IMPERFECT ARCHIVES AND THE PRINCIPLE OF SOCIAL PRAXIS IN THE HISTORY OF FILM PRESERVATION IN LATIN AMERICA

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Prelude

On a walk in Viriato Beach, Cuba, I could not stop imagining emulsions deteriorating on the mass of motion pictures I had seen earlier in the week at the Cinemateca de Cuba's film archive. The airconditioner at the film archive looked as though it had stopped working a long time ago, and I wondered which titles would survive to be seen in their original format. Cuba’s “special period,” the severe economic crisis that hit the island in the 1990s, is a time to be reckoned with in any future research on Cuba’s history of motion pictures. Since 1962, there has been a nearly complete embargo against Cuba by the United States. Starting with the Eisenhower administration, countries that trade with or assist the island are also threatened with sanctions. I was visiting Cuba in 2008 as part of the School on Wheels
program of the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film’s (International Federation of Film Archives; FIAF). In 2002, Iván Trujillo Bolio, Mexican preservation specialist and past president of FIAF, Paolo Cherchi Usai, founder of the L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation, and Steven Ricci, founding director of the moving image archives studies program at the University of California, Los Angeles, dreamed up the idea of the School on Wheels as an alternative to the FIAF Summer School.²

The School on Wheels was a response to the fact that the institutions hosting FIAF Summer Schools or offering formal film preservation education programs are almost exclusively based in Europe and the United States.³ The school’s model was meant to redirect this Euro–U.S.–centric situation by reaching out to constituents in developing countries where opportunities for professional training are scarce and financial difficulties often create insurmountable problems. The strength of the School on Wheels is that it leverages the knowledge of its FIAF members by having them travel to other countries to share their expertise and address archival concerns at the host institutions.⁴ I was asked to give a talk on the School on Wheels initiative and other educational opportunities in moving image archiving. Yet the presentation left me ambivalent because I was promoting educational initiatives in the United States and Europe in an impoverished and blockaded Cuba, from the same privileged position the School on Wheels was trying to transgress. The feeling intensified on my walk at the beach when a woman with a baby waiting at a bus stop approached me. She pressingly asked if I knew what time the bus would arrive, and when I replied no, she revealed that she was searching for milk for her child because the bodegas in her vicinity had run out. At that point, the current deprivations and dehydrating tropics were transforming my own, out-of-place archive fever with this woman’s story. Her urgent search for milk began to replace my images of film emulsions being eaten away by the extreme heat and humidity of the tropical climate.

Through the School on Wheels, I came to reason that the circumstances surrounding the films deteriorating at the Cinemateca de Cuba’s film archives and the Cuban mother not having access to food were both linked to the historical violence of a greater social and economic condition that has been starving Cuba for a long time. In 1992, the embargo against Cuba was reinforced with the Torricelli Act, passed just a year after the dismantling of the Soviet Union, and later with the even stricter Helms–Burton Act in 1996. With Cuba’s major ally no longer of assistance, the country was hit with an energy deficit that affected all areas of Cuban life, film archives being no exception, not to mention that only weeks after the Torricelli Act was passed, basic foodstuffs, such as oil, beans, and milk, became scarce on the island as freight
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Air conditioner at the Cinemateca de Cuba. Photograph by the author.
ships that delivered to a Cuban port faced severe restrictions. Therefore the broken air conditioner at the Cuban film archives and the woman lacking basic food items in Viriato Beach are the concrete consequences of an ideological battle between Cuba and the United States.

This story perhaps bears some resemblance to the impoverished conditions that inspired the writing of “Uma Estética da Fome” (“An Aesthetic of Hunger”) by renowned Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha. In his 1965 political manifesto, Rocha called for the historical violence of European colonialism in Latin America, which was expressed and resisted through its hunger, to be interpreted as a violent hunger that in filmmaking would determine the aesthetic of form and content of films such as Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol (Black God, White Devil; Brazil, 1964) and Terra em Transe (Land in Anguish; Brazil, 1967). Rocha stated, then, that “our originality is our hunger and our greatest misery is that this hunger is felt but not intellectually understood.”

