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Transcending school: the continental impact of the Argentine educator Olga Cossettini, based on the experience of El niño y expresión, in the 1940s

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ABSTRACT

In the early 1940s Olga Cossettini, an Argentine teacher, received missives from several representatives of the cultural and educational world of the Americas. The event that allowed Cossettini's international relevance was the school artwork exhibition that took place in November 1939 in the Castagnino museum in the city of Rosario (Argentina). This experience surpassed the actual event when in 1940 a book of the same name as the exhibition was published. Its distribution led to Cossettini being invited personally by Henry Allen Moe to apply for the Guggenheim Fellowship. What is more, the distribution of the book also made her name and work known in Pan-American organisations of different types. The aim of this article is to put forward the personal and institutional networks and contacts that Cossettini developed throughout a given period in her career. A clear example of this is *Ego*, which allows us to observe the shaping process of pan-American intellectual connections. These connections included ideas that although founded in educational experiences, transcended their boundaries.

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In the early 1940s the Argentine teacher Olga Cossettini, headmistress of the Carrasco Primary School of Rosario and representative of the New School Movement in Argentina, started to receive letters and invitations from several representatives of the cultural and educational world of the Americas. The event that triggered Cossettini's international relevance as a renowned educator was the exhibition that took place in November of 1939 at the Municipal Museum of Fine Arts Juan B. Castagnino (Museo Municipal de Bellas Artes Juan B. Castagnino) in the city of Rosario. Not only did the activity exhibit the artistic production of students from Cossetini's school, but it also featured a master lecture given by Cossettini herself. As part of this lecture, she exposed the pedagogical basis for her proposal. It consisted of teaching children through art and retracing the path

that had allowed her students, who came from working-class backgrounds, to delve into artistic, plastic, and literary practices. The experience went beyond this particular event when in 1940 the Minister of Public Instruction and Development of the province of Santa Fe, Juan Mantovani, authorised the publication of a book containing Cossettini's transcribed lecture as well as the schoolchildren's works. The book was titled after the exhibition, El niño v su expresión, and it had a print run of one thousand copies. The continent-wide distribution of the book - for which she was responsible - allowed Cossettini's name to exceed Argentine borders, making the Escuela Serena² experience to be known in new intellectual spaces.³ Furthermore, the distribution of the book opened the doors for her access into the United States' educational world and it led her school's children's works to be exhibited at the Children Art Gallery in Washington. Additionally, it allowed her to travel to the United States, as part of a journey in which she obtained the prestigious John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship.⁴

²In Argentina, the New School Movement started developing in the hinge of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, achieving its greatest public presence during the inter-war period. Debate centred on severe critique of traditional pedagogy, and in particular of normalism as a dominant practice. Due to the pre-eminence given in it to children as subject of the learning process, the proposal was thoroughly discussed and became a main orientation in Argentine pedagogical development. Olga Cossettini named her New School experience in Rosario Escuela Serena. Concerning the specific experience of Escuela Serena, see Olga Cossettini, La escuela viva (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1942); Olga Cossettini and Leticia Cossettini, Obras Completas (Rosario: Ediciones AMSAFE, 2001).

⁴See Sandra Fernández and Paula Caldo, *La maestra y el museo. Gestión cultural y espacio público. 1939–1942* (Rosario: SECTEI-El Ombú Bonsai, 2013).

¹There is vast literature dedicated to Olga Cossettini. Some of the most relevant contributions on the subject are: Ovide Menin, "El ensayo de escuela serena realizado por las hermanas Cossettini en la República Argentina," Revista da Facultade de Educação 24, no. 1 (1998): 1-14; Natalia Fattore y María Paula Pierella, "La construcción de un nuevo modo de autoridad pedagógica: una lectura de los diarios de clase en la experiencia Cossettini," Revista de la Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación de la Facultad de Humanidades y Artes UNR 4, no. 3 (2008): 359-74; Paula Caldo and Sandra Fernández, "Biografía, historia y mujeres: la revisión de un vínculo complejo a partir del caso de Olga Cossettini, 1898-1987," Avances del Cesor, no. 7 (2010): 115-42; Sandra Fernández and Paula Caldo, "Cartas para Olga y Leticia. Aproximación al tratamiento del Epistolario de las hermanas Cossettini," Anuario Escuela de Historia, no. 22 (2010): 183–203; María del Carmen Fernández, María Eugenia Guida, and María Elisa Welti, "Una singular articulación entre comunidad y saberes: las misiones de divulgación cultural en la Escuela Serena (Rosario, 1935-1950)" Educación, Lenguaje y Sociedad 8, no. 8 (2011): 39-54; Sandra Fernández and Paula Caldo, La maestra y el museo. Gestión cultural y espacio público 1939-1942 (Rosario: SECTEI-El Ombú Bonsai, 2013); Sandra Fernández, "Amiga mía...': Las tramas de la sociabilidad de una maestra argentina en las décadas de 1930 y 1940 a través de su epistolario," in María Sierra, Juan Pro and Diego Mauro, eds., Desde la Historia. Homenaje a Marta Bonaudo (Buenos Aires: IMAGO-MUNDI, 2014), 253-75; Sandra Fernández, "Olga Cossettini en el laberinto de la sociabilidad política santafesina (Argentina, 1937–1943)," Revista Brasileira de Histórica da Educação 15, no. 1 (2015): 191-9; Sandra Fernández and Micaela Yunis, "Notas serenas. Las hermanas Cossettini y la enseñanza de la música en su experiencia educativa," Revista Mexicana de Historia de la Educación 4, no 7 (2016): 69–86; Javiera Díaz and Silvia Serra, "Olga y Leticia Cossettini ; mujeres, maestras e intelectuales?" Educación lenguaje y sociedad, no. 6 (2009): 233-50.

