 Crafton, *The Talkies*, 214.

1073 Advertisement for *Tarzan*, *El Día*, April 29, 1933. The film premiered in Quito on this day.

pachyderm, the river of crocodiles, the attack of the caravan by hippos, and Tarzan's defense, as he manages to beat them due to his ability to handle a dagger.

However, the fact that Tarzan is a human does not make him civilized, and even though the use of his voice and the dagger allow him to dominate and survive an uncivilized environment, he is still regarded as an uncivilized human being. This is determined by the fact that Tarzan lived in the jungle surrounded by animals, and therefore was unable to speak. These qualities led to him at times being considered wilder than even the animals of his environment: "With the direction of the film Tarzan, director W. S. Van Dyke has given modern filmmaking a movie that takes place completely in the warm jungles of Equatorial Africa, in an environment swamped by wild animals and men even wilder than the former."¹⁰⁷⁴

Tarzan was also depicted as equal to other animals not only due to the space that he inhabited, his lack of speech, and the animals he was surrounded by, but also given that he was an emotional character:

He is the man that was born in the jungle, without the prejudices and advantages of civilization. He is one more animal of the jungle who feels the same emotions, the same needs, and the same dangers as the monkeys. A love affair arises in the life of this ape-man, who just because he is a savage is not insensitive to the beauty of women. It reminds us of the book by Rudyard Kipling, which thrilled us in our childhood.¹⁰⁷⁵

Consequently, Tarzan, the uncivilized, is considered equal to monkeys, since both of them felt the same emotions. In other words, the emotions felt by the uncivilized are quite the same as those of the animals. The emotions felt by the rational are not the same as those experienced by the non-rational and by animals. Animals and the uncivilized are regarded equal in terms of emotions and in terms of the space they inhabit. The jungle, then, was pictured as a place that was opposite to civilization.

The fact that Tarzan is uncivilized does not mean that he is not attracted to women. Tarzan likes not only women, but has feelings for his animal companions:

1074 Arizona Kid, "Cinematográficas," *El Día*, April 29, 1933.

1075 Fence, "'La jaula de oro' y 'Tarzan' en el Bolívar," *El Comercio*, April 29, 1933. The original version says Kypling. In the translation it has been corrected to Kipling.

The great movie of the jungle, 'Tarzan the Ape Man' will premiere this Saturday. Beautiful scenes in the jungle, wonderful landscapes, beasts in perpetual fight with everyone and against everyone; the suggestive story of a man raised among monkeys, endowed with an enormous strength and great endearment towards the beasts that have been the only companions of his life. It is a suggestive story that will thrill the public with its scenes of enormous realism.¹⁰⁷⁶

Before being exhibited in Quito, *Tarzan* had been screened eighty-five times in Guayaquil.¹⁰⁷⁷

There is at least one factor that was not connected to sound and was regarded as having a direct influence on making people emotional, the climate, as shown in the following account: "Love was outlined among the horror of the islands of Malaysia, Batavia. The tropical heat made humans more emotional. Passions are volcanic."¹⁰⁷⁸ Sentiments were linked to the place in which one was born: in fact, people were influenced by climate. In this way, the sun was pictured as making people more sentimental. Here we can see how people from sunny locations were regarded as emotional and passionate: Climate had made them that way.

In contrast to the uncivilized, who were seen as emotional people, at the time, the civilized were seen as emotionless, or as people with a certain aversion to emotions:

Valentín is an automaton in this initiation of vulgar tragedy. Impassive, elegant, always correct, he knows how to come out the victor in the fight with himself. Not a single dissenting gesture with his exquisite sentimentality of a gentleman; not even a smile that would divert towards irony, a wrinkle on the chin that is proof of serenity; in brief, nothing at all. Valentín is incapable of becoming aroused as an adolescent, (...)¹⁰⁷⁹

In summary, the construction of being civilized or not continued in relation to language, through the portrayal of sonic characteristics attributed to the characters themselves, with certain attributes considered civilized or barbarian.

1076 Arizona Kid, "Cinematográficas," *El Día*, April 28, 1933.

1077 Advertisement for *Tarzan*, *El Día*, April 27, 1933.

1078 Advertisement for *El Dios del mar*, *El Día*, October 22, 1931.

1079 Ezequiel ABAD GUERRA, "Perdón, amigo lector...", *El Día*, July 3, 1932.

With respect to the relationship between civilization and wild animals, the union of animal and human in one single body was described in the local press as another aspect to be feared, such as in the case of *Drácula* (1931). The frightening feature of *Dracula* was that its main character was partly human and partly animal. Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931) starring Bela Lugosi, which is the original production of *Dracula*, was not the movie screened in Quito in 1932. Instead, the Spanish-language version directed by George Meldford starring Carlos Villarías arrived in the city. The two versions were filmed at the same time. The English-language picture was filmed during the day and the Spanish-language version at night.¹⁰⁸⁰ Not only did the lead characters vary; in fact, the two casts were completely different.

Drácula debuted in Quito in mid-September 1932.¹⁰⁸¹ The opening screening was considered to be a complete success.¹⁰⁸² The film stayed on weekly screenings for a couple of weeks and for the rest of 1932, the film did not reappear.¹⁰⁸³ This situation contrasts the one that occurred in Madrid, where *Drácula* was screened in March 1931, and the film was shown for the rest of the year.¹⁰⁸⁴ Of course, one cannot underestimate the success the film had in Quito, particularly if one analyzes the screening practices in those days. Although *Drácula* (*Dracula*, 1931) was produced before *Frankenstein* (1931), the latter was first exhibited in Quito.

The relationship between men and animals, as forming one being, was also seen in *Ingagi*:

Ingagi, this exciting film that comes to us from the heart of Africa introduces us to these creatures half monkey, half human. (...)

