

# *A role model: Disney in Ezeiza and the business plan of Dante Quinterno<sup>1</sup>*

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## ABSTRACT



This article is in the line of transnational cultural studies and seeks to contrast the film *Saludos Amigos* from Disney Studios and the short film *Upa en Apuros* from the Company Dante Quinterno, both created in the year 1941/1942. As we shall see, while the films produced by Disney are "works made upon request", Quinterno's production accounts for the interest of the editor to follow in the footsteps of his master, but above all, of his ambition for being positioned in the face of progress. How one of the most conservative and traditional businessmen in the ruble faces this plan is not entirely without its contradictions. In order to do this, the author will start from a set of problems arising from the few sources available from Walt Disney's visit to Argentina with the ultimate goal of avoiding the reductionism that suggests a linear phenomenon of 'Americanization' in the supply of entertainment..

*Keywords: Cartoon. Cultural diplomacy. Disney. Dante Quinterno. Market. Progress.*

## RESUMEN



Este artículo se inscribe en la línea de los estudios culturales transnacionales y busca contrastar el filme *Saludos Amigos* de los Estudios Disney y el cortometraje *Upa en Apuros* de la Empresa Dante Quinterno, ambos creados en el año 1941/1942. Como veremos, mientras que los filmes producidos por Disney resultan de un "trabajo por encargo" la producción de Quinterno da cuenta del interés del editor por seguir los pasos de su maestro, pero sobre todo, de su ambición por posicionarse de cara al progreso. El modo en el uno de los más conservadores y tradicionales empresarios del rubro encara este plan no está exento de contradicciones. Para ello partiré de un conjunto de problemas surgidos de las escasas fuentes disponibles sobre la visita de Walt Disney a la Argentina con el objetivo final de evitar el reduccionismo que lleva a pensar en un fenómeno lineal de "americanización" de la oferta de entretenimientos.

*Palabras Clave: Historieta. Diplomacia cultural. Disney. Dante Quinterno. Mercado. Progreso.*

## *Is it David against Goliath?*

There is no need to highlight the effects of cultural diplomacy or account for one of its regular channels: mass culture. The degree of overlapping between the Department of State and Hollywood during the war has already been shown in profuse literature. Clearly, it is not the

<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of my current research in CONICET: "Un proyecto de industria cultural nacional: análisis comparativo del mercado de producción de historietas en la Argentina entre 1942 y 1968".

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purpose of this work to retrace those steps. On the contrary, the author is interested in starting from the links between different actors to the government and the market to give thought to the extent of the effects on foreign policy; such as the missions of "good neighborhood" which had an impact on the national scenario.

As such, this paper puts quotes around the concept of the comic industry as a "cultural tool" and emphasizes strategies of redefinition, previous positions and relative autonomy before the propagandistic effects of an ideological campaign. In other words: the adoption of working methods, creative production and standardization had an impact on the field of comic books in a way that could hardly fit into the immediate objectives of a broader policy.

The position of Dante Quintero oscillates between a radical defense of national values and the intention to place products that can compete in the market. However, the "cultural entrepreneur" diversified the offer in the context of a public homogenization process and territorial expansion. Understanding the logic of this convergent and simultaneous trend involves stopping *reading Donald Duck* from the perspective of colonialism and Disney as a dominant ideology factory, and start thinking about the processes of deterritorialization (ORTIZ, 1994) and negotiation of identities (Garcia Canclini, 1995) in mass culture.

In *Saludos Amigos*, Disney is presented as an ambassador of culture (reminiscent of the ocean voyages from the early twentieth century) and as a visionary who advertises a project for the future in South America. It is impossible not to notice the ideology of their producers, but the interesting thing in this case is the tightening of the threads of a comparison, which in principle, seems *impossible*. I mean, if Dante Quintero in the Argentinian imagery is the "Latin American Disney", this would only make sense in the context of the failure of his project.

From the axiom: "Quintero is not Disney", the question arises from the distinguishing features of his company, his strategies for imitating an imported model, the way in which he mixed and re-appropriated an hegemonic ideal, or even better, if not contributed with his own initiative to consolidate and build on that vision of the world. I understand that Quintero is somewhat more than an impoverished version of the dominant discourse and I refuse to believe that Disneyland had such leverage that subverted other competing ideologies. Without futurology, I think that the course would not have been very different if Disney had not visited Argentina.

