



# Paulo Emílio and the formation of historical studies of cinema in Europe

*Paulo Emílio e a formação dos estudos históricos de cinema na Europa*



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**Abstract:** this article aims to show how Paulo Emílio Sales Gomes participated in the formation of the historical studies of cinema in Europe when carrying out the research on Jean Vigo, on which he delineates some reflections on the critical and historical reception of his films from sources of research, such as books, journals and film magazines, in order to understand dissension and continuity between the critiques in the heat of the moment, the memories of those who had been contemporaries, and the intensifying historical critique in the 1940s and 1950s in Europe. By commenting on the bibliography produced in the period, Paulo Emílio will improve an action strategy focused on the formation of historical cinema studies in Brazil.

**Keywords:** Paulo Emílio; film criticism; film history.

**Resumo:** neste artigo, pretendemos demonstrar como Paulo Emílio Sales Gomes participou da formação dos estudos históricos de cinema na Europa ao realizar a pesquisa sobre Jean Vigo, na qual delineia algumas reflexões sobre a recepção crítica e histórica dos filmes do cineasta a partir de fontes de pesquisa como livros, jornais e revistas de cinema, a fim de compreender dissensos e continuidades entre as críticas tecidas no calor da hora, as lembranças daqueles que haviam sido contemporâneos e a crítica histórica que então se intensificava nas décadas de 1940 e 1950 na Europa. Ao comentar a bibliografia produzida no período, Paulo Emílio irá aperfeiçoar uma estratégia de ação voltada à formação dos estudos históricos de cinema no Brasil.

**Palavras-chave:** Paulo Emílio; crítica de cinema; história do cinema.

The expansion of historical studies on cinema, or the formation of the cinema history has increased in Brazil in recent years. It has been subject of colloquiums<sup>2</sup>, thematic seminars<sup>3</sup>, research groups<sup>4</sup> and also theme of books such as *Humberto Mauro, cinema, história* (2013), by Eduardo Morettin; *Alex Viary: crítico e historiador* (2003), by Artur Autran; selections such as *The New History of Brazilian Cinema* (2018), organized by Fernão Pessoa Ramos and Sheila Schvarzman etc. In general these works constitute initiatives that establish a dialogue with critical procedures, originated from art criticism, with historical procedures, which are linked to the analysis of the society and with the questioning of research sources. The combination of historical research and film critique seems to delineate a reflection, perhaps a common method capable of analyzing the language and style of a work in a specific society and time. In light of this configuration, we find in Paulo Emílio Sales Gomes' work valuable insights to understand how film critique became history, based on the establishment of methodologies aimed at the understanding of cinema as art, phenomenon and object of historical interest.

### **Critical and historical reception**

The comparison between the critical and historical receptions of cinema constitutes an important key to understanding the problem, which received a singular treatment in the work of the critic and film historian Paulo Emílio, more precisely in his considerations on the reception of the work of the French filmmaker Jean Vigo. Referring to the work of Paulo Emílio, Mendes (2009) stated that it is in the research on that filmmaker the internal analysis of the films expands as it relates to historical-biographical criteria, while investigating cinematographic mediations and their artistic continuity. However, Mendes did not pay attention to the importance of the historiographical method outlined for this purpose: the direct comparison between the critical and historical reception of the film, in order to determine the extent to which the relations between work and society impact on the filmmaker's

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stylistic development, as well as analyzing its reception in the context of production to measure the impact of the work on society.

In his reflection on the historical reception of Vigo's work, we can affirm that Paulo Emílio investigated the process that transformed the film of a little known filmmaker, in an inescapable work of the history of cinema. It is an essentially historical approach that examined the impact of later events – such as the rise of Nazism (1933), the Moscow trials (1937), and the 1939-1945 war – on how critics and historians analyzed Vigo's films. In this context, the libertarian character of Vigo's films provided an excellent material for a historicized view of the system that interconnects work and society in a certain time, and served Paulo Emílio as an excellent field of experimentation. The film was censored, forgotten – and, after the renewal of studies and the development of the historical dimension of cinema – was recovered as the theme of the most important article among those published in magazines on Jean Vigo between 1951 and 1953: *L'oeuvre de Vigo et la critique historique* (1953), later published in Portuguese in *Revista de Cinema* in January of 1955.