The hunting of hippopotamuses, rhinos, monkeys, leopards, and lions turns out to be truly exciting. Nevertheless, the scene that creates the most expectation is the one in which a man and a gorilla fight, where human valor is put to the test. (...)¹⁰⁸⁵

In *Ingagi*, the animals were portrayed in amorous relationships with

1080 *Wikipedia*, s.v. 'Dracula,' [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dracula_\(1931_Spanish-language_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dracula_(1931_Spanish-language_film))

1081 Advertisement for *Drácula*, *El Día*, September 16, 1932.

1082 Advertisement for *Drácula*, *El Día*, September 17, 1932.

1083 The last time *Drácula* was screened in Quito in 1932 was on 29 September. That is, the film was screened for about two weeks. These runnings, of course, were not continuous, but every other day or so.

1084 Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-language Filmmaking*, 53-54.

1085 "Ingagi," *El Día*, September 23, 1932. The film premiered in Quito on this day.

humans, in particular, with women. This film revolves around the sexual relationships between a woman and a gorilla. The story of a woman's kidnapping by an ape was also highlighted in the advertisements. Moviegoers were invited to *listen to* this film. To scholar Harry M. Benshoff, the film "... purported to show (Black) women and apes in sexual situations,"¹⁰⁸⁶ and had racist implications. The success of this film stimulated RKO to invest in the production of *King Kong* (1933).¹⁰⁸⁷ Even though *Ingagi* was filmed in Los Angeles, in the local press this film was billed as if it had been filmed in Africa. In fact, it was even claimed that a lion had killed one of the film crew members, and that a beast had injured another.¹⁰⁸⁸

In order to emphasize fear, the sounds of animals were also described in the advertisements, in conjunction with other sounds of nature, such as those of trees, a storm and wind. This emphasized the frightening aspect of the scenes of the films, as was the case in the advertisements for *La voluntad del muerto* (1930):

A Stormy night, the wind wailing among the trees that surround the old mansion that belonged to Mr. West, and the howling of the wolves accompany the wind creating an amazing mix. A bolt of lightning splits the night into two halves: stray dogs, from afar, add their ominous yowling to this cursing orchestra of nature that intones the funeral march of the storm. Owls release their strident cry calling for death ... Indeed, that night at twelve o'clock, the testament is to be opened; (...)¹⁰⁸⁹

It is striking that the wolves' sound is not the only scary feature, but its effect is increased in combination with the wind. It is their mixture that is considered the frightening aspect of the film. All these qualities are in addition to the description of the terrifying effect of the film images, which took place at night, and add an extra element to the fear scene. In other words, it is clear how recorded sound was considered a booster of the visuality of the film. *La voluntad del muerto* (1930)¹⁰⁹⁰ was the alternate-

1086 Harry M. Benshoff, "Horror Noire: Blacks in American Horror Films from the 1890s to Present," *Cinema Journal* 53, no. 4 (2014): 184..

1087 *Wikipedia*, s.v. 'Ingagi,' <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ingagi>

1088 Advertisement for *Ingagi*, *El Día*, September 21, 1932. See also advertisement, *El Día*, September 23, 1932.

1089 Advertisement for *La voluntad del muerto*, *El Día*, February 26, 1932. This film premiered in Quito on this day.

1090 Advertisement for *La voluntad del muerto*, *El Día*, February 26, 1932. *La voluntad del muerto* premiered in Quito on this day.

language version of *The Cat Creeps* (1930), which at the same time was, according to Crafton, a talking remake of *The Cat and the Canary* (1927).¹⁰⁹¹

Although *La voluntad del muerto* premiered in 1932, the film was already discussed in the local press in late 1930. At this time, after the screening at the Universal studio, the film was described as ‘the best sound Spanish-language production made so far’. Ernesto Vilches, Ramón Novarro, José Mojica, María Alba, José Crespo, the composer Oscar Strauss and the brilliant Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, among other personalities, were part of the audience on the premiere day.¹⁰⁹² *La voluntad del muerto* was the first sound horror film in Spanish shown in Quito.

In terms of the opposition of civilization and animal, these films emphasized the fight between man and animal, as evidenced in the following account of *El vampiro del mar* (*The Sea Bat*, 1930):

In this sound production, one witnesses the most interesting fight ever shown to the public to this date. This is a fight between man and fearsome sea monsters, like an octopus that imprisons with its tentacles those audacious ones who dared to penetrate the mysteries of the depths of the ocean, making them pay with their lives. The struggle to which we refer to was filmed in its natural setting, using a marine cinematographic camera procedure.¹⁰⁹³

In addition to this, in the early 1930s, it should be mentioned that rats were transformed from despicable animals that should be eliminated from cinemas to animals that people admired in the screenings. This occurred when Mickey Mouse appeared in Quito’s screenings. In the moving images, animals such as this mouse had sonic capabilities such as playing instruments or being able to dance to the rhythm of music.

The first cartoons in which animals were represented as having sonic abilities were Columbia’s cartoon *El gato loco*, *Krazy Kat* in English, and Mickey Mouse. In reference to the first one, the physical resemblance of *Krazy Kat* to *Felix the Cat* may be the reason why after a few days of promoting *El gato loco* along with the screening of *Debajo de la máscara*, *El gato loco* was suddenly advertised as *El gato Félix*, meaning *Felix the Cat* in

1091 Crafton, *The Talkies*, 371.

1092 “Un público distinguido aplaude *La voluntad del muerto*,” *El Comercio*, November 25, 1930.

1093 Advertisement for *El vampiro del mar*, *El Día*, November 15, 1932. This film premiered in Quito on this day.

Quito's advertisements.¹⁰⁹⁴ Felix the Cat was the cartoon character of the silent cinema period,¹⁰⁹⁵ and apparently this character, created by Pat Sullivan remained silent at least in the late 1920s and early 1930s because "... when the distributor, Educational, demanded sound versions for the 1929–1930 season, Sullivan refused to comply."¹⁰⁹⁶ As for *Krazy Kat*, it should be mentioned Columbia released the first *Krazy Kat* cartoon with sound in 1929.¹⁰⁹⁷ The mixing of *El gato loco* with *Felix the Cat* could also have been a strategy to draw moviegoers.

Félix, gato loco en su carnaval was also screened together with Mickey Mouse's *Ratón Miguelito, en solo de violón* as extra short films of the feature film *Viejo amor (Lover Come Back, 1931)*.¹⁰⁹⁸ Probably referring to the same two cartoons, they were also screened a few days later under the title *El ratón violinista* and *La caravana del gato* also along with the sound film *Las campanas de Capistrano (1930)*.¹⁰⁹⁹ *El ratón violinista* was said to have well-known music, whereas *La caravana del gato* was said to be fully sung.