This powerful metaphor transcended poverty’s potential for romanticism and quantification by communicating the historical, social, and economic conditions inherent in the hunger of those overwhelmed by its force. The essence of this cinema of hunger was to be communicated through an aesthetic of violence crafted through a language unlike the commercialized chanchadas (musical comedies) Brazilians were used to seeing on the big screen. The aesthetic of hunger aggressively provoked audiences to wrestle with the misconceptions and contradictions of poverty by watching “the ugly, sad films, those screaming, desperate films where reason does not always prevail.” Perhaps if we, too, transposed Rocha’s metaphor to the Cinemateca de Cuba’s film archive, we would be better equipped to understand its current state of disarray.

INTRODUCTION

This article examines how the archival concerns and imperfect working conditions of Cuba are not new and seeks to demonstrate the radical manner in which the circumstances surrounding film archival practice were addressed in the past and continue to exist in the present. For a brief period of time, Latin American film archivists sought to preserve films in light of the then popular theories of cinematic practice. The 1960s to 1970s politicized critiques of hunger, the hope of cultural liberation, and a polemical idea about imperfect cinema brought forth the pan-national political project known as the New Latin American Cinema Movement (NLACM). The NLACM gave rise to a principle of social praxis with a commitment to film as an agent of social change, and I argue that
the militancy of the broader cinema movement also contributed to the development of the film archives of Latin American *cinematecas* during the 1960s and 1970s. The growing film archival concerns across the region, in part because of the NLACM’s productions, motivated the formation of the Unión de Cinematecas de América Latina (Union of Latin American Cinémathèques; UCAL), a pan-national collective that later found its way onto Latin American cinema’s path toward cultural liberation. By appropriating archival methods to preserve Latin American cinema, UCAL members approached film archival practice with their own philosophy and techniques traceable to current professional initiatives, such as the School on Wheels.

Following moving image archives scholar Caroline Frick’s methodology in *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*, I approach film archival preservation as a socially structured practice to which I add a cultural dimension, as the period being studied was fraught with resistance to cultural imperialism, which no doubt penetrated the work of archivists. To weave this history, I draw from personal experience assisting in the coordination of the School on Wheels from 2006 to 2008, interacting with Latin American and Caribbean moving image archivists, and the use of both English- and Spanish-language resources. Regarding the latter, the FIAF congress meeting minutes are pointedly useful in revealing how, at least “officially,” film archiving began to take shape in Latin America. In the United States, a set of these FIAF congress meeting minutes can be found at the Library of Congress. Additionally, two Spanish-language sources worth noting are the film journal *Cine Cubano*, issued by the Instituto Cubano de Artes e Industria Cinematográficos (Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry, ICAIC), and publications by the university press at the Filmoteca de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (National Autonomous University of Mexico; UNAM). Héctor García Mesa, the first director of the Cinemateca de Cuba (a division of the ICAIC), and Manuel González Casanova, the first director of the Filmoteca de la UNAM, took great pains in instituting publication initiatives to document the early history of cinema as well as film preservation activities in Latin America in Spanish. Even though university libraries in the United States make these latter resources readily available to researchers, little has been written in English about the history of film archiving and preservation in Latin America, perhaps because of language barriers and the invisibility of archives as a proper unit of study, that is, in which archives are the subject of history and not the bearers of history’s subjects. It is hoped that this attempt at carving out a small piece of this history will inspire new research with greater depth that may include discussions about indigenized archiving techniques in the region and substantive research on archival collaborations between Latin American countries and with others.
THE OTHER ORPHANS

In Cuban filmmaker Julio García Espinosa’s 1969 essay “Por un cine imperfecto” (“For an Imperfect Cinema”), the author reflects on the notion of imperfection as it applied to film production in Cuba when he notes with concern that Cubans had “[begun] to accomplish films that were well-made and coherent.” What was at stake in Cuba after the Revolution was the possibility of producing a cinema that, as García Espinosa elucidated, could instead speak “to our exposed innards,” as opposed to a cinema that was artistically revered but alienated audiences. This gut-wrenching cinema, according to García Espinosa, called for a new poetics in its production as a committed artistic expression. It was to make visible the processes that generated social problems by subjectively selecting the problems, the subject, and by objectively showing the process—as object—with the process submitted to the public for judgment. To be imperfect was, then, a revolutionary idea. It was revolutionary because, at the time, Cuba was in a position to control its means of communication without foreign intervention, and Cuban filmmakers were at liberty to experiment with forms of representation that called for the public’s participation in the filmmaking process.