³Silvina Gvirtz, ed., *Escuela Nueva en Argentina y Brasil. Visiones comparadas* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila Editores, 1996); Marcelo Caruso, "¿Una nave sin puerto definitivo? Antecedentes, tendencias e interpretaciones alrededor del movimiento de la Escuela Nueva," in Pablo Pineau, Inés Dussel, and Marcelo Caruso, eds., La escuela como máquina de educar. Tres escritos sobre un proyecto de la modernidad (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2001); Sandra Carli, Niñez, pedagogía y política. Transformaciones de los discursos acerca de la infancia en la historia de la educación argentina entre 1880 y 1955 (Buenos Aires: UBA; Miño y Dávila, 2003); Sandra Carli, "Escuela Nueva, cultura y política" in Biagini, E. y A.A.Roig, dirs., El pensamiento alternativo en la Argentina del siglo XX. Identidad, utopía, integración (1900-1930) (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2004) 363-72; Héctor Cucuzza, "Desembarco de la Escuela Nueva en Buenos Aires: heterogéneas naves atracan en puertos heterogéneos," Revista brasileira de Pesquisa 2, no. 5 (2017): 310-29; Ricardo Marín Ibáñez, "Los ideales de la escuela nueva," Revista de Educación, no. 242 (1976): 23-42; Elizabeth Sánchez Luquez, "La experiencia de escuela nueva en Mendoza," Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana, no. 5 (2003): 65-83.

Legitimised not only by the government's financial funding but also by the unconditional support of Juan Mantovani⁵ and the Director of the Castagnino Museum (architect Hilarión Hernández Larguía), 6 the exhibition surpassed Rosario's area of influence. Without the endorsement of these local cultural and educational representatives, it would have been impossible for Cossettini to be catapulted as the role model of Argentine education that she still remains to the present day.

An exchange between the Director of the Museum and the Minister of Public Instruction, made it possible for Cossettini's book to be published in a very short time. Cossettini's lecture and the photographs of the most distinguished drawings and children's collective work were the main content of El niño y su expresión. Santa Fe's government assumed the responsibility for the distribution of most of the copies, as well as their editing and printing. The book spread strikingly fast, resulting in a great amount of correspondence addressed to the author, which ultimately led to her receiving the Guggenheim fellowship.

Right after the exhibition had finished, Hernández Larguía sent a missive to Mantovani, suggesting the publishing of the book as an exaltation of Santa Fe's educational and cultural affairs. The haste with which the project of editing the book was set into motion is noteworthy. Without delay, on 2 March 1940, Mantovani responded to Hernández Larguía's missive, sending him the galley proof. In this package, Hernandez Laurguía sketched some corrections and eagerly said: "I spoke to Olga Cossettini yesterday; she is very enthusiastic about this book. I await it with great expectation."

The transcription of the exhibition into a book motivated fluent written exchanges between the actors involved, and generated enthusiasm and commitment among them. The government allocated 1,500 pesos (national currency) to print a thousand copies of the book, according to Resolution N. 702 of 9 January 1940.8 Resolution N. 909 of 29 April ratified Resolutions 702 and 711 and sanctioned:

the preparation of the book 'El niño y su expresión' is being arranged and to this end that the artistic direction of the edition has been entrusted to the Director of the Castagnino Museum, architect Hilaríón Hernández Larguía, being convenient its distribution to be centralized.9

⁵Juan Mantovani was an Argentine intellectual and educator of international relevance. In his youth, he had been a member in the 1918 University Reform movement. Through the years, he bolstered his intellectual track record with public participation as well as with his writings. From the late 1920s he stood out as a public servant in the position of General Schools Inspector of Santa Fe (1928–1929); since the 1930s he became Middle, Normal and Special Schools National General Inspector (1932-1938), and finally reached the position of Minister of Public Instruction and Promotion of the Province of Santa Fe. Aguirre states that Mantovani had participated in various groups of heterogeneous ideology, but that the backdrop of his ideas had always been a liberal, reformist, progressive, democratic, anticlerical and secular tradition with strong americanists and antiimperial claims: see Alejandra Aguirre, "El sentido de la política en Juan Mantovani (1889–1961): esbozo de una biografía política" (2009), http:// uvla.kultur.lu.se/Virtual/politica/Mantovani.htm (accessed March 7, 2013).

⁶Silvia Pampinella, "Biografía," in *Hilarión Hernández Larguía. 1892–1978* (Rosario: Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, UNR, 1993).

⁷Archivo Cossettini, Instituto Rosario de Investigaciones en Ciencias de la Educación-Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (AC), Letter Collection, Letter from Juan Mantovani to Hilarión Hernández Larguía (official) Santa Fe, March 2, 1940 [author's translation].

⁸AC, Letter Collection, Letters and Resoutions adressed to Hilarión Hernández Larguía from José Carmelo Busaniche and José Monasterio (official), Res. No 702, Santa Fe, January 9, 1940.

⁹AC, Letter Collection, Letters and Resolutions addressed to Hilarión Hernández Larguía from José Carmelo Busaniche and José Monasterio (official), Santa Fe, April 29, 1940; signed by governor Iriondo and minister Mantovani [author's translation].

On 10, Hernández Larguía was authorised to initiate the project and approximately half a year later the book was published. The ministry paid 200 pesos of postal mail. The work was distributed impressively. Worldwide, but particularly in the United States and Latin America, governmental offices, associations, groups, and individuals expressed their gratitude for the shipping of the book and planned to contact the creator of this cultural experience.

Its impact on Argentina was similar. The book reached diverse territorial and ideological spaces of the nation. A letter written by Hernández Larguía to Cossettini summarises this, when "as director of the Museum ... and as a friend" he tells her that

...the cooperation that I have provided the School under your distinguished direction is simply a modest collaboration to the valuable contribution to culture and popular education that you carry on in this city. You should not insist in stressing what the entity under my direction may have done for the children ... given that it is the obligation every institution like ours has to impose upon itself to effectively fulfill its function. 10

These exchanges began in May 1940, and lasted for a few months. These first exchanges were enhanced by the occurrence of two events that would eventually increase the size of Cossettini's public figure: the itinerant presentations of the exhibition in various American cities during 1941, and her obtaining the Guggenheim Fellowship.

During the 1940s, networks of educational scientists, which eventually allowed the spread of their disciplinary knowledge and social capital, were fully organised. Many of them were linked to international projects and included well-known figures from educational fields in three different continents. This characteristic contributed to the consolidation of certain individuals and institutions as essential references for teachers all around the world. In addition to these formal means of interaction, these networks included, within their functioning, a series of grassroots mechanisms (which they administered in a more informal and horizontal manner) which included listening to the teacher's problems and including them in the decisionmaking process.11

In Argentina, the distribution of Cossettini's book reactivated links among teacher groups, intellectuals, artists, and officials who regarded it as a proof of the results of a type of experience which they were quite acquainted with and which they highly praised. On an international level, the outlook was much complex, particularly in Latin America and North American.