In 1931, other Mickey Mouse cartoons were screened in contemporary Quito, such as *El jugueteón Pan (Playful Pan, 1930)* which was one of the 75 Silly Symphonies' animated Disney short films. This short film was screened along with another sound cartoon entitled *Tal para cual* (unknown). Both sound cartoons were exhibited after the screening of the film *Venganza del desierto*.¹¹⁰⁰

Hearing the Unknown

The sounds of *Africa habla* were seen as introducing the sounds of the unknown. This occurred because the camera and the microphone allowed people to see and hear places they had not been before:

Through sight and hearing we get in touch with the continuous romance that beats in these unknown regions. The mysterious veil that has for so many centuries covered this part of the world is removed before us, as well as its ferocious animals, its fascinating tribes and the dreadful spectacle of their revenge, religious rites,

1094 Advertisement for *El gato Félix, El Día*, October 9, 1931.

1095 *Wikipedia*, s.v. 'Felix The Cat,' https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_the_Cat

1096 Crafton, *The Talkies*, 393.

1097 *Wikipedia*, s.v. 'Ratskin,' <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratskin>

1098 Advertisement for *Viejo amor, El Día*, November 14, 1931.

1099 Advertisement for *Las campanas de Capistrano, El Día*, November 25, 1931.

1100 Advertisement for *Venganza del desierto, El Día*, November 20, 1931.

paradoxical moral, and strange psychology, etc.

From the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean, the history of these primitive people fascinates us. We see their sensual and mysterious dances. We hear their music of lascivious and barbaric jazz, the ceremonies of adoration to sinister gods... the struggle of man and beasts, which at times seems to us to be atrocities forged in a witches' Sabbath dream...¹¹⁰¹

In fact, this did not only apply to unknown regions located on the surface, but also to the recording of sounds of space above or of airspace with the sounds of airplanes, and also sounds below or in the depths of the sea. The latter can be evidenced in the descriptions of *El Dios del mar* and also *Submarino* (*Submarine*, 1928):

Not content with invading the domains of air, the great studio has now submerged its cameras and microphones into the depths of the seas, to the immeasurable abysses, which are another world as suitable for life as our own.

This allows us to get to know the life of men who spend their lives in a perpetual struggle with the storms of angry oceans.

Moreover, it puts us in contact with the vastly large risks of great men who are forced to immerse themselves into regions of octopuses and big monsters due to their duty, love for science and, sometimes, even desperation.¹¹⁰²

Submarino, screened in Quito in 1932, was produced much earlier, in 1928. Jack Holt and Ralph Graves, both actors in *Dirigible* (*Dirigible*, 1931), also starred in *Submarino*.¹¹⁰³ Although *Submarino* had been produced years before *Dirigible*, the local newspapers described it as if it had been the other way around. This shows how exhibitors adapted the film advertisements not to the dates of production of the films, but rather to how the films were screened in Quito.

Thus, sound cinema brought people not only sounds of different places in different parts of the world, but also sounds of the most difficult places to access such as the jungle and the sea. The screening of the sounds of these spaces came to be regarded as conquering and as an extension

1101 W.L., "La Cámara arranca su secreto a las selvas milenarias," by Mary M. Spaulding, *El Comercio*, September 27, 1931.

1102 Advertisement for *Submarino*, *El Día*, July 8, 1932. This film premiered in Quito on this day.

1103 Advertisement for *Submarino*, *El Día*, July 8, 1932.

of space. We could also say that in this way, contemporaries experienced the expansion of their space not only on the surface, but also above and beneath it. This 'hunger' for space is well manifested in the advertisement for the film *Pistas peligrosas* (unknown):

Youth and longing for space seem to be synonymous today. The calm rhythm of a declining generation has been succeeded by the vertigo of new times, and this conquest of space has created the necessity of all sorts of machines: speed cars hardly conceivable by imagination and airplanes capable of leaving far behind the former proud monarchs of the air.¹¹⁰⁴

In addition to this, *Africa habla* was regarded at the time as a vehicle for people to experience travel:

The landscapes, the scenes of nature, the customs of native people, the sensational and terrifying episodes of great hunting, the endless processions of wild animals and flocks of diverse birds departing, the roar of beasts, the thousand rumors of the virgin forests harmonized by melodious twittering, the barbaric 'symphonies' and discordant chants of war and of pleasure in primitive tribes, everything, absolutely everything is represented through sound and image, with such liveliness, precision and accuracy that the spectators, throughout the development of the film, live moments of intense emotion, transporting themselves with wings of fantasy to the splendid scenery of the heart of Africa, (...) ¹¹⁰⁵ '

To de Certeau, stories, either everyday or literary, serve as a means of mass transportation, as *metaphorai*.¹¹⁰⁶ In other words, stories make us travel. Speaking of the consumption of the story in the construction of sound cinema, people traveled to the future and at the same time through the name of the place, Bolívar, went back to their past. In other words, this traveling is never necessarily only into the future; it can also be to the past and even more, it can be to the present, in which case it shows spectators the simultaneous present in other places, a present that otherwise would not be possible to access for different reasons.

In conclusion, these sounds made locals continue constructing

1104 Advertisement for *Pistas peligrosas*, *El Día*, January 17, 1933.

1105 "'Africa Habla,' emocionante y suggestiva película," *El Debate*, September 1, 1931.

1106 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 115.

their meaning around the 'wild,' the 'unknown,' 'animals,' and their 'real' environment. In addition to contrasting what they had in their minds as the concept of city or the urban area, they also differentiated the sounds of an 'uncivilized' world. In addition to this, it seems that the question as to whether the sounds of the adventure movies may have begun to be associated with the uncivilized world in the jungle, in contrast to the civilized sounds of the city. Additionally, fear was discussed in the local press in reference to certain films. In this way, fear continued being disseminated. This time, however, it was connected to new qualities, according to times and contexts.