In the article, Paulo Emílio presented the method applied in his analysis of Vigo: the division of the reception of his work into two distinct phases, separating immediate reception from historical reception. Using this procedure, the Brazilian critic observed the presence of “two very different opinions about Vigo”. In dealing with the critical reception, Paulo Emílio analyzed the work of writers such as Maurice Bardèche, Robert Brasillach and Carl Vincent, whose positions would be insignificant as compared to that of Alberto Cavalcanti in his article, published in 1934 in *Cinema Quartely*, London (GOMES, 1953, p. 67). Paulo Emílio detected in the cultural scene after 1945 new stimuli and debates inspired by Vigo's films, at a time when critics such as Bazin claimed for the cinema a social aesthetics.

In the light of these new cinematographic propositions, the Vigo films played a fundamental role for the new filmmakers, critics, historians and film clubbers, who begun to study his lessons and add comments about the filmmaker in their works. We could say that Paulo Emílio detected the revival of a forgotten and already deceased filmmaker, but while evaluating the productions, the critic observed that the debates were limited to summary comments such as that of Marcel Lapiere: “He was one of the most beautiful hopes of French cinema that disappeared” (GOMES, 1953, p. 68).

In the entire French critique, Paulo Emilio highlighted the attempt of Georges Sadoul at establishing more complete and yet not very relevant notions about the biography of the filmmaker. For the Brazilian critic, Sadoul did not historically understand the reception of the Vigo's films in the 1930s, as he judged according to his contemporary vision those spectators who did not know how to watch the films. Sadoul's judgment preserved a critical style similar to that of Bardèche and Brasillach when he indicated that some old films, rich in defects and often rejected by the public, announced new artistic developments in the cinema and its history – despite remaining unnoticed or having gained little prestige among critics and the public. But Sadoul's judgment is brief, and it is with the disapproval of a film history admirer that he condemns his ancestors for having wasted the opportunity, regretting Vigo's early death and highlighting the artistic contributions he could have offered to French cinema. For Paulo Emilio, Sadoul's judgment distanced him from historical criteria, and placed him in the field of critique: Sadoul was “a better critic than historian” (GOMES, 1953, p. 68).

After presenting an overview of the published works on Jean Vigo, Paulo Emilio observed that there was a general shortfall in accurate general there was insufficiency of accurate projects able to investigate the question in depth. Additionally, the historian showed the disparity between the critical studied and the process that transformed Vigo's films into indispensable works of the cinematographic culture from 1945 on. It was when his films started to appear in the repertoire of the (Brazilian) *Cinematoteca*, cine-clubs, studio and specialized rooms – a phenomenon that the critique did not follow. Commenting on a publication of the *Fédération Française de Ciné-Clubs*, Paulo Emilio observed the absence of critiques and the predominance of testimonies of those who had known Vigo during his lifetime. Nevertheless, only critiques published in magazines such as *Raccord* and *Positif* would have contributed “to replace the sclerotic positions of official critics” (GOMES, 1953, p. 68).

In analyzing how Vigo's films reappeared in the cultural context, Paulo Emilio emphasized the importance of cine-clubs in the process of historical reevaluation of his works, something not observed with the same intensity in the works of Sadoul, Lapierre, etc. These considerations redouble the importance of Vigo's work in Paulo Emilio's formation, regarding the historical reflections he made in his comments on the diffusion and reception of Vigo's work, both at the time of production and of revitalization by the movement of cinematographic culture. In

other words, he refers to the prospection, conservation, exposition of non-film sources and also, when possible, exhibition of old films.

We note in the research on Jean Vigo's work that the analysis of style gained social concreteness as it mobilized large numbers of sources, such as testimonies, critiques, photographs and original scripts in the writing of the research results and in the reconstruction of *Atalante*, bringing it back as close as possible to the original version. The great amount of sources on the filmmaker gathered by Paulo Emilio starting with reflections on art and society, form and background, style and social expression – allowed him to adopt the object as a starting point, analyzing Vigo's work based on the comparison with non-film documentation. Putting the object – or its existence – at the center of his approach, Paulo Emilio quite appropriately perfected the historical narrative as an alternative to works that took the opposite direction, imposing a theoretical model to the object as the Italian author Glauco Viazzi did. In 1947 this author published the article *A proposito di Jean Vigo* which was poor in sources and rich in inaccuracies, according to the Brazilian critic. In analyzing Viazzi's work, Paulo Emilio emphasized that perhaps he is the first person to put Vigo next to René Clair and Jean Renoir and to interpret *Zero for Conduct* and *Atalante* as two movements of the same poetic and ideological march. In short, "Glauco Viazzi proposed a Marxist interpretation of the life and work of Vigo, or at least an interpretation that depended heavily on Marxian schemes and terminologies" (GOMES, 1953, p. 69), this ended up implying a mystification of the film-maker:

