

Transatlantic cultural embassies: Georges Clemenceau in Buenos Aires and Paul Groussac in Paris, 1910-1911. Intellectual relations and university life

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ABSTRACT: This article analyses Georges Clemenceau's visits to Buenos Aires, undertaken in 1910, and their connections with Paul Groussac's visit to Paris, in 1911. The text aims to show the dynamics that were established between the two events and proposes consideration of the visits that they made as a means of studying transatlantic intellectual connections at a moment immediately before the interwar period, which has been studied in historiography with categories such as scientific or academic exchanges and mobility, intellectual cooperation, and so on. That is, it tries to show how the links between France and a Latin American country were consolidated in circumstances not yet clearly institutionalized and formalized by state entities or agencies. The notion of "cultural ambassadors" is proposed to address the role played by visitors, following the proposal made by the bibliography in reference to the overlaps between official and non-governmental missions in the processes of building exchange ties, intellectual relationships, and other forms of contact between nations.

KEYWORDS: Intellectual relations; Cultural ambassadors; Transnational identities.

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RESUMEN: En este artículo se analizan las visitas de Georges Clemenceau a Buenos Aires, concretada en 1910, y sus conexiones con la de Paul Groussac a París, en 1911. El texto apunta a mostrar las dinámicas que se establecieron entre los dos eventos y propone pensar las visitas que realizaron como una posibilidad para estudiar las conexiones intelectuales transatlánticas en un momento inmediatamente anterior a entreguerras, que se ha estudiado en la historiografía con categorías como intercambios y movilidades científicas o académicas, cooperación intelectual, y otras. Es decir, se intenta mostrar de qué modo se consolidaron los vínculos entre Francia y un país latinoamericano en circunstancias aún no claramente institucionalizadas y formalizadas por entidades u organismos estatales. Se propone la noción de "embajadores culturales" para pensar en el rol que ejercieron los visitantes, siguiendo la propuesta de bibliografía que se ha ocupado de analizar las superposiciones entre misiones oficiales y no-gubernamentales en los procesos de construcción de lazos de intercambio, relaciones intelectuales, y otras formas de contacto entre naciones.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Relaciones intelectuales; Embajadores culturales; Identidades transnacionales.

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INTRODUCTION

This article analyzes Georges Clemenceau's visits to Buenos Aires in 1910 and their connections with Paul Groussac's visit to Paris in 1911. The text aims to show the dynamics that were established between the two events and proposes consideration of the visits that they made as a means of studying transatlantic intellectual connections at a moment immediately before the interwar period, which has been studied in historiography with categories such as scientific or academic exchanges and mobility, intellectual cooperation, and other associated concepts (Buchbinder, 2019; Charle, Schriewer and Wagner, 2006; Chonchol and Martinière, 1985; Rodríguez de Lecea, 1991). In other words, the aim is to show how links between France and a Latin American country were consolidated in circumstances that had not yet been clearly institutionalized and formalized by state entities or organizations.

This essay proposes the notions of “cultural ambassadors” and “cultural embassies” to the role played by visitors, following the proposal of a bibliography that has analyzed the overlapping between official and non-governmental missions in the processes of building exchange ties, intellectual relations, and other forms of contact between nations (Bruno, Pita and Alvarado, 2021). I have opted for the use of this notion that recovers and conceptualizes epochal expressions—such as “ambassador of *las letras*,” or “ambassador of culture”—with a view to describing a type of figure that I have also previously called “cultural articulator” and that in other contributions has been defined as “cultural mediator” or “non-official ambassador” (Bruno, 2017; Roig and Subirana, 2020; Biletkin, 2020). This methodological and conceptual choice makes it possible to capture the actions of figures—and connections between them—who, as will be seen in this essay, did not respond to state logic when undertaking cultural actions to promote their countries. Nor did they adhere to state indications, governmental or institutional projects that outlined lines of action or specific discourses to be promoted. I believe that these analytical options make it possible to give an account of areas of intersection in which spontaneous personal actions, commercial logics and unexpected events could generate instances of what was known at the time as “cultural propaganda,” but which did not respond to rigid governmental agendas to which the actors adhered. Therefore, as I have argued in other works, it allows us to capture cultural dynamics characteristic of the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century (Bruno, *et al.*, 2020). These choices have been made to the detriment of the use of the category of “cultural diplomacy” which, as historiography has widely shown, has been employed to analyse the actions generated by agencies, institutions, state divisions and agents in the implementation of government agendas from the interwar period onwards, and throughout the twentieth century, but which can force arguments and interpretations to analyze phenomena from the early twentieth century (Rodríguez Barba, 2015; Carbó-Catalán and Roig, 2022; Bruno, *et al.*, 2023).

The focus, then, is on two visits that had different logics but were connected to give shape to a circuit in which university life, official missions and the rhythms of the entertainment market associated with the big cities coexisted, not always harmoniously. When viewed in continuity, these stays allow us to observe overlaps in circuits of intellectual circulation that responded to different intentions or priorities. Thus, the proposal is to analyse these events and their impact on academic and intellectual life but also to consider them as cultural events that generated dynamics which exceeded the strictly institutional, scientific or official spheres of reception.

The figures studied, at the time of the visits, had different trajectories. When Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929) arrived in Buenos Aires, he was a renowned and recognized French statesman. Paul Groussac (1848-1929), on the other hand, was a Frenchman who had settled in Buenos Aires in 1866 and had established himself as an intellectual figure of reference in Buenos Aires and for scholars in some Latin American capitals. Both had one feature in common: they did not occupy professional roles in the universities; nevertheless, their visits generated diverse interests in which figures of the intellectual life of both countries were involved in university and official dynamics, and laid the foundations for a collaboration between academics to be possible in the medium term. Through their actions in these instances, they became “cultural ambassadors” who, perhaps unintentionally, operated as bridges between two worlds: they strengthened transatlantic ties and created images and representations of transnational identities, among other issues.

The first two sections analyse both visits in terms of their dynamics, paying attention to the way they were financed and organized, the actors involved in them, and the effects they had on the public life of Buenos Aires and Paris. The third section presents considerations on the dimension that a transnational cultural identity, the “Latin community,” assumed within the framework of the visits and conditioned some ways of thinking about the hierarchies between countries when establishing intellectual relations.

Given that the intention of this article is to capture the dynamics that these visits generated and that they did not respond to a single circuit (both show overlaps between commercial and private, university and intellectual dynamics and personal affinities and interests), the sources used in the research that supports this article respond to different registers. On the one hand, I have consulted the periodical press and cultural magazines published in Argentina and France in the years studied and I have focused in particular on the publications that were considered a reference in the connections between French and Latin American cultural life (for example, *Revue des Deux Mondes* and *Magazine Mondial*). At the same time, I have also studied the Paul Groussac Fund, located in the General Archive of the Nation of the Argentine Republic. I have also consulted official and institutional sources of different types, among them: *Diarios de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados* and *Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de*

Senadores, and minutes of the Consejo Superior de la Universidad de Buenos Aires (Argentina), documents of the Conseil Municipal de Paris, statutes and bulletins of the *Groupe des Universités et Grandes Ecoles de France pour les rapports avec l'Amérique latine* (France). I have also read testimonies of the figures studied (correspondences, chronicles, travel memoirs, among others), and of their contemporaries.