At the same time that *Africa habla* was shown, *Africa ruge* (unknown), a silent film about Africa, was also exhibited in the city. Previous to these films, other screenings of Africa had been shown in Quito during the silent cinema period. For example, *Solo en el bosque virgen*,¹¹⁰⁷ produced in Germany and starring Carl de Vogt, had been screened in 1923 in the city. There are no written accounts in the local press describing the experience provoked by this silent film. Regarding *Africa habla*, it is important to mention that "Paul L. Hoefler's book *Africa Speaks* (1931) came out almost a year after the documentary *Africa Speaks* (1930), which he made with Walter A. Futter."¹¹⁰⁸

1107 Advertisement for *Solo en el bosque virgen*, September 17, 1923.

1108 Charles Musser, "Presenting "a true idea of the African of to-day": two documentary forays by Paul and Eslanda Robeson," *Film History* 18, no. 4 (2006): 416.

3. The Sounds of Airplanes

Up to the moment when this problem was solved, the noise of engines and propellers in sound films was achieved with a couple of common fans, whose blades clashed with a few rods of film, which when vibrating touched the surface of a pair of big drums, thus producing the desired effect.¹¹⁰⁹

Just as in the early 1930s, when sound prompted fear in the audiences, in the late 1910s, during the silent cinema period, the motion of imaged was regarded as increasing fear in comparison to still images:

The most exciting is, undoubtedly, the action of the famous *tanks* which, though they can be admired in photographs of illustrated magazines, the efficiency of these devastating machines can only be known through the moving pictures that cinematography offers.

There is no abyss that this monstrous machine cannot overcome, and since it is equipped with a special movement feature, it slides with the same ease on road ways and on broken fields, or over rubble, ascending and descending, like a huge reptile that can crawl on any surface. (...) ¹¹¹⁰

In summary, even though contemporaries had seen artillery such as tanks in still images, they acknowledged that it was the movement of the silent images what was more efficient in alerting people to their destructive power. Simply put, the movement of the images made them more frightening. In addition to tanks, submarines were also seen as very destructive devices during the silent cinema period:

There were also some test screenings of other beautiful films about the maneuvers of the French squadron presenting their best naval units in line of battle, and the film in which the French submarines appeared in the Adriatic is also remarkable. In the latter, one can observe the reproduction of the various exercises of this powerful destructive element: from the conditioning of torpedoes, their immersion in the sea and their launching against the object that they are trying to destroy.¹¹¹¹

1109 'El ruido de los aeroplanos,' *El Debate*, May 30, 1930.

1110 "Cintas de la guerra," *El Comercio*, September 13, 1917.

1111 "Cintas de la guerra," *El Comercio*, September 13, 1917.

Fear of artillery already existed during the silent cinema period; the fear of the moving images in cinemas was not born with the arrival of artillery sounds.

In addition to motion as a quality to increase fear, in 1918 the assortment of moving images was also seen as a magnifier of fear. For instance, in 1918, the local press reported a shift in the screening of the silent moving images of WWI, since these moving images were no longer the *scattered* images of war, but were assorted, and presented as *La Potencia Militar de Francia* [*The Military Power of France*]. They were no longer the individual, separated moving images of WWI; they were now ‘the tangible of the extraordinary effort made by France’.¹¹¹² This was interpreted as the portrayal of the powerful weaponry pertaining to a single particular country. This artillery had been collected throughout WWI by countries involved in the war. Classifying the images of war in a particular way and under a specific title had provoked a new impression among contemporaries:

Until recently, the cinematographic service had been satisfied with making a kind of journey log of every movie, the pages of which were scattered around all the cinematographs of France and abroad.

The beginning of a classification of images of war already owned began today. The ‘Temps’, in a long and documented study, describes how under the title of ‘The Military Power of France,’ a film of high interest has just been established, where the splendid effort of France becomes tangible.

The evocation is therefore performed under the eye of the spectator. One can first see how a French citizen becomes a soldier, his arrival to the barracks, the first contact with his peers, the hazing, the fort, the practice, and there they are, all the weapons that all the young soldiers will have to make use of. In impressive progression, all the calibers of trench artillery, of artillery of campaign and of heavy artillery are parading, starting with the minuscule cannon of campaign up to the monster mortar that goes on rails and makes projectiles describe a fantastic trajectory that confuses the imagination.¹¹¹³

This example shows how the act of classifying something in a particular way, the fact of ordering it, can completely change the focus of

1112 René Lafont, “La guerra y el cine,” *El Comercio*, February 13, 1918.

1113 René Lafont, “La guerra y el cine,” *El Comercio*, February 13, 1918.

attention and serve various purposes that may be entirely different to that which the first motivation had probably been. In other words, classifying and organizing things, as mentioned by the scholar Tony Bennett, is not innocent, and evidences particular ways of power.¹¹¹⁴ We could say that in addition to the fear of artillery, the fear around these devices had shifted, and in addition to the fear of the technology, there was a fear of those who had this technology, or in this case France. Had fear now moved from a particular device to a powerful country against which one could not battle?

So far, the way in which fear was discussed as a feeling in reference to artillery during the silent cinema period in Quito has been examined. Now the inclusion of sound in films, particularly whether the sound of airplanes was felt differently by the audience in Quito, is investigated. Is there any difference between the experience raised by airplanes in silent and sound films?

A good example of how the recorded sound of airplanes magnified the feelings provoked by silent films is *El amor nunca muere* (*Lilac Time*, 1928), as it was considered to have increased the experience of the *live* in comparison to the silent *Alas* (*Wings*, 1927):

No one can have forgotten the effect of the creepy silent film *Alas*. Then, to the macabre effect of *seeing* the great air war in the film whose title heads these lines, we should add that of the *sound*, which makes it the most vivid reconstruction of the wild madness that seized the world from 1914.¹¹¹⁵

In reference to the silent film *Alas* and even in relation to other sound films with airplanes, the movie *Angeles del infierno* (*Hell's Angels*, 1930) was praised:

Neither *Dirigible*, *Lilac Time* nor *The Flying Fleet* in the field of sound cinema, nor even the unforgettable silent film *Wings* have reached the faithful dominion of the field of space in the same way as harrowing film, which shows us the great catastrophe of 1914, raw, with all its pain, its sorrows and its heroism.¹¹¹⁶

1114 Tony Bennett, "Collecting, Ordering, Governing," (Keynote, University of Turku, September 28, 2015).

1115 C. W., "El amor nunca muere o la Guerra en el espacio," *El Comercio*, January 10, 1932.

1116 Advertisement for *Angeles del infierno*, *El Día*, May 26, 1932. This film premiered in Quito on May 24, 1932.

Airplanes' sound was seen as boosting the feeling of fear. At the time, airplanes and fear were also seen in comparison to the human body. People were warned to consume appropriate food, so that their bodies would not crash as aircrafts did (Fig. 27):¹¹¹⁷



Figure 27: “A small act of carelessness and... the organism can fail as a machine fails. Be cautious with the medicines that your body ingests. (...)”

