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*Garras De Oro ( The Dawn of Justice—Alborada De Justicia )*: The Intriguing Orphan of Colombian Silent Films

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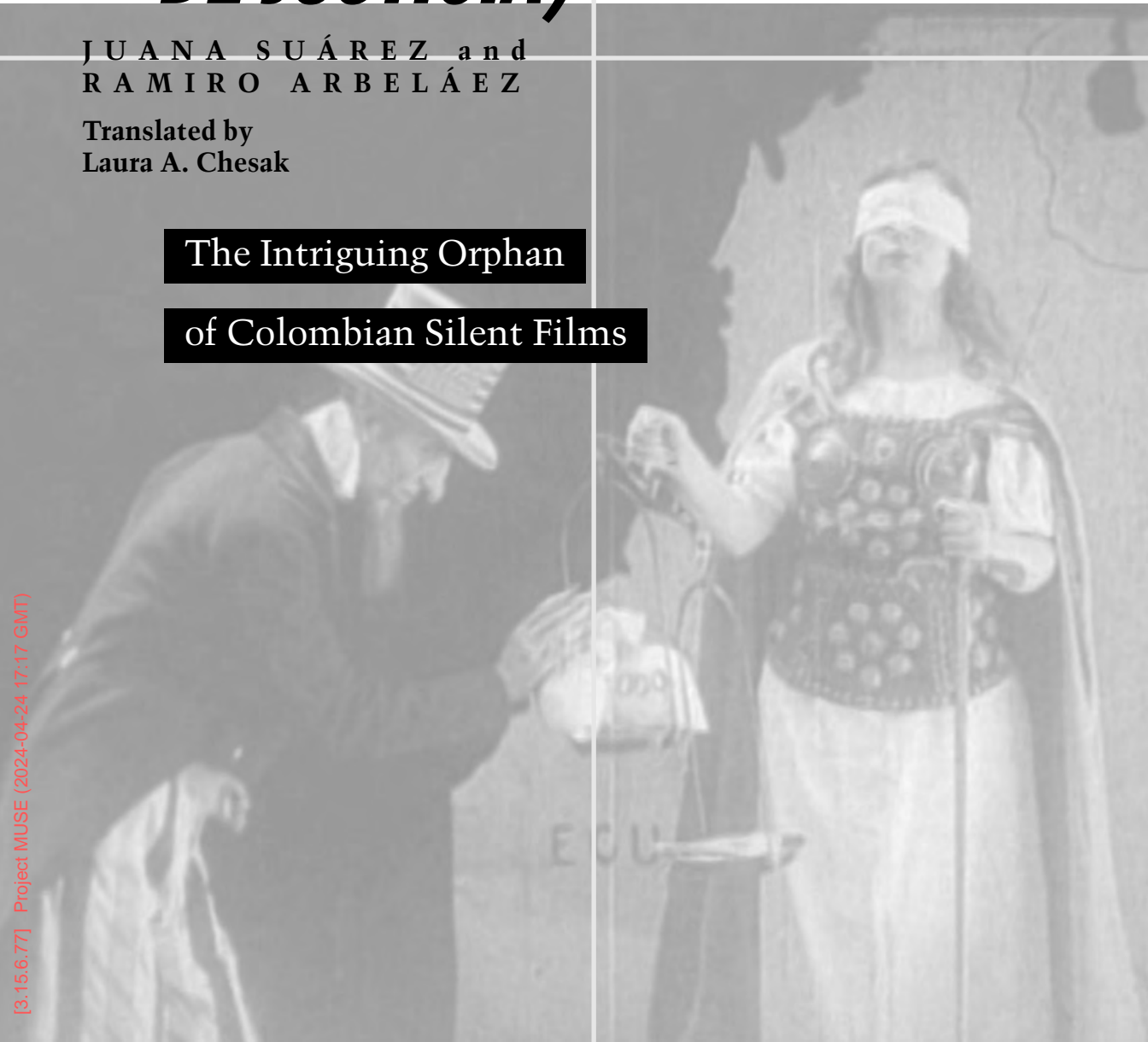
# ***GARRAS DE ORO (THE DAWN OF JUSTICE—ALBORADA DE JUSTICIA)***

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The Intriguing Orphan

of Colombian Silent Films





## GARRAS DE ORO AS AN ORPHAN FILM

In 1985 the existence of a silent-era Colombian film entitled *Garras de oro* (*The Dawn of Justice—Alborada de justicia*) came to light within a small circle of historians of Colombian cinema. Filmed in 1926 during the economic boom known as the *danza de los millones*, it focused mainly on the circumstances surrounding Panama's separation from Colombia and also referenced a polemic between newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer and President Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>1</sup> *Garras de oro* (literally, *Claws of Gold*) tells the story of a supposed New York daily newspaper editor anxious to locate supporting documents that could vindicate him in a libel suit. In his columns, the newspaperman has maintained that Roosevelt should

not be reelected, given that he violated an international treaty. While the treaty in question allowed for the development of an interoceanic waterway across the isthmus, it included a commitment to maintain the territorial integrity of what was then Colombia.

**The anti-U.S. tenor of the film, the impossibility of connecting it to other Colombian film productions from the period, and the bizarre circumstances of its reappearance in the 1980s heightened interest in the film.**

In 1982, historian Jorge Orlando Melo came across clues of the existence of the film in the National Archives in Washington, DC. A 1988 news bulletin from the Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano (Colombian Film Heritage Foundation) records that “in going through the indices of books of correspondence from the State Department in Washington, he came across an annotation regarding documents that recounted efforts to block the screening throughout the Americas of the film *The Dawn of Justice*, made in Cali in 1926, for being libelous towards the United States.”<sup>2</sup>

Coincident with Melo’s research, in 1986 the scholar Rodrigo Vidal handed over a 35mm nitrate print of *Garras de oro* to Bogotá’s Cinemateca Distrital. A year earlier Vidal had rescued it from the Teatro Isaacs in Cali, following indications from an unidentified informant who let him know where the copy had lain hidden for so many years.<sup>3</sup> The Cinemateca Distrital subsequently gave the print to the Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano to be preserved in partnership with the film department of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York.<sup>4</sup> Then, in 1996, Mexico’s Goethe Institute contributed a copy of *Garras de oro*, one that included eight minutes of footage that were (temporarily) missing from the print that Vidal gave the Cinemateca.<sup>5</sup> The current version runs approximately fifty-six minutes. Presumably, this corresponds to 85 or 90 percent of the original duration. The incompleteness of the extant film, however, does not affect comprehension of the plot. There are multiple reasons to consider *Garras de oro* an orphan film: its censorship, lengthy disappearance, incompleteness, and indefinite origins.

For example, to date, no script or production records have been located, and research has relied on the intertitles and scant press coverage from the period. As Ana María López has pointed out, the majority of Latin American films produced between 1896 and 1930 have disappeared and research on the period is widely based on “secondary materials, especially press coverage.”<sup>6</sup> In the case of *Garras de oro*, the limited and scattered material that is available cannot resolve questions about the film’s ostracism. Who ordered its censorship? Was it local or national? Did the U.S. government request it? What role did Colombian authorities play in obstructing the film’s screening and promotion?

In this regard, we have found consular documents at the U.S. National Archives that reveal a move to suppress the film. If we take the eight documents in chronological order, that move seems to have initiated with a directive on October 9, 1926. Addressed to American Diplomatic and Consular Officers in Latin America, it simply said: “Film entitled ‘The Death of Justice’: instructing to prevent exhibition of.”<sup>77</sup> More than a year later, this precaution was reinforced in a telegram addressed to the secretary of state, sent from Panama on December 22, 1927. Signed by someone who is apparently a secretary, the document says “Sub-Secretary Foreign Affairs asked me orally today to invoke the Department’s good offices in arranging informally for the suppression of a film entitled *Garras de oro*, which was recently exhibited at Buenaventura.” As an additional paragraph explains, “The Sub-Secretary describes the film as a sort of history of the Panama canal and as most objectionable propaganda against the United States and Panama.”<sup>78</sup> The other documents continue in the same vein, and the exchange of consular communication spans from 1927 through March 1928.