Filmmakers fostered critiques by audiences that spoke to the social realities being portrayed on the screen, and this new filmic approach was significant because, until then, a major impediment to the creation of national film industries in many Latin American countries was the dominating influx of foreign films that were distributed (especially from the United States) through domestic and subsidiary exhibitors. Furthermore, until the 1960s, film festivals in Latin America were dedicated to screening European art cinema, which had much to do with the fact that many Latin American countries could not sustain stable film industries and, therefore, produce films. Even though the Argentinean, Brazilian, and Mexican filmmaking ventures were more successful in forming film industries prior to the NLACM, they required the generous support of state subsidies to implement modes of film production similar to and influenced by those of the United States. Because the social and economic structures of Latin America have been conditioned by a history of colonialism and have, over time, undergone political transformations, whether they manifested into military dictatorships or the appropriation of neoliberal doctrine, the instability of these governments has led to varying but often detrimental consequences in developing stable film industries. The exploitative tactics of avaricious entrepreneurs, foreign investors, and even the control of raw film stock by Latin America’s “good neighbor” up north have historically left national film industries in these countries highly susceptible to crises. For instance, film scholar Tamara Falicov
has documented how Argentina was punished by the United States with an embargo in the 1940s, leaving its highly prosperous film industry without access to raw film stock and, as a result, a greatly debilitated film industry. Although the major reason behind this embargo was the Argentinean government’s decision to be politically neutral during World War II, its film industry also posed a threat to Hollywood’s new interest in the Spanish-language market as, at the time, Europe was unprofitable and war torn.  

García Espinosa’s “Por un Cine Imperfecto” and Rocha’s “Uma Estética da Fome,” then, are examples of cinematic theorizing that helped engender radically different approaches to film production by articulating the impassioned motivations for building national cinema cultures. Their manifestos inspired stylistic sensibilities and reinforced a commitment to social praxis through revolutionary filmmaking styles that in Cuba were financially supported by the state. In other countries, such as Argentina, the Cinema Law of 1957 (which lasted until 1973) stimulated the production of independent films by subsidizing as much as 50 percent of the production costs for nationally produced pictures. The financial backing of the NLACM varied across Latin America and reflected the different production, distribution, and exhibition mechanisms used by filmmakers. In describing the NLACM, historian Ana López points out that “by comparison to the standard or dominant cinematic movements and national cinemas, the New Latin American Cinema is peculiar: a marginal, politicized, often clandestine cinematic practice that has managed to give expression to new forms and contents; to create alternative modes of production, consumption, and reception; to produce great box office hits as well as utterly clandestine films; and, in short, to change the social function of the cinema in Latin America.”

The social function of cinema was being changed in Cuba by García Espinosa and in Brazil by Rocha, but they were not alone. Filmmakers across Latin America called for action through the writing of their own manifestos. Another important example is the work of the Argentineans Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, who looked “Hacia un Tercer Cine” (“Towards a Third Cinema”) to cinematically contribute to the decolonization of culture not only in Latin America but throughout the Third World. Their mission was to advocate political consciousness-raising content and visual and editing techniques in the name of cultural liberation. Powerful ideas of this sort were equally important for emergent film archivists who were the orphans of infrastructure, or “individuals, groups and forms of social and professional practice that fit uneasily or not at all within the emerging infrastructural paradigm.” Orphans of infrastructure imperfectly mirrors the term orphan film, which is used to describe cinema that is conceptually and physically neglected—unseen, unpreserved, and/or legally questionable. The adoption of the word
To fortify their institutional operations, UCAL shared a vision and purpose to

- promote a policy of integration and development of cinematecas across Latin America
- foster cultural development within the same scope as members’ specialty areas
- study and facilitate common and shared solutions to problems that affect its [UCAL’s] operation

*orphan* to describe portions of the international infrastructure of moving image archiving is useful for making visible not only neglected films but archival principles that have been demarcated largely by European and American concerns since FIAF’s inception in 1938.

Even though film archives in Latin America have existed since the 1930s, it was not until 1965 when archivists, who might well be considered amateurs, first came together to share their archival concerns at the Mar del Plata Film Festival in Argentina. There they organized a regional network called the UCAL. That this union came together at a film festival during this period is as timely as the flurry of ideas that fueled the creation of the NLACM two years later at the Viña del Mar Film Festival in Chile.