Viazzi's work was poorly documented and did not make Vigo's life and personality more than a vague and conventional idea [...] he described Jean Vigo confined to a humiliated and rejected existence, almost banished by the French society, notably by the bourgeoisie. (GOMES, 1953, p. 68)

While commenting on this work, Paulo Emilio simultaneously observed that the film was received in a new light; at the same time criticized the subordination of the object of study to dialectics. It was precisely in dealing with filmic and non-filmic sources that Paulo Emilio perfected the distinction between criticism and history, so that Bazin considered that "this extraordinary historical and critical work proved the importance acquired after war by the work of Jean Vigo. "The examination of "critical reactions in France and abroad to *Zero for Conduct* and *L'Atalante*, before and after the war, clearly indicated that, comparing the critiques from the 1930s to those of the 1950s, the star of Jean Vigo acquired a new brilliance" (BAZIN, 2009, p. 386).

The application of the method manifested again in the comments on the film *The Rules of the Game*, by Jean Renoir, in which Paulo Emílio emphasized that critics, the public and he himself did not understand the film at the time of the launch, a few weeks before the beginning of war. Afterwards, the film was considered by him and by many film critics and historians not only as Renoir's masterpiece, but as the best French film and one of the best in the world (GOMES, 1982a, p. 330-333).

With the end of World War II, historical studies of cinema were boosted by the celebrations of the *50 Ans du Cinéma* (1945), an event of great proportions. According to Albera, the event was decisively important to consolidate the idea that cinema was born in France:

the patriotic stakes were great: the invention of cinema has been proclaimed as being French for decades (the war of 1914-1918 gave impetus to this claim which was extended throughout the 1920s and 1930s); the French defeat of 1940 and the return of peace generated important initiatives for France to regain the status of nation of culture and art. (ALBERA, 2011, p. 56)

The celebrations of the 50 years of cinema took part in the stimulating process that culminated with the publication and republication of books on the history of cinema, as well as the republishing of critical texts of the 1920s and 1930s, which were compiled in almanacs and specialized magazines. This all enabled both reflections and research sources for comparing critical and historical receptions of old films.

### **Witnesses or historians?**

The comparison between critical and historical receptions of films as a problem allowed the Brazilian historian to separate what was testimony from what really was history. Within these perspectives, Paulo Emílio innovated by proposing a way to explain the transition between the critique and the history of cinema through preface changes in the republication of the book *Histoire du Cinéma* by Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach in the lecture *The importance of History of Cinema*, given in the second half of 1958 in the cine-club Dom Vital.

The Centro Dom Vital was a Christian entity founded in 1921 in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), which extended its activities to São Paulo in 1954. Vivian Malusá provided us with much information on the activities and purposes of the Centro Dom Vital, including the founding of its cine-club in 1957. Its activities ranged from

individual lectures to longer courses about diversified themes given by members of the cine-club as well as invited experts (MALUSÁ, 2007, p. 43-44). In the second semester of 1958, Paulo Emílio was invited by Gustavo Dahl, to conduct a conference about the importance of the history of cinema at the cine-club of Centro Dom Vital (GOMES, 1958).

At the conference, Paulo Emílio began his presentation by pointing out that his role would not be to clarify the importance of the history of cinema, since it was already clear to the audience. The purpose of his participation would lie in “suggesting some conclusions” based on the conferences he had attended at the cine-club. The first point was the corroboration of the youth of the cinema relatively to other arts, whose “roots” could be located in antiquity and that “they are almost always lost in the night of time, outside historical frameworks” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058). The historian also emphasized that cinema was a phenomenon with the age of a generation before his own, in order to bring the attention of the audience to the writers Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach, witnesses who wrote the book *Histoire du Cinéma* (1935). Later the book was submitted to changes in its republications until the mid-1950s. The comment aimed to emphasize – referring to the period between the 1930s and the post-World War II – the understanding that cinema actually had a history still in formation.