In addition to this, the combination of recorded sound and moving images in films about airplanes provoked a feeling of revulsion. This repugnance was not towards rats this time as earlier, or to children's noise, but to war. The following was mentioned in relation to Pabst's first talkie¹¹¹⁸ *Los cuatro de infantería* (*Westfront 1918*, 1930), a film that together with *Sin novedad en el frente* (*All Quiet on the Western Front*, 1930) “established a basic convention of the war film genre:”¹¹¹⁹

The formidable German talkie *Westfront 1918* was screened in the

1117 Advertisement for Boticas Sucre, *El Día*, February 16, 1933.

1118 Michael Geisler, “The Battleground of Modernity: *Westfront 1918* (1930)” in *The Films of G.W.Pabst: an extraterritorial cinema*, ed. Eric Rentschler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 91.

1119 *Ibid.*, 91.

cinemas yesterday, and the venues were full of people, attracted by the celebrity of this work. The crude reality of killing, the extreme pain of confrontation and destruction, the brutal madness, tangibly exhibited on the screen by photography and sound, make *Westfront 1918* a sensational and moving spectacle.

The strongest emotions shake up the spirit due to the fidelity of the reproduction of this chastening European tragedy. Not only the din of the combats and the horror of death and mutilation, but also the hunger of the populations, the abandonment of homes, and the dissipation of all sentimental ties are palpable without veils and conventionalities in this movie.

This is, without a doubt, the best war film produced until now with an anti-war motif, due to the repulsion that it leaves in our minds-.¹¹²⁰

Revulsion was now a revulsion to war. *Los cuatro de infantería* was received as anti-war film not only in Quito. In fact: "although it could never seriously compete with the popularity of *All Quiet, Westfront 1918* managed to establish itself as one of the premier anti-war films and a brilliant example of the director's optimal use of a new cinematic code, even while the technology still lay in its infancy."¹¹²¹ Revulsion to war equaled being civilized. Ironically, however, having weaponry was portrayed as a sign of power and its development as being civilized.

In the case of Quito, it is noteworthy that the description of the sound of sound films, as has been pointed out, preceded the reception of their screening:

Fields full of ghostly thin people, lightning of powder illuminating cadaverous faces, desperate cries by the agonizing wounded, huge mechanical condors causing destruction and death in its wake, the most frightening of all pictures, before which even the fantasy of infernal minds turns pale. In the heat of the battle appear recollections of homely spots, of parchment-like faces of old mothers, of abandoned brides' tears of inconsolable wives, and of children who ask for a fatherly kiss before going to bed...¹¹²²

1120 "Los cuatro de infantería," *El Día*, December 5, 1932.

1121 Geisler, "The Battleground of Modernity: *Westfront 1918* (1930)," 96.

1122 Advertisement for *Los cuatro de infantería*, *El Día*, December 4, 1932. The film premiered in Quito on this day.

The screening of moving images with recorded sounds of artillery provoked not only the feeling of fear and revulsion, but also the feeling of compassion among locals.¹¹²³ It is striking that the moving images of war together with recorded sound had indeed provoked so many different feelings: Fear, compassion, and solidarity were stirred by sound films of war. Other evidence that these films, as well as the still silent moving images and oral descriptions invoked compassion can be seen in the collection of money in the city to send to the Red Cross in countries in Europe:

The Committee of Allied Communities residing in the capital city has organized for tonight a great cinematographic screening at Sucre Theater, in which they will show the following beautiful films, which represent a minimum display of the reality of the huge catastrophe that is devastating European countries: (...).

The output of the screening has been earmarked to increase the funds of the Italian Red Cross.¹¹²⁴

Funds were also sent to the British Red Cross.¹¹²⁵ It is important to remember that at that time, people were to some extent aware that some European countries such as Switzerland or Germany were living in poverty. The economic situation of these countries was very difficult at that time as has been widely studied by various scholars and was also echoed in the local press.

The emphasis on the sound of airplanes was not new in 1932, as there are examples from early 1930 in which the sounds of war on films were highlighted by the local press. As *Sombras de gloria* is a picture that revolves around the war of 1914, these sounds were highlighted when this film was screened for the first time in the city in 1930.¹¹²⁶

1123 "El cine parlante," *El Debate*, September 3, 1930. "... The scenes in the trenches that take place throughout the screening, along with the crackle of the cannons and machine guns and with the storm-like noise of uninterrupted firing of rifles is something magnificent and frightening. The episodes of exquisite sensitivity and tenderness as well as the greatness and self-denial that one can admire in the melodrama move us deeply.

In short, the exhibited work highlights the excellent results achieved by science and art in sound cinema, and it is a prediction of the enthusiastic acceptance that this new and varied spectacle will deservedly receive in our society."

1124 "Función de gala," *El Comercio*, October 26, 1918.

1125 "Películas de la guerra," *El Comercio*, March 1, 1918. "The film to be shown tomorrow contains interesting episodes of the famous battle of Arrás, and the money collected from the screenings will serve to increase the funds of the British Red Cross."

1126 "El cine parlante," *El Debate*, September 3, 1930. "The scenes in the trenches that take place throughout the screening, along with the crackle of the cannons and machine guns and the storm-like noise of the uninterrupted firing of rifles is something magnificent and frightening. (...)"