During most of the 1930s, Cossettini had created important links with European academic circles. The mutual correspondence with Lombardo Radice¹² can be interpreted as a given due to their teacher-pupil bond, but Cossettini had also fostered other connections, such as the one with the "Inspección General de Enseñanza" of Spain, Antonio

¹⁰AC, Letter Collection, *Letter from Hilarión Hernández Larguía to Olga Cossettini*, Rosario, December 17, 1940 [author's translation].

¹¹ International collaboration networks regarding education and culture has been dealt with by *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no. 2 (2007).

¹²Lombardo Radice (1879–1938) currently renowned within academic circles, was an Italian pedagogue involved in the pedagogical renewal movement known as New School. In addition to his written work, he displayed an important epistolary network built with teachers from different latitudes, amongst whom was Olga Cossettini. These two spheres of his work made him a well-known figure in the educational field. He briefly occupied an important position in the Education branch of the Mussolini regime, where he was accompanied by Giovanni Gentile, who also was an important influence on the teacher.

Ballesteros. 13 Evidently, her European contacts were strongly constrained by the effects of the Spanish Civil War, firstly, and subsequently, by the effects of the Second World War. 14 In these troubled years, American nations were far more susceptible to receiving and accepting Olga's work. Both the distance these national states posed from the actual scene of the war and the policies deployed by them in order to stimulate regional integration made it easier for Cossettini to establish connections and allowed her to achieve a longlasting recognition.¹⁵

Therefore, her relationship with the American sphere was not based on luck; after the exhibition in Rosario was over, Cossettini followed a policy of publicising her work. In January 1940, she received two letters from Concha Romero James from the Oficina de Cooperación Intelectual de la Unión Panamericana.

From the early 1920s onwards, intellectual circles pointed out the need to build a regional perspective on social problems; this way, Pan-American instances of debate turned into the possibility for the discussion of key problems on continental integration and also to strengthen ties with European institutions such as the Paris Institute of International Intellectual Cooperation.

In addition to this, during those years Latin America was conceived by United States as a natural territory for the display of geo-strategic and political presence. In this line of thought (and leaving behind the Monroe doctrine) Pan-Americanism was promoted by the United States as a way to protect its own political and commercial agenda, via a continental-wide policy based on the principles of cooperation and international peace. Furthermore, this new doctrine developed specific ways of legal, political, and intellectual influence that crystallised in the creation of widespread continental institutions and common values. 16 Also, the Pan-American Conferences displaced the purely commercial discussion about and moved forward to consider more ample subjects, some of which were part of United States international agenda.

From the second Pan-American Conference (1901) onwards, cultural policies were incorporated into the debate with the creation of a catalogue of American publications, their exchange among different countries and the creation of a specialised library on issues of regional integration. 17 Therefore, the effective communication that Romero James established with Cossettini was not a strange phenomenon. Their first contact in 3 January 1940 was an answer to a note sent from 14 December. In it, Cossettini stated her hopes of being invited to a conference in Gainesville. Romero James was very honest in her answer:

¹³AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Antonio Ballesteros, General Inspector of Primary Schooling of Spain to Olga Cossettini, Madrid, May 20, 1936.

¹⁴In July 1940 the service of Child Literature of the Bureau Internacional d'Éducation, in Geneva acknowledge receipt of the book El niño y su expresión and acknowledges for its shipment. However, no further communications between Olga and this European dependency are recorded: AC, Letter Collection, Letter from E. Weber to Olga Cossettini, Geneva, July 24, 1940.

¹⁵Olga Cossettini and Leticia Cossetini, *Obras Completas* (Rosario: Ediciones AMSAFE, 2001), 21.

¹⁶Yáñez Andrade and Juan Carlos, "El trabajo en el debate panamericano (1923–1936)," Relaciones, no. 138 (2014): 45– 77; Juan Pablo Scarfi, "La emergencia de un imaginario latinoamericanista y antiestadounidense de orden hemisférico: de la Unión Panamericana a la Unión Latinoamericana (1880-1913)," Revista Complutense de Historia de América, no. 39 (2013): 81-104.

¹⁷Unión Panamericana, Conferencias internacionales americanas, 1889–1936 (Washington: Dotación Carnegie para la Paz internacional, 1938); Unión Panamericana, Medidas adoptadas por la Unión Panamericana en cumplimiento de las convenciones suscritas y resoluciones aprobadas por la séptima conferencia internacional americana (Washington: Unión Panamericana, 1936); Unión Panamericana, Conferencias internacionales americanas, 1889-1936 (Washington: Dotación Carnegie para la Paz internacional, 1938).

The University of Florida wishes only to invite to the conference being held in Gainsville in April, educators who can master English language, so that they can participate in the discussions. Therefore, I think that it would not be possible to offer you special facilities for this trip Meanwhile, why don't you start to learn English? ¹⁸

Nevertheless, she also encouraged Cossettini to organise a collection of the best works of the exhibition and to send them to an exposition to be held in May in Medellín for "we are in charge of gathering the drawings, paintings, etc., of all countries, and therefore we would be glad to send your children's works". ¹⁹

Despite what happened, two days later, Cossettini received the formal invitation from the University of Florida to participate as the Argentine representative in the Inter-American Educational and Cultural Conference. Although, in the end, she did not attend the conference, a close professional tie, which would eventually bloom within the following years, started to be nurtured by the Argentine teacher.²⁰

In March 1940, with the book project already on its way, Cossettini received a new letter from Romero James, from which several details can be inferred. The first and most important one was the certain possibility for Cossettini to visit the United States in order to participate in any of the countless alternatives that such a pedagogical, intellectual, and cultural scene offered; the second one was that Cossettini's request to publish some of her writings would have to wait longer:

For our series of brochures on educational matters we prefer unpublished works and, therefore, maybe it would be better to publish your monograph on "Children's Cultural Missions" ("Misiones Culturales Infantiles") ... I think the opportunities for you to come to these lands will not be scarce, and it will be particularly pleasant for me to recommend your name, any time I am asked for, for your being invited to any congress in this country.²¹

This passage of the letter shows how from late 1939 onwards, Cossettini focused on constructing an ideal setting for the reception of her book, which would eventually allow her to make a qualitative leap in the continental pedagogical landscape. It also showcases her tenacity to go beyond regional and national limits. She insisted in creating new contacts, precisely those that would assure her being part of the educational and cultural world which she did not have access to by that time.