Paulo Emílio also resumed a discussion already initiated in an article of 1957, in which he stated that the authors wrote in the preface to the first two editions of their book that they had witnessed the birth of an art whose adventure was too extraordinary not to deserve any reflection. Paulo Emílio fully translated the passage in which the authors report that they were in the same

situation as the legendary Greeks, inhabitants of lost cities in Attica and Boeotia, who saw one day the arrival of a cart in the main square, and that at night or in the morning of the next day they attended the first theatrical performance given in the world. (BARDÈCHE; BRASILLACH, 1935, p. 9)

Regarding this excerpt, Paulo Emílio points out the verbal time employed by the authors, “we saw the birth of an art” as a demonstration that at the time of publication the authors addressed the people who, like them, “had been contemporaries and witnessed the first steps of cinema” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058).

Within these reflections, the Brazilian historian defines the book as an “autobiography of spectators”, whose charm “for most readers was to evoke an epoch

they had personally witnessed time they lived” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058). In making these considerations, Paulo Emílio affirms that “we all have had occasion to observe this state of mind around us”, and inserted as keywords in his manuscript, in parentheses, the “*caso do Clube de Cinema de S. Paulo – Hora da Saudade*” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058). In offering his testimony as a fan and film clubber of the times of the São Paulo Film Club, Paulo Emílio positioned himself as a character in this history, and as a fan and critic. For him, “both Bardèche and Brasillach, like others who preceded them in the task of writing about cinema, did not really made history; but drew up their raw materials such as chronicles, annals, and testimonies” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058) organized in an evolutionary perspective of the first “30 years of film history before their names had completely disappeared from memory” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058), because for the contemporaries of the birth of the art “the reality of the films was limited to the fleeting instant of their commercial distribution” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058).

While making these considerations on the publication of 1935, Paulo Emilio put the testimony, the memories of the biography of their writers as a starting point to the historical narratives of cinema. From the comment to the first edition, the historian examined the changes that *Histoire du Cinéma* suffered from the amendment of the preface to the second edition (1943), in which we can observe that the authors expressed “the hope and the desire for the creation of cinematheques” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058). From the perspective of Paulo Emílio, the evidence of this concern would indicate the development, or “the proper historical maturation of minds concerned with the things of the cinema”, and their authors “consciously participated in this evolution” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058).

While highlighting the importance of the role of cinematheques in the 1943 edition, Paulo Emílio observed that the preface was completely removed from the 1948 edition. In his place, Bardèche wrote the introduction of the book “reminding the spectators of Greta Garbo or Charles Chaplin that they have known them in the heroic times of cinema” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058). At that moment, “between that period and us, the time rope was extended, the history of cinema is now history” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058). While comparing the three editions of the book, Paulo Emílio presented another possibility of historiographic procedure to understand the process of awareness of the history of cinema for writers and readers: in 1935, they write as fans who wrote down their memories; in 1943, as fans who became aware of the need for preserving copies through the cinematheque; and in

1948, at the third edition considering the undeniable fact that cinema already had its own history (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058).

Although Paulo Emilio did not go into details on the third edition of *Histoire du Cinéma* (1948), regarding the aforementioned editions, we could find the publication of a curious warning so that that the book could be understood. Bardèche wrote that it was necessary to say that the book had been written very quickly by two young authors, nourished by the passions common to youth and deeply connected to life and its memories. Bardèche drew attention to the fact that the book was, instead of a proper history, an erudite compilation of impressions and personal memories of fans (BARDÈCHE; BRASILLACH, 1948).

Twelve years after launch of first edition of the book, Bardèche affirmed that what he loved most in the book was precisely “its partiality and particular point of view”, although he emphasized the importance of the documentation gathered, which had not been changed in the new editions. At the same time, the author affirms that the testimonies could also provide accurate data on the “unrectified, non-falsified reactions of two spirits of this generation relatively to the time they live in.” (BARDÈCHE; BRASILLACH, 1948, p. 7). Documentation and testimony could be complementary or fundamental sources in the absence of films, for the historical researches that were then in progress – a natural part of a process favorable to the construction of the “mausoleums that we build for all the arts” (BARDÈCHE; BRASILLACH, 1948, p. 7). Bardèche avoided the proper historical responsibilities of his book and observed that it was important not to erase the mistakes and inaccuracies of the first editions, as these would be the “errors” of many young people of the time, consequences of the enthusiasm of a time that should to be preserved, so that the author saw “in the book what it is, a document” (BARDÈCHE; BRASILLACH, 1948, p. 7).

In treating the book as a document, Paulo Emilio historically situated the transition from critique to the history of cinema. According to the historian, historiographical procedures such as those employed by historians that studied the birth and evolution of Western painting were being employed in studies of the history of cinema, for persons and films such as “Méliès, Max Linder, *Cabiria*, Griffiths” were no longer autobiographical evocations as they once were at the time of Bardèche and Brasillach. (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058).

