Introduction

This book tells a story of cinema and mobility. It explores the transatlantic circulation of both films and film culture—the institutions, ideas, and social practices surrounding the medium—and the kinds of movement cinema affords, the international horizons it can open up. More precisely, it traces how, following World War II, film became intertwined in novel ways with individual desires for geographic and class mobility and the global ambitions of nations. My focus is an especially fruitful set of exchanges between France—a pioneer in cultural diplomacy and the global export of films—and Latin America.[1] In the postwar period, the region possessed large and profitable film markets, notably in Mexico, Cuba, and much of the Southern Cone, with the number of movie theater seats per capita rivaling that of France in several countries.[2] It was also home to growing urban middle classes who sought to build their cultural capital through the consumption of cinema, increasingly viewed in this period as a legitimate art with unprecedented mass appeal and influence.[3] This period witnessed the mass expansion of what we now call *cinephilia*—though the terms *culture cinématographique* and *cultura cinematográfica* were far more widely used among film enthusiasts in the period—after its initial emergence alongside the interwar avant-gardes in France. Recent scholarship has rightly sought to expand our conventional understanding of cinephilia, drawn from aesthetic preferences and cultural practices developed in 1920s and 1940s–1960s France, by highlighting affective investments and sociabilities inspired by cinema

TABLE 1 TOTAL MOVIE THEATERS AND MOVIE THEATER SEATS PER CAPITA IN LATIN AMERICA, FRANCE, AND THE UNITED STATES, 1950*

Country	Total Movie Theaters (Commercial)	Inhabitants per Movie Theater Seat (Commercial)
United States	19,311	12.4
France (excluding colonial territories)	5,163	20.9[a]
Argentina	1,547	19.7[a]
Brazil	1,490	56.2
Mexico	1,369	21.0
Cuba	485	19.0[a]
Colombia	445	45.0[a]
Venezuela	338	22.2
Chile	312	21.4[a]
Peru	252	42.0[a]
Uruguay	178	22.1[b]
Ecuador	84	36.2
Costa Rica	73	19.8
Panama	60	16.4
Bolivia	48	94.3
Dominican Republic	47	105.6
Nicaragua	44	25.7
Guatemala	39	168.9
Honduras	30	73.0
El Salvador	28	56.8
Paraguay	26	100.4

SOURCES: *The 1950 Film Daily Year Book of Motion Pictures* (New York: Wid's Film and Film Folk, 1950); and *United Nations Demographic Yearbook 1951* (New York: United Nations, 1951).

*Arranged in descending order by total number of theaters.

[a] Indicates a 1950 population estimate was used for calculations in the absence of 1950 census data.

[b] Indicates a 1949 population estimate was used for calculations in the absence of census data or estimated population for 1950.

that predate and exceed these cultural formations.[4] This book takes an alternate path by tracing the reverberations of this normative concept of cinephilia on the other side of the Atlantic.

By expanding the distribution of French film and disseminating French institutional models of film culture—embodied in cineclubs, cinémathèques, festivals, and film schools—diplomats, policymakers, and film enthusiasts worked to bolster France's soft power in the face of military defeat and occupation.[5] Like other European cinemas of the period, France's industry faced profound postwar challenges, in particular an onslaught of Hollywood imports—a condition of the Blum-Byrnes

TABLE 2 TOTAL MOVIE THEATERS AND MOVIE THEATER SEATS PER CAPITA IN LATIN AMERICA, FRANCE, AND THE UNITED STATES, 1960*

Country	Total Movie Theaters (Commercial)	Inhabitants per Movie Theater Seat (Commercial)
United States	16,103	17.9
France (excluding colonial territories)	5,793	16.3[a]
Mexico	2,185	17.4
Brazil	1,998	51.2
Argentina	1,900	20.0[a]
Colombia	560	56.5[a]
Cuba	525	14.4[a]
Venezuela	496	21.8[b]
Chile	399	23.4
Peru	334	36.2[a]
Uruguay	211	24.0
Ecuador	150	66.4[a]
Costa Rica	113	23.3[a]
Nicaragua	84	28.3[a]
Bolivia	82	77.3[a]
Dominican Republic	68	94.2
Panama	57	21.2
Guatemala	41	80.1
El Salvador	39	60.9[a]
Honduras	32	70.0[a]
Paraguay	24	104.0

SOURCES: *The Film Daily Yearbook of Motion Pictures 1960* (New York: Wid's Film and Film Folk, 1960); and *United Nations Demographic Yearbook 1961* (New York: United Nations, 1961).