Documentation of the film’s origin exists in Colombian archives. We have found that as early as September 1925, José Vicente Navia, a resident of Cartago (a town near Cali), registered his authorship of a literary and artistic work entitled *La venganza de Colombia o la muerte política de Theodoro Roosevelt* (Colombia’s Revenge, or the Political Death of Theodore Roosevelt). He declared it was intended for the big screen. Navia also submitted a

**Figure 1.** During editor James Moore’s speech denouncing President Roosevelt, *Garras de oro* inserts an unexpected shot of this Teddy impersonator at an undisclosed location, presenting TR as a self-aggrandizing roughrider. Appearing near the end of the film, it is the only depiction of him. Courtesy of Archivo de Fundación Patrimonio Filmico Colombiano.



notebook of thirty-one typed pages to the federal Department of Instruction and Public Health and agreed to provide “views of the corresponding film” in a timely fashion.<sup>9</sup>

*Garras de oro* premiered at Cali’s Teatro Moderno on March 13, 1927, where a full house applauded it enthusiastically. On March 17, Navia claimed in a letter to the Cali newspaper *Relator* that the film was actually his *La venganza de Colombia*. He announced a lawsuit accusing the film’s producers of fraud for significantly changing his plot and removing his name from the credits. We don’t know the results of his suit; apparently Navia only managed to halt distribution of *Garras de oro* for a few months. Later the film screened in small towns, but without much publicity.

Dissatisfied with the result of his suit, Navia cabled Samuel H. Piles, head of the American Legation in Bogotá, warning the diplomat that the film was being shown and its nature was derogatory to the United States. The author offered the Americans his rights to the motion picture so they could take legal action against Cali Film. By the end of 1927, State Department communiques were describing the film as “most objectionable propaganda against the United States and Panama” in order to stop its screening and distribution.<sup>10</sup> During January and February 1928, Piles followed the film’s movements closely, cabling the secretary of state in Washington with timely reports of its screenings. His letter dated February 4, 1928, relates his exchange with Navia and also reports his successful efforts to block the film. He mentions the “voluntary intervention” of the Colombian minister for foreign affairs, along with a cold reception from the audience that led to the film’s being withdrawn from the theaters.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, State Department correspondence also shows that on March 23, 1928, Alfred T. Burri, the American consul in Barranquilla, followed up by alerting the delegation in Bogotá that, despite U.S. requests, screenings were scheduled to take place in Barranquilla and either Medellín or the town of Puerto Berrío. However, Burri advised against drawing more attention to the film by insisting on its censorship, which would perhaps only attract more viewers.<sup>12</sup>

On June 17, 1928, fifteen months after *Garras* premiered, the Teatro Moderno burned down. Three years later, at the same site, construction was completed on the Teatro Isaacs. At some later date, the copy of *Garras de oro* was hidden inside the theater and remained there until its discovery in 1985. We still cannot clarify who may have had an interest in hiding it and why.

**The enigmatic and orphan nature of *Garras de oro* is further accentuated by the absence of published and archival references to the director, crew, and actors of Cali Film, the production company of record.**

A legal document indicates Cali Film was established in October 1925 with the “primary objective” of filming a movie entitled *La venganza de Colombia o la muerte política de Teodoro Roosevelt [sic]*, by a group of businessmen and intellectuals that included José Vicente Navia, Juan A. Bonilla, Isaías Mercado, Pedro Sellanes, Gilberto Garrido, Martin Skovnoski, Camilo Cantinazi, and Alfonso Martínez Velasco. (As we will see shortly, Martínez Velasco was the man behind the pseudonym of *Garras*’ director, “P. P. Jambrina.”)<sup>13</sup> Several of these men were founding members of an earlier company, Colombia Films S.A., established in Cali in 1923. They had hired artistic and technical personnel from Italy and imported scenographic elements for the purpose of making films. (Adding to the confusion about the origins of *Garras*, another founding member, the actor Hernando Domínguez Sánchez, misreclected in a published interview that Colombia Films was the only movie production entity in Cali during the mid-1920s.)<sup>14</sup>

The intertitles for *Garras de oro* each bear the label “Cali Film—Rep. Colombia,” but only three credits appear on-screen: director (“dirigida y puesta en escena”), P. P. Jambrina; chief cameraman, Arnaldo Ricotti; and assistant cameraman, Arrigo Cinotti. Film historians have long thought these names to be pseudonyms, but only Jambrina’s was. Both Ricotti and Cinotti shot feature films in Italy until at least 1922.<sup>15</sup> The cast in this photoplay goes unnamed in the surviving print. This might have been to shield the actors from controversy; or perhaps the credit sequence is simply among the footage that does not survive. Press accounts, however, identify two of the leading players. The newspaper *Correo del Cauca* declared that one of the primary reasons to see the film was the presence of Italian actress Lucia Zanussi.<sup>16</sup> It also praised the acting of Jorge de Hoyos, a *paisa* living in Cali. (*Paisa* refers to the culture and people of the western region of Antioquia.) He played only a small role, as a thief, yet the audience applauded until the actor appeared on stage to receive an ovation. The Teatro Moderno even had to replay the reel.<sup>17</sup>

Some press items contemporaneous with the film’s premiere suggested that the movie was shot in Italy. Others identified locations along the Río Magdalena, saying some sequences were shot in Fontibón, a town on the outskirts of Bogotá.<sup>18</sup> Critics such as Juan G. Buenaventura have challenged the film’s supposed Colombian origin, which is suggested in the scant literature that exists about the film prior to 1992 and has been reiterated in more recent publications. Buenaventura only had access to the film’s beginning, its end, and two intermediate reels, so he can say only that any questions about “the film’s narrative procedures cannot be answered.” Analyzing its cinematic form, Buenaventura classifies *Garras de oro* as a typical product of late silent-era filmmaking. Contradicting Hernando Salcedo Silva, who spoke of “the absence of innovative camera positions and the use of a theatrical notion in camera placement,” Buenaventura sees in

*Garras de oro* hallmarks of European silent filmmaking. However, he is vague about what is European about the work, referring only to the film's "distribution of different types of shots and sufficient knowledge of the breakdown of a scene present in the use of the cut-aways and of the shot/reverse shot protocols." Jorge Nieto's brief description is closer to the mark. "The style," of *Garras*, he writes, "does not stray from the film language common to silent cinema the world over at this time."<sup>19</sup>

Buenaventura's work is in the form of a master's thesis and, as such, the author indicates that his conclusions are quite tentative. He examines the supposedly European features of the actors, along with exterior shots showing architecture that does not correspond to Colombian locations, and suggests that the Cali Film producers must have "nationalized" a European production being filmed at that time. Buenaventura states, "[M]y provisional conclusion is that *Garras de oro* was filmed in a foreign country, but adapted to be released in Colombia. This 'adaptation' implied translating and rewriting intertitles, probably inserting some local footage and reorienting the direction of the story. The resulting story and the underlying ideological strata are clearly Colombian." His work highlights the need to expand research on this sui generis production to include European sources that may produce more information about *Garras de oro* and other films strongly influenced by French and Italian cinema. For Buenaventura, *Garras* is tentatively "a compilation of at least three sources of footage (Colombian titles, internationally available newsreels, and a love story cum intrigue) likely shot in Europe sometime after the year 1917."<sup>20</sup>

