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Tracing Past Exchanges between European and South American Cinematheques

A Key to Understanding the Impact of Sharing

Collaboration between archives from all over the world to preserve and provide access to films is not new and there are many examples that testify to this. In 1991, the Lumière Project gathered European film archivists with several aims: organizing joint restoration projects, writing a collective European filmography, and searching for and identifying lost European productions.¹⁾ Institutions from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom were members of this initiative.²⁾ However, the collections of two Uruguayan institutions — the National Archive SODRE and the Uruguayan Cinematheque — also provided copies of lost European films to the “Search for Lost Films Bureau” created and based at the Cineteca di Bologna as part of the Lumière project. When Gian Luca Farinelli and Vittorio Martinelli accounted for film losses and recoveries they referred to the value of the collection of Uruguayan cinephile Fernando Pereda, who “collected large numbers of films in the late 1920s, including many hand-coloured early works.”³⁾ These prints, held at SODRE since the 1970s, became part of the Lumière project and thanks to the cooperation between the Uruguayan institutions and the cinematheques of Bologna and Belgium, the films were restored and later screened at the 11th Edition of the Cinema Ritrovato Festival in Italy.⁴⁾ Almost two decades later, in 2008, the finding of a longer version of *Metropolis* (F. Lang, 1927) in the Museo del Cine Pablo Ducrós Hicken in Argentina provides another more recent example of a European film recovered from an archive in

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- 1) José Manuel Costa, ‘Working Together’, in Catherine A. Surowiec (ed.), *The Lumiere Project: The European Film Archives at the Crossroads* (Lisbon: Associação Projeto Lumiere, 1996), p. 9.
 - 2) Catherine A. Surowiec (ed.), *The Lumiere Project*, p. 247.
 - 3) Gian Luca Farinelli and Vittorio Martinelli, ‘The Search for Lost Films’, in Surowiec (ed.), *The Lumiere Project*, p. 179.
 - 4) Eugenio Hintz, *Algo para recordar: la verdadera historia de Cine Club del Uruguay* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Plaza, 1998), p. 98–100; Gian Luca Farinelli, ‘XXVI Mostra Internazionale del Cinema Libero IL CINEMA RITROVATO 1997, undicesima edizione’, <<http://www.cinetecadibologna.it/files/festival/CinemaRitrovato/archivio/fcr1997.pdf>> [accessed 10 August 2018].

the south.⁵⁾ These cases remind us of the importance of the circulation of copies among different countries and institutions. The history of film circulation, however, has tended to be overlooked and more work certainly needs to be done on this topic, which has been crucial for the origin of many archives.

In her study of the history of the circulation of experimental and avant-garde films and video art from the 1960s, Erika Balsom emphasizes that the act of reproduction “is the means by which works are disrespected and the means by which works become known; it is the way formats will be driven into obsolescence and the way works in obsolete formats will be saved from obscurity.”⁶⁾ These observations are relevant to this article inasmuch as the copies that travelled among institutions were mostly made without the authorization of copyright holders. However, thanks to the circulation of these copies, far-flung spectators became familiar with a cinema that was not necessarily released abroad. Likewise, as pointed out, the circuit created among film archives has permitted the finding of lost films and the further reconstruction of collections.⁷⁾

The aim of this article is to contribute to uncovering and analyzing film exchanges between the French cinematheque and the cinematheques in Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Montevideo (Uruguay) in the aftermath of World War II. It therefore follows the perspectives of so-called “new cinema history”, which, in the words of Richard Maltby, is part of “an emerging international trend in research into cinema history [that] has shifted its focus away from the content of films to consider their circulation and consumption, and to examine the cinema as a site of social and cultural exchange”.⁸⁾ The analysis of the traces that these past exchanges left on the screens, archives and films that entered this circuit allows us to reflect more broadly on the impact of the practice of collection sharing, which has been at the core of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) since its conception.

In the aftermath of WWII the opening of several cinematheques around the world created an extraordinarily rich and complex transnational circuit of film and non-film exchanges. Although archives’ critical role in the writing of film history through their selection and preservation policies has been widely acknowledged,⁹⁾ the importance of the circulation of films promoted by these same archives has been taken for granted. As Caroline Frick has pointed out, “although the major histories of film archives have focused upon FIAF’s preservation-related activities, the organization maintained an ongoing interest in developing international distribution networks of ‘classic’ films throughout the 1950s”.¹⁰⁾ An exploration of part of this circuit is intended to show the importance that these exchanges had for the history and present of cinema.

5) Åke Bergvall, ‘Apocalyptic Imagery in Fritz Lang’s “Metropolis”’, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 4, (2012), pp. 246–257; Thomas Elsaesser, *Metropolis* (London; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

6) Erika Balsom, *After Uniqueness. A History of Film and Video Art in Circulation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 24.

7) In this article no specific distinction has been made between the terms cinematheque and film archive.

8) Richard Maltby, ‘New cinema histories’, in Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers (eds.), *Exploration in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 3.

9) Eric Schaefer, ‘Introduction. In Focus: the 21st Century Archive’, *Cinema Journal*, vol. 46, no. 3 (2007), p. 112.

10) Caroline Frick, *Saving Cinema: The politics of Preservation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 106.