*Arranged in descending order by total number of theaters.

[a] Indicates a 1960 population estimate was used for calculations in the absence of 1960 census data.

[b] Census data from 1961 used for calculations in the absence of 1960 census data, given a large discrepancy between the 1960 population estimate and the 1961 census figures.

accords that forgave France's debt to the United States—and it sought to (re)conquer foreign markets by capitalizing on emerging notions of film as art. Cultural diplomacy through cinema promised to yield both box office profits and intangible benefits by raising the international profile of French cultural products. These efforts found especially fertile ground in Latin America, where French influence had historically been strong, ranging from the impact of the ideals of the French Revolution on newly independent Latin American republics in the nineteenth century to the prevalence of French language instruction and the popularity of French consumer goods.[6] Even the notion of *Latin America* itself is

a nineteenth-century French invention, used by Napoleon III to justify the French intervention in Mexico (1861–1867) by evoking *latinité*, a supposed cultural kinship based on a common linguistic heritage.[7] This book retains the concept of Latin America as a frame, despite its limitations and despite the fact that I focus on Mexico, the Andean countries, and the Southern Cone and devote limited attention to Central America and the Caribbean (with the exception of Cuba). This is because the term accurately evokes the regional imaginary that shaped the work of the region's film enthusiasts (who collaborated extensively across national borders) and of French cultural architects seeking to challenge the rising postwar hegemony of the United States.

Connections and collaborations between Latin American and French cinephiles helped foster an extraordinary blossoming of institutions of film culture in postwar Latin America. Over 250 cineclubs, a dozen film archives (some ephemeral), six film schools, and two major film festivals were established in the region in the two decades after World War II. The activities of these Latin American organizations frequently intersected with the work of supranational bodies like the Fédération internationale des ciné-clubs (International Federation of Film Societies; FICC); the Fédération internationale des archives du film (International Federation of Film Archives; FIAF); the Fédération internationale des associations de producteurs de films (International Federation of Film Producers' Associations; FIAPF); the Centre international de liaison des écoles de cinéma et télévision (International Liaison Center for Film and Television Schools; CILECT); and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which were all based in Paris and influenced by French priorities. I argue that the emergence of a transatlantic film culture between Latin America and France in the postwar period led to a mutually beneficial exchange of cultural capital that served both the geopolitical aims of the French state and the social ambitions of Latin America's middle classes, participating in broader efforts to regulate and instrumentalize cinema in the service of postwar aspirations and Cold War politics.

Even as upwardly mobile Latin Americans sought distinction—in Pierre Bourdieu's dual sense of aesthetic discernment and elevated social status—by watching films deemed artistically important by erudite film critics, film appreciation was cultivated as a moderating and modernizing force.[8] While often spearheaded by left-leaning film enthusiasts, Latin American institutions of film culture rarely engaged in political activism before the early 1960s. Despite major differences in economic

and political development between Latin American nations, as a whole the region's expanding middle classes were accorded outsized geopolitical significance in the polarized Cold War climate. According to interested observers from capitalist nations, particularly the United States, emerging middle classes would be pivotal for promoting peace and democracy, especially in developing regions like Latin America that were viewed as vulnerable to the spread of communism. The expansion of the middle classes, which somewhat narrowed the profound and enduring split between a small elite and an economically disenfranchised majority in Latin America, was imagined as a bulwark against the region's supposed tendencies toward the extremes of socialism and right-wing authoritarianism.[9]