## THE URBAN CONTEXT OF *GARRAS DE ORO*

Conjecture about the foreign nature of the actors and the very origin of the film is complicated by considerations of the filmmakers' environment and the cosmopolitan nature of Cali during the first three decades of the twentieth century. By 1926 Cali was a city bustling with culture and industry. Its enthusiasm for movies was comparable to what was happening in Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, Havana, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Santiago, whose relationship with cinema—as Ana María López points out—is not surprising since "locations . . . follow well-established routes of transatlantic commerce through the most advanced cities of the continent, which were already in the throes of modernization." At the time, Cali was a small city of sixty thousand inhabitants. Near the Pacific Ocean, it was becoming quite modern, with a considerable bourgeoisie made up of landowners who were also businessmen, alternating between the city and the countryside. Its agricultural production began to be exported to international markets via the Panama Canal (opened in 1914) and the Pacific Railroad (1915). These indirectly connected Cali with Europe and the United States, thus avoiding complicated transit through Barranquilla. Indeed, by



1910, Cali already had streetcars, electricity, and an active international cultural scene, including theater, opera, and *zarzuelas* (traditional Spanish operettas).<sup>21</sup> Politically, Cali was a lively place. Press reports from the time highlight the confrontations between factions of the two traditional political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives.

Continuing a nineteenth-century tradition in Latin America, many of the business owners and men of influence financed a newspaper to obtain political visibility and a space to promote their ideas. Indeed, the second printing press in Cali belonged to Alfonso Martínez Velasco's grandfather, and the subsequent Jambrina Printing House (located next to the Teatro Isaacs) may have been founded as a legacy of the same printing press. This tradition reminds us of the critical role, according to Benedict Anderson, that print-capitalism played in creating imagined communities and reaffirming nationalism.<sup>22</sup>

The presence of European filmmaking personnel and investors was a constant throughout Latin America. Most research describes their extensive participation as producers, distributors, directors, or technical personnel, alongside the large number of actresses who were hired. The situation in Cali was no different. This close contact with Europe, not only via filmmaking but also through other devices of modernity, was reflected in the European-style architecture in wealthy sectors of the city. Suffice it to mention neighborhoods in Cali such as Granada and Versalles, whose place names and buildings bear witness to broad European influence in the 1920s. Some of the interiors in *Garras de oro* may show ballrooms from the period or simply social rooms from a luxurious house of the time. It is worth remembering that pioneers of Colombian filmmaking such as the Italian Donato Di Domenico (a relative of Vincenzo

**Figure 2.** Whether the luxurious interiors seen throughout *Garras de oro* were shot in Italy or a wealthy neighborhood in Cali remains unknown. Courtesy of Archivo de Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano.



and Francesco) and the Spaniard Máximo Calvo eventually settled in Cali, a place supportive of filmmaking and related business ventures.<sup>23</sup>

In contrast to the argument for a European origin, various historical texts about the city of Cali coincide in recording P. P. Jambrina as the pseudonym of Alfonso Martínez Velasco. He was a descendent of prominent families from the Valle del Cauca (Cali is its capital) who stood out both intellectually and politically.<sup>24</sup> Society pages of the time frequently record Martínez Velasco's participation as a charismatic agent and promoter for commercial and cultural projects. A liberal politician, Martínez Velasco was also a journalist and an editor of magazines devoted to writing on literature, theater, and opera. In addition to being a tradesman and merchant, he also invested in movie houses, was a prestigious member of social clubs, and served as a benefactor for many social causes. He was even the mayor of Cali from 1930 to 1931. Martínez Velasco died in Bogotá in 1945 while serving as auditor of prices for President Alberto Lleras Camargo.<sup>25</sup> His appointment as mayor three years after the film's production attests to the fact that his connection to *Garras de oro* did not jeopardize his performance in politics. Nonetheless, his pseudonym of P. P. Jambrina fell out of use once the film's production was completed.

By the late 1920s, hostilities existed throughout the world towards the United States. Even the Panamanian Congress had rejected—albeit belatedly—the treaty its delegate had signed with the United States in 1903 for the construction of the Canal, considering it harmful to Panamanian interests. U.S. interventions in the Caribbean, frequent landings by its naval forces, and prolonged stationing of marines in Haiti, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic, alongside conflicts with Mexico, intensified the polemics about the legitimacy of the Monroe Doctrine. Unease over the expansion of banana republics and alliances generated by William Howard Taft's "dollar diplomacy" furthered anti-American sentiment. Within the United States, newspapers such as the *New York World* continued their overt criticism of the government's foreign policies through editorials that defended human rights and the sovereignty of other nations. If widely disseminated, *Garras de oro* could have contributed to negative publicity for the United States, exacerbating the anti-Americanism that already existed.<sup>26</sup>

### **GARRAS DE ORO AS A POLITICAL ENDEAVOR**

The U.S. government and its representatives abroad became increasingly alarmed about the growing animosity; any sign of a threat or criticism was interpreted as an attack that could put American interests in jeopardy. Clearly the State Department considered Cali Film's depiction of Uncle Sam such a threat. That the film also recalled real incidents of

international conflict no doubt increased unease among the consular delegation in Colombia. The plot of *Garras de oro* is based on a political battle between President Theodore Roosevelt and the *New York World*, owned by Joseph Pulitzer. A story that Pulitzer published in 1908 had chronicled Panama's separation from Colombia and the buyout of stock in the French company that had originally tried to build the Canal, thus producing massive gains for a Wall Street firm.<sup>27</sup> Historian Lars Schoultz stresses that Roosevelt was "exasperated by the continual stream of accusations of impropriety by Joseph Pulitzer's *World*." The president sent a message to Congress arguing "it should not be left to a private citizen to sue Mr. Pulitzer for libel. He should be prosecuted for libel by the governmental authorities." Pulitzer's editorials also targeted William Nelson Cromwell, a "lawyer for the Panama Railway [and] cofounder of the now-venerable Wall Street law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell." Known as El Zorro (the Fox), he served as the attorney for the French company and acquired the assets at a very low price. In *How Wall Street Created a Nation* (2001), Ovidio Díaz Espino summarizes the newspaper's accusations against Cromwell of "fomenting a revolution in Panama and bribing Panamanian patriots, Colombian troops, and American officials to achieve his aims." Despite not offering a faithful version of all these events, *Garras de oro* explicitly references the dispute between the *World* and Roosevelt.<sup>28</sup>

The anti-U.S. sentiment that inspires the film is apparent from the opening curtain that accompanies the title: "Cine-novela para defender del olvido un

Figure 3. April 3, 1903: "Tío Sam" extends his claws (*garras*) while grabbing the isthmus. Frame from the prologue to *Garras de oro*. Courtesy of Archivo de Fundación Patrimonio Filmico Colombiano.