In order to tackle this important aspect of the Federation, under-researched sources need to be explored. For this article, the retrieval and analysis of documents such as letters, telegrams, shipping orders, insurance policies and programs kept in the administrative collections of the institutions — SODRE, FIAF, Uruguayan and French cinémathèques — were crucial.¹¹⁾ This methodological choice has been carefully evaluated, since it has been noticed that exchanges between archives have mostly been overlooked due to the secrecy around them. Even if these cinémathèques were doing their best to preserve and screen films that would have otherwise been lost forever, they had a dubious legal status and were frequently attacked by rights holders.¹²⁾ Catalogues were not shared to avoid problems and also to choose which films to share. As Langlois put it, “we are bound to keep a professional secret, like banks”.¹³⁾ If no-one knew what was in a collection, no-one could request a specific title. When films were shared, the interactions remained private. As José Manuel Costa has pointed out, “the international network was a network of complicity”.¹⁴⁾ The relationship between archivists and programmers was based on trust. As a consequence there are not many records of these exchanges today. Current archives do not necessarily know where their copies come from, since perhaps no traces remain beyond some administrative exchanges. Moreover, during the last seven decades, these institutions have moved premises a few times and most have lost parts of their collections in fires. However, even if lacunar, the documents that still exist today do give us a solid starting point to identify and analyze concrete examples of the circulation of copies between these three countries: Argentina, France and Uruguay.

In the pages that follow, the analyses of precise film exchanges are organized into two tendencies: from south to north and from north to south. The first section explores both the retrieval of European films in the south and the inclusion of films made in the south in the programs of the French cinémathèque. The second studies the circulation of European cinema on southern screens and its possible impact on the perpetuation of a canon of classics. Before exploring specific cases, a brief history of the creation of the South American cinémathèques and the beginnings of the interactions with Henri Langlois, the general secretary of the French institution, will be presented.

From cine-clubs to cinémathèques

After WWII, the FIAF resumed its activities and organized its second congress in Paris, in 1946.¹⁵⁾ During the years between the immediate aftermath of the military conflict and the end of the 1950s, the French cinémathèque was at the core of the Federation and Langlois

11) The archive of the Argentinean Cinémathèque could not yet be visited. However, the French Cinémathèque has a very complete archive of the interactions between Langlois and Roland.

12) Pierre Barbin, *La Cinémathèque française 1936–1989: Inventaire et légendes* (Paris: Vuibert, 2005), pp. 65–66.

13) Henri Langlois, letter to René Jeanne, 25 November 1953, cited in Laurent Mannoni, *Histoire de la Cinémathèque française* (Turin: Gallimard, 2006), p. 169.

14) Costa, “Working Together”, p. 13.

15) For the activities of the FIAF during the war years see, Christophe Dupin, ‘FIAF: From a Promising Start to Forced Hibernation (1938–1945)’, *The Journal of Film Preservation*, vol. 99, 2018, pp. 77–89.

was to become its leading figure.¹⁶⁾ He believed in the importance of screening and circulating films even at the risk of damaging or losing copies. This belief could be traced back to his origins as a cinephile, collector and programmer of Le Cercle du Cinéma, the cine-club he founded with Georges Franju in 1935 and for which he continued programming until 1947.

At the beginning, most of the films that were part of the French cinématheque would be screened at cine-clubs both in France and abroad. However, as time passed the numbers of these film societies grew and it became more difficult to cater for their screening needs.¹⁷⁾ In addition, Langlois saw the creation of the French Federation of Cine Clubs (FFCC) in 1946 as a direct competitor to the French Cinématheque. The FFCC also had its own collection of films and some cine-clubs would attempt to purchase the same films he had set his eyes on.¹⁸⁾ Problems also existed with copyright holders who deposited their films in the institution managed by Langlois and only wanted them to be screened in similar settings. Luis Buñuel, for example, allowed copies of his film *Age of Gold* (*L'âge d'or*, 1930) to be screened in film museums and cinématheques, even outside France, but not at cine-clubs.¹⁹⁾

Conflicts between archives and cine-clubs extended beyond France. To provide a framework for their interactions, the International Federation of Cine-clubs (FICC) and the FIAF signed a “gentleman’s agreement” at the FIAF congress in Rome in 1949 to define the terms and conditions of their relationships. Among other things, the screening of FIAF films would be allowed in cine-clubs only under the auspices and control of a national FIAF affiliated archive.²⁰⁾ However, in practice, Langlois considered that it was better if films belonging to the French cinématheque were to circulate among similar institutions that were already — or soon to be — affiliated with the Federation. When foreign cine-clubs contacted him to borrow films from his collection, he would persuade them to transform their institutions into cinématheques. This is how, in Argentina, the cine-clubs Gente de Cine and Cine Arte created the Cinemateca Argentina in 1949 and, in Uruguay, Cine Universitario and Cine Club del Uruguay teamed up to inaugurate the Cinemateca Uruguay in 1952. However, history is never linear and there are always a few layers to dig up in order to fully understand why these institutions and the French cinématheque started interacting and exchanging material.

The first contact between Langlois and Uruguay took place in 1947 when Danilo Trelles, director of Cine Arte SODRE — the National film archive and screening outlet managed by the Uruguayan state (henceforth SODRE) — wrote to Langlois asking to borrow copies of films that were not easily found in the region.²¹⁾ Langlois responded warm-

16) Raymond Borde, *Les Cinémathèques* ([Paris]: Ramsay Poche cinema, 1988), p. 96.

17) Mannoni, *Histoire de la Cinémathèque française*, p. 166. For further information on French cine-clubs, see Léo Souillès-Debats, *La culture cinématographique du mouvement ciné-club: une histoire de cinéphiles (1944–1999)* (Paris: AFRHC, 2017).

18) Mannoni, *Histoire de la Cinémathèque française*, p. 167.

19) Henri Langlois, letter to Paulo Emilio Sales Gomes, 12 January 1951. Cinémathèque Française Archives (Hereafter A-CF).

20) Gentleman’s agreement, 26 November 1949. A-CF.