Ironically given their avowedly apolitical nature, postwar Latin American institutions of film culture helped create the preconditions for the politically radical, formally experimental New Latin American Cinema (NLAC) of the 1960s and 1970s by disseminating socially engaged filmmaking movements, including Soviet montage and Italian neorealism, as film historians often note in passing. NLAC has been incorporated into Anglo-American canons of film history as a radical Other to Hollywood, a role that so-called non-Western cinemas are often drafted to fulfill in film histories that seek to be global in scope but nevertheless continue to center Europe and the United States. Yet the vibrancy and complexity of postwar Latin American film culture cannot be reduced to a mere prehistory of this celebrated movement. Rather, it simultaneously participates in and exceeds a binary Cold War logic that, in most historical accounts, pits capitalist Hollywood against a leftist, anti-colonial Third Cinema.[10] Over the past decade, and especially in the past five years, Latin America's postwar film culture has inspired a new crop of insightful book-length studies.[11] Yet these works have invariably focused on a single country (while nonetheless attending to transnational connections). My interest, by contrast, is to plot the dense institutional networks that arose across national borders in this period.

The cultural and political circumstances that nurtured Latin America's postwar film culture were distinct from the turbulent social context of NLAC, characterized by powerful currents of leftist and anti-colonial politics stirred by the 1959 victory of the Cuban Revolution, which would be brutally repressed by US-backed regimes in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. After a brief political opening across much of Latin America in 1945–1946, inspired by pro-democratic propaganda and antifascist mobilization, national governments moved to sharply limit leftist

agitation and labor activism, particularly as Cold War conflict intensified in 1947 and 1948.[12] This move was partly rooted in a bid to attract international investment as countries across the region pursued economic development through import-substitution industrialization, a policy of building up domestic manufacturing and internal markets to replace the export of raw materials and agricultural products as a country's main economic activity.[13] (Ironically, this bid for economic independence often required foreign capital.) In a political climate where any hint of ideological extremism could alienate overseas investors, Latin American film enthusiasts tended to position their interest in cinema as purely aesthetic, operating in a space outside partisan politics.

This is not to say that postwar institutions of film culture in Latin America had no politics, but rather that they espoused a supposedly apolitical dedication to transcendent values like global peace and human progress that resonated deeply after the war. In the wake of a world conflict waged in part through media propaganda, policymakers and film enthusiasts on both sides of the Atlantic championed the creation of institutions of film culture as a means of honing viewers' critical sensibilities, thus inoculating them to morally or politically threatening content or simply against what some intellectuals saw as the crass commercialism of mainstream film. These institutions cultivated specific modes of interpretation—such as attention to film style over star appeal—that demanded detachment from the emotional and sensual responses roused by cinema. In theory, these practices would prepare audiences to navigate problematic film texts and ultimately to curate their viewing habits in a manner that would promote social well-being. Within this framework, films by avowed communists (such as works from the Soviet montage movement or Italian neorealist films scripted by Cesare Zavattini) could be embraced in bourgeois Latin American cineclubs not only for their celebrated aesthetic achievements but also for their humanism. Furthermore, cinephiles hailed film as a mass art that could facilitate intercultural understanding, a goal advanced most directly by the emerging festival circuit's role as a showcase for national industries. Cineclubs, archives, festivals, and film schools were all deeply shaped by an internationalist spirit that transcended efforts to build cultural capital for patriotic purposes or individual benefit, aligned with a humanism that fully embraced neither socialist nor capitalist ideologies as adequate for ensuring human happiness.

Postwar institutions of film culture in Latin America and France collaborated to advance a liberal-democratic internationalism, albeit