As stated above, *El niño y su expresión* was printed and distributed in an extremely swift fashion. In June 1940, a flood of replies showing gratitude for receiving the book started to arrive to Escuela Carrasco's postal address, where Cossettini lived.

One of the first institutions to write back was the *Oficina de Cooperación Intelectual de la Unión Panamericana*. In June 1940 its chief wrote to her "friend":

¹⁸AC, Letter Collection, letter from Concha Romero James, Chief Oficina de Cooperación Intelectual de la Unión Panamericana to Olga Cossettini, Washington, DC, January 3, 1940 [author's translation].

¹⁹AC, Letter Collection 342/3, Letter from Concha Romero James, Chief *Oficina de Cooperación Intelectual de la Unión Panamericana*, to Olga Cossettini, Washington, DC, January 3, 1940.

²⁰This was not a coincidence. As Fuchs states, in these years internationalism became a key word in intellectual and political debates which also included science and education in their topics. In the midst of an increasingly interdependent world economy, the threat of imperialism and fascism, social reform, and pacifist movements increasingly turned to academic educators, teachers, and educational reformists to strengthen their position. In this sense, scientific and professional collaboration proved crucial, organised in international educational expositions and conventions, transnational institutions, multilateral standardisation, and the publication of international magazines: Eckhardt Fuchs, "Networks and the History of Education," *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no. 2 (2007): 185–97.

²¹AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Concha Romero James, Chief *Oficina de Cooperación Intellectual de la Unión Panamericana*, to Olga Cossettini, Washington, DC, March 20, 1940 [author's translation].

Concha Romero James . . . warmly sends her regards to her dear friend Olga Cossettini and expresses her utmost gratefulness for the beautiful book ... in which the fruitful results of her teaching are displayed. Declaring that she has had the pleasure to receive an extra copy that will be sent to one of the magazines that deal mostly with artistic education in schools in this country . . . ²²

The Servicio de Cooperación Intelectual de la Unión Panamericana, whose priorities were educational matters, incorporated into the Pan-American conferences schedule, programmes which favoured the exchange between students and teachers. This turned the Cooperation Service into an exceptional means of connections that exceeded the strictly diplomatic and political ones.23 In this sense, the International American Conference of 1936 held in Buenos Aires constituted a turning point in the issue of intellectual cooperation. As part of it, treaties, conventions, and resolutions which were made in favour of Pan-American cooperation were passed and national commissions were created to see these resolutions through. Those efforts explicitly addressed the issue of education and especially initial education. It also addressed the issue of which channels would be the most suitable to incorporate scientific societies, professional organisations, and public institutions into tangible forms of intellectual cooperation. These experiences functioned as organs which cornered international exchange of scientific, artistic, and cultural knowledge in pursuit of a continental enterprise.²⁴

On the same day Romero James wrote to Cossettini, the former sent a long letter to Mantovani, in which she again highlighted how pleasant it had been to receive two copies of "the beautiful book" directly from Cossettini and the Museo Municipal de Bellas Artes Juan B. Castagnino. Right after that, she pointed out the possibility of the book being published in her journal Readings for Teachers; one copy would be sent directly to their library and the other would be sent to the magazine School Arts for the book to be known among "North American educators that worry about artistic education in primary school". Romero James's admiration can be appreciated throughout her epistle:

I would also like to have a copy of the book at my disposal for the magazine Progressive Education which, as you may know, has published several numbers devoted to children's art.

I think it would be remarkable if the Children's Art Gallery of this city could be given another copy. I imagine it is a limited edition and therefore I do not dare to ask you for a greater number of copies, but I would be greatly thankful if you would find a way to send at least two more copies for the purposes mentioned above.

²²AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Concha Romero James, Chief Oficina de Cooperación Intelectual de la Unión Panamericana, to Olga Cossettini, Washington, DC, March 20, 1940 [author's translation].

²⁴Fabián Herrera León, "México and the International Institute of Cooperation. 1926–1939," *Tzintzun, Revista de Estudios* históricos, no. 49 (2009): 169-200.

²³Juliette Dumont, Construyendo nuestra América, el papel de la cooperación intelectual en el período entreguerras (Vienna: ICA, 2012). In its formal declaration it was put on record that it was an international institution supported by the 21 American republics, that was directed by a council formed by the US Secretary of State and by the Diplomatic representatives in Washington from the other American nations. It is administered by a Director General [L.S. Rowe] and a Subdirector [Pedro de Alba], elected by the aforementioned council and aided by a personnel composed of statisticians, compilers, business experts, translators, editors, librarians, and transcribers, and it is devoted to trade development, friendly relations, and to a better mutual understanding in all of the American republics.

I congratulate you most sincerely for the stimuli you surely have given to the *Escuela Experimental Doctor Gabriel Carrasco*. This loyal friend, and humble servant sends you her regards.²⁵

Mantovani was an eminence in this field and his approval of Olga's work helped her to be recognised in the United States' educational sphere. Because of this, Romero James strengthened her relationship with the Argentine teacher even more by carrying out an event that would be a landmark for Cossettini's career:

My dear friend: every person that has had the chance to examine the beautiful book ... has shown great interest in seeing other works by your students. Because of this and also because of my wish to make more broadly known the work that you are carrying out, I have the pleasure to invite you, in the name of the Children's Art Gallery of this city, to send us a collection of 50 or 60 works of the children in your school including if possible the ones that appear in *EL NIÑO Y SU EXPRESIÓN*.

... The director of the gallery has stated that the collection will be exhibited not only in Washington, but also in several other important cities of the country, and for this reason, he wishes to have your authorization for the works to remain in the United States for twelve more months.