When *Sombras de gloria* was re-ran in Quito in 1931, the sound of the film was even more widely described.¹¹²⁷ Because this was a war film, the last screenings of *Sombras de gloria* were dedicated to the Ecuadorian military institution and to soldiers.¹¹²⁸ In addition to this, sound cinema was portrayed as a product of civilization, in fact, as a ‘wonder of civilization’.¹¹²⁹ Despite this, none of the sounds of airplanes in 1930 or 1931 received such a detailed description as that in 1932. In other words, these sounds only gained relevance later that year.

Tanks, Submarines and Airplanes

The public discussion about emotions and cinema did not emerge with sound cinema. In fact, this has a long history. How emotions and cinema are connected to one another, however, has changed over time. In Ecuador, for instance, in the mid-1910s during the silent cinema period, it was noted that the audience was getting used to stronger emotions in cinema:

We do not ask for art in the simulation, [but for] terrible, bloody and heroic reality. We want to be judges in the enormous cause ventilated from the mists of the North Sea up to the celestial clarity of Istanbul, judges without responsibility and without a gown, comfortably installed in the darkness of a cinema. Let the war come to us! (...)

The movie theaters fill up; the public applauds, stamps, shouts, whistles, and cheers, determined to prove that with great reason it has been called a monster. And in the meantime, there, at the box office, next to the window at which spectators arrive in search of a ticket; the business owners smile and feel that around them, little by little a greasy sphere of tranquility is being formed. They have hit the spot. (...)

The public is becoming accustomed to strong emotions, and when they are offered a war film, they are no longer satisfied with

1127 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, November 25, 1931. See also advertisement, *El Día*, November 27, 1931. *Sombras de gloria* premiered in Quito on this day. “You will be able to watch and hear the horror of war and the banging of the cannons as if you were attending an infernal event; also the merry music of troops that go out of control in the bivouac for a minute of glory, plus the chanting of the youth, dances, revues and variety shows...”

1128 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Día*, September 13, 1930. See also advertisement, *El Día*, September 14, 1930.

1129 Advertisement for *Sombras de gloria*, *El Debate*, September 5, 1930. See also advertisement, *El Día*, September 5, 1930. See also advertisement, *El Día*, September 6, 1930. See also advertisement, *El Debate*, September 9, 1930. See also advertisement, *El Día*, September 11, 1930.

seeing the tiny king of England parading along with the obese and charming Poincaré, whose eloquence has no place in the cinematograph, (...)¹¹³⁰

In summary, to the author of this excerpt, people wanted to feel stronger emotions and therefore wanted to have more silent moving pictures of WWI. Montalban's opinion shows that the public's conception of art and aesthetics in relation to cinema had changed; people did not want only heroic contents; those who produced the films themselves had to show their heroism:

Now we ask the manufacturers of movies not only for luminous clarity in the passages, but we also ask that they are heroes in their own way, not next to a cannon or with a weapon in their arms, but by winding the crank handle of a cinematographic apparatus with the same tranquility of a boy who spins the handle of a barrel organ in the streets of Paris, which now -Thank God!- are miles away from the line of fire.

Heroic courage, serenity of a fakir, and not of a fib fakir performing in slum theaters, but a legitimate fakir, (...) And one should not believe that there are no operators capable of facing the dangers of war with cinematographic weapons on their shoulders. For money, men now become as courageous as Bayardo; millions of men fight for money today (...).¹¹³¹

Putting one's heroism into the other's observation was appreciated and praised. In Montalban's opinion, people were heroic not only for loving their land, but also for a different kind of love, the love for money. As is clear, emotions were not yet linked to the sounds of cinema, but to silent moving images.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, contemporaries regarded cinema as almost real with the inclusion of recorded sound. However, feeling recorded sound as real was not provoked first by the first sound film exhibitions. That is, the experience of moving images combined with recorded sound as real preceded the exhibition of the sounds of the films as well:

1130 P. de Montalbán, "El cine y el arte militar," *El Comercio*, August 29, 1915.

1131 P. de Montalbán, "El cine y el arte militar," *El Comercio*, August 29, 1915.

Where are cinematographs headed now?

It is not difficult to imagine. Despite all the critics and opponents of the new procedures, it is a fact that it is getting closer and closer to real life.

It is a highly reliable reproducer of movement, endowed with the resource of words and susceptible of copying colors; all it needs is to get into Einstein's relativity theories... (...) ¹¹³²

In summary, the perception of experiencing the new technology as more real occurred prior to the screening of the sound films in Quito.

In addition to the recorded sound in sound cinema, or to the sense of hearing, in the early 1930s, cinema was seen as more real also by the inclusion of smelling in the screenings:

Recently, a film company screened a scene depicting a harvest of oranges in California. The film was of natural colors, and the girls that performed in it sang a romantic song. The air coming from the ventilators was scented with orange blossom flowers... The illusion was almost perfect; however, some mocked it: 'American artifice!' they said. Very likely, had the illustrious Pirandello been there, he would have protested indignantly! ¹¹³³

With respect to the sense of sight, the inclusion of the technicolor system in the moving images had contributed to the increased of the feeling of cinema as more real. That is, color made cinema look more real. In addition to sound, smell, and color, in 1932, contemporaries found that cinema had also reached a certain depth. In other words, cinema had included the third dimension:

A three-dimensional film was successfully presented today, when Charles Monroe Stitt showed that cinema had acquired the much sought stereoscopic effect of depth or relieve in the screening. 'With natural color and sound already added to the film, said Stitt, we believe that by providing the dimension of depth, the illusion is complete.' ¹¹³⁴

It should be noted that by 1932, cinema was described in different

1132 "El próximo futuro del cinematógrafo," *El Comercio*, April 11, 1930.

1133 "El próximo futuro del cinematógrafo," *El Día*, April 11, 1930.