### **From critique to the history of cinema**

From the study of cinema history books, Paulo Emilio found similar reflections in the work of the historians René Jeanne and Charles Ford, noting

that the first two editions of Bardèche and Brasillach's book presented "a critical understanding of the evolution of cinema, seen through a temperament" whose "ingenious and profound" perceptions were incapable of fixing "on a certain number of men, works and facts" (JEANNE; FORD, 1947, p. 9-10). *Histoire Encyclopédique du Cinéma* (1947). Paulo Emilio knew the book very well, so much that it is present in the collection of the Brazilian Cinematheque, and would be cited as reference of the extensive catalog *Grandes Momentos do Cinema*, First International Film Festival, published in February 1954 (GOMES, 1954). In the book, the authors take stock of the works on the history of cinema published in France in order to situate the encyclopedic narrative that they mobilized in dealing with the history of cinema: "cinema lovers already have in their libraries many 'Stories' where none gave him/her all the information they desire about each of the fields in which the complex activity of cinema is performed" (JEANNE; FORD, 1947, p. 9-10).

Once the aim of the initiative has been determined, the authors reviewed the works published in France on the history of cinema through which we can better understand the improvement of the historical treatment applied to the cinematographic phenomenon. As a starting point for this type of publication, the authors found G. Michel Coissac's book *L'Histoire du Cinématograph*, published in 1925 as "a summary of the invention and technique, and therefore, of the industrial movement born of this invention, a true history" (JEANNE; FORD, 1947, p. 9), that is, a description based on the external factors of the work, focused on procedurally narrating the evolution of technique.

Of course, Jeanne and Ford positioned the Bardèche and Brasillach book as a fan book and source of research before commenting on Carl Vincent's *L'Histoire de l'Art Cinématographique* (1939), criticized for leaving "aside all that the technical, industrial and commercial aspects of the question" (JEANNE; FORD, 1947, p. 9). According to Jeanne and Ford, one of the major problems of this "history" was that of having restricted itself to the artistic aspect, attending to the research of the "great intellectual and artistic currents that are conditioned to the evolution of the art of the images" (JEANNE; FORD, 1947, p. 9). In this sense, Vincent's work concentrates on the analysis of the essentially cinematographic problems, listed in an evolutionary perspective (JEANNE; FORD, 1947, p. 9). Vincent's book will be one of the references used by the historian in his study of the critical and historical reception of Jean Vigo's work (1953).

In Jacques Feyder's preface to the history of cinema, written by Vincent, Jacques Feyder, one of the innumerable personalities who had collaborated in providing sources of research and giving interviews to the "critic", how to focus

his efforts on elucidating the historical development of style, something of great importance to the filmmakers who hitherto had not meditated in depth on the subject (VINCENT, 1939). Two years later, in 1941, André Boll's book *Le Cinéma et Son Histoire*, already condenses some different interpretations of the previous ones, when affirming that at that time the cinema already had a history, although it was not comparable with the one of the other arts, like the theater, which dates back to ancient times.

After positioning the history of cinema in relation to that of other arts, Boll observes that cinema is in perpetual "evolution", at a speed that does not find correspondence in the other arts, because none presents the variety that the cinema gathered in a short time interval. According to Boll, this great variety of transformations became clear only when they were able to "accurately fix, through masterpieces, the important points of their successive transformations" (BOLL, 1941, p. 7), by creating a kind of historical index faced with the rapid transformation of the cinema: "a film may be outdated as fast as clothes. Realist par excellence, it is necessarily episodic" (BOLL, 1941, p. 8) that is, inserted in a certain epoch, product of a specific society.

A year later, in his book *Histoire du Cinéma*, Lo Duca (1942) reflected on how he handles documentation in the writing of his work, while striving for narrative clarity to make the work more accessible to the public. His book analyzes "the driving ideas of cinema, its course, from the series of inventions that have been summarized in the cinematographer, to the realization of the style" in order to understand the role "of the atmosphere, the technical evolution, the personality of the directors and of the actors "in the realization of cinema (DUCA, 1942, p. 5).