I beg you to seriously consider this wonderful opportunity to make public the talent, artistic aptitude and good training of Argentine children in a country that passionately wishes to get to know the different aspects of educational activity in Latin America. This loyal friend and humble servant sends you her regards.²⁶

Cossettini fulfilled Romero James's wishes and sent the requested works in time, with the crucial help of Hernández Larguía. The chief of the *Oficina de Cooperación Intelectual de la Unión Panamericana* notified her on the reception of the material:

A few lines just to let you know that we have had the pleasure of receiving the collection of drawings and watercolors that you have been so kind to send.

 \dots Today I was informed that the drawings are lovely and \dots beautifully put together. How wonderfull 27

This way, the exhibition's materials started a year-long journey across several different cities in the United States:

My dear friend: The exhibition of your children's drawings and watercolors has been displayed in Washington with great success. Shortly, it must leave towards Chicago, and so far, so many cities have shown interest in helding it, that frankly I don't know how every one of them could be satisfied, in the twelve months that it is stay in this country.²⁸

... The beautiful collection that you so kindly provided has been a success in the United States. Right now it has just returned from the famous Museum of Colorado Springs, where it was greatly admired ... Promptly, we will send it to the New Education Congress

²⁵AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Concha Romero James, Chief *Oficina de Cooperación Intelectual de la Unión Panamericana*, to Olga Cossettini, Washington, DC, August 12, 1940 [author's translation].

²⁶AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Concha Romero James, Chief *Oficina de Cooperación Intelectual de la Unión Panamericana*, to Olga Cossettini, Washington, DC, August 5, 1940 [author's translation].

²⁷AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Concha Romero James, Chief *Oficina de Cooperación Intelectual de la Unión Panamericana*, to Olga Cossettini, Washington, DC, November 29, 1940 [author's translation].

²⁸AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Concha Romero James, Chief *Oficina de Cooperación Intelectual de la Unión Panamericana*, to Olga Cossettini, Washington, DC, January 8, 1941 [author's translation].

that will take place in the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in the second week of July. Many of the most important educators in the United States will have the chance to see it, as well as a great number of teachers, since fifty professors will arrive from Latin America, among which there are several that take an interest in artistic education ... As Doctor Mantovani is attending the Conference ... he will have the chance to tell you about it ... I'm very happy to have this chance to showcase one of the most pleasant and important works in the field of education from Latin America. Your friend sends the most sincere congratulations, and a big hug.²⁹

The divulgation of Cossettini's experience was paradigmatic and worked as a mechanism for publicising and making her design renowned. Another effect of its presence in the New Education Conference was that Mantovani appeared once again as a leading figure of the Experimental School in Rosario.

Knowledge circulation entailed an increase in the number of meetings, conferences, and academic events that included transatlantic visits. These meetings give us a glimpse of the existing networks of intellectual circulation,³⁰ since the increasing interest on education worldwide resulted in the organisation of numerous events on the matter in the first decades of the twentieth century.³¹ In this context, the direct support given by Mantovani's administration to Cossettini's New School experience boosted the promotion of this kind of practices in public schools. Therefore, the original exhibition and the subsequent presentations in cities of the United States were a testimony of Cossettini and Mantovani's shared merits. The Director General of the Pan American Union, L.S. Rowe, sends the regards: "my warmest congratulations for this admirable presentation of your very talented students' works, from the school that you run with so much skill."

It was not only the US educational world which opened up for the Argentine pedagogue. The echoes of her work reached other latitudes. Systematic reviews of the book made it possible for her educational experience to become considerably well known. As a result, in July 1940, the Departmental Inspector of Public Education of Cartago-Valle in Colombia, Carlos Marmolejo, wrote to Cossettini asking for a copy of the book, based on a review published by the magazine *Letras y Encajes* from the city of Medellín.³³ The same happened

²⁹AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Concha Romero James, Chief *Oficina de Cooperación Intelectual de la Unión Panamericana*, to Olga Cossettini, Washington, DC, June 21, 1941 [author's translation].

³⁰An interesting take on the influence academic reunions had on the conformation of the field of educational sciences can be found in Van Gorp, Depaepe, and Simon's article. These authors examine the link between the academic and institutional level of these events and their communicational instances, through the analysis of the work of Belgian educator Ovide Decroly. They do so, considering specifically how this link was expressed in the hinge of the disciplinary and professional spheres. See Angelo Van Gorp, Marc Depaepe, and Frank Simon, "Backing the Actor as Agent in Discipline Formation: An Example of the 'Secondary Disciplinarization' of the Educational Sciences, Based On the Networks of Ovide Decroly (1901–1931)," *Paedagogica Historica* 40, no. 5–6 (2006): 591–616. In this sense, Fuchs argues that the globalisation of education through international institutions and its engine in the moral and political assumptions of the teaching profession and the goals of educational reform of New Education rather than in a specific international scientific paradigm of "new educational sciences": Eckhardt Fuchs, "Networks and the History of Education," *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no. 2 (2007): 185–97.

³¹Claudio Suasnábar and Verónica Cheli, The Role of International Congresses in the Constitution of the Disciplinary Field of Education in Argentina (1910–1937)," Revista Brasileira de Histórica da Educação 15, no. 3 (2015): 83–107; María Rosa Dominguez Cabrejas, "El perfeccionamiento de los maestros en las primeras décadas del siglo XX: Congresos, conferencias, certámenes," Revista Interuniversitaria de Formación Profesional, no. 4 (1989): 11–21; Paulí Dávila Balsera and Luis María Naya Garmendia, "La evolución de los derechos de la infancia: una visión internacional," Encounters on Education 7 (2006): 71–93.

³²AC, Letter Collection, Letter from L.S. Rowe, General Director of Union Panamericana, to Olga Cossettini, Washigton DC, December 11, 1940.

³³AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Carlos Marmolejo, to Olga Cossettini, Inspector Departamental de Educación Pública, Cartago-Valle, Colombia, June 20, 1940.

with América magazine in Havana.³⁴ Correspondence from Montevideo,³⁵ Havana,³⁶ and Santiago de Chile, ³⁷ carried requests asking for Olga's collaboration in magazines, meetings, and analysis of projects; there were also invitations for her to give conferences and make field visits, most of which Cossettini fulfilled after finishing the Guggenheim Fellowship.