So, what interests me is to reverse the burden of proof, and analyze the complexity of the process and address the differential modes of "ownership", instead of starting from Disney to show how his business policy influenced Quintero's production.<sup>3</sup> The intention is to dive into the existing links in the entertainment market in a period marked by the transformation of the

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<sup>3</sup> The contributions to these reflections were fundamentally taken from Peter Burke (2000) and Michael de Certeau (1999).

cultural industry as well as taking the reciprocal influence of the idea of *cultural magnetism* proposed by Peter Burke.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, I understand that there is the contiguity between the cartoon publishing sector and the film industry. In turn, this will trigger convergences with other production sectors, resulting in contradictory and complementary processes of industrial homogenization. I will not be able to work this subject here but this article could not leave these objectives behind: the Argentinean comic industry is not separated from the transnational production complexes and hegemonic forms of action from globalization in cultural media and industries (Vazquez, 2010).

## Saludos amigos and good neighbors

In the early forties, Walt Disney visited the Latin American continent with the mission of consolidating and expanding the "good neighborhood" policy initiated by the U.S. government in 1939. The main objective of this mission was to develop strategies to strengthen cultural, political and trade ties between North America and Latin America, maintaining the country's leadership on the continent, preventing the European influence and stopping a possible spread of communism. It is within this framework that the Disney Entourage through Latin America can be analyzed as a "cultural artifact", whose manipulation would be coordinated by the U.S. State Department.

The Disney studio was going through financial problems and one of the most powerful trade union strikes in Hollywood history.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, the government's proposal was a temptation for the company, and also a very convenient offer. It was not the first time the artist worked for the "American cause"; between 1941 and 1942 he made a series of animations, among which are: *Victory Through Air Force*, the short stories *Private Pluto*, *Commando Duck* and *Victory Vehicles*. These films were produced supporting the American and Canadian government agencies since before December 1941, in which the U.S. entered the war directly.

Between 1941 and 1946, the company made 28 "educational films" and 80 destined for military training, as well as 6 major productions for the film industry. To this, we must add the

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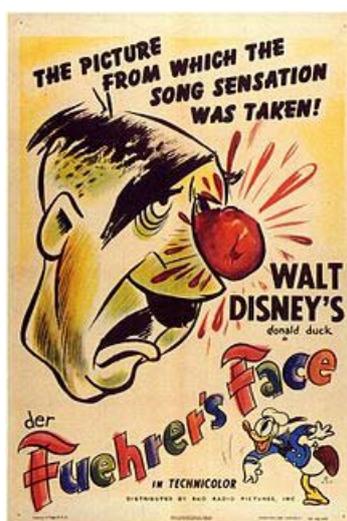
<sup>4</sup> The historian defines *cultural magnetism* as the attraction between similar elements in two different societies (BURKE, 2000, p. 203).

<sup>5</sup> In 1938, the Screen Cartoonist Guild is created, the first union of the animation industry. It developed an intense campaign to gather members among the workers in the media. Disney prohibited the union membership of his employees while complaints over payment of bonus and extra hours grew, as well as the acknowledgement of credits and benefits. Disney fired a group of workers and animators, on May 28, 1941. A strong strike took place in the studios of his industry. Finally, and thanks to the intermediation of the federal government and several pressure groups (among them, the main creditor, Bank of America) Disney accepted to acknowledge the union and partially improve the hiring conditions. The strike was ended after nine weeks.

voluminous amount of 70 short films, from which 6 were nominated to an Oscar and two actually got one: *Der Fuhre's Face* and *Lend a Paw* (PURCELL, 2010, p. 510).<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that much of the material produced for specific purposes is out of print and is now virtually undiscoverable.

Perhaps the best known among these animations is *Der Fuhre's Face*, in which Donald dreams he is in Nazi Germany, working in an ammunition factory and is forced to compulsively salute Hitler. On waking from his nightmare, he greets a shadow with his arm up and shouts "Heil", but soon realizes that the image comes from an ornament: the Statue of Liberty he has in his window. He happily jumps out of bed in his red, blue and white pajamas, kisses the object and sings: "Oh, Boy, I am proud of being a citizen of the United States of America!" At the end of the tape, a caricatured Hitler gets a tomato thrown to his face, in the best *stand-up comedy* style.

Figure 1 - Poster of the film *Der Fuhre's Face*



Source: The author's personal archive.