1134 "Nuevo invento fue demostrado ayer, para dar relieve a las cintas cinemáticas," *El Comercio*, May 6, 1932.

ways as being capable of achieving a complete illusion. The portrayal of airplanes in the sound films exhibited during this transitional period was pivotal to the feeling of realism:

Yesterday, we were finally invited to the test screening, for the press, of the film *The Lost Squadron*. It is certainly one of the most notable films ever made on aviation. Filled with emotions, its scenes are so real that the multiple accidents cause the sensation that one is actually watching them.¹¹³⁵

1135 Arizona Kid, "El escuadrón perdido o Los mosqueteros del aire," *El Día*, December 30, 1932. *El escuadrón perdido* premiered in Quito on January 15, 1933.

Chapter 12 Destandardizing Standardized Sound: 1933

When the Bolívar Theater opened in April 15, 1933, one of the aspects that was less talked about in the local press was the sounds in the film *El signo de la cruz* (*The Sign of the Cross*, 1932). Instead, what was mostly discussed was having a monument such as the new venue, and the progress this meant for Quito and the entire country, as previously examined in Chapter 10. The few commentaries raised by the sounds of the film could be a consequence of the fact that various sound films had already been heard in Quito, in the adapted silent cinema venues, by the time the first purpose-built cinema venue opened. That is, the sounds of the films were not a novelty in Quito anymore.

In spite of the limited discussion on the sounds of *El signo de la cruz*, the opening program of the Bolívar Theater gave relevance to one particular sound, that of the music: Not the music of the film itself, but rather the music played during the intermissions of the screening:

INAUGURAL PROGRAM

At 9 pm

1. Overture - 'Cleopatra' - Roselló - Orchestra
2. National Anthem of Ecuador - Neumane - Orchestra
3. Presentation of the Bolívar Theater to the public - Mr. Carlos Mantilla Ortega
4. 'The Sign of the Cross' - First part
5. Intermission - Capricho Polonés - Penalva Tellez
6. 'The Sign of the Cross' - Second part
7. Intermission - Serenata al Vento - M. Masheroni
- 8.- 'The Sign of the Cross' - Third part
- 9.- Final March - Defiliermasch - Klang Film

The orchestra for this inaugural screening will be conducted by Maestro Ramos Albuja and composed by the best maestros of the city.

During the intermissions, the service of the bar will be provided by Hotel Metropolitano.¹¹³⁶

1136 Advertisement for *El signo de la cruz*, *El Comercio*, April 15, 1933.

The above shows that the exhibition of *El signo de la cruz* was strongly intertwined with music. It is also clear that the film was not exhibited continuously but that it was fragmented, which was no longer a common practice in Quito at the time. This illustrates the destandardization of the standardized sound of the film, as evidently it was shown differently to the way in which Hollywood desired:

MUSICAL PROGRAM TO BE PLAYED BEFORE THE
INTERMISSIONS OF TODAY'S SCREENING

VICTOR records musical execution by the famous organist
JESSE CRAWFORD:

1. Ah! Sweet Mystery of Life
2. Roses of Picardy
3. Amapola

IN THE INTERMISSION:

2. Heute Natch oder Nie.
1. Rosse Marie¹¹³⁷

This is another way in which records and sound films were put together in the showings in Quito:

Program for this screening:

1. Music selection (Discos Victor (Discs))
2. One reel of Tarzan (next premiere)
3. Bull confinement in Pamplona
4. Alma Libre (A Free Soul, 1931) - first part
5. Intermission - Music
6. Alma Libre (A Free Soul, 1931) - second part¹¹³⁸

One explanation for this program could be that at the time the Bolívar Theater opened, music was one of the most cherished sounds of sound cinema. However, Hollywood had made the transition to mostly talking films, leaving the dissemination of songs to the radio. Although in Ecuador, by April 1933, the radio was wider spread than it had been from 1930 to 1932, that is, people could listen to recorded sounds of music mostly by gramophones and radio, both of these were expensive at the time. In other words, in 1933, cinema continued serving as a disseminator of songs in Quito, and in Ecuador. Therefore, music had to be somehow integrated

1137 Advertisement for *Alma libre*, *El Comercio*, April 22, 1933. This film premiered in Quito on this day.

1138 Advertisement for *Alma libre*, *El Comercio*, April 28, 1933.

into the program.

In addition to the screening of sound films interspaced by recorded music, a new practice of introducing films emerged at the Bolívar Theater since the exhibitors of this venue did not only rely on the written press to introduce the upcoming films, but rather they screened one reel in advance:

Program

1. American Jazz Music - Discos Victor (Discs)
2. One reel of Tarzan - Coming soon
3. 'Se prohíbe pescar' - Cartoons
4. La Jaula de Oro (Platinum Blonde, 1931) - first part
5. Intermission - Music - Discos Victor (Discs)
6. La Jaula de oro (Platinum Blonde, 1931) - second part¹¹³⁹

That is, there is a radical change in how films, and in fact sound films, were promoted in the city. The source that advertised them was no longer only silent, and the sounds of the films were promoted through sound for the first time in the city. This is an early use of the 'trailer' in Quito, which in the same way shows that, at least in Ecuador, there were no trailers until that point to introduce the next premieres. This practice was not done at all screenings, but rather in the so-called special screenings: "During the special screening, we will present a reel of the upcoming movies: *La Usurpadora* (*Back Street*, 1932) and *Alma Libre* (*A Free Soul*, 1931)."¹¹⁴⁰ Soon, the other cinema company took the idea and applied this practice of introducing sound films: "... To finish the event, we will exhibit the funny comedy *Las Delicias del Cabaret* and one reel to promote *La Calle del Lujo* (*Vanity Street*, 1932)."¹¹⁴¹

Tarzan's program was the following:

'Program

1. Musical selection - Discos Victor (Discs)
2. One reel of Mam'zelle Nitouche (*Mam'zelle Nitouche*, 1931) - Coming soon
3. Tarzan - First part
4. Intermission - Music - Discos Victor (Discs)
5. Tarzan - Second part

1139 Advertisement for *La jaula de oro*, *El Día*, April 28, 1933

1140 Advertisement for *Una noche celestial*, *El Comercio*, April 19, 1933.

1141 Advertisement for *La mujer marcada*, *El Día*, April 28, 1933.

6. Final march¹¹⁴²

As films began to include intermissions, which was one of the practices during the silent cinema period in Quito, clarification was needed: "The feature film is NOT A SERIAL. This movie will be acclaimed as the most sensational work that sound cinema has ever produced; this is what the fans of the entire world claim."¹¹⁴³

In conclusion, although it has been said that the arrival of sound cinema produced standardization in the sound of the movies, this did not apply to Ecuador, particularly in the case of Quito. In this way, we can see that Quito's exhibitors, instead of showing the sound films continuously, cut sound movies into parts, and these pauses were mostly filled with recorded music. In other words, contemporaries did not *use* sound cinema in the way they were supposed to. Drawing on Michel de Certeau, it can be argued that: "They subverted it not by rejecting,"¹¹⁴⁴ but by altering the way in which they were supposed to screen it and what is more, as mentioned by Certeau, by using certain ends.¹¹⁴⁵ In other words, they appropriated in a very different way according to the time and place in which they lived.