Figure 4. Epilogue: Uncle Sam is baffled that the moneybags he places on the scales of Justice do not counterbalance the isthmus he took from Colombia. All frames from *Garras de oro*. Courtesy of Archivo de Fundación Patrimonio Filmico Colombiano.



precioso episodio de la historia contemporánea, que hubo la fortuna de ser piedra inicial contra uno que despedazó nuestro escudo y abatió nuestras águilas.” (“A photoplay to defend from obscurity a precious episode of contemporary history, which had the fortune to be the first stone [cast] against one who shattered our shield and brought down our eagles.”) Throughout, the United States is called “Yanquilandia” (Yankeeland) and New York City “Rasca-Cielo” (Sky-Scraper), facetiously tagged as “the moral capital of

Yankeeland.” The opening sequence is an allegorical set piece. A title card tells us it is November 3, 1903 (the day Panama separated from Colombia). The scene then literally depicts Uncle Sam extending his sharpened fingernails to grab the Isthmus of Panama (Figure 3). This explicit criticism of the United States is repeated in the final sequence. A title card tells us it is now April 6, 1916. (Presumably it meant April 6, 1914, the date on which an American ambassador signed the so-called Thomson-Urrutia Treaty, an agreement to pay Colombia 25 million dollars indemnification.) Uncle Sam then appears next to another allegorical manifestation, the blindfolded Lady Justice. In the film’s final shots, he tries unsuccessfully to tilt her scales with sacks of money (Figure 4), specifically the 25 million dollars compensation for violating treaties in 1903.<sup>29</sup>

Roosevelt’s expansionist projects in the Caribbean and Central America were and are both famous and infamous. The circumstances surrounding the controversial taking of Panama constitute one of the main reasons to question Roosevelt’s Big Stick diplomacy. Historians and T.R. biographers oscillate: some label Roosevelt an opportunist, while others, such as Richard Collin, defend the U.S. head of state and his actions, not only in Panama but also in the Caribbean. For Collin, politicians, journalists (including Pulitzer), and Latin American nationalists looking for anti-American slogans capitalize on “one example of the wrong legend and the wrong history” in order to promote anti-Roosevelt press based on this episode. He argues that “Colombia’s specific condition in 1902 and 1903” and “the illegal seizure of power by Colombia’s acting president José Marroquín, Panama’s tradition of independence and revolution, and the older French motives for building canals as symbols of modern civilization and works of art and technology” must be taken into account. More objective viewpoints such as the one offered by Joshua D. Hawley acknowledge that Colombia was undergoing a political crisis but also recognize that Roosevelt’s actions were questionable; in consequence, not only were Democrats fiercely critical but “congressional Republicans had reason to be concerned at the pattern that was developing, and not just in foreign affairs.”<sup>30</sup>

Colombian historians such as Marco Palacios and Frank Safford argue that the question of Panama overwhelmed the Colombian government. In 1903, Colombia was absorbed in the consequences of the War of a Thousand Days (1899–1902), the armed conflict between the Liberal and Conservative parties. The nation was also invested in a reaffirmation of Hispanic values, a return to values imposed on the colony by Spain—hierarchical social strata based on race and framed by dominant Catholicism. Given the turmoil, the Colombian government did not anticipate the long-term consequences of letting go of the isthmus. In his canonical history of Latin America, Tulio Halperín Donghi points out that Roosevelt “proudly trumpeted the success of his Panamanian policy. Roosevelt believed that the United States should not vacillate in using its ‘Big Stick’ to discipline the unruly



Figure 5. Colombian diplomat Pedro González (bottom) tells Paterson: “If only you Yankeelanders knew Panama’s history, I’m sure you would all be on our side. On that unfortunate day for my nation, the flag that so gloriously floated over the Isthmus was lowered forever . . . by the claws of gold.” A hand-colored insert shot of the Colombian flag being lowered is followed by actuality footage of U.S. gunboats (and their own flag). Don Pedro then toasts to his undiplomatic desire—“the fall of Roosevelt” [sic]. Courtesy of Archivo de Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano.



republics of Latin America . . . in accordance with the imperialist fashion of the times, which called for political ‘realism.’”<sup>31</sup> In the copious literature on the topic, the role played by the press and the emergence of yellow journalism at the time stand out.

Without a doubt, the director of *Garras de oro* had ample knowledge of the political and diplomatic context as well as the dispute between Pulitzer and Roosevelt.

Thus, the plot of *Garras de oro* includes direct references to the *World* along with clear allusions to consular intervention. The intrigue is woven around Paterson, a character whose profession is not clear, but who eventually embraces Colombia's patriotic claim of sovereignty over Panama. To do so, Paterson joins the cause of James Moore—the fictional editor of the *World*—who is accused of libeling Roosevelt by alleging that he contravened a treaty assuring the territorial integrity of Colombia. A known breach of the treaty, intertitles tell us, would impede Roosevelt's reelection in 1904. The plot includes a contrived love story between Paterson and Berta (the daughter of Pedro González, a Colombian staff member at the consulate in Rasca-Cielo), along with a series of episodes that refer to the taking of Panama in a metaphorical way. However, the intertitles of the film transform all the intended allegories into overt criticism.

Mr. González differs with Paterson's opinion of Roosevelt. Nonetheless, Paterson courts Berta. Since footage from the end of the second part of the film is missing, it is unclear how Paterson is lured into having an affair so that Berta will break off their relationship. The third part begins in a ballroom, where a drunken Paterson, in the arms of Ketty, is surprised by Berta. Determined to regain Berta's love and his own honor, Paterson joins the team of detectives traveling to Colombia in search of the incriminating documents. This search for documents reflects the fact that, when faced with indictment, Pulitzer, according to Schoultz, "set reporters to gathering every scrap of information available on the circumstances surrounding Panama's independence, and he soon amassed the largest collection of source material on the subject" in preparing his defense. Paterson's character may well be a reference to one of the reporters from the *World*—perhaps Henry Hall or Earl Harding—who collaborated closely with Pulitzer in preparing his defense against Roosevelt. According to Díaz Espino, they were sent to Panama, Washington, Paris, and Bogotá by the publishing magnate "to dig up information." Hall and Harding experienced harassment from the U.S. Secret Service and clashed with officers unwilling to provide documents. Undoubtedly, the reporters' difficulties have been recreated in *Garras de oro*, and in reality evidence turned up for them just when it seemed most elusive, as it does for Paterson in the film.<sup>32</sup>

In the cinematic version, once Paterson arrives in Bogotá, he will ally himself with Russell Smith, an American political operative charged with locating the evidence against the president. Ketty will reappear in Bogotá, which clarifies her role as a spy. The narrative takes on a different rhythm when Smith warns Paterson that the documents are about to leave Colombia in the hands of Dr. Careless—a name referencing one of Cromwell's men, known for mishandling sensitive documents.<sup>33</sup> Such an action would



Figure 6. The intertitles in *Garras de oro* are extensive, often containing Spanish wordplay. Here, however, we see a comic reversal of that. A spy inside the American consulate in Bogotá reacts to a telephone conversation. Courtesy of Archivo de Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano.

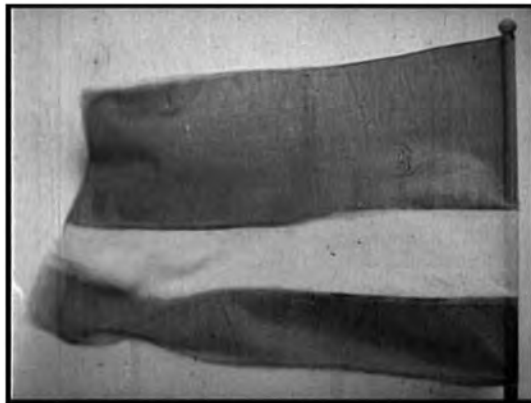


benefit Roosevelt. At this moment Paterson's loyalty is put to the test, since doubt remains about his true allegiance (to his country or the *World*). In the sequences at the Río Magdalena, as the ship is about to head for the Atlantic Ocean, the power of feminine seductiveness is employed to distract Dr. Careless and remove the suitcase: the wife of Jujol—one of Moore's allies—will ensnare Careless. Meanwhile, Paterson is forced to disclose his true purpose and his collaboration with Moore's team.