The project that originated *Saludos Amigos* (1943) and *The Three Caballeros* (1945) was widely discussed in 1941. Originally, it raised the production of 12 short films in which Disney's creations appear alongside new South American characters. The approval came through a letter sent to John C. McClintock, "under the understanding that the film, when completed, should be reviewed by representatives of the Department of State for final approval." (PURCELL, 2010) The project was defined as:

<sup>6</sup> The work of Fernando Purcell is recommended, where the author carefully analyzes the impact of propaganda films in Chile during the cold war years. Purcell, 2010. His analysis on Walt Disney in Chile have been particularly enlightening for the writing of this paper.

While Disney's trip was a substantial gesture of goodwill, a film based on the trip will be the greatest act of adulation for the rest of the American republics and it can emphasize the common bonds that unite the peoples of the Americas. At a time when continental solidarity is of paramount importance, this film will provide a persuasive demonstration of our good wishes seen in action. These kind of unifying factors, such as the ones in this film, are essential to the morale of civilians in our country and the rest of the Americas.<sup>7</sup>

The trip of the delegation was prepared and designed by Nelson Rockefeller, then Secretary for International Affairs for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The *Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American* (OCCIA) led by Rockefeller sought to strengthen a positive view of the United States. Working directly with Hollywood's film industries, this institution promoted the military strength of the United States while also seeking to promote *the American Way of Life* through its ideological offensive campaign.

The tour was comprised of Disney, his wife and a team of sixteen writers, animators, technicians and artists among whom, the business manager John C. Rose and musical director Charles Wolcott. The trip lasted ten weeks: it began on August 6, 1941 and ended on October 22, with the return of the last professionals from Disney studios to the U.S.

**Figure 2** - Arrival of Disney Entourage: expectation and adventure.



**Source:** Purcell (2010)

The delegation visited the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Peru, Guatemala and Mexico. The length of stay was different in each case, and it is possible to notice that this was due to the direct interests of the U.S. policy. The artists took photographs, sketched "al natural", filmed and shared experiences with local colleagues. The material gathered accounts for Disney's interest in recording that "anthropological" experience and build an image that would last over time.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "Walt Disney Sees South America", Authorization of the Project, December 18, 1941, NARA, RG 229, Caja 216, Carpeta, "Walt Disney Sees South America", mentioned in Purcell, (2010, p. 513).

<sup>8</sup> The documentary *Walt y el Grupo* (2008), directed by Theodore Thomas, Frank Thomas' son, one of the closest collaborators to Disney, and a member of the 1941 entourage) was produced by The Walt Disney Family Foundation was released in 2008. Its director interviewed family members, sketchers, journalists and personalities with whom Disney had

**Figure 3 - Mary Blair and Blair Lee sketching**    **Figure 4 - Walt Disney at the beaches of Copacabana**



**Source:** Walt Disney in Brazil (2008).



**Source:** Walt Disney in Brazil (2008).

In fact, *Saludos Amigos* is the collection of four short films depicting the passage of the entourage in Latin America from August to October 1941. The film was shot at Disney Studios in February 1943 and lasts 42 minutes. The animated film is positioned as a regional fresh, an adventure on Lake Titicaca that illustrated Donald Duck's trip in Peru, *Aquarela do Brasil* with Jose Carioca and Donald dancing on the beaches of Copacabana, the adventures of *Peter, the little plane* in the Chilean Andes and *El Gaucho Goofy* in the Argentine pampas.

**Figure 5 - Poster for *Saludos Amigos*.**

contact. From the enlargement of photographs taken during the trip, he investigated the travel books and visited the original locations.



Source: the author's personal archive.

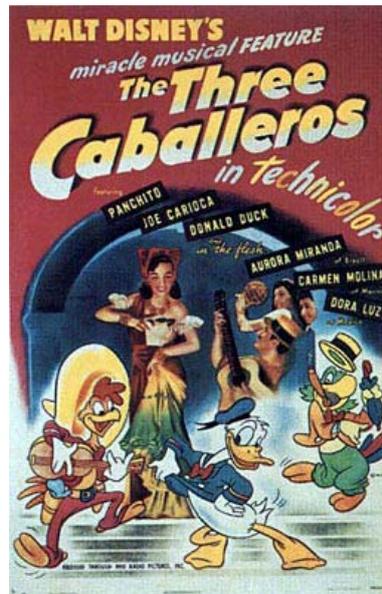
The film begins with a scene from the plane that shows expectant explorers while a voiceover presents "the unusual expedition: artists, musicians and writers leaving in search of new characters, music and dances for their cartoons". The intention is revealed in the opening scenes and verses from the soundtrack composed by Edward Plumb and sung during the opening credits. The music works as a synthesis of the script and represents the objective of the policy of good neighborliness, "*We salute all of South America / Where the skies are always blue / Welcome to all friends of the heart / Who we left there, whom we remember while singing this song*".