Why did contemporaries in 1933 destandardize the standardized? One possible explanation for this in Quito is that in the early 1930s, at the same time that Hollywood had decided the best way to promote music in general was no longer the cinema but the radio, in Quito the radio was only just making its entrance and radio sets were not yet widespread. In other words, most people had no place to hear recorded music. In private homes, it was not common to have gramophones due to their high prices at the time. Due to the amount of music added during the screenings, it can be argued that the musical aspect still played a crucial role in cinema in Quito in that period. This, however, is not to argue that the artists dialogues did not have a pivotal role.

Simply put, even though Hollywood had decided to step further away from the amount of music in the films, contemporaries in Quito found a way in which to maintain it, and compared to other sound screenings, increased the amount of music in the screening. Hollywood certainly did not intend this, but in Quito they did what they wanted to with the film,

1142 Advertisement for *Tarzan*, *El Día*, April 29, 1933.

1143 Advertisement for *Tarzan*, *El Día*, April 29, 1933.

1144 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 65.

1145 *Ibid.*, 65.

and adapted this technology to suit their needs. Of course, this use is more related to that of the exhibitors, but it is still evident that they did this grounded in the place they were located. Had they known that the emphasis on recorded music would not work, they would not have done it, and what is more, the audience would not have flocked to the venues to the degree that they did. So, the amount of people in the screenings, as pointed out in the advertisements, is evidence enough that the audience liked this combination.

Conclusions

My main conclusion is that before the screening of sound films, the construction of the first purpose-built sound cinema and the import of sound equipment for the exhibitions, all of which occurred from 1930 to 1933, sound cinema had already dominated the cinematographic sphere. This was due to its arrival through the local press, which reached its peak in the public debate of late 1929. The discussion about cinema in these texts, which centered on particular features such as hygiene, censorship, law and electricity, modified the contemporaries' understanding of cinema. What this meant is that when contemporaries discussed these issues—hygiene, for instance—they attached several meanings to it: one of which I argue was sound cinema. Thus, although at first glance one may think that hygiene was a crucial concept at the time and that it meant only health and had nothing to do with sound cinema, it actually had everything to do with sound cinema. In fact, sound cinema in general meant something clean, censored, moral and, of course, sonic.

In relation to Part I and in particular to Chapter 3, it is clear that cinema was framed under particular discourses in late 1929, discourses which in most cases were not new even to the cinematographic sphere as they had been discussed in relation to cinema from at least 1906 to 1922. However, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the novel feature was that all these aspects did not appear to be disconnected from one another; they were discussed all at once in one month in three newspapers. The fact that they came together framed cinema under certain discourses and redefined in a particular way what cinema should later be in the city.

It is also clear that in 1917 to 1922, people had become more sensitive to the manners of others, including the manners of speech, which, according to Elias, is human relations turned into sound.¹¹⁴⁶ One of the reasons for people becoming more sensitive to sound was likely the reading of civilized practices involving sound in the local press. That is, the role of the press in the dissemination of how to behave inside cinema is pivotal to understanding how these practices spread in Quito.

Silence was portrayed in the local press as part of the characteristics

1146 Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 99.

of good behavior followed by the higher ranks not only in Quito, but in Europe, which was regarded as a model of civilization. This way of behaving was also promoted by telling readers that the influential and higher ranks of society behaved in a particular way and therefore those who did not must belong to the lower ranks of society.

This sensitivity to sound could be, drawing on Elias's analysis, a consequence of the clashing of different social classes and therefore manners in various spaces of the city.¹¹⁴⁷ Based on this author, it seems clear to argue that the spreading of entertainment to the lower classes meant that the higher social classes needed to differentiate themselves in some way from those of the lower class. One way of doing this was through their relation to sound.

The importance of silence in the period under investigation is also evident in the law preventing the admission of women with babies and pregnant women in cinemas because it is clear that this law was issued with the intention to control noise in cinemas. This decree was also the consequence of a public discussion on children's manners that lasted more than a decade in Quito. Children and children's noise was a matter of attention for quite some time in Quito's cinematographic sphere. The sonic aspect of children - their noise and their language - was only one more example of the focus of attention they had become in Quito by the early 20th century. Silence in the 1920s was also seen as a trait of the government of Mussolini, and in Quito it was seen as an extension of the silence requested in different spheres at the time.

All in all, prior to the arrival of sound cinema in Quito, being silent in screenings and focusing on the moving pictures was described as an appropriate way to behave in cinema. That is, even though we may tend to think that during silent cinema the sound of the audience did not matter because cinema had no sound, it is clear that in Quito the upper social classes were extremely sensitive to sound and demanded more silence. Moreover, in Quito, the demand for silence in the silent cinema spectacle was because it was a matter of manners and distinction among different social groups more than understanding silent cinema.

The role of the press in the construction of the sensitivity to sound is found not only in the discourses attempting to silence audiences in cinema, but also in the scheduling of the gramophone, which was not widespread in

1147 Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 6-483.

the late 1920s and early 1930s. Although it may be concluded that people wanted to silence cities, the fact is that people did not want to eradicate sound; they merely wanted to control it, to regulate it, along with everyone's sonic manners.

The complexities of sound can be evidenced in the fact that in the first decades of the 20th century in Quito, controlling one's sound and behaving in the venues was part of the civilizing process, as was embracing more sonorous technologies; although contradictory, it was part of the same process of civilization.

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