The links between Latin America and the United States was part of a certain spirit of the time that prolonged itself during the following decades. Alfonso Reves, 38 from El Colegio de México, thanked Cossettini for the "beautiful monograph" that she had sent him, ³⁹ and that was an example of the most successful strategy of divulgation via postal

Furthermore, letters of gratitude from US universities, for receiving the book, multiplied. For example, the President of the University of Florida, John Tigert, renowned scholar in the area of philosophy and psychology, and who had also invited Cosettini to his university months before, sent her his gratitude. He also elaborated on further projects on pedagogical proposals and teacher exchange:

At the Education department in this University there is a lab-school, where the teaching methodology is very similar to yours, which is to say that the emphasis is made on the creative expression of the child ... I am not sure if we have made as much progress as you, and I am not sure whether we have had any praiseworthy results. We're very sorry you couldn't assist to our Interamerican Educative and Cultural Conference ... 40

Curt Sachs, 41 distinguished German musicologist, professor in New York University and collaborator of the New York Public Library, told her in an identical sense:

I take enormous pleasure in looking at your very beautiful book containing the admirable works of your students ... I, myself, feel proud that my Antología Sonora has a place in your school's curricula. I thank you with all my heart for sending this book to me. With deep admiration I send my regards to you.⁴²

She received similar feedback from Teachers College of Columbia University. 43 I.L. Kandel strengthened his ties with Olga by expressing his wish to distribute her "beautiful book" amongst those colleagues devoted to artistic education.

³⁴AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Antonio Camacho, to Olga Cossettini, Cali, August 21, 1940.

³⁵AC, Letter Collection, Letter from María Orticochea, Consejo Nacional de Educación Primaria y Normal, to Olga Cossettini, Montevideo, September 26, 1942.

³⁶AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Celso Enríquez, to Olga Cossettini, Agencia Periodística de Información Internacional Unión, La Habana, July 23, 1940.

³⁷AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Blanca Flores, to Olga Cossettini, Comisión Chilena de Cooperación Intelectual, Santiago de Chile, May 20, 1940.

³⁸Alfonso Reye's long career in the building of intellectual cooperation networks was very important. He was one of the minds underpinning Mexico's entering in the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in Paris. There, in 1926 he was named as the permanent delegate of the country's Public Education Secretary, allowing collaboration to continue from 1927 to 1939. In this same spirit, he established ties with the Pan-American Union's Section of Intellectual Cooperation which lasted from 1936 to 1940.

³⁹AC, Letter Collection, *Letter from Alfonso Reyes, El Colegio de México, to Olga Cossettini*, México DF, November 15, 1941. ⁴⁰AC, Letter Collection, Letter from John Tigert, President of University of Florida, to Olga Cossettini, Gainesville, June 18, 1940 [author's translation].

⁴¹Renowned figure in the musical world in Germany, because of his works in research and teaching, he had to emigrate from his home country in 1933, and became a leading figure in musical studies in the US thanks to his work in New York University and the New York Public Library. His writings, especially his musical instruments encyclopaedia, are still current particularly because of their stance of making music teaching available to the wider public.

⁴²AC, Letter Collection, *Letter from Curt Sachs, to Olga Cossettini, New York University*, New York, November 16, 1940 [Antología Sonora: selection of musical pieces which goes through the history of this art form] [author's translation].

⁴³AC, Letter Collection, Letter from I.L.Kandel, to Olga Cossettini, Columbia University, New York, June 5, 1940.

In this regard, the book worked as a sort of business card, strengthening those social networks which went beyond the merely institutional ones, and reactivating ties which Olga had previously made, like the one with Curt Sachs.

Due to the effective distribution of the book, the work of Olga Cossettini is known. However, perhaps, the most significant is the epistle Cossettini received in December 1940 from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. In it, the prestigious Henry Allen Moe suggested to Cossettini - given the impact of the book and the exhibition in the Children Art Gallery of Washington - that she should apply for the 1941-1942 fellowship granted by this institution, so that she could study and work in the United States for a year. 44 In the note, Allan Moe briefs her on the chance to extend the deadline for submitting the application, which was originally set for January. At the bottom of Moe's letter, and in his own handwriting, Américo Castro 45 summarises the traces of their friendship, materialising the network that eventually took Cossettini to the US the following year:

Our friend in common, Susana Larguía, has spoken to me about the outstanding work that you have been carrying out at your school. I also have your book ... I think it would be a very good idea for you and for certain educators in that country, you living here for a year. We assure you to make your stay pleasant so as to widen your prospects and contribute to stimulate Argentine values. If you see my good friend Dr. Mantovani, send him my regards and show him this letter. I am sure he will make things conveniently easy . . . ⁴⁶

At this point, Castro takes as a given that Cossettini would get the grant, and insists increating an Inter-American programme of cultural policy associated to knowledge and friendship based networks that Cossetini was already a part of.

Cossettini accepted Allen Moe's proposal, sent the application in January, and got the grant. The goal was to publicise the works of the children and her pedagogical design (summarised in the exhibition and the book El niño y su expresión) Susana Larguía, one of the most prominent promoters of her work, would welcome her and be her host in the US.⁴⁷

In June 1941, Cossettini received the blessing of the General Director of the Pan-American Union, L.S. Rowe, acknowledging "the great honor" of being designated for one of the Guggenheim Fellowship. What is more, he made "all of the Pan-American Union's facilities" available for the distinguished visitor. 48 In September, Cossettini embarked on her voyage to the United States; she arrived in October, and immediately

⁴⁵Américo Castro was a renowned philologist and historian of the Spanish culture. His commitment to the Spanish Republic forced him to exile in the US, where he became a professor at the universities of Wisconsin, Princeton, and California until 1970. He also won the Guggenheim Grant and participated with other intellectuals in the discussion and divulgation of the Hispanic Issue in the country.

⁴⁶AC, Letter Collection, hand-written note from Américo Castro at the bottom of the letter from Henry Allen Moe, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, New York, December 16, 1940 [author's translation].

⁴⁴The Guggenheim Grant meant a significant economic prize for the training of academics. Although it began to be issued only nationally in 1925, little by little it incorporated people from other countries, and Argentina in particular, was added in 1929. From that year on, important Argentine scientists and intellectuals were awarded with the possibilities made possible by this grant, whose objective was the exchange of knowledge by staying in the US for the period of six months to a year.