UCAL first comprised seven individuals who sought to address how to best circulate, exhibit, and care for the films being produced and acquired at their respective cinema-based institutions. Those in attendance at the Mar del Plata Film Festival represented a significant portion of the Latin American filmmaking landscape: the Cinemateca Argentina and the Instituto Nacional de Cinematografía (National Institute of Cinematography) in Buenos Aires, Argentina; the Cinemateca Brasileña in São Paulo; the Cinemateca Universitaria de Chile (Cinemateca at the University of Chile) in Santiago; the film department at the UNAM in Mexico City; the Cinemateca de la Universidad Agraria del Perú (Cinemateca at the Agrarian University of Peru) in Lima; and the Cinemateca Uruguaya in Montevideo. The representatives from these institutions held interrelated identities that spanned filmmakers, educators, and archivists. At the University of Chile, for instance, filmmaker Pedro Chaskel was an instructor at the Centro de Cine Experimental de Chile (Center for Experimental Cinema of Chile) and an archivist at the Cineteca Universitaria. Manuel González Casanova was another such educator, filmmaker, and archivist at the UNAM. He was a part of El Grupo Nuevo Cine (New Cinema Group) and founded the Filmoteca and Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos (University Center for Cinema Studies). The professional titles of other UCAL members varied across their cinema-based institutions but tended to extend in scope if they were associated with university settings.
• broaden and coordinate tasks of organizing museums, research, preservation, and filmic dissemination
• intensify its relationships and exchanges of information and materials

To solidify this network, three administrative secretary posts were assigned throughout Latin America so that members could maintain better relationships and make their communication manageable. This required that UCAL split into three geographic zones so that each secretary supervised cinematic activities accordingly in each area: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay; Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela; and Mexico and Central America. UCAL’s strategy was to build a web of relations to satisfy their unique efforts and mutual desires to develop their national cinema cultures. As in the filmmaker’s movement, they emphasized the uniqueness of each member’s operations while harnessing the commonality of their institutional problems to achieve out of this duality a successful unified practice. Their approach was to create a necessary space for difference, while a shared research agenda brought them closer together. Yet their desire to organize museums, for instance, is curious because it denotes an approach to film preservation that associates UCAL with Henri Langlois and his own desire to build a museum for the cinema at the Cinémathèque Française. In fact, the Cinemateca Argentina, aside from being a founding member of UCAL, had been a member of FIAF since 1963 and had an important connection to Langlois.

SHARED PASSIONS AND RELATED VISIONS

According to Frick, Guillermo Fernández of the Fundación Cinemateca Argentina (Cinemateca Argentina Foundation) commented in an oral history that he was surprised at the work done by Langlois to help establish film archives in South America, including the “necessary arguments, which brought the Cinemateca Argentina into existence.” Not only was Langlois in contact with Argentina, but, through his efforts, films from the Cinémathèque Française reached the Cinemateca Uruguaya in association with the cine club Cine Universitario (University Cinema) as early as the 1950s. Manuel Martínez Carril, the director of the Cinemateca Uruguaya, noted that aside from helping Uruguay’s and Argentina’s cine clubs, Langlois also assisted others in São Paulo, Brazil. Langlois sent up to eighty silent films on loan to the Cinemateca Nacional de Venezuela (National Cinemateca of Venezuela) for a programming series that lasted three months. He also visited Chile in the 1960s to discuss plans for establishing the Cineteca Universitaria de Chile. Even in Cuba, Langlois facilitated the donation of films to the Cinemateca de
Cuba as it existed before the Revolution. Not only did Langlois’s passion for cinema inspire the Nouvelle Vague in France, but he also vicariously stirred the spirits of Latin American artists, writers, historians, film critics, scholars, and fledgling filmmakers to view and discuss the possibilities of creating their own national cinemas by viewing those of others. Langlois’s attraction to film preservation’s sociality is what intimately connected him to those running Latin American cine clubs and cinémathèques, the latter being the plural form for the Spanish and Portuguese language translations of the word cinémathèque.