GEORGES CLEMENCEAU IN BUENOS AIRES: BETWEEN SHOW BUSINESS AND CULTURAL LIFE

Clemenceau arrived in Buenos Aires on July 17, 1910, having embarked in Genoa aboard the *Regina Elena* on June 30. His visit is frequently mentioned as a highlight of the centennial year of the rupture of the country's colonial ties with Spain. In fact, between 1909 and 1911, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Rafael Altamira, Adolfo Posada, Jean Jaurès, León Duguit, Enrico Ferri, M. Victor Margueritte, and others visited the country (Herrera, 2009; Bruno, 2014; Prado, 2008). Each of these visitors circulated through scenarios that were not always those foreseen in the initial moments of their "lecture tours": schools, university auditoriums, immigrant community clubs, among others.

Although, in general, there is no emphasis on the pecuniary issues that motivated these travelers to visit distant lands, taking this fact into account allows us to grasp some dynamics of their movements. In the case of Clemenceau, in the available bibliography, reference has been made to the fact that he had been advised by Anatole France regarding the economic advantages of touring South American capitals. This was due to the fees obtained for the payment of lectures, but also to the fees that newspapers and magazines offered to correspondents who undertook to send picturesque notes on unknown or "exotic" geographies. To these economic interests were added, of course, others. In this case, as one of his prominent biographers points out, the French statesman had long expressed his intention to explore South America and to learn firsthand how the countries of the region were organized (Duroselle, 1988, p. 554).

Sometimes it has been misleadingly stated that Clemenceau travelled as an official representative of the French government and was summoned by the Argentine government. In fact, the French delegates who traveled to the Centennial celebrations were led by the senator and envoy extraordinary Pierre Baudin (*Caras y Caretas* [CyC], 30/4/1910) and authorities and professors of French study centers (Pelosi, 1999, pp. 107-108). Clemenceau arrived in Buenos Aires via a circuit different from that of the state celebrations and did so months after the celebrations of May 1910. Although it was not official, his visit generated widespread interest, although when he arrived in the country, his career seemed somewhat eclipsed. After being mayor of Montmartre, deputy of the National Assembly, having fought for the separation of Church and State, and being a detractor of France's colonial expansion, he held the posts

of senator, minister of the interior and became president of the Council of Ministers. But in exercising this last responsibility, the reputation he gained among figures of the French left, such as Jean Jaurès, had been corroded. From his post, he had taken decisions that made him a controversial figure, such as the repression of workers' mobilisations and the reform and hardening of the police system (Daudet, 1940; Duroselle, 1988). His decisions being questioned, he resigned in 1909. And at that very moment, he began to think about the trip to South America.

As soon as it was known that Clemenceau would be traveling, a period marked by expectations began in Buenos Aires and other cities (his tour included Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay). Several Buenos Aires newspapers and magazines began to translate texts written by Clemenceau, five presented biographical sketches accompanied by portraits, and expectations were generated in relation to the visitor's arrival. A profile was repeatedly offered in newspapers and magazines: he was a French statesman, mature, with a declining career, but also a "man of virile effort" and a "great fighter" (CyC, 19/03/1910, *La Nación* [LN], 12/05/1910). In several newspapers it was noted that Clemenceau was not fond of giving interviews; but an attempt was made anyway to give information about his arrival. Among the few statements prior to his voyage, the following stands out:

I had long intended to visit South America. Above all, Buenos Aires has always seduced me by the strange modern breeze that blows from there. Imagine thinking of an America that two hundred years ago was populated by Indians, and suddenly, in less time than it takes in Paris to change the face of a boulevard, we get the news that America has wonderful cities. Parisian cities like Buenos Aires, whose statistics are not only astonishing for their progress, but also frightening (CyC, 19/03/1910).

Clemenceau's arrival at the port of Buenos Aires had all the traits of a comedy of entanglements. As he had neither been invited by the Argentine government nor had credentials from the French State, the businessman who organized his *tournee de conférences*, Faustino Da Rosa, did not foresee a reception in keeping with the traveller's reputation. Thus, the French community in Argentina, some self-organised groups, and journalists made up for the absence of an officially appointed entourage for the occasion. One newspaper pointed out that the visitor had not noticed the "official discourtesy" and that he had been impressed by the presence of a group of people waiting for him in elegant suits (*El Diario* [ED], 10/17/1910). Despite this initial indifference of Argentine men of letters and politicians, throughout his visit, he established relations and met with figures of intellectual and university life. Interest and some invitations resulted from the success of his lectures.

The lectures were announced in an official guide made for the 1910 celebrations, not in the program of the state celebrations but in a section devoted to advertising. An advertisement in the Odeon Theatre's program highlights

the participation of such figures as Gustavo Salvini (Italian lyric singer), María Guerrero Díaz de Mendoza (Spanish dramatic actress), Albert Brasseur (French comedian and opera singer), Marthe Regnier (French actress), Abel Tarride (French actor and playwright), Kubelick (violinist born in the present Czech Republic) and other lyric singers, actors, operettas and concerts. At the bottom of the page is this legend: “in the month of July the illustrious French statesman Mr. GEORGES CLEMENCEAU will give six lectures in this theatre” (*Guía-Programa de los Festejos Oficiales del Centenario, 1810-1910*. Buenos Aires: Talleres Heliográficos de Ortega y Radaelli, 1910, p. 174). The lectures appeared, literally, sharing the bill with theatrical performances. In the same vein, it was announced in the newspapers that a season ticket could already be purchased at the theatre’s administration office to listen to them. In capital letters, the advertisements were printed in block letters: “Georges Clemenceau. Six Conferences of the Illustrious Statesman” at the Odeon Theatre (ED, 15/07/1910 and 16/07/1910).

For the businessman Faustino Da Rosa, of Portuguese origin but settled in Argentina, the lectures of the French statesman were on a par with the programming of theatrical shows. This entrepreneur may have captured a demand and a market for this type of event in Buenos Aires, since his name appears linked to the hiring of Anatole France, Ramón del Valle Inclán, Enrico Ferri, Guillermo Ferrero, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, and others, to lecture in the halls of the Odeon Theater and the National Theater (De Fagoaga, 1971, p. 100). When an Argentine intellectual commented to Clemenceau, during his stop in Montevideo, that his lectures were advertised as shows, the latter was somewhat confused and emphasized that his interest was to have an influence on Argentine intellectual life (De Vedia, 1922, p. 138).

The six lectures were given to a full house. While the audience produced a sell-out, journalists noted that Clemenceau’s attitude towards them was distant and unfriendly. This treatment did not seem to discourage the press’s intention to turn the visit into a series of news stories, as evidenced by the publication of a column published in *El Diario* during his stay, and entitled “La journée de M. Clemenceau” (ED, 18/07/1910).