on unequal terms. While somewhat tainted by the legacy of the Vichy regime, France was well positioned among major European film producers to embody this liberal spirit in the postwar period. Italy and Germany could hardly carry this torch as defeated Fascist aggressors, at least not immediately. Furthermore, French cinema had prospered during the war thanks to a captive audience for domestically produced films (Hollywood imports were banned under the occupation) and new levels of industry regulation under Vichy, though it would face new challenges in the postwar era.[14] Latin America was imagined as an especially promising terrain for the implementation of French and France-based institutions' global designs. Organizations like FICC and FIAF supported the propagation of nontheatrical venues, including film societies and the archives that nurtured them, in the region. The growth of cineclubs, cinémathèques, and film festivals had the collateral effect of boosting the commercial distribution of French films, which could reap promotional benefits from their presence in these non-commercial circuits. Representation from Latin America, especially its major film industries (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico), was key for asserting the internationalism of events like Cannes. Like its counterparts elsewhere in Europe, France's national film school, the Institut des hautes études cinématographiques (IDHEC), strategically recruited aspiring filmmakers as de facto cultural ambassadors. IDHEC's international students, it was hoped, would bolster the French film industry's reputation in their home countries through their newly acquired expertise. For their part, Latin American film enthusiasts leveraged their links to French organizations to gain access to material resources and skills—prints of film "classics" hard to source locally, professional training in filmmaking—and to enhance their local prestige.

Despite these gestures toward reciprocity, profound imbalances remained between France and Latin American nations when it came to access to the means of film production, imbalances that French officials and film enthusiasts naturally had little interest in redressing. Under the circumstances, French and Latin American institutions of film culture alike encouraged the region's cinephiles to valorize themselves primarily, though not exclusively, as sophisticated *consumers* rather than cultural producers. Cineclubs across the region screened mostly US and European features, dedicating limited time to Argentine, Mexican, and Brazilian cinema and homegrown amateur and nontheatrical film. Film society leaders, encouraged by Henri Langlois of the Cinémathèque française to establish archives in order to receive prints from FIAF members, amassed French, German, Italian, and US titles to furnish a growing network of

clubs with programming and gave only belated attention to collecting and safeguarding a national film heritage. Local boosters in Punta del Este, Uruguay, organized a film festival in the absence of a commercial film industry to showcase the elevated film tastes of local viewers while promoting tourism and real estate development. The more ambitious Mar del Plata festival tried to compensate for its geographic remoteness from the United States and Europe and the less-than-stellar international reputation of Argentine film by styling itself as a center for the serious discussion of the cinematic medium, organizing an annual summit of film scholars and critics. Even Mexico's Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos (University Center for Cinematic Study; CUEC), the oldest continuously operating film school in the region, initially emphasized the training of filmmakers as critically inclined viewers more than as creators. Yet for French cultural architects and Latin American film enthusiasts of the postwar period, consumption was the pivotal terrain on which battles not only for national and class prestige, but also for the fulfillment of cinema's aesthetic and social potential, would be waged.

RETHINKING CINEMA AND THE "CULTURAL COLD WAR"

In a history of Unifrance, the government agency dedicated to promoting French film abroad, its longtime director Robert Cravenne reflected, "If the Second World War revealed to military men the absolute weapon, the bomb, it showed civilians that there existed a less deadly weapon that was nonetheless an effective auxiliary in winning the war: the media [*l'information*] and public relations."[15] In suggesting an equivalency between the power of modern communication technologies and that of nuclear arms, Cravenne signals how the rationale for Unifrance's creation in 1949 was shaped by wartime experiences with film propaganda. At the same time, his phrasing suggests how media might be mobilized in the service of the French state when its military might had proved inadequate. Notably, France lacked nuclear weapons capacity in the decade and a half after the war and performed its first nuclear test only in 1960.[16] Seen in this light, Cravenne's comment prompts us to consider how France instrumentalized culture in the face of perceived military weakness and postwar economic crisis, and more broadly, how media can serve strategic geopolitical ends.