21) Danilo Trelles, letter to Henri Langlois, 15 July 1947. A-CF.

ly to this approach. He described briefly his collection and envisaged fruitful interactions between both institutions. In line with his constant search for lost films, Langlois asked to be sent SODRE's institutional programs to see if there were copies of films in Uruguay that were missing in Europe. If that were the case, promising exchanges were planned.²²⁾ In this context, SODRE was invited to join FIAF straightaway. In August 1948, Langlois reminded Trelles that, together with Iris Barry, he wanted SODRE to apply as a full member as soon as possible, so that it could be admitted at the following congress.²³⁾ Trelles submitted the application at the beginning of September 1948 and it was accepted that same month.²⁴⁾

Argentina founded its cinemathèque the following year. Indeed, a document dated September 1949 and signed in Paris by Elias Lapzeson from Cine Arte, Roland from Club Gente de Cine and Langlois reveals the agreement under which these Argentinean cine-clubs were to become one cinemathèque following "the rules, aims and regulations of the International Federation of Film Archives, which they commit to respect."²⁵⁾ This document inaugurated the interaction between Roland and Langlois and the exchange of films between both countries. However, Roland postponed the Argentinean Cinemathèque's application to enter the FIAF for three years. At the Congress of Amsterdam in 1952 this cinemathèque was accepted as a corresponding member and its membership became effective at the Congress of Vence in 1953.²⁶⁾

A newly created Uruguayan cinemathèque went through the same process at the Amsterdam and Vence congresses. Although SODRE was already the archive representing Uruguay at the FIAF, other Uruguayan institutions were created to join the Federation. As the relationship between Trelles and Langlois became very strained at the turn of the decade, Langlois sought other means of contact with cine-clubs and collectors from the country. In order to circumvent SODRE, with the help of Roland (his Argentinean colleague, who frequently interacted with the two main cine-clubs in Montevideo: Cine Universitario and Cine Club del Uruguay) contacts were established with Walter Dassori and Eugenio Hintz, from both Uruguayan institutions, respectively. For the congress in Amsterdam, each cine-club had inaugurated its own cinemathèque and both of them applied to enter the FIAF: Cine Universitario had created the Uruguayan Cinemathèque and Cine Club del Uruguay had founded the Cinemathèque of Independent Cinema.²⁷⁾ However, a year later, after overcoming local rivalries and differences, the two cinemathèques merged their collections and kept the name Uruguayan Cinemathèque.²⁸⁾ This institution would provide films for screening to both cine-clubs. It would also, occasionally, organize

22) Henri Langlois, letter to Danilo Trelles, 4 August 1947. A-CF.

23) Henri Langlois, letter to Danilo Trelles, 19 August 1948. A-CF.

24) Danilo Trelles, letter to FIAF's president, 3 September 1948. FIAF Archive (Hereafter A-FIAF); G. Toeplitz and Barry Iris, letter to Danilo Trelles, 30 September 1948. A-FIAF.

25) Henri Langlois, Elias Lapzeson and Roland, Document, September 1949. A-CF. The author translated all the documents that were written in a language other than English.

26) Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 8 May 1952, A-FIAF; Roland, letter to FIAF, 19 October 1953, A-FIAF; F. Gaffary, letter to Roland, 26 November 1953, A-FIAF.

27) Minutes FIAF Congress Amsterdam 1952, 29 October 1952, 14h30, pp. 1–18. A-FIAF.

28) Eugenio Hintz and Walter Dassori, et al., Minutes of meeting, 7 December 1953. Archives Cinemateca Uruguay (Hereafter A-CU).

its own screenings. The 1953 congress of Vence sealed the Uruguayan Cinematheque's full membership with the FIAF.²⁹⁾ In contrast to SODRE, which was state-funded, both the Uruguayan and Argentinean cinematheques were private and aimed to follow the French cinematheque's organizational principles.

In terms of the larger historical context, the period in which interactions between the French, Argentinean and Uruguayan institutions began was peculiar. During WWII, both South American countries were able to develop industrial projects and also received European immigration. By the end of the war, Argentina and Uruguay were in good economic shape. Admiration for and close ties to European culture — cinema included — resulted in trips and cultural exchanges on several levels. Cine-clubs were very popular and would screen films that either belonged to local collectors (who would travel and purchase small-gauge copies of European or American classics), were lent by embassies or were purchased to national or regional distributors. However, as the 1950s advanced both countries experienced major social and economic crises. Beyond the political specificities of each country, this was the consequence of, among other things, the recovery of Europe and the fragility of an industrialization project that could no longer be promoted and protected within a different international context.³⁰⁾

From South to North

This section reveals the mutually beneficial interactions that took place between Paris, Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The few histories and testimonies dealing with the creation of the Argentinean and Uruguayan cinematheques have duly acknowledged that Langlois helped these institutions to access films and that his contributions were important for their inception.³¹⁾ However, they have failed to study the ways in which Argentina and Uruguay also contributed to the collections and screens of the French cinematheque. To demonstrate this, I will first provide examples of European titles that were recovered from Argentinean collections before referring to cases of films made in either Argentina or Uruguay that were programmed at the French cinematheque.

The recovery of Soviet and German “lost films”

The documents available today suggest that Langlois's interest in recovering Soviet and German films was the driving force behind the interaction with Argentina. From there, at the beginning of 1950, Langlois received, in a first delivery, four Soviet films that he had

29) F. Gaffari, letter to Walter Dassori, 24 November 1953. A-FIAF.

30) For Argentina, see Juan Carlos Torre (ed.), *Nueva historia argentina: los años peronistas 1943–1955* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2002); for Uruguay, see Gerardo Caetano and José Rilla, *Historia contemporánea del Uruguay: de la colonia al Siglo XXI* (Montevideo: Editorial Fin de Siglo, 2005).