Between his arrival and the beginning of the conferences, Clemenceau’s stay began to generate the interest of local authorities. Together with some political figures and leaders of the French community in Argentina, he visited schools, hospitals, cattle ranches, and the emblematic sites of the city: the Jockey Club, the French Bank, the Recoleta and Palermo promenades, the Colon Theatre, the Odeon Theatre, the Palermo Penitentiary, the Zoological Garden and the Botanical Park. He was staying at the luxurious, centrally located Palace Hotel and there he had a visiting schedule and received several personalities, such as Ernesto Bosch, Antonio Piñero, Román Le Breton, Carlos Rodríguez Larreta, Juan Agustín García, Paul Groussac, and others. All these figures were associated with the university, literary, and diplomatic circuits. He also accepted invitations and attended receptions.

Once settled in Buenos Aires, and after the recognition of some intellectual and political figures, the senate invited him to a banquet in his honour and encounters were organised for him to meet the president, José Figueroa Alcorta, and his ministers. In these days, in addition, he went to the amphitheater of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters to listen to a professor of Spanish language and culture in Paris, Ernest Martinenche. A chronicler summarised the hectic days: “Mr. Clemenceau has been actively engaged in making the most of these first days of his stay in the capital [...] before leaving, as of Monday, for this brief vacation, which is in keeping with his spirit and his laborious activities” (ED, 07/22/1910).

The hectic life of social relations and meetings slowed down when the lectures began. The newspapers announced the beginning of the sessions with enthusiasm and pointed out that there was a growing “real anxiety to hear the eminent citizen on a larger stage, open to the general public.” The chronicles in this sense were replicated and several manifestations of this type can be read: “the day is approaching when Mr. Clemenceau will begin, before his Buenos Aires audience, the intellectual work he intends to develop, satisfying the lively expectation awakened by his presence among us, the illustrious guest” (ED, 21/07/1910 and 22/07/1910).

The lectures were delivered in French and dealt with various aspects of democracy (Clemenceau, 1930). As the days went by, Clemenceau began to show himself to be more and more uninhibited, walking around the stage, making theatrical pauses, generating interest in the audience with comparisons and factual details. Paul Groussac acted as chronicler at the first conference and remarked:

it is very likely that reduced to a methodical review and read with pause, the decorative fresco that the speaker improvised last night with courage and grace would turn out to be as languid as, for example, this or that episodic commentary of *Pantagruel*. Interpreted by Clemenceau, the abstract adventures of democracy took on the life and colour of personal conflicts (LN, 28/07/1910).

In a barely disguised tone, an intellectual figure reported that the sessions did not provide a deep analysis of democracy, but they did excite the audience. The punch line of Groussac’s commentary was that it had been a “mundane talk, sprinkled with ironic features and jokes in good taste” (LN, 28/07/1910). The anonymous attendees, on the other hand, were delighted with the session. On leaving the theatre, Clemenceau was carried back to his hotel. Those who had listened to him, and although perhaps they had not fully understood his words pronounced in French, applauded him with enthusiasm, cheered and acclaimed him. One chronicler described Clemenceau as shocked by the reactions and remarked: “a man of action, he must have been particularly pleased by this demonstration in a town that is not of his language, so distant from his own and therefore alien to the upheavals that at first sight moved the fibres of solidarity” (ED, 27/07/1910). The expressions of affection were extended in several oth-

er actions: people left gifts at his hotel, numerous albums were brought for him to sign dedications, some women left him private messages, gold and silver medals, home-made sweets, finely manufactured mates were given to him (*ED*, 08/08/1910 and 09/08/1910).

These actions may have made Clemenceau more enthusiastic as the days went by, as his lectures became more dynamic and widely praised. But, at the same time, he began to show annoyance and felt besieged. After a few days, he would collect albums of ladies with the promise to write them a thought, and, in general, he did not deliver, for example. It is noted in the newspapers that Clemenceau showed an “invincible aversion” to “the collectors of postcards and autographs,” who seemed to be constantly on the prowl (*ED*, 18/08/1910). There was thus a misunderstanding between the “spectacularised” lecturer and his audience. Meanwhile, among the audience, the presence of senators, deputies, the president’s aide-de-camp, the mayor of Buenos Aires—Manuel Güiraldes—, the chief of police—Luis Dellepiane—, Enrico Ferri, Paul Groussac, Antonio Piñero, among others, was growing in the boxes and front rows.

Ferri was in Buenos Aires at the same time as Clemenceau and his experience as a lecturer developed along different tracks. His talks were given in theatres, but above all at the Law School of the University of Buenos Aires. Clemenceau went there to listen to him, and they also met on several occasions (*La Vanguardia*, 09/09/1910). Ferri’s audience was different, predominantly university students and linked to the leading figures of Argentine socialism. His circuit had not responded to the needs of an impresario to sell season tickets. Ferri did not seem to be considered a show, as a chronicler explained:

the courses he has been teaching in our Law School (University of Buenos Aires) and in La Plata, make it possible today to judge the teacher in the field in which he masters even the smallest details and confirms once again that great talents cannot be confined to the somewhat narrow pedagogical discipline (...) Professor Ferri, accustomed to his system of exposition in his university professorship in Rome and with a very high awareness of his condition as a teacher, develops in our country a program that he is confident he will know how to teach (...) Professor Ferri, accustomed to his system of exposition in the university chair in Rome and with a very high awareness of his condition as a teacher, develops among us a program, confident that he will know to interpret it as he understands he must perform his task in the course of eight conferences (Gonzalez, 1910, p. 83).

But it was not only this commentator who noted the difference in tone between Ferri’s proposal, clearly framed in university life, and that of Clemenceau and others. In fact, the doubts as to whether the French statesman should be invited to academic circles were clearly expressed at a meeting of the Superior Council of the University of Buenos Aires. In the minutes of the session of July 21, 1910, we read a controversy about whether the university

could avoid the visitor’s presence. This summarizes the arguments of the discussion, which began with a proposal from the Dean of the Council. He pointed out that, since Clemenceau was an eminent politician as well as a physician, a banquet could be held in his honour at the university. This proposal generated a debate. Some professors pointed out that the Faculty of Medicine should honor him. Others, on the other hand, were opposed because he had not practiced medicine for some time. Those against banquets or tributes argued that Clemenceau’s visit was for commercial, not academic purposes: “(Clemenceau) has been hired to give lectures for a number of francs. He is not a respectable doctor, therefore, the Faculty does not have to bestow honours on him” (*Consejo Superior de la Universidad, Revista de la Universidad de Buenos Aires*, year VII, volume XIV, 1910, pp. 257 and 258). An argument appears in this exchange that clearly states that a visitor arriving in the country via commercial circuits was not worthy of being received at the university. To close the discussion, the Dean, Eliseo Cantón, indicated that he would simply extend an invitation for Clemenceau to visit the facilities of the School of Medicine. A visit that, judging by the press reports, did not materialise.