One of the similarities between Langlois’s Cinémathèque Française and Latin American cinémathèques was that they were sites that enabled political contestation during the Cold War period. For instance, in Paris, in May 1968, some of the filmmakers who had trained at the Cinémathèque Française challenged the French film industry’s “means of production” and “commodification of cinema” by siding with union strikes and workers’ rights protests. They used Langlois’s removal from the Cinémathèque Française by the minister for cultural affairs as a significant factor to resist social inequities going on at the time. And so the story goes that Langlois was reinstated at the Cinémathèque Française thanks to the tactical campaign (demonstrations, protests, and boycotts) organized by his most faithful supporters: Jean Renoir, François Truffaut, Jean Luc Godard, Marcel Carné, and others. Yet one of the differences between the French and Latin Americans who participated in social movements to contest injustices was the direct consequence of their direct action under repressive regimes. Luis Buñuel expressed the difference well when describing his visit to Paris in 1968:

The city was filled with serious debate as well as complete confusion. Everyone was seeking his own revolution with only his small lantern for a guide. I told myself that if this had been happening in Mexico, it wouldn’t have lasted more than two hours, and there would surely have been a few hundred causalities to boot, which is exactly what happened, of course, in October on the Plaza de las Tres Culturas (The Three Cultures Plaza).

The only surviving footage of the massacre at Tlatelolco mentioned by Buñuel is from the perspective of the student movement as it was filmed by film students at the UNAM and edited into the film El Grito (The Cry; Leobardo López Aretche, Mexico, 1968).

Filmmaker Jean Luc Godard said of Langlois that although he did not make films, he “produced a new way of seeing movies.” Langlois’s contribution to film archiving is constituted in his approach to film preservation as a social practice rather
than as a purely intellectual and technical endeavor. From Langlois, we learn that film archives are not the exclusive bearers of contextual information used to create access to moving image heritage. Context also relies a great deal on the people who watch, remember, discuss, and critique cinema; their reception engenders cinema’s future transformations. Archives are a valuable instrument in this process, fundamental assemblages that enable cinema’s appearance, disappearance, and reappearance as a timeless and ritualistic activity. Therefore preservation’s social dimensions are just as significant as the intellectual and technical practices that constitute it.

UCAL’S ALTERNATIVE WORLDVIEW

Since 1965, it had been on UCAL’s agenda to seek admission into FIAF, but it was not until four years later, at the congress in New York City, that it was brought up. Eugenio Hintz, director of the Archivo Nacional de la Imagen–SODRE in Uruguay (also affiliated with the Cinemateca Uruguaya), was at the congress and addressed the economic conditions of the fourteen Latin American film archives that formed UCAL in ten countries. Hintz began discussing the state of Latin American film archives by stating that one of the key differences between film archives in Europe and Latin America was that the latter sought survival, and their main problems had to do with acquisition and exhibition, as preservation and film duplication were completely out of the question. He then shared UCAL’s proposal to FIAF by relating that it was too expensive for all fourteen entities to join FIAF, so they should be given the opportunity to join individually as “correspondents” and be recognized collectively as a “hemispheric branch.” It was also suggested by Hintz that their progress as members could be monitored by a representative from the FIAF Executive Committee. In effect, the FIAF representative could be present at UCAL’s congresses and relate back on the proceedings to other FIAF members. The logic behind this procedure was that, because it was financially unfeasible for a Latin American delegate to attend FIAF congresses each year, this could help remedy the lack of contact between FIAF and Latin American film archives. The reaction to Hintz’s statements varied. Some were supportive: in particular, a representative from the Soviet Union’s Gosfilmofond offered to collaborate with them. However, Ernest Lindgren, curator at the British National Film Library, was wary.

Lindgren was noted in the minutes of the congress to have reacted to Hintz’s comments. Thus “after having heard Mr. Hintz he [Lindgren] was beginning to wonder for the first time whether South America had any film archives at all, in the true sense of that term. Mr. Hintz described 14 organizations which were obviously composed of
film enthusiasts, but they seemed to have none of the resources necessary to perform any of the functions of a film archive.” And the FIAF secretary general viewed UCAL as “a grouping without a defined identity.” Although Hintz proposed a plan to integrate Latin American cinemathecas into FIAF, it was only agreed by the FIAF president that their institutions be allotted the category of correspondents and that a future investigation of their archives be conducted to determine their integration into FIAF. This matter was not seriously addressed again until the FIAF congress that took place in Mexico City in 1976. The lack of financial resources in Latin America made their film archives “underdeveloped” because they could not truly perform the practices that FIAF had by then developed into standards of film preservation. FIAF’s *Manual of Film Preservation* was published in 1965, and as early as 1954, UNESCO prepared its International Rules for the Cataloguing of Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Films and Filmstrips, based on the British National Film Library’s and the Library of Congress’s film cataloging rules.