31) See Christian Dimitriu, 'La Cinemateca argentina — Entrevista con Guillermo Fernández Jurado', *The Journal of Film Preservation*, vol. 74–75, 2007, pp. 15, 17–18; Germán Silveira, 'Réseaux culturels, réseaux politiques. Les archives du film en Amérique latine, des années 1950 aux années 1970', *Artl@s Bulletin*, vol. 3, 2017, pp. 38–41.

long sought for: *The New Babylon* (*La nouvelle Babylone*; G. Kozintsev, L. Trauberg, 1929), *Zvenigora* (A. Dovjenko, Y. Solntseva, 1927), *Two Days* (*Les deux jours*; G. Stabovoi, 1927) and *The Girl with the Hatbox* (*La jeune fille au carton à chapeau*; Boris Barnet, 1927).³²⁾ However, these were not the only Soviet films he received from the Argentinean institution. In 1951, he was also sent *Penal Servitude* (*Trabajos forzados*; Y. Raizman, 1928)³³⁾ and *The Three Million Trial* (*Le procès des trois millions*; Y. Protazanov, 1926).³⁴⁾ According to the French cinémathèque's programs available today, with the exception of *The New Babylon* and *Penal Servitude*, all the films had been programmed at least once close to their arrival dates: *Zvenigora* on 10 November 1951; *Two Days* and *Girl with the Hatbox* on 20 March 1951; and *The Three Million Trial* on 29 October 1951.³⁵⁾ The programming of Soviet films was frequent at the French cinémathèque, which at that time had daily screenings of the same film at its premises at 7 Avenue de Messine at 6.30pm, 8.30pm and 10.30pm.

In the context of the Cold War, Langlois' search for Soviet films is very telling. Although contacts with Russia can be traced at the French cinémathèque during these same years, evidence suggests that it was easier to receive these films from elsewhere. Indeed, documents reveal that Soviet titles did travel from distant spots. In the case of *October* (S. Eisenstein, 1927), for example, in an attempt to compare the length of his copy with the one held in Argentina, Langlois mentioned that the film at the French cinémathèque came from New York's MoMA. He also said that he had no copy of *Ivan the Terrible* (S. Eisenstein, 1944). However, he instructed Roland not to send him his copy as he was expecting to get one from other institutions in Europe.³⁶⁾

In 1950, Langlois requested the help of his Argentinean colleague in searching for several lost Soviet films, including *The Deserter* (*Le déserteur*; V. Pudovkin, 1933), *A Simple Case* (*Un simple cas*; V. Pudovkin, 1930), *Ivan* (*Ivan de l'aerograd*; A. Dovjenko, 1932), *Three Songs about Lenin* (*Trois chants de Lenine*; D. Vertov, 1934) and *Strike* (*Grève*; S. Eisenstein, 1925). Langlois emphasized the importance of these titles, by saying, "if you found these films and, particularly, the last one [*Strike*] you would have oeuvres of great exchange value because all the cinémathèques, even New York, are after them and would be very happy to have them".³⁷⁾ Moreover, he mentioned that he had heard that there was a copy of *Three Songs about Lenin* in Chile and that all the cinémathèques were after it.

In response to Langlois's request, Roland said that the last copy of *Strike* held in Argentina had burnt in a fire and there were no copies of the other titles in the country. Howev-

32) Henri Langlois, letter to Roland, 17 January 1950. A-CF. In the documents titles were written in either French or Spanish and, in most cases, there was no indication of director or year of production. If they were available, I respected the information provided in the letters. Missing information was completed using databases and relevant bibliography. In addition to the English title, either the Spanish or French name used in the letters was left inside brackets to provide the reader with extra information on the names with which the films circulated at that time.

33) French Embassy in Argentina, letter to Miss Catala, 23 June 1951. A-CF.

34) Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 19 October 1951. A-CF; Roland, telegram to Henri Langlois, 20 October 1951. A-CF.

35) 1951 programs. A-CF.

36) Henri Langlois, letter to Roland, 12 February 1951. A-CF.

37) Henri Langlois, letter to Roland, 13 March 1950. A-CF.

er, from a historiographical point of view, the lists of films that were sought for provide us with valuable information today. They reveal which films were thought to be lost at the beginning of the 1950s and this could therefore prompt further research on when and how these films, which are widely accessible today, were finally presented to European audiences. Moreover, Langlois's emphasis on the "great exchange value" of these titles points to the expectations behind film loans. This value was passed on with the films. This is why Langlois requested the permission of his Argentinean colleague to make countertypes of the copies that belonged to his institution and were in Paris, so that he could exchange the new copies with other European archives.³⁸⁾ The authorization was granted.³⁹⁾ As Bregt Lameris writes in her study of the history of the Netherlands Filmmuseum, within the FIAF there was a hierarchy of archives, depending on their collections; the scholar points out that having titles "regarded as part of the art-film canon" would provide archives with better conditions when it came to exchanging films with other FIAF institutions.⁴⁰⁾ By making countertypes of the films he received from foreign cinematheques, Langlois was enriching his own collection and was better placed when making further exchanges with other institutions. If Langlois carried out this project, we may wonder how many film archives in Europe still have copies of the negatives that he planned to do in 1951. Although gathering this information could be interesting — especially if archives have these copies and do not know of their origin — this example shows a way in which specific titles might have gone from being lost to being disseminated throughout Europe very quickly.

Due to the demise of the German cinematheque, Langlois also tried to recover films from that country. As he told his Uruguayan colleague, "The German cinematheque [...] does not exist, but I hope that we will manage, step by step, to reconstruct these archives."⁴¹⁾ In fact, Langlois had been worried about the contents of this archive when the outbreak of war seemed inevitable. In November 1938, he wrote to his counterpart from MoMA, Iris Barry, saying "we must expect new trouble by the spring. The more films out of Germany the better."⁴²⁾ His willingness to recover part of what might have been these collections comes as no surprise. From Argentina, he received, in May 1951, the film *Tartuff* (F. W. Murnau, 1925)⁴³⁾ and five months later *The Love of Jeanne Ney* (*L'Amour de Jeanne Ney*; G. W. Pabst, 1927).⁴⁴⁾ Langlois had also identified German titles in Uruguayan programs. He was extremely interested in H. Galleen's *The Student of Prague* (1927). However, this title, which belonged to Pereda's collection, and was part of the Lumière project in the 1990s, was never sent to him.