In spite of this controversy, which revealed the existence of a commercial path that was not entirely well regarded in academic life—that of lecture *tours* in theatres—Clemenceau’s visit had an impact on Argentine cultural life. This can be explained by two things: the friendship he struck up with his compatriot, Paul Groussac, and an episode that accidentally had an impact on the country’s cultural legislation.

On the first point: it has already been noted that members of the French community had received and accompanied Clemenceau. Among them, Groussac, with whom he established a close bond, stood out. At the time of the visit, he was the director of the Bibliothèque Nationale, was considered an articulator of intellectual life, and was open to accompanying the visitor spontaneously. Although, as has been pointed out, Clemenceau’s stay in South American capitals was the idea of a theatrical impresario, Groussac showed no disdain for this fact and was willing to be part of his entourage and officiate as a local guide in walks and gatherings promoted by circles of intellectual sociability. Clemenceau considered Groussac a missionary of French culture in Buenos Aires, and in his travel notes published shortly after the visit, he highlighted his “civilising” role (Clemenceau, 1911c, pp. 59 and following).

With regard to the second episode referred to: while Clemenceau’s visit was taking place, on August 12, 1910, several Argentine newspapers, following the dynamics already described, covered an altercation between the visitor and a group of actors who intended to entertain him by staging his play *Le voile de bonheur* in a theatre. The troupe approached the Frenchman’s hotel and asked for permission to do so, assuming he would be flattered, and also invited him to watch the rehearsals. Clemenceau’s reaction is described by chroniclers as choleric: surprised by this initiative, he flatly refused to allow his play to

be performed. Nevertheless, the troupe rehearsed, publicized, and performed the play. This irritated the visitor, to such an extent that he issued a written complaint in which he pointed out that he was opposed “to these acts of piracy that unfortunately are authorized by the lack of a law that guarantees literary property in the Argentine Republic” (ED, 13/08/1910).

The trial described a reality: Argentina’s lack of adherence to the rules of intellectual rights and property, which made it possible for translations, reproductions, and performances of all kinds of works to be undertaken without paying remuneration to their authors (Bellido, 2009). Clemenceau met with Groussac to tell him that he, as a native of a “civilized” country, should promote the drafting of a law for the protection of intellectual authorship.

A few days later, in the same month of August 1910, a bill on literary and artistic property was discussed in the Chamber of Deputies, presented by deputies Carlos Carlés and Manuel Carlés, who argued that they were gladly representing “the commission of friends and teachers, famous in science, arts and social respects” (*Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados*. 1910. Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos de Rosso, pp. 89-95). The bill was approved and passed to the Chamber of Senators, where it was Joaquín V. González, senator for La Rioja and founder of the National University of La Plata, who lent his voice to the exposition of the bill, arguing that Argentina had been pressured by prominent French intellectuals to have its own scientific and literary property law. Gonzalez declared:

In Europe, particularly in France, a movement has been promoted lately to urge the Argentine Republic to pass this law. A committee, formed by the first French intellectuals, under the presidency of the famous historian and politician Hanotaux, has made representations to the Argentine legation in Paris adducing reasons of those that are difficult to postpone, so that a law that recognizes the rights of French authors is dictated. This request has had its repercussion here on the occasion of the visit of one of the most eminent men of France and contemporary Europe, Monsieur Clemenceau (*Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Senadores*. 1910. Buenos Aires: Establecimiento Tipográfico “El comercio,” p. 612).

Law 7092, Argentina’s first intellectual property law, was finally passed. Its drafter was Groussac, at the request of Clemenceau. This fact shows how this visit, motivated by commercial and private interests, triggered a series of events that, although they can be considered fortuitous, led to legislation that had a direct impact on the conditions for the dissemination of works in the Argentine intellectual sphere. Of course, nothing in the preparation of the French statesman’s visit anticipated this kind of repercussion, totally unexpected, but the law became known as “*loi Clemenceau*” and was celebrated in France (*Excelsior*, January 26, 1911). Following its enactment, interest in intellectual law issues grew in Argentina and, in the following years, there was an increase in the number

of theses from the Law School of the University of Buenos Aires dealing with intellectual law issues (Mouchet, 1944).

Another unexpected cultural effect of Clemenceau’s visit was of a more long-term nature and continues to be valid, despite the more than one hundred years that have elapsed. On his return to Paris, he commented to Groussac, in a private letter dated January 6, 1911:

I have accepted the commitment to write for *L’Illustration* twelve large articles entitled ‘Travel Notes in Argentina and Brazil’ [...] It will be a kind of unpretentious talk, about everything. I will say frankly what I think, and I do not believe—except for my rights as a critic—that this will displease the Argentines (Clemenceau to Groussac, letter transcribed in Echagüe, 1935: 141).

The promised installments were published in *L’Illustration* in the first months of 1911 (some of them can be seen in the following editions: 28/01/1911, 04/02/1911, 05/02/1911, 11/02/1911, 18/03/1911); the same year, with considerable additions, they formed part of the book published by Hachette: *Notes de voyage dans l’Amérique du sud: Argentine, Uruguay, Brésil* (Clemenceau, 1911a), which was immediately translated into English and Spanish. The English version, published in New York and London by G. P. Putnam’s sons, is entitled: *South America Today. A study of conditions, social, political and commercial in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil* (Clemenceau, 1911b), and the Spanish version—translated by Miguel Ruiz—was published in 1911 by Cabaut y Cía. Editores under the title *Notas de viaje por América del Sur. Argentina-Uruguay-Brazil* (Clemenceau, 1911c). In the preface to the book, Clemenceau states that he had not taken notes during his stay in any of the countries visited (Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil) because he found it “very annoying to record impressions in black on white—always via a manifestation of impotence—at the precise moment when they are most vividly felt” (Clemenceau, 1911c, p. 19). However, the notes are written as if they were a diary contemporaneous with the visit.

This book has become a valuable source and has been used by several generations as a valuable text to obtain information on the social, political, and economic life of Argentina in its illustrious Centennial year (Lorenz, 1998; Herrera, 2009; Suriano, 2010). The visibility that Clemenceau’s figure assumed years after the visit, in the context of the First World War (Lecomte, 1918; Hyndman, 1919), may have brought renewed attention to the name and generated a retrospective—albeit enduring—interest in his stay in Buenos Aires.

PAUL GROUSSAC IN PARIS, 1911: BETWEEN STATE MISSIONS AND UNIVERSITY LIFE

In Clemenceau’s aforementioned travel notes, among other considerations about Groussac, we read: “If I am well informed, we will soon have the pleasure of having M. Paul Groussac in Paris. A chair of History of the Ar-

gentine Republic having been created at the Sorbonne, I am told that he has been approached to occupy it. Surely no one could be better qualified" (Clemenceau, 1911c, p. 74).