Two years later, the production of the film *The Three Caballeros* with material selected during the trip was completed.<sup>9</sup> The new film could be thought of as a sequel since the objective was not unlike the previous one: to show the brotherhood of the American people from the fusion of animation and documentary records. This time, the characters are presented as representatives of their countries: Donald Duck (USA), Jose Carioca (Brazil) Panchito (Mexico) and Flying Gauchito (Argentina).

A stylized map highlights the flora and fauna of the region, paying attention to the Andes and the Amazon jungle. Carmen Miranda functions as a symbol of Pan Americanism and as a cultural ambassador of the "adult world": if Donald Duck appealed to children, the famous star of the show was an obvious temptation for her fanatical followers. Note that the projection of *the three gentlemen* was relegated in Argentina because of the government's declared neutrality during World War II, even after the entry of the United States in the conflict.

<sup>9</sup> The film had its global premiere in Mexico on December 21, 1944. One year later, it was presented in the United States.

**Figure 6** - Poster The Three Caballeros.



**Source:** The author's personal archive.

During the 40's, the attack of the ideological persuasion promoted by the Roosevelt administration caused significant tensions. The data is not less, if we wonder how effective the mission was in the country and how much myth is in the imaginary that reconstructed Quinterno as a "Latin American Disney." The forms of cultural hybridity are present in the redefinition of hegemonic elements. The idea expressed herein does not mean forgetting the unequal conditions of the production or differential modes in which such processes operate.

However, based on these unavoidable data, the adoption of the American model and the implementation of a type of industry related to those interests went beyond the sphere of mere adaptation. In regards to the business expectations of Dante Quinterno (also Ramón Columba and other editors and cartoonists on stage) there are differences, not only regarding the "original pattern", but a complex negotiation that is not necessarily produced "beyond borders."

In the golden years of the medium, exporting cartoons or grains assumed a programmatic and speculative character. The promotion of their "own" artists, styles and narratives were part of the reorientation of the economy towards the domestic market. Therefore, during those years, there was a reference to "a school of Argentinian cartoons" and a unique mode of production. (Vazquez, 2010) Ramon Columba, president and founder of the Argentina Association of Comic Book Publishers, noted in an interview:

Our comic books sell one hundred and fifty million copies per year! No other country in the world overcomes us in this line. Hence the importance for Argentine artists of all that relates to this activity has become another characteristic production of the country. [...]. That is, fans can indulge in practicing drawing with confidence that there will be plenty of work and good pay for them. The good ones, now they cannot cope, even when they are many. [...] When I met Walt Disney in Buenos Aires two years ago, he was surprised when I introduced him to nearly three hundred Argentinean artists. "I had never imagined finding so great a focus and I doubt that will surpass New York" -he told me. - How many artists collaborate in the Editorial Columba? - Around forty. Some, like Eugenio Colonese, (3) that even though being an Italian guy I can say that he is a "unique product of our editorial." 10

This perspective should be read in the context of industrial policy in Peronism and the consolidation of a competitive comic book market. By the mid-fifties, that promising course would begin its downward curve, but until then, expectations shaped an ambitious company where the admiration and respect had as its counterpart a competitive and challenging career.

Then, I will address the episode *Goofy in the Pampas* from the *Hola Amigos* film. It is noticeable how the film focuses on Argentina and Brazil over the rest of the American countries visited during the tour. I understand that the prolonged stay of Walt and his team in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires was not a mishap. The choice of these countries as American political centers accounts for them being white priorities in the foreign policy and that they had to put an end to any aspirations to regional leadership.

## *Disney in Ezeiza*

From Rio de Janeiro, the tour left to Buenos Aires on September 8 being received by an enthusiastic crowd at the Ezeiza airport. The delegation spent three weeks in the capital and set up a sort of "creative studio" at the Alvear Palace Hotel. They also visited the provinces of Salta and Mendoza. Among the cultural activities and meetings with colleagues and artists, it is worth mentioning a visit to the studio of the painter Florencio Molina Campos, famous for his gaucho paintings for the calendars of the Alpargatas company.