38) Henri Langlois, letter to Roland, 18 September 1951. A-CF.

39) Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 19 October 1951. A-CF.

40) Bregt Lameris, *Film Museum Practice and Film Historiography: The Case of the Nederlands Filmmuseum (1946–2000)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), p. 47.

41) Henri Langlois, letter to Danilo Trelles, 6 October 1947. A-CF.

42) Henri Langlois, letter to Iris Barry, 6 November 1938. A-MoMa, cited in Dupin, 'FIAF', p. 80.

43) Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 19 May 1951 and 27 May 1951. A-CF; Ms Catala, letter to Roland, 6 June 1951. A-CF.

44) Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 19 October 1951. A-CF; Roland, telegram to Henri Langlois, 20 October 1951. A-CF.

Argentinean and Uruguayan productions programmed at the French cinémathèque

Although interactions with Uruguay were less frequent than with Argentina, a few copies travelled from Montevideo to Paris. Here I will focus on a set of films that were sent from the Cinémathèque of Independent Cinema. This was a short-lived institution that gathered the collections of Cine Club del Uruguay between 1952 and 1953 before it was merged with the Uruguayan cinémathèque.

Eugenio Hintz, the head of the institution, seems to have sent Langlois five local titles, which he defined as “experimental films.”⁴⁵⁾ They were: *Fede* (A. Mántaras, 1952), *Lapsus* (A. Mántaras, 1951), *Written on Water* (*Escrito sobre el agua*; E. Amorim, 1952), *The Wall* (*El muro*; L. T. Nilsson) and *José Artigas* (E. Gras, 1950). Whereas Uruguayan directors were behind the first three films, an Argentinean filmmaker was in charge of the fourth one, and the renowned Italian filmmaker Enrico Gras directed the last one. Gras had made a few films in South America at the time, including *Turay* (E. Gras, 1949), in Argentina; and *Eye-pupil in the Wind* (*Pupila al viento*; Gras and Trelles, 1949) and *Artigas* (E. Gras, 1950), in Uruguay. In fact, Langlois had received *Turay* from Argentina in order for it to be screened at the Festival of Antibes in 1950.⁴⁶⁾ Even though the film did not make it on time for the festival, the copy stayed at the French cinémathèque and was programmed later.

The fact that Roland had sent *Turay* is certainly important, since, as stated, the other films that had been shipped from the Argentinean cinémathèque included Soviet and German films exclusively. However, the origin of the film becomes less relevant when the friendship between Langlois and the Italian filmmaker is taken into account.⁴⁷⁾ Langlois’s interest in *Turay* was mostly linked to his admiration for Gras’s work rather than to the fact that the film was made in Argentina. In this sense, the selection made by Hintz becomes especially relevant, since it included, in addition to a film by Gras, titles directed by three Uruguayan directors and one from Argentina.

Hintz’s choices should be framed within the project of creating an Association of Experimental Documentary and Avant-garde Film that Langlois and Ledoux began discussing in March 1952. In a letter in which Langlois summarizes the early stages of this project, a branch was already anticipated either in Montevideo or Buenos Aires, and Gras appeared as one of the vice-presidents.⁴⁸⁾ Over the months, Langlois invited different colleagues to join “The International Association of Experimental Documentary and Avant-garde Film”, which had been created under the auspices of FIAF.⁴⁹⁾ In parallel, he requested from his colleagues materials for an Exhibition on Experimental Documentary and Avant-garde Film that he was planning to organize in Paris at the Palais des Beaux Arts.⁵⁰⁾

45) Eugenio Hintz, *Rapport Cinemateca del cine independiente*, 16 October 1953. A-FIAF.

46) Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 24 October 1950. A-CF; Henri Langlois, letter to Roland, 3 November 1950. A-CF. For information on this festival see Laurent Mannoni, *Histoire de la Cinémathèque française*, p. 153–166.

47) Danilo Trelles, letter to Henri Langlois, 12 April 1948. A-CF; Henri Langlois, letter to Danilo Trelles, 26 April 1948. A-CF.

48) Henri Langlois, letter to Jacques Ledoux, 7 March 1952. A-CF.

49) Henri Langlois, letter to Théodore Huff, 19 August 1952. A-CF.

50) Henri Langlois, letter to Olwen Vaughan, 5 August 1952. A-CF; Henri Langlois, letter to André Thirifays, 11 September 1952, A-CF; Henri Langlois, letter to Richard Griffith, 12 September 1952. A-CF.

Hintz was among the colleagues that Langlois contacted. At that time, the opening of a Uruguayan cinematheque was still not very clear to Langlois, so he invited Hintz to create a Section of the Federation of Independent Cinema, in charge of documentaries, and avant-garde and experimental films.⁵¹⁾ This explains the origin of the cinematheque created by Cine Club del Uruguay and the reason it was called Cinematheque of Independent Cinema.⁵²⁾ In this context, Hintz offered to coordinate with Gras, who was at that time living in Buenos Aires, the shipment of different materials related to the production of his films *Artigas* (made in Uruguay) and *Turay*.⁵³⁾ At least fifty-four elements, including photographs, script notes and props were sent to Paris.⁵⁴⁾

However, from the documents available it is unclear whether the films from the Argentinean and Uruguayan directors were programmed at all. The only evidence that might indicate that they actually were is the generic "South American films" which appears in a list for the "Screenings and Exhibition of Experimental Documentary and Avant-garde Film". In contrast, the three films directed by Gras in Argentina and Uruguay were indeed programmed, at least once, at the French cinematheque in other seasons. *Turay* was programmed on 1 November 1950 and 13 April 1953;⁵⁵⁾ *Artigas* on 28 March 1953; and *Eye-pupil in the Wind* on 10 March 1953.⁵⁶⁾ The choice to program these three films emphasizes the importance that Langlois attributed to the *auteur*. Although he insisted that every film needed to be taken care of, choices were thoroughly made at the time of programming. Indeed, documents suggest that during these first years of interaction with Uruguay and Argentina, Langlois was not curious about the developments of their cinemas and did not request local productions from unknown filmmakers.