**Figure 7. Paterson and Berta (top) attend a dinner celebrating “the acquittal of James Moore and the fall of Teddy Roosevelt!” “Years roll by” and we see two Paterson children playing patriotic soldiers, saluting the Colombian flag (bottom). Courtesy of Archivo de Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano.**



There are significant inconsistencies in the narrative with regard to the handling of the documents. For one, the suitcase falls into the river and is recovered by a thief without any apparent damage to the documents. For another, we are led to understand that Careless and Paterson travel on the same ship towards Barranquilla. Despite these inconsistencies, we discover that Paterson and the detectives have achieved their objective: the documents arrive in Rasca-Cielo precisely as editor Moore is about to be sentenced, freeing

him from the charges. The final sequences exalt Colombian patriotism and celebrate the honor of the good Yankee, Paterson, rounding out his love story with Berta (Figure 7).

## GARRAS DE ORO AND OTHER COLOMBIAN SILENT FILMS

The decidedly political objective of *Garras de oro* as well as the handling of its filmic elements distances it from contemporaneous Colombian productions, adding to its enigmatic quality. Characteristically, most Colombian films from the time are either adaptations of literary bestsellers or follow the conventions of tableaux vivants and European *films d'art*. Colombian silent film productions were few and records of them are scarce. Thanks to press clippings and the survival of one photogram, notice remains of the production of *El drama del 15 de octubre* (The Drama of October 15), directed by Vincenzo Di Domenico. The movie was filmed in the former National Panopticon (now the National Museum) and brought together General Rafael Uribe's presumed assassins to reenact their crime. Press coverage in cities where the film was shown gives an account of the scandal set off by the on-camera appearance of the accused, who seemed to boast of their actions. Audiences perceived that the film exalted the criminals to the detriment of the figure of the general.<sup>34</sup>

Insufficient material survives to be able to discuss adaptations of two nineteenth-century bestsellers, *María* (1922) and *Aura o las violetas* (Aura or the Violets, 1924).<sup>35</sup> Literary adaptation was a constant in the cinema of various Latin American countries, particularly with postindependence narratives (what Doris Sommer calls “national romances” and “foundational fictions”). These facilitated confirmation of pride in one's country. In addition, adaptations made commercial success more likely, as audiences were familiar with the works. The simplicity of most plots facilitated their presentation on screen. Adaptations of such romances also speak to the continuity of nineteenth-century culture during the first decades of the twentieth century and, as Sommer puts it, the “inextricability of politics from fiction in the history of nation-building.”<sup>36</sup>

*Bajo el cielo antioqueño* (Under the Sky of Antioquia, 1925) and *Alma Provinciana* (Soul of the Province, 1926) are two feature films that have survived in their entirety, allowing us to better illustrate their differences with *Garras de oro* in terms of form and content.<sup>37</sup> Like other early films from Latin America, both of these, as López argues, “capitalized on the panoply of modern technologies, including urban developments, media and new amusements.”<sup>38</sup> Caught up in the voyeuristic interest in the spectacular that cinema's sense of modernity generated, *Bajo el cielo antioqueño* was also an excuse to portray contemporary *paisa* society. As López points out, “[In] Latin America as a whole, the cinema was, from its earliest moments, closely aligned with those in power, be they wealthy and

socially prominent or simply in government, and this alignment was a step toward nationalist projects.” The exception in the case of this film is that an affirmation of the sense of the local and of belonging to the region of Antioquia takes precedence. As López Díaz discusses, *Bajo el cielo* presents “an idea of nation from the region.”<sup>39</sup> Although a love story, the plot of *Bajo el cielo antioqueño* is an excuse to record the progressive aspects of the region and its process of industrialization, which has always been a source of regional pride. In this story, Lina, daughter of a wealthy industrialist from Medellín, pursues a romance with Álvaro, a bohemian and spendthrift young man. Going against her father’s wishes, the young couple flees. Their plans to escape are thwarted by the admonitions of a woman beggar. The encounter triggers a series of mishaps that end with Álvaro in court, accused of stealing jewelry, though Lina eventually restores his honor.

The film makes use of a *costumbrista* setting and lingers over showing coffee and tobacco production in detail. These scenes are interspersed with interior and exterior

shots that reflect the nascent cosmopolitan tastes of Antioquian society: ballroom dances, tennis matches, and literary gatherings. These are occasionally accompanied by folkloric elements and leisurely days at the riverside merely as an excuse to confirm the superiority of the landowners. Unlike the use of the ballrooms in *Garras de oro* that serve as a backdrop to highlight the political intrigue, the interiors in *Bajo el*

Figure 8. A production still from the *costumbrista* film *Bajo el cielo antioqueño* (Under the Sky of Antioquia, 1925), produced by the wealthy industrialist Gonzalo Mejía. The protagonist Lina attends a masquerade party. Lina is played by Alicia Arango de Mejía, wife of the producer. Courtesy of Archivo de Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano.



*cielo* allow for the creation of a vaudeville revue in which each member of society can show off his or her social graces and skills in the fox-trot, the waltz, and the tango, turning these sequences into a “who’s who” of *paisa* society. Tellingly, one of the initial inter-titles lists as protagonists not only the Mejía family and their friends but also “many other members of Medellín society in the 1920s.”

The influence that cinema exerted as an instrument of modernity made another director, Arturo Acevedo, and producer, Gonzalo Mejía, turn the interests of their other commercial enterprises towards this art form. Mejía was a rich businessman who brought ambitious projects to Colombia, such as the mail system and promotion of modern transportation technology. He founded Avianca airlines (1940) and textile giant Coltejer, two of the country’s more famous companies, and sponsored the construction of a highway from Bogotá to Medellín. Mejía even became the Colombian representative of General Motors and other corporations. After visiting the United States in 1914, he was struck by the commercial possibilities of cinema. Building up a firm to distribute and show films from Mexico and Hollywood, he then ventured into producing *Bajo el cielo antioqueño*—with the condition that his wife, Alicia Arango, and he have starring roles. In this way, the film served as a social event that allowed him to create a record of wealthy *paisa* society of the day.

Also inscribed into literary patterns of the early twentieth century, *Alma provinciana*, based on a 1923 novel, follows the conventions of melodrama and adheres to the dialectic between civilization and barbarism that runs throughout nineteenth-century Latin American literature. The film recounts the story of a wealthy young man, Gerardo, who goes off to study in the city and falls in love with Rosa, a woman from another social class. His sister, for her part, remains with her parents on their estate and falls in love with the foreman. Don Julián, the landowner and father, refuses to accept his children’s choices in love, due to his elitist prejudices in the face of social class differences. Both *Bajo el cielo antioqueño* and *Alma provinciana* are inspired by Christian doctrine. Virtue, goodness, charity, perseverance, submission, and other values derived from Catholic spiritual practices saturate the narratives. *Garras de oro* reveals none of these tendencies. To the contrary, religion is completely left out of the film’s narrative, and the entire denunciation of the unjust negotiations with respect to the isthmus is framed solely as a political problem with strong implications for journalistic and political ethics.

The distribution of space in *Alma provinciana* contrasts with that of *Bajo el cielo antioqueño*. While the latter confirms the idea of Antioquia itself as a type of “nation”—autonomous, prosperous, and privileged—and utilizes both rural and urban landscapes to support this purpose, in *Alma provinciana* the idea of nation is broader precisely because of the movement between Bogotá and the rural landscape of Santander (a region in eastern Colombia, close to Venezuela). On the other hand,



Figure 9. Values of Catholicism permeate *Bajo el cielo antioqueño*. Here Lina contemplates a crucifix. Courtesy of Archivo de Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano.