We can observe in Duca's ideas the manifestation of the critical awareness of the social dimension of cinema, by situating the cinematographic ideas in the context and by examining the role of filmmakers in technical advances that have resulted in the invention of the cinematographic style. In thinking about the history of cinema taking into account not only the films but the context, the personalities involved and the role of economic factors in the development of technique, Duca understands that it is impossible to study the history of cinema as an art without evoking its industrial aspects (DUCA, 1942). In addition to being dealt with in the book by Jeanne and Ford, Duca and Boll's books compose Paulo Emílio's library, and at least Duca's book is referenced in the Humanism and eroticism class of the Language, Style and Social Expression discipline held for the Course for film club directors (1958), especially the images of the book

to illustrate all the sensuality of actresses such as Vilma Banky, Theda Bara, Mae Murray etc. (GOMES, 1958).

### **Social and artistic history**

Little by little, the notion that cinema history studies should distance themselves from an exclusively artistic perspective, so that, through dialogue with the other disciplines of knowledge, they were able to develop artistic and scientific systematizations that understood cinema as a social phenomenon. In order to highlight the stage of development of the history of cinema, Paulo Emilio commented on the book *Cinema dell'Arte* (1951) by the Italian historian Nino Frank, in order to highlight how the author notes “with irony and correction that ‘all countries of the world having invented cinema in the same year’, Italy could not have failed to do so” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058).

At the same time, the irony of the author refers to the fact that the birth of cinema often appeared associated with the exhibition performed by the brothers Lumière, was the object of dispute after the war, which aimed to recognize the French as the pioneers. According to Paulo Emilio, Frank rejects the birth certificate registered in Paris Notaries to demonstrate how simultaneously, in other countries such as in Italy, “the conditions for the appearance of the mechanical recording and projection apparatus of moving forms with the which cinema was achieved” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058). For Paulo Emilio, the data presented by Frank directly associated cinema as a result of the technical developments of the industrial revolution, whose historical role “was to promote, also in the field of fun and art, the substitution of artisanal techniques of manufacture by industrial ones”. This comment allows the Brazilian historian to reaffirm the fact that cinema, in addition to being defined as an art, should also be thought “in terms of making fun and art, in mass and for the mass” (GOMES, 1958, PE/PI 0058).

The commentary on Frank’s book offers the Brazilian historian sufficient arguments to demonstrate to the public of the Dom Vital Center the importance of understanding cinema in relation to society, based on a national historiographical model that allowed him to establish as the point of arrival of his narrative the importance of social elements in the realization of a work set in time. It was necessary to understand that cinema could not be considered only as art, but also as a technique, resulting from the transformations of a production mode that the world had passed after the Industrial Revolution – a reflection of the maturing of circumstances that appealed to its invention.

Such statements seem to follow closely Frank's aims and inquiries by asking the following question in his book: "How can we write the history of cinema?" (FRANK, 1951, p. 16). For Frank,

the cinematographic fact is not the product of strictly artistic activities, but the result of artistic, social, moral, and other components: a direct expression, but not always clear language, of the life of a country and of a determined epoch. (1951, p. 16)

Following these ideas, cinema is defined as a social expression in which the "spectator itself adds a tone, an indefinably necessary color", but at the same time, the historical operation could not be confused to a "sentimental confession, a bouquet of dreams, mixed tastes and dislikes, placing a sworn testimony of the past and, consequently, a kind of novel of customs of a country", because cinema is "mainly the expression of the life of the spectator" (FRANK, 1951, p. 17).

Despite the importance of Frank's national approach among film historians of the period, we believe that Georges Sadoul can synthesize the transformations of historical studies. In analyzing Sadoul's three books, we see that in *L'invention du cinema* (1945), the history of technique overlapped with that of art and in *Les Pionniers du Cinéma* (1947), the study of the work of art prevails over that of technique. Already in *Histoire de l'art du cinéma: des origines a nos jours* (1949), art and technique appeared in relation, that is, it is from the consolidation of the notion of cinema as industrial art that Sadoul harmonized artistic and scientific lessons to understand the history of cinema. The path was open for the historian to devote himself to the writing of a historical modality based on universal pretensions, an international history of cinema.

In the book *Le cinéma pendant la guerre* (1939-1945), published in 1954, Sadoul investigated the cinematographic production of Germany, France, United Kingdom, Italy, Russia and the United States, from the beginning to the end of the hostilities. Despite the comparative analysis he established among national cinematographers, Sadoul proposes, in addition to the selected countries, to open the way to the historical treatment of the filmography of fifty countries. But he clearly realized that the study of cinema in 50 countries and on five continents could not be limited "to a quick and brief commentary. Contrary to my preconceived ideas, I was led to consider the multiplication of national cinemas as a primordial contemporary phenomenon" (SADOUL, 1954, p. VI, our translation).