From North to South: Consolidating the canon of French classics

This section focuses on some titles that were sent from the French cinematheque to Argentina and Uruguay in order to demonstrate that, in these exchanges, access was privileged over quality and that this decision has a contemporary impact on restoration projects. It also explores how these far-flung foreign screens served to reinforce further the canon of French classics, mostly from the 1920s, that had been already celebrated by cinephiles in Europe.

51) Henri Langlois, letter to Eugenio Hintz, 7 June 1952. A-CF. The Statutes of the Federation were written in June 1952 in Paris: "Fédération Internationale du documentaire expérimental et du film d'avant-garde", June 1952. A-CF.

52) Eugenio Hintz, letter to Henri Langlois, 24 July 1952. A-FIAF; Eugenio Hintz, letter to the President of the International Federation of Experimental and Avant-garde Film, 24 July 1952. A-FIAF.

53) Eugenio Hintz, letter to Henri Langlois, 4 September 1952. A-CF.

54) Cinémathèque française, Exposition du cinema experimental et d'avant-garde. Seccion uruguayenne. Document without date, dated by the author of this article in 1952. A-CF.

55) Programme Musée du Cinéma, Cinémathèque française, Novembre 1950. A-CF; Programme Musée du Cinéma, Cinémathèque française, 'Les Maitres du court-métrage 1893-1953', first semestre, 1953, p. 27. A-CF.

56) Program Musée du Cinéma, Cinémathèque française, 'Les Maitres du court-métrage 1893-1953', first semester, 1953, p. 22 and 17, respectively. A-CF.

Trelles and Roland's motivation behind contacting Langlois was to gain access to films that had not necessarily circulated in Uruguay or Argentina. The first delivery from the French cinémathèque to SODRE-Uruguay was made during the second half of 1948. At that time, Langlois sent *Nana* (Jean Renoir, 1926), *The Devil in the City* (*Le diable dans la ville*; Germaine Dulac, 1924), *Peach Skin* (*Peau de pêche*; Jean Benoit-Levy, 1928), *Nosferatu* (*Nosferatu le vampire*; F. W. Murnau, 1921), *Loulou* (G. W. Pabst, 1927) and *Okraina* (B. Barnet, 1932).⁵⁷⁾ As we can see, on this occasion, he did not restrict his choices to French titles and also added one Soviet and two German films. From a FIAF perspective, Langlois should have limited his selection to French films; however, the political context could explain that he took the liberty of including them. Moreover, this decision demonstrates the interest he had shown in receiving copies from these origins. Probably it was part of a strategy that did not work with SODRE (as he never managed to receive the Soviet and German films he requested) but did end up working later during interactions with Argentina.

After not receiving anything in exchange from the Uruguayan institution, in 1950 Langlois requested that this group of films be sent to Argentina.⁵⁸⁾ The Argentinean cinémathèque used these first copies, which included three French titles, together with films from its own collection, to screen a season entitled "History of French Cinema."⁵⁹⁾ Indeed, Roland was very interested in French films and was planning to organize regular seasons with titles from the French cinémathèque.⁶⁰⁾

In most cases, the shipments from Paris to Buenos Aires included titles that Langlois suggested and his Argentinean colleague accepted. The first selection, received in October 1950, included *The New Gentlemen* (*Les nouveaux messieurs*; J. Feyder, 1929), *The Imaginary Voyage* (*Le voyage imaginaire*; R. Clair, 1926), *The Faithful Heart* (*Cœur fidèle*; J. Epstein, 1923) and *El Dorado* (M. L'Herbier, 1921).⁶¹⁾ The reasons behind these choices are unknown. From a practical perspective, we can deduce, since the French cinémathèque had the negatives, that it was easier for Langlois to make extra duplicates.⁶²⁾ However, in the case of this particular delivery, Roland mentioned that three of the titles — *The New Gentlemen*, *The Faithful Heart* and *El Dorado* — had arrived without inter-titles.⁶³⁾ These details inform us about the kind of copies that travelled and remind us of the nature of cinema itself. Each copy becomes a unique oeuvre and that is one of the reasons current restoration projects need so much research, time and funding. Not all versions have titles or share the same ones; not all of them share color processes (if they have any at all), and the same goes for sound. As Lameris pointed out "film, as a historical source, is also a multiple object. For this reason, it is extremely important for film historiography and film theory that ancient, even worn-out duplicates of films are preserved."⁶⁴⁾ These versions that

57) Henri Langlois, letter to Danilo Trelles, 19 August 1948. A-CF.

58) Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 8 May 1950. A-CF.

59) Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 8 May 1950. A-CF.

60) Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 6 March 1950. A-CF.

61) Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 24 October 1950. A-CF.

62) Henri Langlois, letter to Danilo Trelles, 6 October 1947. A-CF.

63) Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 24 October 1950. A-CF.

64) Lameris, *Film Museum Practice*, p. 121.

have been spread throughout the world and continue to appear today constantly challenge — and complement — previous findings.⁶⁵⁾

The multiplicity of versions can include differences not only in the film's edition, colors and sound, but also in the actual gauge. Films from cinematheques were sent in both 35 mm and 16 mm. A shipment from Paris to Buenos Aires, made at the end of 1950, clearly shows this. On that occasion, Argentina received *The Red Inn* (*Lauberge rouge*; J. Epstein, 1923) on 35 mm and both *An Andalusian Dog* (*Le chien andalou*; L. Buñel, 1929) and *Fever* (*Fièvre*; L. Delluc, 1921) on 16 mm.⁶⁶⁾ Cheaper laboratory costs prompted the printing of small-gauge copies, especially made for travelling and wider circulation. When it came to transatlantic transport, sending 16 mm prints could make a substantial saving in shipping costs. Moreover, the decision to reduce prints signals that access was prioritized over quality. This has become a constant in the history — and digital present — of cinema since the early 1920s, when small-gauge films (9.5 mm and 16 mm) introduced the concept of portable cinema.⁶⁷⁾ These copies were rented or sold for them to be projected at home. Indeed, many of these domestic copies that were gathered by private collectors ended up feeding the collections of archives around the world when 35 mm copies were in an excessively poor state or had disappeared.