Bogotá maintains the centralized aspect that is characteristic of the checkerboard layout developed by Latin American capital cities, the result of the link between culture, state power, and the place of the capital city in the process of colonization, as explained by Angel Rama

in *The Lettered City*.<sup>40</sup> The realist bent in *Alma provinciana* divests the production of interior shots and accords preference to natural scenes, while emphasizing a nineteenth-century Romantic insistence on portraying landscapes as affirmations of national values. With regard to the city, the emphasis on presenting a cosmopolitan image motivates the

inclusion of multiple events: bullfights, the student carnivals of 1925, and numerous strolls through the capital make this production an exquisite visual document of Bogotá's historic downtown at that time.

In this Manichean view celebrating the goodness and purity of the province, the city is portrayed with an aura of modernity but also as an epicenter of licentiousness given the liberality that capital allowed. The city is also—as Raymond Williams points out with regard to English literature—the place of “political authority, law and trade,” a distribution that sustains, in the case of Colombia, the contrast between the city and the country: “here nature, there worldliness.”<sup>41</sup> *Alma provinciana* is a narrative of return where the young people, once established with their families, must come home to live in the countryside. The camera indulges in showing its bucolic nature.

Despite this, the inopportune inclusion of an airplane landing in the final sequence conspicuously draws our attention. The gesture seems imposed by the filmmaker to capture the idea of modernity, but it is not entirely gratuitous. The scene serves as an excuse to film Camilo Daza, the pioneer of Colombian aviation, a native of Santander (like the director) and a personal friend of his. The idea of mobility, as López emphasizes, is one of the great attractions of early cinema in Latin America. The inclusion of the plane in *Alma provinciana* illustrates the “panoramic perception” that López relates to trains in movement.<sup>42</sup> However, this preoccupation with showing means of transportation as emblems of progressive modernization does not motivate the presence of trains and ships in *Garras de oro*. Here the idea of mobility has the purpose of complicating the plot of the love story (itself an excuse for the political critique) and facilitating the spread of information (the documents that may indict Roosevelt). The route that is taken includes Bogotá and the Río Magdalena and ultimately, by way of the Atlantic Ocean, it connects to Panama and Rasca-Cielo/New York. In the intertitles there are specific references to locations in Bogotá such as Independence Park and the Las Cruces neighborhood. Places in New York, such as Battery Park, the Colombian consulate, and the offices of the *World* are mentioned, although the landmarks themselves are not distinctly visible in the unidentified urban locations.

Inter-Atlantic travel is marked by the sequence at the pier from which the ship sets sail for Colombia, and its reason for being in the narrative is pragmatic: it establishes both Paterson's departure for Bogotá and Berta's disappointment in love as she sees her antagonist Ketty appear to bid him farewell. As mentioned earlier, the other ship on the shores of the Río Magdalena has a clearly political purpose: it becomes the locus for supporters of Roosevelt and allies of Moore to dispute the fate of the documents that will impugn Roosevelt. Whether the environment is rural or urban, the use of space in *Garras*

*de oro* is pragmatic. There is no time or space for the camera to indulge in displaying bucolic landscapes or the budding cosmopolitan tastes of Colombian society.

Each of these three movies was a unique cinematic project, but *Garras de oro* is distinct from the other two. *Bajo el cielo* and *Alma provinciana* were social events that afforded their directors the opportunity to capture their friends on screen. Their plots are linear and do not grow out of the models acquired through the incessant importation of films at that time. As such, their most notable formal characteristics are their continuous editing and internal narration. For its part, *Garras de oro* has an overtly political purpose and even a somewhat urgent tone as it recounts and denounces political acts that taint Roosevelt's reputation. It does not intend to be escapist but instead takes a highly accusatory stance. *Garras de oro* addresses Panama's separation from Colombia, a crucial historical event not only for Colombia but also for relations between the United States and Latin America. When the film premiered in 1927, the event was still an open wound for Colombians.

In contrast, *Bajo el cielo* and *Alma provinciana* are conceived with entertainment purposes. *Garras de oro* reflects a political issue that became widespread in Latin America after the centenary celebrations of Independence (spanning from 1910 to 1924; in Colombia, July 20, 1910). These occasions promoted nationalist programs and philosophies for the construction of historical memory. In questioning events related to Panama, the film narrative undoubtedly examines political problems inherent in modernization itself. What is more, unlike the centennial narratives that introspectively examine their patriotic dilemmas, *Garras de oro* takes aim at an international problem whose repercussions would not only affect Colombia.<sup>43</sup>

Notably, all three films have female characters who restore a male character's honor or who hold a position of agency, belying the passive role often associated with women of the time. Lina restores Álvaro's honor in *Bajo el cielo antioqueño*. In *Alma provinciana*, Rosa—the industrious, working-class woman—motivates Gerardo to put his life in order. In *Garras de oro*, the need to get Berta back sends Paterson on his journey. However, Berta is not paralyzed by separation from her lover. The narrative recounts the death of her father (Pedro González, the consular staff member) and when Paterson returns, he finds that Berta is now employed at the *World* and is politically connected to Moore. The conciliatory tone at the end of the film is more paradoxical: Paterson and Berta, now happily married, celebrate the July 20 anniversary of Colombia's independence from Spain, as their children play with Hoyos the *paisa*, imitating a military parade, while the intertitles display the lyrics of the Colombian national anthem. As the years go by, Moore is the only person invited to the celebration in Paterson's home.



Figure 10. Gerardo (Ali Bernal, top, center), the male lead in *Alma provinciana* (Soul of the Province, 1926). The young man from the city sings of the rural landscape of Santander province. Rosa (played by Maga Dalla) is a humble country girl who leads the wealthy college boy to set his life in order. Courtesy of Archivo de Fundación Patrimonio Filmico Colombiano.

Within the context of foundational fictions and national romances discussed by Sommer with regard to nineteenth-century canonical literature in Latin America, the relationship between erotics and politics is important in consolidating the processes of nation-building. For her, “the classic examples in Latin America are almost inevitably stories of star-crossed



lovers who represent particular regions, races, parties, economic interests, and the like.” While such opposites appear to attract in *Bajo el cielo* and *Alma provinciana*, the union between Paterson and Berta seems to inaugurate cinematically another type of accord: nations in political and diplomatic conflict no longer seek to consolidate the national but rather the international. This apparently happy ending is quite problematic when read against the semantic fabric of the film’s conclusion. The death of Berta’s father can be read as the absence of the Colombian state; the fact that the actress playing Berta also embodies the allegory of justice when Uncle Sam toys with the scales illustrates Colombia’s victimization. Here the film repeats something that Sommer detects in so-called projects of conciliation: “even when they end in satisfying marriage, the end of desire beyond which the narratives refuse to go, happiness reads like a wish-fulfilling projection of national consolidation and growth, a goal rendered visible.” Such an ambiguous final gesture of complacency in *Garras de oro* is but one more of the enigmas surrounding this production.<sup>44</sup>

The dearth of press reports on *Garras de oro*, the apparent lack of collaboration in filmmaking ventures between Jambrina and either Calvo or the Di Domenicos (who were already working in Cali), the six decades of silence on the work, and the absence of cast credits inspire multiple questions about the film. Among the work surely left to be done is an exhaustive examination of the archives in Italy to see if there is some record of Alfonso Martínez Velasco or his pseudonym P. P. Jambrina, and/or Cali Film, to confirm whether or not any filming was done in Italy. Likewise, there is a need to recover consular correspondence from the time period, extracts of which apparently arrived in Colombia through the work of Jorge Orlando Melo when he spread the word about *Garras de oro*; perhaps they would clarify the issue of censorship. More importantly, this is a valuable visual document that merits production of a commercial edition or at least an edition available to cinephiles and scholars. In the same vein, it’s not too late for the film to be shown widely at festivals and through other specialized forums, a possibility that was curtailed by its suppression in the 1920s.