⁴⁷Paula Caldo and Sandra Fernández, "Biografía, historia y mujeres: la revisión de un vinculo complejo a partir del caso de Olga Cossettini, 1898-1987," Avances del Cesor, no. 7 (2010): 115-39; Sandra Fernández and Paula Caldo, "Cartas para Olga y Leticia. Aproximación al tratamiento del Epistolario de las hermanas Cossettini," Anuario Escuela de Historia, no. 22 (2011): 183-203.

⁴⁸AC, Letter Collection, Letter from L.S. Rowe, The Director General Unión Panamericana, to Olga Cossettini, Washington, June 26, 1941.

after, she started sending and receiving a great number of letters, which evidenced the active social life the pedagogue carried out from her residence in Riverside Drive in New York City. Before the end of the month, F.J. Rey, from Lincoln School, sent her an intriguing letter which exemplifies what would become a constant feature in Cossettini's journey:

I have fallen in love with the beauty and the spiritual quality of your book ... I cannot recall any descriptions as original, deep and gorgeous as these ones in page 36 about Beethoven's "Moonlight". I'm very eager to see you again so that I can introduce you to doctor Coleman \dots 49

When the book did not act as her 'business card, other links that she used to bring into play allowed her to enter the university and educational world. For example, M. Elizabeth Barry wrote to Dr Roma Gans of the Teachers College of Columbia University, asking her to receive Cossettini and bring her closer to the problems of "progressive schools". 50 Also, Américo Castro wrote from Princeton University right after she disembarked:

My distinguished lady ... I'm glad to know you are here ... I'm eager to have the pleasure of seeing you ... come over to have lunch on Friday ... we shall take the 11 am train, or shall I go over there on Saturday?...⁵¹

The US Office of Education, through Mary Dabney Davis, established her visiting schedule to different cities and establishments, particularly in Detroit and Chicago: "You might want to consider staying in Michigan long enough to visit the Kellogg Foundation."52

But even these visits were not an end in themselves: they functioned as ways to reassemble contacts that fostered Olga's reputation in a much wider intellectual world than the Argentine one. Jasmine Britton wrote to her from Los Angeles' Board of Education. In the letter, Britton comments on the profound impact the book had had on Britton herself and on Mrs Lewis (the Supervisor of Art for Los Angeles Schools). She also stated the satisfaction she felt when contemplating the watercolours authored by the children from Rosario, particularly Lucinda's, whom she hoped to meet in Argentina. Britton also encouraged Cossettini to travel to Mexico City and to meet with the Spanish ex-ambassador in Sweden between 1932 and 1934, Isabel de Palencia, a prestigious journalist, writer, diplomat, and feminist activist known as Isabel Oyarzábal, 33 who from her exile in Mexico, had profound ties with the Americas' intellectual environment. Jasmine Britton insisted that Olga should visit her to arrange for the translation of her books into English, and to get to know this Spanish intellectual and her work more deeply:

⁴⁹AC, Letter Collection, Letter from F.J. Rex, Lincoln School of Teachers College, to a Olga Cossettini, New York, October 24, 1941 [author's translation].

⁵⁰AC, Letter Collection, Letter from M.Elizabeth Barry Teacher College, Columbia University, to Roma Gans, New York, October 17, 1941.

⁵¹AC, Letter Collection, *Letter from Américo Castro, to Olga Cossettini*, Princeton, October 28, 1941 [author's translation]. ⁵²AC, Letter Collection, Letter from May Dabney Davis, Federal Security Agency, US Office of Education, to Olga Cossettini, Washington, November 7, 1941.

⁵³Isabel Öyarzábal, known for her literary and journalistic work, and to her commitment to the Spanish Republic, to which she served as representative and ambassador; in addition to this she participated in the feminist struggle. In 1918 she begins to be an active member of the Spanish National Women's Association, over which she comes to preside, and in 1920 assists as delegate to the XIII Congress of the International Alliance for Women's Voting rights in Geneva, as secretary of the Supreme Feminist Council of Spain. Her biography is highly attractive and paradigmatic, marked by her forced exile to México in 1939. As reference: Olga Paz Torres, Isabel Oyarzábal Smith (1878–1974): Una intelectual en la Segunda República Española. Del reto del discurso a los surcos del exilio(Sevilla: Junta de Andalucía, 2010); Antonina Rodrigo, Mujer y exilio. 1939 (Barcelona: Flor de Viento, 2003).

She is a precious person. You will enjoy her. Perhaps you can convince her to translate your books into English and to translate American books into Spanish. She has written several books for children. Her autobiography is "I Must Have freedom." You could enjoy reading it ...⁵⁴

Britton also stated that Cossettini should try to publish her works in the US. Therefore, she sent her the contact information of the renowned editor of Longman's, Bertha Guntermann, so that she could visit her as soon as she returned to New York.⁵⁵

From that moment on, the quantity of letters multiplied: Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, Nashville, Washington, and New York, and Colorado were the more usual locations for their emission and reception. Cossettini approached schools and educational programmes. She visited high-profile personalities in the field of education, like William Kilpatrick, who invited her to his home in New York City. The knowledge she acquired about the school system caused her great admiration:

 \dots A much more open, free, and happy spirit than in the Argentine school, and on top of this, the wonderful buildings and the delightful tools at their disposal to carry out their tasks, will give you an idea of how the school in this country is. The teacher here works from 8.45 to 3.30 or 4, with an hour for a light lunch \dots ⁵⁷

In addition, she made an effort to consider in her work the difference made between boys and girls within the educational system; and also to remark, without making an open judgment, the highly troublesome limits of state intervention in the education of black minorities.

If any of voices written in these letters expresses as a whole the dynamic of her journey through the US school establishments, it is the one in which I.E. Schatzmann, Executive Secretary of the Rural Education Committee, requested the Chief of the Elementary Education Division of California, Helen Hafferman, to make possible Cossettini's visit to schools of California, as well as making contact with several colleagues of the area:

Although Miss Cossettini is very much interested in elementary public school education, she would also like to visit some rural schools in California, as she is planning to help her government reorganize its rural education program ... In her school children do some significant work in art, drama, and music. It is for this reason that I hope you will include you institution in her itinerary ...