Access was certainly the priority for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs when it provided funding to the French cinematheque to circulate around the world a series of programs promoting French cinema. The selection that entered this project included both fragments and complete films. The first shipment included R. Clair's *Entr'acte* (1924), *The Italian Straw Hat* (*Le chapeau de paille d'Italie*; 1928) and *La Tour* (1928); M. L'Herbier's *The Late Matthias Pascal* (*Feu Mathias Pascal*; 1925), *El Dorado* (1921, fragment) and *Don Juan and Faust* (*Don Juan et Faust*; 1922, fragment); A. Gance's *The Madness of Dr. Tube* (*La folie du Dr. Tube*; 1915), *The Tenth Symphony* (*La dixième symphonie*; 1918, fragment), *Napoleon* (1927, fragment) and *The Wheel* (*La roue*; 1923, fragment); and J. Renoir's *Night at the Crossroads* (*La nuit du carrefour*; 1932), *The Little Match Girl* (*La petite marchande d'allumettes*; 1928, fragments) and *Nana* (1926, fragment).⁶⁸⁾ The second group had films including L. Delluc's *The Flood* (*L'inondation*; 1924) and *The Woman from Nowhere* (*La femme de nulle part*; 1922); J. Epstein's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (*La chute de la maison Usher*; 1928), *The Faithful Heart* (*Cœur fidèle*; 1923, fragment) and *The Three-sided Mirror* (*La glace à trois faces*; 1927, fragment); and G. Dulac's *Themes and Variations* (*Thèmes et variations*; 1928), *Spanish Fiesta* (*La fête espagnole*; 1928, fragment), *The Smiling Madame Beudet* (*La souriante Mme Beudet*; 1923) and *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (*La coquille et le clergyman*; 1928).⁶⁹⁾

As I have argued elsewhere, these programs, classified by the director's names, show a *d'auteur* approach and provide an overview of French classics, most of which belonged

65) See Marie Frappat, 'Histoire(s) de la restauration des films', *The Journal of Film Preservation*, vol. 94, 2016, pp. 45–46 and Lameris, *Film Museum Practice*, pp. 109–123.

66) Henri Langlois, letter to Roland, 3 November 1950. A-CF.

67) For the circulation of avant-garde films on 8 mm see Balsom, *After uniqueness*, pp. 54–80.

68) Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 5 April 1951. A-CF.

69) Henri Langlois, Note for Mlle Catala, 7 November 1951, A-CF; Cinémathèque française, Pro-forma invoice, 20 November 1951, A-CF; Feuille de Transports R. Michaux & Cie, 6 December 1951, A-CF; Roland, letter to Henri Langlois, 3 April 1952, A-CF.

to the silent period and which Langlois frequently programmed in his seasons.⁷⁰⁾ Exploring the programs in detail also allows us to reflect upon the sense of unity that Langlois anticipated. Otherwise, it would be difficult to understand the shipment of fragments of *El Dorado*, *The Faithful Heart* and *Nana* on 16 mm when the full-length copies on 35 mm had been sent to Buenos Aires before. These programs were intended to continue circulating in other South American countries and documents show that many of these titles were sent from Roland to Uruguay to be screened both at Cine Universitario and Cine Club del Uruguay.⁷¹⁾

Exploring the selection of French titles and directors that crossed the Atlantic between 1948 and 1951 reveals a canon of classics. Christophe Gauthier, in his research on the beginnings of French cinema prior to WWII, identified films considered “classics” in influential texts on the 1920s and 1930s, such as the screening publications of the cinema Vieux Colombier, the catalogue of the FFCC, the journal *Pour vous* and the writings of Jean George Auriol and H. Langlois. Gauthier’s findings show that classic status had already been bestowed on Clair’s *Entr’acte* and *The Italian Straw Hat*; L’Herbier’s *The Late Matthi- as Pascal* and *El Dorado*; Delluc’s *Fever*; Gance’s *The Wheel*; Renoir’s *The Little Match Girl*; and Epstein’s *The Faithful Heart*.⁷²⁾

As time passed these titles continued circulating and representing French cinema. In March 1957 films such as Dulac’s *The Seashell and the Clergyman*, Clair’s *Entr’acte* and Buñuel’s *An Andalusian Dog* were part of a program called “The French Avant-Garde” screened at the Netherlands Filmmuseum.⁷³⁾ A few decades later these films are still available and circulating thanks to restoration projects. As an illustration, the likes of Delluc’s *Fever*, *The Flood* and *The Woman from Nowhere*, Dulac’s *Spanish Fiesta*, Epstein’s *The Three-sided Mirror*, Feyder’s *The New Gentlemen* and Clair’s *The Tower* have been restored by the French cinémathèque.⁷⁴⁾ Likewise, it is still possible today to see these films at archival film festivals such as Il Cinema Ritrovato (Italy) and Festival Lumière (France). To give only a few examples, Il Cinema Ritrovato programmed in 2016 Benoit-Levy’s *Peach Skin* and Epstein’s *The Faithful Heart*⁷⁵⁾ and the Festival Lumière showed in 2017 Clair’s *The Italian Straw Hat* and in 2018 Clair’s *Entr’acte* and Renoir’s *Nana* and *The Little Match Girl*.⁷⁶⁾ If we consider these examples, it is unclear whether these films became classics because of their quality or their wide circulation, i.e., the availability of copies that made them travel extensively. Most likely, it is a combination of both that has led to them remaining classics of film history. However, from a historiographical point of view it is important to establish

70) Beatriz Tadeo Fuica, ‘Echange de Films avec l’Amérique du Sud: une étude de séances envisagées par la Cinémathèque française et le ministère des Affaires étrangères au cours des années 50’, *Kinétraces Éditions* (forthcoming).