In order to pursue the phenomenon, Sadoul corresponds to several critics and historians from all over the world, among them Paulo Emilio. He

visited the Brazilian Cinematheque in 1956 and other archives of the world in order to gather information, documents, testimonies, etc. In this sense, Sadoul became the epicenter of a network of international collaborators, as the historian himself points out in the book's foreword: "Thanks to the diligence and courtesy of several correspondents, I was able in a few months to gather many of the information for an exhibition that I believe is valid" (SADOUL, 1954, p. VII, our translation), but that he did not believe in any way to be complete and that he still lacked indispensable researches and verifications to fill the gaps and to specify his hypotheses, of the correspondents who had sent him information for the project he was proposing: the writing of a complete world history of cinema. Despite the ambitious initiative, which is quite positivistic in regard to the systematic survey of summary data, Sadoul was the great name of the period for having highlighted the importance of prospecting for film sources such as old films rather than films such as news from newspapers, in magazines, programs, posters, testimonies etc., withdrawn from his experience in conducting the historical research carried out in the Cinémathèque Française. Of course, Sadoul understood the limits of his ambitions, for example, about the 50 languages that a solitary historian should master in the exercise of his research. In 1954, Sadoul drew attention to the need for an international and collective survey (SADOUL, 1954, p. IX, our translation) from the collaboration between witnesses and historians from around the world. The International Federation of Film Archives (Fiaf) was at the heart of this process, the cinematheques were conceived as poles for prospecting filmic and non-filmic sources, part of a global project that could roughly simplify the following sentence: historians of the world: unite yourselves!

**The formation of the *Bureau International de la Recherche Historique Cinématographique***

In this mood, Paulo Emilio published the article about the First International Congress on the History of Cinema (1957), held at the Pedagogical Museum of Paris. The good results of the event, due to the finding of new facts as a result of prospecting pieces for the filmic and non-filmic collections of the cinematheques, were at the same time inserted in the efforts of diffusion of this knowledge by these institutions.

Paulo Emilio established in the article some considerations on the importance of the general histories of Carlos Fernandez Cuenca and Georges Sadoul. Both took part in the congress and in the formation of the *Bureau*

*International de la Recherche Historique Cinématographique*, which had been formally founded at its pre-constitutional meeting at the FIAF Congress in Amsterdam (1952). Paulo Emilio did not participate in the congress because of health reasons, but his name was in the list of founding historians, along with Siegfried Kracauer, Lotte H. Eisner, Henri Langlois, Georges Sadoul, Paul Rotha, Leon Moussinac, Jay Leyda, Iris Barry etc. At the congress they decided that each country should organize its historical research commission (FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES ARCHIVES DU FILM, 1952, p. 1-2). Then, during the congress of Dubrovnik (1956) the activities of the *Bureau International de Recherches Historiques Cinématographiques* (BIRHC) were again discussed, when the following measures were approved: the publication of a bulletin for the organ, the creation of commercialization strategies and the realization of the First International Congress on the History of Cinema (FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES ARCHIVES DU FILM, 1956, p. 36-38).

The BIRHC aimed at establishing relationships among different national commissions, and also between archives and historians, whose collaboration would allow historians to have greater access to archives, and in return they would help to form and specify collections of archives. In January 1957 there was a massive fire at the Brazilian Cinematheque, which caused great commotion and favored national and international solidarity, stimulating this kind of initiatives. Additionally, commissions were defined for the Economic History of Cinema, Technical History of Cinema, Teaching of History of Cinema, Microfilms and Publications at the mentioned congress (FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES ARCHIVES DU FILM, 1957, p. 13), besides the nominal formation of national working groups sections.

The Brazilian Section of the BIRHC, created at the FIAF Congress in Dubrovnik (1956) was composed of Paulo Emilio, Adhemar Gonzaga, Alex Viany, Pery Ribas, Pedro Lima and B.J. Duarte (GOMES, 1982a, p. 30), although the latter name was not mentioned in the report. Of the list, only Adhemar Gonzaga and Pedro Lima belonged to the 1920s' generation of critics; so they were at the same time witnesses, film critics and production agents, as well as archivists and collectors. Alongside Viany and Ribas, all these people were not professional historians, but enthusiasts of a "more direct intervention project in the present, in the film production project itself" aimed at "winning an exhibition market for films made in Brazil" (MORETTIN; XAVIER, 2015, p. 18-20). Despite the effort to gather these names to develop historical research in Brazil, Melo Souza stated

that unfortunately the Brazilian section never came into operation (SOUZA, 2002, p. 451).