Clemenceau was not so well informed, but he had a general idea about a university venture that focused on Latin America and its contacts with France. It was the *Groupe des Universités et Grandes Ecoles de France pour les rapports avec l'Amérique latine*. The organisers of this group were self-convened referents of French houses of study that had been statutorily associated in 1909 and whose purpose was to strengthen intellectual ties between the French nation and Latin American countries ("Groupe des universités et grandes écoles de France." *Revue internationale de l'enseignement*, 57, 1909, pp. 113-116). The grouping organised a series of visits of representatives of Latin American culture and outstanding students, for whom they obtained discounts on boat tickets and facilities to assist with their movements. As can be seen in the *Bulletin de la Bibliothèque Américaine (Amérique latine)*, an organ of the aforementioned group, among the participants in the meetings with conferences of this association were, for example, Manuel Ugarte, M. Oliveira Lima, M. A. Dellepiane, and an outstanding guest: Paul Groussac, who was returning to Paris after consolidating his career in Latin American literary life.

Groussac was born in Toulouse, France, and had settled in Argentina in the 1860s. There he established himself as an intellectual reference and had a considerable impact on the formation of repertoires of ideas associated with Latin Americanism with an anti-American bias and with the Latin identity (Bruno, 2012). His name became, for his contemporaries and for later generations, synonymous with French cultural prestige in a South American country. So much so that Borges came to call him "Voltaire's representative among the *mulataje*."

He had arrived in Buenos Aires at a young age, with his high school studies probably unfinished and with some letters of reference. Without specific knowledge when he arrived in the city, he gradually became involved in educational spheres: first, he was a Latin instructor at the current Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, then he was the director of a national school in the province of Tucumán, and school-inspector in the northern territories of Argentina. By 1882, he already had some experience in educational life and became a reference in the International Pedagogical Congress held in Buenos Aires in 1882. There he gave a speech on educational needs in Argentina and his intervention was reported in newspapers and magazines. His prestige was usually underpinned by mention of his French origin. In 1884, he was appointed Director of the National Library of the Argentine Republic, a position that he held until 1929, when he died (Bruno, 2005).

Groussac's intellectual trajectory was consolidated, then, in South America. At the beginning of the 1890s, he tried to return to his native country and to integrate himself into intellectual society but had no luck. He described this return trip as a disillusionment due to the rigidities of the Parisian cultural world and the impossibility of enter-

ing the latter. His destiny seemed to be, then, in Buenos Aires. There he founded magazines, such as *La Biblioteca* (1896-1898) and *Anales de la Biblioteca* (1900-1915), endorsed or criticized the endeavours of Latin American scholars, and wrote a work composed of several volumes of historical texts, fictional stories, and travel chronicles. As mentioned in the previous section, he was recognized by Clemenceau as a valuable interlocutor when the latter visited Buenos Aires, since, among other undertakings, Groussac had founded *Le Courrier Français*, a newspaper for the French community living in Argentina.

In 1911, after befriending Clemenceau, his visit to Paris took place. But, unlike the French politician's visit, this one was part of an official mission and what could be called a *sui generis* exchange program, promoted by the *Groupe des Universités et Grandes Ecoles de France pour les rapports avec l'Amérique latine*. The association had made it known through its organ, the *Bulletin de la Bibliothèque Américaine (Amérique latine)*, that it was open to call on all Latin American figures willing to strengthen ties with France. It also emphasized that the journal would publish "articles on the main topics of interest to the intellectual movement in Latin America." In addition, it was stated that the bulletin intended to give an account of the university life of both countries, to publish comments and reviews on American books, and to provide information on materials "scattered across libraries and archives in Europe and the New World" (*Bulletin de la Bibliothèque Américaine (Amérique latine)*, 1910-1911, p. 2).

The group included among its promoters figures such as Paul Appell, Georges Dumas, Émile Bourgeois, Henri Le Châtelier, Louis Olivier, and Lucien Poincaré, and a heterogeneous group of university professors including historians, doctors, and writers. Among them was En-test Martineche, a professor who had visited Argentina in 1910, coinciding with Clemenceau, and who held the chair of Spanish language and culture at the Sorbonne (Chonchol and Martinière, 1985). The bulletin reported that the association had held a general assembly in March 1909 and that it had decided to select a series of corresponding figures in Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Brazil, and other countries. The Hispanic American community living in the French capital celebrated the group's initiative with enthusiasm. This was expressed in the *Magazine Mundial*, published in Paris in Spanish, which stated: "for some years now, there has been a great interest in Paris for the things of America"; this interest was confirmed by the formation of "an association in the French universities that was formed in 1909, with the aim of strengthening intellectual relations between France and the Latin countries of America" (*Magazine Mundial [MM]*, II (9), January 1912, p. 280).

It may be that the funding that the group could offer was not sufficient to cover the costs of a transatlantic trip. Perhaps consideration was not actually given to financing Groussac's entire trip, given that he was the director of the Argentine National Library, but did not hold a university position. Regardless of the motives, what is certain is that

Groussac's visit was supported by two overlapping circuits: one promoted by the Argentine government and the other by the aforementioned university group.

Thus, Groussac's trip and stay in France in 1911 enjoyed the support of the Argentine state budget; in fact, he was appointed official representative of the country at the International Exposition of Roubaix. The vice-presidential decree reads:

being convenient that to the material propaganda of the products and artifacts exhibited by the Argentine Republic, be added the one resulting from a reasoned demonstration of our sociological processes, as well as, in the present circumstances, from news related to the French community in the development of civilization and national greatness (...) Paul Groussac (...) is appointed as special delegate.

It was expected that the special envoy would write a text in French about the Argentine Republic and that it would be printed in Paris and that, by means of conferences, he would spread the news about the country: "Mr. Groussac should proceed in agreement with the Argentine Minister in Paris for everything concerning this or any other means of propaganda that he may deem appropriate." At the same time, the envoy was expected to give lectures on the Argentine Republic (*Registro Nacional de la República Argentina*, 1911, Primer Trimestre. Buenos Aires: Talleres Tipográficos de la Penitenciaría Nacional, 1911, pp. 495 and 496). A French newspaper echoed the special commission and noted that "Paul Groussac shall publish a concise work (...) which will pay attention to the French influence in Argentina, from independence to present-day progress. This work will be exhibited in the Argentine pavilion of the exposition and, surely, will generate maximum interest" (*Bulletin commercial et industriel de Roubaix*, 04/05/1911).

In the end, this work was not written by Groussac, but he travelled on an official commission and spent a good part of 1911 in Paris. Among the activities he carried out, as mentioned above, was the one promoted by the *Groupe des Universités et Grandes Ecoles de France pour les rapports avec l'Amérique latine*. Groussac was summoned by the group as a relevant figure in Latin America, but also because of his French origin. French newspapers launched a campaign generating expectation about his public intervention. From June 1911 onwards, his presence was announced in events of the Argentine legation in Paris, such as banquets and gatherings, and his work as a "civilizer" in South America was highlighted (*Le Figaro*, 29/06/1911). In November it was announced that Groussac's conference, which would deal with Jacques de Liniers, would take place on December 9, and would be presided over by Clemenceau. The group confirmed this to the editorial staff of several newspapers (*Le XIXe siècle*, 30/11/1911, *Le Rappel*, 30/11/1911).