From this joint work two short films emerged *El Gaucho Goofy* (in English in the original) and *The Flying Gauchito*, both in a countryside theme. *El Gaucho Goofy* was directed by Jack Kinney and released in Buenos Aires in October 1942. In representing Argentina, Disney uses a theme dear to the American imaginary: the association between the west and the border. Goofy is a

<sup>10</sup> Interview made with Ramón Columba (1891-1959) published in *Dibujantes* N. 4 (December–January 1954).

cowboy of the Pampas and its passage through the field is only one circumstance. In fact, there is no need to learn to ride its horse, make a roast or dominate an ostrich with the balls because after all, it is going to come back.

**Figure 7 - Tradition and identity.**



**Source:** Frames captured from the short film "El Gaucho Goofy"

The picture of the gaucho Goofy seems to parody the Indian Patoruzú by restoring its earthy image from a caricatured version. Indeed, the *Patoruzú* appeared in the comic strip *La Razón* since 1928, but its consecration came when its creator, Dante Quintero, visited the Disney Studios in 1933. The first issue of the comic book came out on newsstands in November 1936, when one hundred thousand copies of its edition were sold out on the first day of sale. Courses of humorous drawings taught by Quintero in the pages of his magazine were not a minor event. The publisher wanted to print the opening lessons of the trade to other artists with the objective of standardizing the production and serializing the stroke: this method of drawing with local dye follows the pattern of industrialization graphics created by Walt Disney.

**Figure 8 - Earth elements, idiosyncrasy and nation**



**Source:** Frames captured from the short film "El Gaucho Goofy"

But it is not only the gaucho who appears as a focal point for national feelings. Tango and barbecue are part of the construction of markedly Argentinean stereotypes. Clearly, if the mission was intended to integrate the differences from the concept of Pan-Americanism, what better to show Walt Disney himself and his characters enjoying a barbecue or dancing a *chacarera*. In the film, animated cartoons are slipped with cartoon artists working "live". The established continuity foreshadows a utopia without conflict, almost a dissolution between reality and fantasy.

**Figure 9** - Disney dancing with Andres Chazarreta dance group on the terrace of the hotel.



Source: Image obtained from the film *Walt and the Group* (2008)

After his tour in Buenos Aires, the team flew to Mendoza and on September 29, they left to Santiago, Chile where they stayed for a few days. The operation was the same as in Argentina. This time, the group established its headquarters in Hotel Carrera in Santiago. Fernando Purcell (2010, p. 512) analyzes the position of the press as follows:

Perhaps the fact that United States had not formally entered the conflict at the time of Walt Disney's visit might explain the reactions a little bit suspicious of the Chilean press to his presence. The magazine *Ecran* noted in 1941, for example, that although the "most terrible wars," were breaking out, the Mickey Mouse would always keep his "contagious smile" and Donald Duck his "bold optimism" because "nothing matters to them. They have been created to entertain us". In short, what Disney was seeking for in his trip to Latin America was, therefore, an "intellectual enrichment." The *Diario Ilustrado* highlighted that the coming of Disney responded to his need to "soak in the South American environment," so he could "understand more" before the creation of his cartoons".

However, following the statement by the author, although it was originally planning to include two Chilean characters (a plane called "Pedrito" and a penguin named "Pablo"), only the first would keep its nationality, because the second, which appeared in the film *The Three Caballeros*, was transformed into a character with no representative name from the South

American west coast.(PURCELL, 2010, p. 516) The film was released in Chile in September 1942, generating expectations from the audiences awaiting the screening of the film in the wake of what Disney had recorded the previous year. However, as pointed out by Purcell, the representation of the Chilean people was clearly dull when compared to the highlights of the geographies, values and traditions of both Argentina and Brazil.

Pedrito's story was focus of attention in the Chilean critics. What the movie shows is the climatic adversity, the dangerous and stormy wind, the terrible rains and the invincible Aconcagua, says Purcell, "of the four sections of the film, the one with Pedrito is the weakest. The "Chilean" character, unlike the Brazilian Jose Carioca and the well-known Donald and Goofy, visiting the Lake Titicaca and Argentina, respectively, is the least funny and attractive "(PURCELL, 2010, p. 518).