European film archives, much like Latin American ones, were ideologically linked to the concept of nationhood: archives, after all, help build national consciousness through the keeping of records that evidence shared identities, customs, and social mores, among other types of cultural representations. Yet the idea of the nation is also fraught with problems and contradictions as it delineates boundaries that are not always as static as they may appear or seek to be. These boundaries, whether they have been constructed to run along a geographical terrain or are designated through racial and ethnic classification systems, bind diverse populations into positions in which they can coherently share a unified identity, even as they confront racism, sexism, discrimination, and social inequality. The building of national cinema cultures, then, privileges the idea of the nation as a solid and coherent entity when it is actually far more complex and problematic. Film archives are also guilty of projecting this idea. For instance, in the late 1950s, Lindgren wrote for the brochure of the British National Film Archive (previously named the British National Film Library), “Films can only be preserved permanently in the national interest by a national organization which has itself some assurance of permanence, which enjoys the confidence of the film industry, and which is endowed with the resources to bestow on its films the special technical care which their preservation requires.” In this case, the strength of the nation is forged through its archives, and their permanence reflects the nation’s powerful ability to sustain them. There were, of course, alternative institutional models that sought to safeguard films, such as the Museum of Modern Art in the United States and the French Cinémathèque. Yet, given Lindgren’s position at a national institution, it is no wonder
that he was wary of UCAL being integrated into FIAF—how could a highly distributed and diversified regional effort collectively sustain the sense of permanence he invested in the idea of the nation? At the heart of this misunderstanding was that Latin American film archivists did not always share the same certainty about the nation, nor did they believe it would be as permanent as Lindgren may have believed was the case for Great Britain.

Film scholar Cristina Venegas adopts the phrase “singular in diversity and diverse in unity” to emphasize how the use of a regional approach to studying media industries “involves teasing out insistent (if limited) national identity that simultaneously finds reciprocal support in a larger identity.” This regional lens is significant for understanding how, across the singular and diverse national identities of UCAL members, there was also a shared unity of vision in which film archiving was a desirable instrument to add to Latin America’s filmmaking tool kits. Some members had already established substantial film collections from their nations’ previous filmmaking ventures, as was the case in Argentina. In general, UCAL’s archival vision was the result of a practical reality—filmic productions in their respective countries existed and were growing, so they needed to be cared for and maintained for future showings. One of UCAL’s projects was to build a pool of Latin American films that could be exhibited throughout the region. And the fact that some of these productions were increasingly marginal, clandestine, and highly politicized put them at great risk of being destroyed if they were intercepted by authorities, if not simply lost because of their alternative exhibition circuits (as in the case of mobile cinemas)—not to mention that some of these film prints probably were the only copies of films circulating for exhibition. Thus the film archives of cinematecas became the places where such films could be safely kept, cared for, and shown because they were not always safe in the custody of national institutions during the Cold War.

**UCAL’S ROUTE TO DECOLONIZATION**

In 1972, some UCAL members began to align themselves more forcefully with the radical politics of the NLACM. That same year, in an interview, Pedro Chaskel, then secretary of UCAL, was asked what new perspectives or ideas UCAL incorporated into its concept of a Latin American cinemateca (in contrast with the notion of film archives as satisfying a narrow and elite public). He responded, “The idea of a cinemateca is undergoing a debate, which, as a matter of fact, has already shaken-up some of our paternal colleagues of the Old World. The Latin American reality has marked in the evolution of our Cinematecas
the imprint of underdevelopment and alongside it, the imprint of the class struggle and confrontation with imperialism evermore alive and vigorous. This is why many years ago our Cinematecas gave up the exclusive idea of conserving and ‘saving’ cinematic productions.” At its sixth congress in Mexico, UCAL issued a manifesto titled “Cultura nacional y descolonización cultural” (“National Culture and Cultural Decolonization”), which called for a redefinition of Latin American cinematecas:

These are the reasons that oblige the cinematecas that subscribe to UCAL to affirm that the cultural act par excellence in Latin America is the liberation of our people and that filmmaking practices in the continent be made of service to them. As consequence, the first task of Latin American cinematecas is to promote, conserve, disseminate and develop to maximum capacity, the cinema of their country and Latin America as one that authentically expresses our reality, and the problems and trends of its transformation. . . . This does not imply that all functions of a Cinemateca be set aside, such as the conservation and exhibition of world cinematic productions with historical and/or artistic value. But it does oblige us to overcome the limitations of its traditional organization. Today’s Latin American cinematoteca cannot be satisfied with its role as a cinematographic archive. On the contrary, it has to become a new and total cultural structure that encompasses all modalities of contemporary filmmaking.