Groussac gave a lecture on Santiago de Liniers (Jacques de Liniers) in the halls of the Sorbonne in front of a large audience, and was introduced by Clemenceau. Liniers, of

French origin, had been acting as Viceroy of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata and is attributed a role in what was called the "reconquest of Buenos Aires," a process that took place when British troops that tried to penetrate into Spanish colonial territory were expelled in 1806 and 1807. Groussac had already published a book entitled *Santiago de Liniers, Count of Buenos Aires* in 1907, on which he based his dissertation (Groussac, 1907).

The conference seems to have generated very good impressions, as one reporter summarized the event:

it was a beautiful Franco-Argentine demonstration (...) Mr. Georges Clemenceau, former president of the French Council of Ministers presided over the ceremony, and at his side was H.E. Mr. Enrique Larreta, minister of the Argentine Republic in Paris (...) also present were Mr. Liard, rector of the University of Paris, and Mr. Appel, dean of the Faculty of Sciences and president of the Steering Committee of the *Groupement* (*MM*, II (9), January 1912, p. 279).

Regarding the conference itself, it was noted: "this beautiful conference was a great success, and we must thank the lecturer and the organizers of such events, which contribute to making Latin America known in France. For some years Paris has shown a great interest in things of America" (*MM*, vol. II, no. 9, January 1912, pp. 279 and 280). This same judgment had been voiced by an Argentine newspaper that had emphasized at the beginning of 1911 the following: "the coming of Anatole France and Clemenceau (...) concentrates the attention of the European continent on Argentina and, in general, on Latin America. Our country begins to acquire authority and importance in the luminous Lutetia" (*La Tribuna*, 16/01/1911).

The truth is that, in this climate of mutual interest between French and Argentinians, the conference was successfully developed and several newspapers took advantage of the occasion to present portraits of Groussac; above all, emphasis was placed on his French origin and his missionary role in "the pampas." Comments on the dissertation were interspersed with praise for the *Groupe des Universités et Grandes Ecoles de France pour les rapports avec l'Amérique latine* for its initiatives, mention was made of the association's actions in consolidating intellectual ties, and it was emphasized that Groussac was the natural emissary of French culture in Argentina (*Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, 10/12/1911). Even a newspaper in Groussac's hometown proudly echoed the missionary work of its prodigal son (*La Dépêche*, 13/12/1911).

Among brief references linked to the life of the city or to the current events of the university and diplomatic circuits, a double column published in the *Gil Blas* newspaper entitled "De la Pampa á París," signed by André Maurel, stands out, stating that for decades different French figures had despised Argentina and that, fortunately, that attitude was beginning to change. Among those who had exercised their contempt, he mentioned Clemenceau, pointing out that during his trip to the country he

had made fun of the Argentines and had reproached them for their primitive legislations. The chronicler vindicated, in turn, Groussac's work and his lecture at the Sorbonne and put an interesting question on the table: had Groussac been well received because he was French or, on the other hand, was he valued as a Latin American voice? Moreover, it was suggested, with some malice, that Groussac had left French soil as an adventurer and had become an intellectual figure in Buenos Aires (*Gil Blas* 10/11/1911).

Despite these judgments, the conference was considered a success and the visitor was entertained and honored. Acts included a diplomatic reception held at the hotel of the Argentine legation in Paris which had become a cultural gathering attended by Georges Clemenceau, Gabriel Hanotaux, Maurice Barrés (members of the French Academy), and several university professors, such as Gaston Deschamps, René Maizeroy, Victor Margueritte, Lucien Maury, and Ernest Martinenche (*Le Moniteur des consulats et du commerce international*, 21/12/1911). As one newspaper noted, the personal ties between Groussac and Clemenceau, which had emerged during the latter's trip to Buenos Aires, now translated into cultural exchange actions (*La Petite presse*, 11/12/1911). A few months later, the lecture on Liniers was published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (LXXXII, May 1912, pp. 140-172), and its reading was recommended by several newspapers (*The New York Herald. European ed.*, 05/05/1912).

In addition to newspaper accolades, publication in a prestigious cultural magazine, and post-conference get-togethers, the lecture sparked an initiative that had its echoes in urban life. Just a few days after the event, Clemenceau and other figures decided to submit a request to the city council to name a street in the city after Jacques de Liniers. Among the arguments that the notables presented to the authorities, they pointed out that, as Groussac had amply demonstrated in his studies and in his lecture given at the Sorbonne, Liniers was a French hero who had had a "civilising" influence in South America, had collaborated with the American emancipation, and that, therefore, he deserved recognition. In 1919, the authorities were further urged to take steps, and the names of Groussac and Clemenceau appeared again as sponsors of the initiative. Finally, in 1926, it was decreed that an avenue in Paris, in the 19th arrondissement, should bear the name Jacques de Liniers (Conseil Municipal de Paris, *Proposition tendant à donner à une rue de Paris le nom de Jacques de Liniers*, déposée par Pierre Gordin, Paris, 1926).

Clemenceau's relationship with Groussac, in turn, was reinforced on several other occasions. In 1918, the latter was appointed Officer of the Legion of Honor at Clemenceau's behest (Archivo General de la Nación, República Argentina, Fondo Paul Groussac, Letter from Francisca Jacques to Paul Groussac, undated. Leg. no. 1: Correspondence received [1881-1929], manuscript of the sender). In 1925, for his part, Groussac returned to his native country for the last time to have an operation on his eyesight, which was deteriorating considerably, by a prestigious doctor recommended by Clemenceau (Lavallo Cobo, 1929). The operation was unsuccessful and

Groussac was left blind for life. These dramatic Parisian scenes had a brief moment of reparation since in November 1925 he attended a tribute held in his honor at the Sorbonne. The speeches read at this tribute were given by Georges Lacomte, member of the Académie Française, and Alfonso Reyes, and were subsequently published in the journal that was the continuation of the *Bulletin de la Bibliothèque Américaine (Amérique latine)*, the *Revue de l'Amérique Latine* ("Hommage à Paul Groussac," *Revue de l'Amérique Latine* [RAL], t. XI, Paris, janvier, 1926). The newspapers regarded this tribute as a well-deserved recognition of Groussac as "ambassador of French culture in Argentina," and the homage was cited by several newspapers after Groussac's death as a milestone in the strengthening of ties (*L'Action française*, 10/09/1929, *L'Auta*, 01/01/1930). In the same *Revue de l'Amérique Latine*, consolidated as an organ of the development of Latin Americanism in France (Castillo de Berchenko, 1990), on the occasion of the death of the French-Argentine intellectual, an article by Juan Pablo Echagüe was published entitled: "Paul Groussac, ambassadeur de la culture française" (RAL, septembre 1929, pp. 201-205).