71) Ibid.

72) Christophe Gauthier, ‘Une composition française: la mémoire du cinéma en France des origines à la Seconde Guerre mondiale’ (PhD Thesis: University Pantheon Sorbonne–Paris 1, 2007), appendix 31.

73) Lameris, *Film Museum Practice*, p. 154.

74) See <http://www.cine-mathèque.fr/catalogues/restaurations-tirages/index.php> [accessed 20 February 2019].

75) These films were part of a retrospective on the work of Marie Epstein and highlighted her contribution to both films. See <<https://festival.ilcinemaritrovato.it/en/sezione/marie-epstein-atrice-sceneggiatrice-regista-conservatrice-restauratrice/>> [accessed 20 February 2019].

76) See <<http://www.festival-lumiere.org>> [accessed 20 February 2019].

a link between today's availability of classics and the past circulation of films. In this sense, uncovering the titles that the influential Langlois selected to reach distant audiences helps us trace how the canon of classics has been created and maintained throughout the decades.

From then on: some consequences of initial collection sharing

The interaction during the late 1940s and early 1950s between Langlois and cinephiles in South America has left several still palpable institutional imprints. In theory, a film archive, or cinematheque, should reach a balance between preservation and access. However, history has shown that it is very difficult to reach this balance. In addition, the concept of preservation has evolved and continues evolving as technologies change. While it is beyond the scope of this article to study its evolution, it is important to understand how Langlois conceived of it, especially in the aftermath of WWII.

The fact that for Langlois screening was part of film preservation had a determining impact on the cinematheques created under his auspices in South America in the late 1940s and early 1950. This influence can be traced as time passed. Indeed, Ernest Lindgren from the National Film Library in London wondered at the 1969 FIAF congress whether South America had any film archives at all, because "they seemed not to have any of the resources necessary to perform any of the functions of a film archive".⁷⁷⁾ Lindgren was referring to the very practices that he had previously criticized about Langlois's work at the French cinematheque.⁷⁸⁾ From the beginning, South American cinematheques indeed adopted several practices that led them to be considered "mere screeners of cine-clubs".⁷⁹⁾ Beyond the pejorative connotations of this observation, it is true that these cinematheques were created to access copies for their screening outlets, most of which were previously established cine-clubs. Their collections have in fact been mostly composed of projection copies bought to distributors or received thanks to exchanges between cinematheques, and donations from local collectors. This fact, however, should not obscure their importance. On the contrary, these holdings dating from the late 1940s have proven to be more attractive than expected.

For Langlois, a good way of avoiding losses was to send copies to other institutions abroad. In March 1948, he wrote to his Uruguayan colleague Trelles saying, "we actually believe that now is time to address the preservation of cinema and prevent any possible destruction. It seems to me that the only effective way is to create an international collection, to multiply copies and to scatter them around different cinematheques".⁸⁰⁾ Placed in the post-war context, this idea makes a lot of sense. As this article has demonstrated, the

77) Minutes XXV FIAF Congress General Meeting, New York City, May 21–24, 1969, 33, cited in Janet Ceja Alcalá, 'Imperfect Archives and the Principle of Social Praxis in the History of Film Preservation in Latin America', *The Moving Image*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2013), p. 78.

78) See Borde, 'Les Cinémathèques', pp. 122–124; Clyde Jeavons, 'The Moving Image: Subject or Object?', *Journal of Film Preservation*, vol. 73, 2007, p. 27.

79) Frick, *Saving Cinema*, p. 115

80) Henri Langlois, letter to Danilo Trelles, 9 March 1948. A-CF.

fact that copies reached territories outside Europe has been instrumental in the recovery of various lost titles.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s the French cinephile promoted the creation of institutions that would follow his cinémathèques' principles and enter the FIAF-created circuit of film sharing. This practice, which has been in place for almost seven decades, reminds us that the film and documents dispersed in several archives are pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that still needs to be put together. The evidence recorded in precise exchanges and the routes taken by specific titles help us to continue reflecting on the nature of cinema and the physical condition of film itself. This also allows us to see that contributions were mutually beneficial: in addition to the widely recognized contribution that Langlois made to cinémathèques in Argentina and Uruguay, they in turn added to the development of the French institution. Studying in depth the networks that the pioneer generation of film archivists created provides us with analytical tools relevant for understanding further the creation of canons of classics and present restoration projects. Last but not least, exploring the comings and goings of specific titles that were part of this circuit reminds us that film history needs to continue being rewritten in order to acknowledge the work of all the actors who, throughout time, have contributed to taking care of and disseminating the abstract worldwide film collection that belongs to us all.

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SUMMARY

Tracing Past Exchanges between European and South American Cinematheques*A Key to Understanding the Impact of Sharing***Beatriz Tadeo Fuica**

The aim of this article is to contribute to uncovering and analyzing film exchanges between the French cinematheque and the cinematheques in Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Montevideo (Uruguay) in the aftermath of World War II. In addition to providing a brief history of the creation of the South American institutions, this article studies specific titles that travelled between these three countries. On the one hand, it explores how films that arrived from the south allowed for the recovery of titles thought to be lost and contributed to the programs of the French cinematheque. On the other hand, it examines how the selection that was sent from the north contributed to both the perpetuation of a canon of classics and the circulation of versions that have an impact on current access and restoration projects.

keywords: cinematheques, film circulation, film archives, film history, Henri Langlois