Cultural diplomacy and cultural relations—a broader term encompassing forms of cultural exchange that are not directly sponsored by

the state but nevertheless serve national interests—enter more or less tangentially into myriad works of film history.[17] The powerful influence of Hollywood's trade organization, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), and the role of the US Department of State in eliminating international trade barriers to Hollywood films, informed by the belief that these works promote American ideologies and products, is widely known.[18] Accordingly, much of the literature on cinema's implications for international relations focuses on the diplomatic maneuverings of the United States. Ruth Vasey's *The World According to Hollywood, 1918–1939* and Hye Seung Chung's recent *Hollywood Diplomacy: Film Regulation, Foreign Relations, and East Asian Representations* examine the impact of diplomatic pressures on the narrative content of US films, while in *Hollywood's Cold War*, Tony Shaw explores explicit efforts by the state to utilize commercial film for anticommunist messaging.[19] Other recent books like Ross Melnick's *Hollywood's Embassies* and Sangjoon Lee's *Cinema and the Cultural Cold War: US Diplomacy and the Origins of the Asian Cinema Network* explore how diplomatic aims shaped the material and administrative infrastructures underpinning film circulation, an interest this study shares.[20] Melnick considers overseas movie theaters owned by Hollywood studios as de facto US outposts that promoted American-style consumption of both films and other commodities and became focal points for both pro- and anti-American sentiments. Lee explores how US policies designed to preserve a bloc of capitalist nations in East Asia reverberated in the region's film industries, fostering the creation of an anticommunist network that fostered co-productions and region-wide distribution, with assistance from the CIA-backed Asia Foundation.

Attending to postwar Latin American film culture not only promises to expand our knowledge of the forms of cultural diplomacy exercised through cinema outside the US context but also prompts us to reconsider our understanding of the medium's relationship to Cold War politics. As the widespread influence of French cultural organizations in postwar Latin America attests, the dynamics shaping the region's film culture cannot be reduced to an opposition between nationalism and cultural colonization by Hollywood. Latin America's institutions of film culture prompt us to reevaluate the politics of postwar art cinema, understood—following scholars like Steve Neale, Janet Staiger, and Barbara Wilinsky—not solely or even primarily as a corpus of films defined by particular aesthetic criteria, but as a set of social spaces (such as festivals and arthouses) and interpretive practices.[21] Idealized for its

textual complexity and credited with fostering more sophisticated forms of spectatorship, art cinema's ideological dimensions—such as the way that cineclubs' efforts to mold spectators functioned as a form of social discipline, and the diplomatic maneuvering that shaped the global festival circuit—have yet to be fully explored.[22]

At the same time, the circulation of art cinema in the context of Cold War–era culture wars requires us to rethink conventional understandings of postwar modernism's political charge and to revisit core assumptions of scholarship on the "cultural Cold War" by considering cinema's medium specificity.[23] The characteristics of acclaimed postwar films do not map meaningfully onto the opposition between Stalinist socialist realism and American abstraction that informed a major strand of US cultural propaganda of the period, most notoriously in the 1946 exhibition Advancing American Art mounted by the US State Department. Slated to tour Eastern Europe and Latin America, the show was recalled in 1947 amid a furor over the use of taxpayer dollars to buy and display abstract works, many created by left-leaning artists.[24] As a result, the international promotion of modernist painting was outsourced to private institutions, notably New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), which continued to champion abstraction as a marker of the aesthetic freedom lacking in socialist countries.[25] While often hailed as modernist, postwar art cinema occupies "a space of aesthetic and commercial distinction that is neither mainstream nor avant-garde."[26] If one accepts David Bordwell's definition of the notoriously slippery concept of art cinema, it is representational rather than abstract, narrative in nature (though its narratives tend to be meandering, marked by randomness and ambiguity), and invites interpretations rooted in directorial subjectivity, contrasting sharply with the nonfigurative works of postwar abstract expressionist painting or the cinematic vanguards of the interwar period.[27]

If, as Neale has argued, European film industries leveraged the concept of art cinema to differentiate their products from Hollywood's, postwar art film from capitalist and socialist nations alike tended to circulate internationally in proportion to the degree that it embodied not only an easily consumable version of a distinctly national ethos, but also the qualities of a "universal" humanism.[28] At the same time, celebrated works of art cinema typically embodied a consciousness of social issues and problems that exceeded liberal capitalist notions of the free market as the guarantor of human prosperity and happiness. This ambivalence resonates both with the ambiguities of French foreign policy—which, as I explore later, advocated a moderate path between US capitalism