**Figure 9** - Frame of the episode "Pedrito".



**Source:** Purcell, 2010.

This disenchantment felt by the general public realizes the promising direction that the company had embodied. The Latin American portrait in a succession of traditional prints, the highlight of archetypes and habits had resulted in the drawing of a multicolored map: Brazilian fauna and flora, the Argentinean extensive and green pampa, Bolivia and its rich indigenous customs and landscapes, an entire Creole and peasant folklore, which had little of third world and modernizing desire. Back in the U.S., Disney's creative team took to the task of producing the films, incorporating the objectives planned before the trip. Propagandistic elements were added to the registration of the natural environments, cultural gatherings, meals and guided tours.

The short films were merged into two major productions. Telling the adventure as a logbook also had its revenue. Disney and his company made the most out of the Latin American tour: they did not only record, film and direct the animation, but published comic strips narrating the journey, made documentary films whose cast consisted of the party, sold photographs magazines and newspapers, and published books on the risky enterprise. In the final analysis, the political and cultural mission was also good business.

### *Upa in Need*

Disney would come to function both as an ally and as a "threat" at the same time. In other words, facing the Indian Patoruzú (other than the gaucho but presented as such) was the American hero, Donald Duck, a clear opponent on the horizon of expectations of success and recognition. These characters, with their brand identities, are presented as clumsy, good-natured, owners of virtues, devoid of political intentions, and above all, without double standards.

The representatives of a "national identity" propose an ideal of selfless life and enthusiastically embrace the traditions and teachings provided to them by the family and morality. Tied to their land, they are never foreigners. The Indian Patoruzú or Gaucho Goofy in the Pampas resist the change of traditions: they more than anyone else, "stomp on their own land."

**Figure 10** - Goofy: trying to "dominate the poncho" **Figure 11** - The Indian Patoruzú.



Source: Author's Personal Archive

On the other hand, there are no moral dramas or great passions. The psychology of Quinterno's characters, like those of Disney, holds a conception of failure that is almost a relief. In reality, happiness and disappointment does not exist as such: the adventures are overcome and life goes on without too many pretensions or ambitions for change. At the same time, the

Indian Patoruzú is never "innocent" and his apparent naïveté and stupidity barely hides an ideological suspicion. It cannot be an archetype of the Argentine hero but a fallacy. As said by Oscar Steinberg (1977) the ideology reveals its imposture since the virtues of the "Indian" Patoruzú are Creole virtues, not Indian:

Patoruzú has gaucho virtues but is an Indian, Indians and gauchos were never anything like a social unit. On the other hand, he is a large landowner, but is also a south Indian chief, and this other duality comes at a time when they were still very close, in time, to the massacres of Indians caused indirectly or even directly by southern landowners. [...] Indeed, Patoruzú's social identity is as untouchable and as elusive as his money. Neither one nor the other can be threatened by objective reality, and more: neither of them can even be best described in its basic characteristics. In this sense, Patoruzú's social and economic situation would seem the ideal of a real rancher, who was also a man of right, and that would not only preserve his patrimony intact and free of hazards, but also his social condition intact and objectionable, making it into something indefinable and evanescent" (STEIMBERG, 1977, p. 65-66)

However, less known than Disney's biography surrounded by mythical anecdotes feeding his legendary figure, the story of Dante Quintero is hardly remembered by his most popular characters or for connoisseurs, for his foundational role in the First Argentine Union for the distribution of comic books. Oscar Steinberg (1977) has already described the essential characteristics of "Quintero's universe". Characters with paternalistic, xenophobic and class behaviors. The political ideology privileges the interests of concentrated capital and is notable supporting of dictatorships in different stages in the circulation of the story.

This conservative and right-wing nationalism led to Quintero not authorizing the use of the image of his characters to illustrate the posters of the First International Cartoon Biennial, held at the Instituto Di Tella (1968).<sup>11</sup> But this purely traditionalist ideological horizon would contradict the modernist certainties of liberal constitutionalism. This is an ideological crystallization that challenges the democratization of the political life on the one hand but on the other, usufructs from the revenues of progress, industrialization and bourgeois project.

However, Quintero, somewhat an entrepreneur and a publisher of comic books, glimpses, since the early forties, a process of transformation in the entertainment industry. As a successful entrepreneur and businessman, but also as a millionaire landowner, he warns that the market for comic books (from which he is one of the main references) needs to expand its

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<sup>11</sup> I have worked extensively on this event in my doctorate thesis: *Oficio, arte y mercado. Historia de la historieta argentina. 1968-1984.* (Faculty of Social Sciences, UBA, 2010)

borders into other areas of the industry. Hence in the heyday of his magazines, he decided to redouble his bet and diversify its production.