CULTURAL EMBASSIES: TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITIES AND CULTURAL PROPAGANDA

Charles Lesca, a reference for French Latin Americanism, wrote the following words in a magazine, reflecting on the possible effects of the actions of the *Groupement des Universités et Grandes Ecoles de France pour les rapports avec l'Amérique latine*: "I am sure that, in all those young and adolescent Spanish-American republics, the feeling of the Latin race marches in unison with its elder sister, France." According to the author, this was because they had known how to break with colonial ties, to embrace "civilization and intellectual culture," which showed "that all those peoples born yesterday into the life of progress, have known how to extirpate from their souls with commendable ardor, in less than a century, the poisonous roots of ancient traditions" (*MM*, II (9), January 1912, p. 282). The quote is eloquent because it suggests that Latin American nations could find in France a new cultural "mother country" to replace Spain (Sepúlveda Muñoz, 2005). A discursive possibility was thus opened: that of turning France into the nation that would articulate a Latin transnational identity.

Clemenceau had already expressed the potential of this leading role of France in the destinies of Latin America. In his book of notes arising from his trip he had pointed out:

France has so far retained its sympathy and friendship (with South America). Latin idealism has kept the South American populations oriented towards the great modern nations emerging from the Roman conquest. I am not sure that we have drawn from this favorable situation all the benefit that it brings with it, as much for the young republics of overseas as for Latinhood, fatigued by an enormous effort of civilization and vigorously assaulted in all its do-

mains by the methodical energy of the races of the North (Clemenceau, 1911c, p. 48).

Similar observations were being made by several figures of Spanish political and university life who, in the climate of the Latin American centennial celebrations (1910-1924), were advocating the resumption of the “spiritual unity” of the language community that would make Spain a new articulator of cultural and commercial relations in a transatlantic key (Dalla Corte and Prado, 2007; García Sebastiani, 2021; Moreno Luzón, 2010; Niño Rodríguez, 1993). Thus, a kind of tacit competition was generated, in parallel, from Madrid and Paris, to carry forward this “Latin community.”

From Paris, the *Groupement des Universités et Grandes Ecoles de France pour les rapports avec l'Amérique latine* seemed to be clear about its role in articulating these transnational ties. Referring to the group's achievements, a contemporary pointed out that it involved

a very interesting work that dreams of implementing the intellectual union of the Latin republics of America with Europe, with the great Latin republic of Europe: France. How many are those who, out of snobbery, proclaim the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race! (...) Our duty is, on the contrary, to preserve as the purest treasure the entire tradition of Latin idealism (*MM*, II (9), January 1912, pp. 281 and 282).

In this scheme, Groussac played a leading role: since 1898, he had posited the existence of a cultural war between Latinism and *Yankeeism*, which had positioned him among the articulating voices of the critics of the advance of the United States on the American continent (Bruno, 2012). To support this argument, he argued that Spain was the nexus that united Latin America with Latin traditions (Bruno, 2012). Now these ideas entered into a decline that turned France into the promoter nation of that cultural Latinism, which was considered superior to the Saxons. A chronicler of his conference had taken good note of the role of Groussac who “with inimitable verbosity and rapacious eloquence, knew how to instill in the distinguished audience that filled the room vigorous feelings of fraternity so that the Latin soul manifested itself sovereign of all those who attended the beautiful conference” (*MM*, II (9), January 1912, p. 282).

His words were recognized as those of an authorized spokesman: French by origin, he became the “natural” bridge to strengthen ties between Latin American countries and, within the framework of his visit, he offered a series of rhetorical resources so that they could ally themselves with the Latin tradition commanded by the Gallic nation. The published contents of the conference show this. It can be seen there how he operationalised arguments to establish links between France and Latin American nations:

It was not only through the diffusion of the philosophical theories and humanitarian utopias of France in the 18th century that the country had an influence on the emanci-

pation of Spanish colonies in America. The propaganda of ideas was accompanied by the propaganda of the actions of numerous representatives of the French aristocracy, who had set out for the West Indies in search of new lands to explore, causes to defend, or moved by simple adventure. The participation of the French nobility in the independence of the United States is only the most famous episode of the continental crusade (...) But numerous emigrants also joined these causes (Groussac, 1912, p. 140).

He went on to argue that in American territories there had unfolded almost novel-like lives of exiled Frenchmen who had collaborated with the American causes. And standing out among them, from his perspective, was Santiago de Liniers, to whom he dedicated his lecture. Thus, a repertoire of ideas was exposed, recoverable for those who wanted to point out that in the origins of Latin American countries “the French”—ideas and men—had offered a key element to emancipate themselves from Spain. Groussac, in a way, could be inscribed in the tradition of those key figures who had been living propaganda of the “civilizing” influence of France in those lands.

In fact, this is how Groussac was characterized in his other role, as the Argentine representative at the Roubaix Exposition. Although he did not fulfill the Argentine government's mandate to write a book to be presented at the exposition, he was presented by the Argentine plenipotentiary minister, Enrique Larreta, as a bridge between two worlds. After enunciating several links between France and Argentina, he did not hesitate to emphasize:

and finally, Gentlemen, it is a Frenchman who directs the National Library, originally from Toulouse, a marvelous writer in Spanish and French, who with great talent nourishes and disciplines our intellectual life and exercises over it a kind of despotic and healthy police (Larreta, 1915, p. 23).

As can be seen, along with the identity proposals, a series of hierarchies were defined within a map of cultural references that, in general, placed France and its representatives above any other country as the guarantor of the road to “progress” and “civilization.” In the observations of the period, we find several clues to think about this type of hierarchy. Thus, when presenting European visitors arriving in some Latin American capital in the first decade of the twentieth century, we find expressions of contemporaries such as “illustrious traveller,” “distinguished guest,” “educational missionary,” “scientific priest,” “ambassador of letters,” “prophet of civilizing values,” “sage,” among others (Bruno, 2014). Each of these epochal designations was supported, of course, by some positive prejudices about European culture. However, it is worth asking what ideas and values, at least theoretically, these visitors represented. Historiography has given an account of a range of options that European travellers offered about Latin America and Latin Americans about the Old Continent, which allows us to capture some of these modulations in force at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th (Bertrand and Vidal, 2002; Colombi, 2004).

In the specific case of Clemenceau, we find references such as “he speaks in the name of France,” “he represents the quintessence of Latinity,” “he has the wisdom of the politicians of the Old Continent,” among other formulae. All these expressions clearly show a hierarchy that places the European reference figure above the Hispanic American ones. In this direction, for example, in a magazine of South American scope, we read:

the great French politician is among us. And his visit is a good that Europe—the Europe of the brain—sends us as one more testimony of the interest that the South American Continent has for the old Continent (...) Clemenceau who possesses an art and, therefore is very meritorious, can come to us as Ferri, as France, as Blasco Ibáñez, as the most arrogant of all those who come with a teaching slogan: he may well come, we say, in the assurance that he will find, in this land, the throne of love and gratitude that we offer to the one who yearns to spread the gospel, in the face of opinion, triumphantly, with the triumphs of science, of literature or art, or of the art alone of governing in which Clemenceau is, if not great, wise (*La Ilustración Sud-Americana*, XVIII (422), 20/07/1910, p. 210).