I have arranged for Miss Cossettini to visit some rural schools here in Illinois, but she would like to see a one-teacher, two-teacher, four-teacher, and consolidated rural school in California. Without doubt you will be able to make the necessary arrangements for her. I am sure she would be interested in seeing the large public school in Guadalupe (Santa Maria County) where the language problem plays such an important role.⁵⁸

⁵⁴Letter Collection, *Letter from Jasmine Britton, Board of Education, City of Los Angeles, to Olga Cossettini,* Los Angeles, 21 de abril de 1942 [author's translation].

⁵⁵AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Jasmine Britton, Board of Education, City of Los Angeles, to Olga Cossettini, Los Angeles, April 21, 1942.

⁵⁶AC, Letter Collection, *Letter from Olga Cossettini to Leticia Cossettini*, Nashville, March 16, 1942: "I've had the good fortune of meeting and speaking extensively with Dr. Kilpatrick, one of the most distinguished thinkers of American education. Admirable 70 years old mind, rigorous and brave, that in the middle of the war, gave a speech that I will comment on when I a go there, in some public talk."

 ⁵⁷AC, Letter Collection, Letter from Olga Cossettini to Leticia Cossettini, Nashville, March 16, 1942 [author's translation].
⁵⁸AC, Letter Collection, Letter from I.E. Schatzmann, Executive Secretary of the Rural Education Committee, to Helen Hafferman, Chief of the Elementary Education Division of California, Chicago, February 3, 1942 [author's translation].

Her concern about rural education was as intense as her drive to multiply her sociability bonds in spheres outside the educational field:

Yesterday it occurred to me to write some lines to Disney, who lives near Los Angeles ... I sent him the poetry notebook of Beatriz and some drawings (Ramón's, especially the one about spring) and other items. I told him I would be delighted to visit his "studio." I know it's very, very hard to be able to do so but the works of the children have opened every door for me and therefore my hopes are high.⁵⁹

Seemingly, she was not successful in this endeavour. The children's works did not open the doors of the Disney studios and neither did they open the ones of another American giant, the Ford Motor Company:

Mr Crowe sent a car for me this morning, so that I could get to the Ford Rotunda factory. He welcomed with charming courtesy, and told me: – 'I'm so sorry you can't visit the interior of the factory, because of the war visits are prohibited'. I was petrified. I didn't know what to answer, since I was so eager to visit this establishment where 100000 men routinely work ... The program he had prepared for me was the one corresponding to distinguished persons that presently visit the establishment. Traversing by car every section of the plant, from the outside of course, to appreciate the colossal magnitude of these enormous enterprise, visiting the new establishment for the manufacture of aeroplanes, to get to know the farm in which Ford was born, pinpointing mentally the house in the middle of a dense forest where he presently lives, visiting the museum, having lunch in an opulent restaurant nearby, having my picture taken, and finally taking me once again to my home. ⁶⁰

The United States were a great cultural *otherness* that appeared before Cossettini. She was amazed by the American civilisation, but this did not dazzle her. She never stopped trusting her own abilities as an educator who built her legitimacy upon her work: "that must, without false vanity, be the cause of our profound satisfaction and absolute confidence in having chosen the path that follows the highest philosophical thinking on education."

Back in Argentina, Cossettini did not stop capitalising on the contacts made on her fruitful trip. Letters continued to arrive; some of them from the institutions that had welcomed her, from colleagues, friends, and officials who had encouraged her, received her personally, and who had established a bond based on empathy that would continue for several years. Likewise, since 1943 she started receiving invitations from other Latin American countries to explain her experience and to guide educational projects. Uruguay, Ecuador, Cuba, and Colombia, among others, were examples of the highly legitimated network that promoted Cossettini as a renowned educator. Nevertheless, her own homeland was, perhaps, the place where she could capitalise the most on the legitimacy achieved in the circle she entered in 1939. When returning to Rosario by mid-1943, Cossettini was no longer the same person that had taken "her children" to the museum. She was quite a different one; one that could move as an *equal* in an

⁵⁹AC, Letter Collection, *Letter from Olga Cossettini to Leticia Cossettini*, Los Angeles, February 22, 1942 [author's translation].

⁶⁰AC, Letter Collection, *Letter from Olga Cossettini to Leticia Cossettini*, Detroit, January 19, 1942 [author's translation]. ⁶¹AC, Letter Collection, *Letter from Olga Cossettini to Leticia Cossettini*, Nashville, March 16, 1942.

⁶²Cossettini would be incorporated to the activities of the "Colegio Libre de Estudios Superiores," "Acción Argentina," la "Universidad Popular Alejandro Korn" among others.

intellectual and cultural field that did not easily allow women and schoolteachers to be

Olga Cossettini showed special interest in organising a vast circulation network for her educational experience. The book El niño y su expresión, made it possible for her pedagogical work to be broadly known. It allowed her to enter intellectual and educational disciplinary fields that were unknown to her before 1940. Her pedagogical assertions rapidly found agreeing voices in the Americas, deeply moved by the effects of war, but also were influenced by the antifascist and Pan-Americanist thinking of the period.

She posed the pedagogical axis as the priority one to transcend national frontiers. Her knowledge - and her praxis - had made her a renowned figure in Argentina. What is more, and thanks to a very plastic network of personal relations, it was possible for her to explore a new universe, exploiting these networks which, in that context, spread to strengthen the bonds between the United States and Ibero-America.

Her professional profile and also her social skills went along with those times in which she lived, but they remain also as a feature of the place teachers, as bearers of theoretical and practical knowledge, could occupy. This way, Cossettini paradoxically conceived herself as much more than a teacher, without abandoning the imposed canon for being one.

The intellectual network that posed her as a protagonist created a collective based on empathy, and shared and common ideas. But it was also supported by strategic points of contact which went beyond shared cultural and intellectual interests. Olga's goal was to seek for legitimacy beyond the classrooms, beyond an educational project, beyond Rosario, and beyond her first and closest friends. It was a monumental legitimate operation that placed her at a pedagogical olympus, that greatly surpassed the world of the Escuela Carrasco.

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