Thus, the first short film in color produced in Argentina: *Upa in Need* " was launched. The production revealed a Pharaonic company, high costs, economic losses and a premiere postponed from April 21 to November 20, 1942 at the Ambassador Cinema during the premiere of *"La Guerra Gaucha"*. The short film with a twelve-minute duration was produced by *Sindicato Dante Quintero*, with Tito Davison as the director, Tulio Lovato as the production manager, Oscar Blotta as the key animator, decorated by the German painter Gustav Goldschmidt and storyboards by Quintero himself. The musical score used the background music of Melle Veersma.

Figure 12 - A short promotional poster for *Upa en Apuros*



Source: La Bañadera del Cómic, 2001.

It is not about transiting the so-called golden age of national cartoon with a confident and optimistic gait. Quintero risks and ventures into the film industry as a unique representative of his time, a mentality that fits with the relationship between art and industry during the second half of the twentieth century. So on the one hand, it is necessary to highlight the pioneering nature that took over his production, but on the other, it exposes that his sensitivity is part of a scenario in which various practices related to leisure and entertainment were widely expressed.

The dozens of colored animated films in the world seem to confirm the obvious: Quintero could be a pioneer but hardly an illuminated inventor. In 1933, he travels to the United

States to learn from the major comic distribution unions. Thus, in 1935, he founded the Sindicato Dante Quintero, through which he distributed his production in North America. In 1936, *Patoruzú* gets a weekly page in *Mundo Argentino*, in full color and reprinted in many newspapers of the country. Over the years, the editorial line is diversified and wide, and several characters get their own magazine: *Andanzas de Patoruzú* (1956), *Patoruzito* (1945), *Correrías de Patoruzito* (1958) and *Locuras de Isidoro* (1968).

Fully diversified, the Union licensed the character for advertising: dolls, calendars, soaps, toys, pins, puzzles, records, and a daily program. All that remained was the "entering" into the movie business. Almost like adding two plus two.

### *These noble savages*

Although the rhetoric of good neighborhood acts as a principle of American solidarity against the external enemy, one of its founding elements was to highlight the identity of each nation and the autonomy of their republican democracies. This discourse would lead to close-up features of "cultural identity", paying particular attention to regional weather, food, indigenous costumes and customs. As Monica Glik says "through a dialectic of inclusion (the Americans) and exclusion (friends of the Axis), it was decided who would be outside, and who would be inside."(Glik, 2009, p. 17)

In any case, the ideology that flies over any difference is the American way of life. The bounded redefinition of that ideology can be seen in the business practices of an editor like Dante Quintero. He is not Disney, but would have liked to be and with what he had in hand, like a good immigrant, made virtue out of necessity. The ideology and market were combined to reveal a narrative and iconographic repertoire that left its mark in the imagery of professionals in the media and the readers.

The position in the industry implicated setting aside the nostalgic evocation and affirming his career in progress. His nationalist reaction would not go against this: taking care of the heritage and defending the land would also involve facing the gringo with "Creole passion". From there he invented his own myth: an Indian landowner, the spirit of the race and an authentic Argentine. Opposite him was also something impossible. In *Goofy in the Pampas*, when the character tries to understand the customs of the gaucho, he fails in every attempt. This could not be otherwise; Quintero and Disney always made it clear that the two worlds, even if they looked alike, should not be mixed.

In this sense, it seems insufficient to see the relationship only by the progress from its effects. Conceivably, the history of national projects (even those unfinished) is always *coming* and

that beyond the uneven flows and unpredictable directions, modernity as a mobile ideal and in its plenitude of contradictions, was not always harmful to the "weakest". Thus, the *rush* to overhaul the national industry and compete in the international market is more than an imitative response.

In conclusion: the dynamic relationships that the comic book activity established with the film industry and later with the television find the correlation with the highlights of these sectors. I could not dwell on this subject in these pages, but it is noteworthy that the incursion of Dante Quintero in the film industry is not an isolated phenomenon nor is the result only of ambition or chance, but part of a set of strategies overlapping between publishers and other media. Obviously, a complementary study of the history of comics and the history of the media is a larger project than the one case presented here, which is limited and restricted.

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