## NOTES

1. The parentheses along with the English phrase are part of the film’s original title. From here on we use the abbreviated title *Garras de oro*. The “dance of the millions” refers to the explosion of capitalist development that took place in Latin America in the 1920s. The period after 1923 saw a major influx of foreign capital into Colombia, which was invested primarily in infrastructure, especially railways. Adolfo Meisel Roca, “La creación del Banco de la República y las teorías sobre Banca Central. ¿Por qué 1923?” in *El Banco de la República, Antecedentes, Evolución y Estructura* (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1990), 36.

2. Boletín Informativo de la Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano 3 (1988), 2.
3. Interview with Rodrigo Vidal, June 14, 2008. Vidal is a lecturer in communication studies at the Universidad del Valle. He has worked closely with film clubs in Cali.
4. The Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano serves as the national film library. It is also charged with curating and preserving the country's archive of visual materials. The Cinemateca Distrital primarily serves Bogotá.
5. The Goethe Institute's Mexican print was identical to the print found in Cali, but the Cinemateca Distrital had misplaced one of the Cali reels. The missing reel was relocated after the laboratory preservation work was completed. See *Largometrajes colombianos en cine y video 1915–2004* (Bogotá: Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano, 2005), 28. Katie Trainor at the Museum of Modern Art generously provided the record of the museum's work. Thanks to curator Eileen Bowser, in 1989 MoMA preserved 2,714 feet of film on four reels. The extremely poor condition of the nitrate required step-printing to make the new negative, in work done by Film Technology Company, Los Angeles.

*Garras de oro* has been preserved in color, although originally all but one shot was in black and white. Early in the story, Colombian diplomat Pedro González tells the American protagonist, Paterson, of Panama's separation from his homeland. "On that unfortunate day for my nation, the flag that so gloriously floated over the Isthmus was lowered forever, by treacherous hands, by claws of gold. . . ." A beautiful but conspicuous insert shot appears on screen. It shows a Colombian flag at full staff in its yellow, blue, and red stripes, next to a green and gold palm tree. The background sky has a light violet hue. An ovular matte frames the image, which ends with the flag being lowered. The violet was produced by a tinting process; however, the other colors were applied by hand.

6. Ana María López, "Early Cinema and Modernity in Latin America," *Cinema Journal* 40, no.1 (Fall 2002): 28.
7. Document File Note, Department of State Central File 810.4061, Record Group 59, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD (hereafter NARA RG 59, 810.4061). State Department correspondence is archived in the "Central File" of RG 59; the decimal filing number signifies material related to the Internal Affairs of Colombia (810) on the subject of motion pictures (4061).
8. Telegram received by the State Department from the Legation in Panama, Dec. 22, 1927, NARA RG 59, 810.4061.
9. *Diario Oficial* (Bogotá), Sept. 4, 1925, 5.
10. Telegram to the Secretary of State, Dec. 22, 1927, NARA RG 59, 810.4061.
11. Letter from Samuel H. Piles to Secretary of State Frank B. Kellog, Feb. 4, 1928, NARA RG 59, 810.4061.
12. Letter from Alfred T. Burri to "The Honorable Samuel H. Piles, American Minister," Mar. 23, 1928, NARA RG 59, 810.4061. Medellín's *El bateo ilustrado* announced a local showing scheduled for March 14, 1928. Edda Pilar Duque, *La aventura del cine en Medellín* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia and El Áncora Editores, 1992), 221–22.

13. We refer to the Notarial Registration, Document #1156, Oct. 23, 1925, located in the Notaría Primera (First Registry Office) at the Archivo Histórico de Cali. This document is the certificate of establishment for the "Cali Film" company. References to it in works on the history of Colombian filmmaking sometimes mistakenly use the plural, Cali Films.
14. Hernando Salcedo Silva, *Crónicas del cine colombiano 1897–1950* (Bogotá: Carlos Valencia Editores, 1981), 114.
15. Arrigo Cinotti is listed in Alan Goble's *The Complete Index to World Film since 1895* ([www.citwf.com](http://www.citwf.com)) as cinematographer on ten films in Italy during 1917–22; Arnaldo Ricotti on twelve films during 1914–22. See Jorge Nieto, *Boletín Informativo de Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano* 3 (1988), as well as the bibliography published in *Revista Credencial Historia* (Apr. 1999) and reproduced online by the Biblioteca Virtual del Banco de la República, June 22, 2005, [www.lablaa.org/blaavirtual/revistas/credencial/abril1999/112garras.htm](http://www.lablaa.org/blaavirtual/revistas/credencial/abril1999/112garras.htm).
16. *Correo del Cauca*, Mar. 12, 1927. Lucia Zanussi had previously appeared in Italian *pepla* (i.e., "sword and sandal" films), such as Enrico Guazzoni's *Messalina* (The Fall of an Empress, 1922); Gabriellino D'Annunzio's *Quo Vadis?* (1925); and *Maciste all'inferno* (Maciste in Hell, 1925).
17. *Correo del Cauca*, Mar. 14, 1927.
18. Both locations are contextualized in *Garras de oro* with a reference to Honda, a port on the Río Magdalena, from which the ship carrying the evidence against Roosevelt is to depart. There is also an allusion to a Congressman Ratabizca ("cross-eyed rat"), a native of "Ontibón" and one of the diplomatic allies of Roosevelt's supporters in Bogotá, whose stance is reputedly anti-Colombian.
19. Juan G. Buenaventura, *Colombian Silent Cinema: The Case of Garras de oro* (master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1992); Jorge Nieto, "Garras de oro," in *South American Cinema: A Critical Filmography, 1915–1994*, ed. Tim Barnard and Peter Rist (New York: Routledge, 1996), 243–44. See also *Largometrajes colombianos*, as well as Nazly Maryth López Díaz, *Miradas esquivas a una nación fragmentada. Reflexiones en torno al cine silente y la puesta en escena de la colombianidad* (Bogotá: Instituto Distrital de Cultura y Turismo, 2006). Salcedo Silva is quoted in Buenaventura, *Colombian Silent Cinema*, 63.
20. Buenaventura, *Colombian Silent Cinema*, 63–64.
21. López, "Early Cinema," 50. Currently, Cali is the third largest city in Colombia, with a population of 2.3 million. Barranquilla is a coastal city on the Atlantic and the most important Colombian port. Its geographical location is also significant due to its proximity to the mouth of the Río Magdalena, the country's greatest waterway.
22. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
23. Calvo came from Panama, and his interest in the adaptation of *María* and other filmmaking possibilities made him choose to settle in Cali (see Salcedo Silva, *Crónicas del cine*, 67–76). The Di Domenico brothers arrived in Colombia after exploring the possibilities in several Caribbean countries and Panama. López also emphasizes the participation of first-generation

Europeans in Latin American filmmaking. With respect to her comment that the Di Domenicos settled in La Paz around 1911, it should be noted that the author surely meant to refer to Bogotá, Colombia's capital. In biographies of the Di Domenicos, there is no indication of their having settled in Bolivia. See Jorge Nieto and Diego Rojas, *Tiempos del Olympia* (Bogotá: Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano, 1988) and Hernando Martínez Pardo, *Historia del cine colombiano* (Bogotá: Editorial América Latina, 1978). Donato Di Domenico—a relative of Francesco and Vincenzo Di Domenico and their associate in filmmaking ventures—settled in Cali in 1918. In 1924 he married María Velasco, a cousin to Alfonso Martínez Velasco. He also took charge of building the Teatro Colombia, which opened in 1927. His mansion in the Granada neighborhood has been preserved, and the inscription on the front gives 1927 as the year of its construction. Cali seems to have been a propitious place for the Di Domenicos' business interests, not necessarily as a filmmaking location but as a space for screenings and general business dealings related to this art form.