It is interesting to focus on this dimension because, as has been pointed out, Clemenceau did not, strictly speaking, officially represent France, nor did he travel on a governmental mission. However, on Argentine soil, he began to be thought of as a “cultural ambassador,” a clear representative of French ideas and values, in a general and diffuse sense of the expression, and as a propagandist *sui generis*.

In a complementary direction, it should be noted that, although Clemenceau’s intentions were neither missionary nor the result of a systematic propaganda of France in South America, his visit—and that of several contemporaries—, criticized by the university authorities for responding to a commercial circuit, became for some young people a kind of “parallel university” from which they could feed and learn. In a book of memoirs of the man who, in the 1920s, would consolidate himself as an intellectual figure, we read, for example, the following judgment when he recalls his formative years:

We had heard in the same room the unwashed readings of Ferrero, and those that Anatole France delivered in 1909 from his Rabelaisian studies; we had heard the oral eruptions of Blasco Ibáñez and the vague critical reminiscences of contemporary French literature that M. Victor Marguerite read to us—a little better than France or Ferrero—; we had heard the flashing dissertations of Enrico Ferri and the *causeries* that Clemenceau had given with such interest and sparkling ease, a year before. Austere lessons of idealism to the Argentine youth (De Vedia, 1922, pp. 74-75).

Thus, there was testimony that several young people who listened to these visitors established imaginary teacher/disciple relationships that, according to different accounts, made the experience of foreign visits a com-

plement to the training of university classrooms. These European voices were listened to, granting them positions of wisdom and professorial labels.

The twist in this plot is provided by the observations that Clemenceau, as a visitor, made about Argentina and the figures of political, intellectual and university life with whom he lived. Strikingly, although he met several professors, he only decided to dwell on general observations about some schools and an event to which he was invited by students of the Law School of the University of Buenos Aires, where he was astonished because a student spoke to him in correct French. The only figure to whom he decided to allocate some passages was his compatriot, Groussac. Perhaps the men of the university led him to notice the contempt that crept into the judgment of he had indicated that his lectures had a commercial purpose. Even so, a visit that, *a priori*, was thought of as a show, rendered viable relations and links between two cultures—beyond the hierarchies that the different actors involved attributed to this expression. Together with the ideas about a figure as the bearer of a mission and the characterizations as “wise,” “prophet” or “spokesman” of a series of values, there were also judgments that did not necessarily make asymmetry explicit. In short, the role of “cultural ambassador” could function on two levels, one more inclined to mark the hierarchies that today we would describe as centre and periphery, and the other inclined to mark the possibilities of exchanges and more horizontal intellectual relations.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In 1922, a decade after the events analysed here, is how the author of “Orientaciones hispanoamericanas,” which he signed with the pseudonym “El españolito” in the magazine *España y América*, referred to the French cultural actions directed towards Latin America:

France, zealously interested in cultivating its intellectual prestige as much as its commercial relations (...) is our most formidable competitor, leaving no stone unturned in the spiritual conquest of Latin Americans. To this end is devoted the “Groupement des Universités et grandes Ecoles de France pour les relations avec l’Amérique latine” which, among other measures, sponsors conferences of Spanish-American personalities in France, and whose publicity bulletin is an excellent organ of cultural propaganda and enjoys a great deal of credit in South America. It creates and supports in the capitals of those Republics organizations such as the “Casas de América” in a network whose centre is in Paris, as well as the “Comité France-Amérique,” which has delegated organisations in Argentina, Cuba, Chile and other Republics. It maintains in Buenos Aires a Franco-Argentine Institute with an annual subsidy of 100,000 francs (*Spain and America*, 10-12, 1922, p. 431).

This judgment accounts for the competition between France and Spain for the strengthening of cultural and exchange relations that, as several authors have pointed

out, were consolidated after World War I (Dumont, 2018; Rodríguez de Lecea, 1991). In the interwar period, the attempts by European nations to consolidate their ties with Latin American countries were accentuated, and individual, isolated, or commercial initiatives began to lose momentum (Blancpain, 2011). Several institutions defined and promoted articulated undertakings to consolidate relations. These were a series of initiatives of international organisations, such as the Office of Intellectual Cooperation, under the United Nations Society (Pita González, 2014) and of different European and American states.

In this context, the association that had met for the first time in 1908, consolidated under the *Groupe des Universités et Grandes Ecoles de France pour les rapports avec l'Amérique latine*, having noted and heeded the observations of several travelers that showed the lively interest that could be felt in Latin America for the French culture and language, consolidated itself by opening or projecting institutes, for example, in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro (Petitjean, 1989). These actions had a central figure in Professor Ernest Martineche, director of the *Revue de l'Amérique Latine* (continuation of the group's bulletin) and considered the "inventor of Latinism" (Chonchol and Martinière, 1985). He is recognized in this way because he formalized some principles that were already circulating and had formed a repertoire of ideas defined in the initial decade of the 20th century amidst visits, exchanges and official missions, in which Martineche and Clemenceau participated.

This fact shows that the national identities that Latin American countries were defining in the context of the centennials (1910-1924), a series of transnational identities, such as Hispanoamericanism, Iberoamericanism, or Latinism, were being contemplated in an Atlantic dimension that made the visits of French and Spanish to Latin American capitals, and of Latin Americans to European cities, events that catalyzed images and metaphors about communities of cultural belonging (Bruno, 2017; Ortemberg, 2018). The episodes that unfolded during the visits and their effects allow us to visualize a series of scenarios of interaction and cultural relations established between countries, but also open the possibility of observing how these repertoires of ideas were defined, repertoires which, from the outset, brought with them considerations about hierarchies and the different roles of the participants of the "Latin community." Each of the visits, in fact, acted as a catalyst for a series of images of the countries visited and allows us to analyse how certain identity dimensions were processed in light of those events, which, as we have shown, enabled the overlapping of state interests, programs aimed at strengthening cultural ties, and propaganda actions—a term used in several of the sources that have been recorded—by figures who became "cultural ambassadors," perhaps unwittingly.

By means of monitoring the two crossed visits, it has also been possible to detect the overlapping and coexistence—not always harmonious—of commercial, state, and university circuits, which reveal, moreover, a network of actors and interests when thinking about the dynamics of

mobility of people and ideas. But it also enables us to see how these visits had articulated imaginaries about Latinism led by France and the unexpected effects that could arise in the heat of an exchange experience between figures from two countries, such as the drafting and enactment of an intellectual property law, or the christening of a street.

In short, given that the exchanges analysed took place at a time prior to that which has been studied in historiography as the consolidation of institutionalized cultural cooperation ties between France and Argentina, this article has attempted to highlight some of the dynamics that generated a network of relations that bore fruit in the medium term. Thus, some possibilities are suggested to observe how coordinates were traced so that, later on, cultural maps with clearer lines could be drawn.

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Paula Bruno: conceptualization, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing.

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