In the report on the decisions of the event, a concern became evident in terms of asserting that the congress was not only composed of historians, but of people who had witnessed an important part of the history of cinema. According to the report, collaborations between historians and contemporaries of the old films made it possible to “establish a first universal panorama of the evolution of cinema, from its origins to the present day”. As general secretary of the congress and vice-president of the BIRHC, Paulo Emilio “reminded that among the intentions signed at the congress was that to allow the establishment of an objective history of the Cinematographic Art”. After all, up to that moment interpretations about the evolution of this art “were elaborated without access to exact and chronologically organized sources, “without which it is impossible for the historian to perform a scientific task”. In his conclusions, Paulo Emilio affirms that there are no countries without a history of cinema, for even those who do not have cinematographic production would be linked to a history of exploration that contributes to the “general development of the art and film industry” (FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES ARCHIVES DU FILM, 1957, p. 14).

Approved during the FIAF (1956) discussions, Paulo Emílio stated that the BIRHC requested the sending of “brief reports on the emergence of cinema in Brazil and the first national production steps”. According to Paulo Emilio “the reading and discussion of these documents has shaken some postulates of the history of cinema, opening up horizons of research until then virgins” (GOMES, 1982a, p. 243). In the text published by the end of 1957, Paulo Emílio highlighted that “[...] given the fact that the history of cinema is relatively short, it is necessary to recognize the importance of its written history, whose steps are the same as those of History itself” (GOMES, 1982a, p. 242), that is, he reaffirmed the great importance of non-filmic documentation for the historical investigation of cinema.

According to the congress minutes, about 30 reports were read about the film histories of each respective country, so that historians and witnesses were to identify to what extent “different cinematographic schools could influence each other”. This is the case, for example, of the German report, which emphasized the importance of Danish cinema on its own development; just as the Danish report recognized the importance for its development of American cinema which during World War I also influenced German cinema. The Italian report emphasized the revival of its cinematography in the late 1930s; and the Indian

report emphasized the predominance of Hindu culture in the representation of the national character of its cinema. The Japanese revealed to the world the role of Benshi in its silent movies; the Soviets needed made recourse to different groups to define the style of their cinema between 1919 and 1924, while the French presented information about their cinema during World War I. The Americans affirmed the historical importance of filmmakers such as DW Griffith and TH Ince. It was necessary to separate, by historiographical operations, what was national from what was foreign in the films through comments on style and reflections on the bonds that the films established with their respective epochs. (FÉDÉRATION..., 1957).

In general, the reports sent to the National Historical Research Commission of the BIRHC recognized the importance of the composition of a universal panorama of the History of Cinema, based on local historical research, which allowed besides the nominal formation of national working groups sections the dissemination of the history of the national cinematography from the perspectives of each country. Also, it was decided at the congress that a worldwide effort of microfilming of magazines, newspapers and documents was required, considered to be indispensable sources for historical studies. That would be carried out by the cinemathèques according to a chronological organization that should obey the following temporal cuts: the origins (1895-1908); the pioneers (1908-1918); mute cinema (1918-1928) and the beginning of the spoken films (1928-1945).

We also highlight one of the disagreements of the event, related to exploration and conservation priorities, which was registered in the congress minute : The French wanted priority to be given to the archives produced between 1918 and 1928, a choice perhaps motivated by the fact that much of their congressmen were witnesses, producers and filmmakers of the period. However Paulo Emilio intervened in the section and convinced them that priority should be given to the first two historical periods, from the origins to the pioneers, probably motivated by the almost inexistence of filmic sources, which was already verified in the history of the Brazilian cinema of the period (FÉDÉRATION..., 1957).

## **Conclusion**

We intended here to demonstrate how Paulo Emilio elaborated a peculiar narrative about the formation of historical studies based on the comparison between critical and historical reception of films – and its actors, witnesses (critics and

filmmakers) and historians – who were responsible for introducing scientific criteria to the understanding of cinema as a social phenomenon. By analyzing reviews, history books and participating in international events, Paulo Emílio forged his strategy aimed at the formation of historical research in Brazil, following maxims such as: there is no culture without history, or there is no cinema without film culture. His aim was to carry forward the development of Brazilian cinema, based on the design of a proper national physiognomy, in which the film should be adapted to better communicate with the public and materially affirm itself in a reality deeply marked by technical, artistic and social underdevelopment, bases of the Brazilian *colonial situation*.

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