**24.** See Gustavo Arboleda, *Diccionario Biográfico y Genealógico del Antiguo Departamento del Cauca* (Cali: Centro de Estudios Históricos Sociales Santiago de Cali and Gerencia Cultural de la Gobernación del Valle, 1996), 331; Manuel María Buenaventura, *El Cali que se fue* (Cali: Biblioteca de Autores Vallecaucanos, 1957), 47; and Alfonso Cobo Velasco, *Calendario Biográfico y Genealógico de Santiago de Cali, 1536–1971* (Cali: Imprenta Departamental, 1971), 191.

**25.** We are referring to the one-year term of Lleras Camargo, who occupied the presidency after the resignation of Alfonso López Pumarejo in 1945. Among the various dismissals and administrative changes with which Lleras Camargo came to power, his naming of Martínez Velasco as auditor of prices was respected. Lleras Camargo served as president again from 1958 to 1962.

**26.** Local press reports from the time period attest to the growing anti-Americanism. In Cali, for example, the *Diario del Pacífico* includes persistent reports in its January 1927 editions. See also Alan MacPherson's introduction to his *Yankee no! Anti-Americanism in U.S.–Latin American Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1–7. See also his introduction, "Antiyanquismo: Nascent Scholarship, Ancient Sentiments," in *Anti-Americanism in Latin America and the Caribbean*, "ed. Alan MacPherson" (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 1–34.

**27.** Ovidio Díaz Espino, *How Wall Street Created a Nation: J. P. Morgan, Teddy Roosevelt, and the Panama Canal* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2001), 169–96.

**28.** Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 173, 160; Díaz Espino, *How Wall Street Created a Nation*, 5. We are indebted to Dr. Francie Chassen-López for her opportune reading of a draft of this article and her bibliographical suggestions (Schoultz being one of them) for understanding the procedures and treaties surrounding the separation of Panama and the construction of the Canal. Limited space does not permit a full account of the convoluted and protracted chain of events leading to Colombia's loss of Panama.

29. Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 154. Díaz Espino recounts that during Woodrow Wilson's first two years in office (1913–14), Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan negotiated "a treaty apologizing to Colombia for its actions in Panama, and providing a twenty-five million dollar reparation. The Colombian congress swiftly ratified the treaty." The American diplomat Thaddeus A. Thomson signed the agreement with Colombian authorities on April 6, 1914, but ratification stalled in the U.S. Senate. From his travels in Brazil in May 1914, former president Theodore Roosevelt criticized the Senate for even considering "so lowly an agreement, contending that it amounted to an admission of guilt by the United States." Roosevelt Republicans, led by Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge, kept the treaty from passage until Apr. 1921, when their party again controlled the White House and American oil companies doing business in Colombia lobbied for ratification. (*How Wall Street Created a Nation*, 193). See also Richard L. Lael, "Struggle for Ratification: Wilson, Lodge, and the Thomson-Urrutia Treaty," *Diplomatic History* 2, no.1 (1978): 81–102, and Teresa Morales de Gómez, "El Tratado Urrutia-Thomson," *Revista Credencial Historia* (Sept. 2003), [www.lablaa.org/blaavirtual/revistas/credencial/septiembre2003/curioso.htm](http://www.lablaa.org/blaavirtual/revistas/credencial/septiembre2003/curioso.htm).
30. Richard H. Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt, Culture, Diplomacy, and Expansion: A New View of American Imperialism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 187–88; Joshua D. Hawley, *Theodore Roosevelt: Preacher of Righteousness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 177.
31. Marco Palacios and Frank Safford, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 468–69; Tulio Halperín Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America*, trans. John Chasteen (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 164.
32. Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 173; Díaz Espino, *How Wall Street Created a Nation*, 169. Earl Harding later wrote about his experiences in *The Untold Story of Panama* (New York: Athene Press, 1959).
33. Díaz Espino, *How Wall Street Created a Nation*, 170.
34. *El drama del 15 de octubre* (1915, Di Domenico Hermanos), Dir. Francesco and Vincenzo Di Domenico. In *Historia del cine colombiano*, Martínez Pardo summarizes various press releases from the time period, highlighting audiences' reactions (40–41).
35. *María* (1922, Valley Film Company), Dir. Máximo Calvo and Alfredo del Diestro; *Aura o las violetas* (1924, Sociedad Industrial Cinematográfica Latinoamericana-SICLA), Dir. Pedro Moreno Garzón and Vincenzo Di Domenico. According to *Largometrajes colombianos en cine y video*, twenty-five seconds of *María* have been preserved, and eleven and a half minutes of *Aura o las violetas* still exist (21–22). Salcedo Silva (*Crónicas del cine*, 40) and Martínez Pardo (*Historia del cine colombiano*, 47) recount the ease of their adaptation in Colombian filmmaking. Jorge Isaacs's *María* (1897) represents the epitome of Colombian Romantic narrative. *Aura o las violetas* (1889) was written by José María Vargas Vila, one of the period's most polemical writers due to his anticlerical and anti-imperialist positions and his progressive ideals.
36. Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 5.

- 37.** *Alma provinciana* (1926, Félix Mark Films), Dir. Félix Joaquín Rodríguez; *Bajo el cielo antioqueño* (1925, Compañía Filmadora de Medellín), Dir. Arturo Acevedo Vallarino. See Rito Alberto Torres and Jorge Mario Durán, "Recuperación y restauración de nuestra *Alma provinciana*," *Journal of Film Preservation* 65 (Dec. 2002): 53–57. Besides the silent films mentioned here, *Largometrajes colombianos en cine y video* describes another fifteen productions, of which little footage survives to compare to *Garras de oro*. *Flores del Valle* (Flowers of the Valley, 1941), Dir. Máximo Calvo, is the first Colombian sound production (*Largometrajes*, 21–32).
- 38.** López, "Early Cinema," 56. López refers particularly in this case to the first panoramic views and actualities produced in Latin America, such as *Melhoramentos de Rio de Janeiro* (Improvements of Rio de Janeiro, 1908, Brazil), Dir. Antonio Leal; *Simulacro de un incendio* (Simulacrum of a Fire, 1897, Cuba); and *Ejército general de bombas* (Firefighters' Corps, 1902, Chile), among others. In Colombia, this period corresponds to the newsreels done by Arturo Acevedo and his sons Gonzalo and Álvaro, who dedicated themselves to recording events for three decades beginning in 1924. In *Bajo el cielo* and *Alma provinciana* the camera focuses in detail on the progressive and modernizing elements in each of the regions.
- 39.** López, "Early Cinema," 61; López Díaz, *Miradas esquivas*, 29–46.
- 40.** Ángel Rama, *The Lettered City*, trans. John Chasteen (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 16–28.
- 41.** Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 46–51.
- 42.** López, "Early Cinema," 53. López takes the concept of "panoramic perception" from one of the paradigms proposed by Wolfgang Schivelbusch in *The Railroad Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Ansel Hollo (New York: Urizen Books, 1971).
- 43.** Among other centennial narratives, López mentions productions from 1900 to 1915 such as the Mexican films *Cuauhtémoc* y *Benito Juárez* and *Hernando Cortés*, *Hidalgo* y *Morelos* (both 1904), Dir. Carlos Mongrand; Brazil's *A vida do Barão do Rio Branco* (The Life of the Rio Branco Baron, 1910), Dir. Alberto Botelho; and the Argentine film *Nobleza Gaucha* (Gaucho Nobility, 1915), Dir. Humberto Cairo. Their differing subject matter incidentally serves to underline the backward state of the Colombian film industry, which by the 1920s still had not broken free of certain cinematic parameters that had already been exhausted in other corners of Latin America.
- 44.** Sommer, *Foundational Fictions*, 5–7.