This manifesto underscores Frick’s contention that “the preservation of so-called national or state heritage is not, and never has been, a neutral concept although it is presented as such by politicians, the press, intellectuals, and archivists.” However, there was no guise of neutrality on the part of UCAL as archival practice was to undergo a process of “decolonization” by expressing realities true to the pan-national struggles faced by Latin American cinematecas.

The shape of this expression varied locally, and at the Cinemateca de Cuba, Héctor García Mesa revealed that the institution was to contribute to cultural decolonization by developing a space for culture in which audiences were enabled to engage critically with the cinema. By programming and exhibiting films from the nation, region, and around the world, Cuba’s nuevos espectadores (new spectators) could resist cultural imperialism by being able to intellectually discern between the vast variety of form and content made available to them. As Alfredo Guevara, the first director of the ICAIC, expressed in 1969, “in this case, the principle of variety has intrinsic value,
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and independently of the necessary intentionality of programming, and of its growing spirit of selectivity, [it] serves a purpose of anticolonialism."45 Some of the films that formed a part of the Cinemateca de Cuba's film collection included the works of Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Alexander Dovzhenko, Jean-Luc Godard, Chris Marker, Vittorio De Sica, Luchino Visconti, F. W. Murnau, D. W. Griffith, Orson Welles, John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Satyajit Ray, and Akira Kurosawa.46 Thus what Chaskel had alluded to in his interview as having presumably perturbed the FIAF ("Old World") is a reference to the power and significance that popular spectatorship had in the film preservation process. The public's incorporation into archival practice was what made a difference in Cuba's and UCAL's approach to film preservation because screening films proved to be more socially productive than simply aiming to conserve them for future generations.

IMPERFECT ARCHIVES

Just as García Espinosa's "Imperfect Cinema" called for a new poetics in the production of cinema as a committed artistic expression, UCAL was developing its own poetics with respect to archival practice by committing itself to the service of "the people" and their social realities. Here it is useful to frame the film archives of Latin American cinematecas as imperfect archives because their approach to preserving cinema was not bound by the standards of the professionally polished movie; this was a cinema of hunger, and their archival codes and standards were outside of the established norm. Theirs was a different reality, and it shaped their filmmaking culture. As a consequence, they were not viewed as serious film archives, and yet what can be more serious than being imprisoned for maintaining film archives? Such were the social realities of the Latin American archivists, who were the orphans of the moving image archival infrastructure of the period.

In 1972, the same year the manifesto "Cultura nacional y descolonización cultural" was written, UCAL was involved in protesting the arrest of Walter Achugar, a member of the Cinemateca del Tercer Mundo (Cinemateca of the Third World; C3M), located in Uruguay.47 The C3M began informally in 1967 as an independent venue that, according to its director Eduardo Terra, exhibited political cinema, cinema of combat, and films from the Third World.48 In addition to cinemateca, the C3M was a filmmaking collective, and the year prior, its members had been using cinema to mobilize the populace to tomar conciencia (raise their consciousness) and organize them politically for the upcoming presidential elections. After this stint, the C3M became a military target; in
1971, seven of its members were arrested, and their film equipment, some documents, and a small film archive were confiscated. When the members were finally released, the C3M’s film archive was never returned. Although Héctor Gutiérrez Ruiz won the presidential election, later, in 1973, Juan María Bordaberry, with the assistance of the military, contrived a self-imposed coup d’état and did away with the legislature. With Bordaberry, Uruguay underwent a climate of terror, and those who contested the regime faced torture, imprisonment, and forced disappearance. Thereafter, the C3M ceased to exist as its equipment was again confiscated and some of its members left the country in exile. The last film produced by the C3M collective demonstrated their solidarity with the many filmmakers who had been imprisoned. En la selva hay mucho por hacer (In the Jungle There Is Much to Do; 1972) is an animation short made from paper cutouts that was created in someone’s bedroom because the country’s repression was so violent that it was impossible to go out in public and film what was happening.

In 1972, presidential elections also took place in El Salvador in February, but these gave way to a failed coup d’état and then a subsequent military intervention. The newly established Cinemateca at the Universidad de El Salvador (University of El Salvador) had requested admittance into UCAL in March. However, toward the end of the year, when the military took over the Salvadorean government, the Cinemateca at the Universidad de El Salvador ceased operation. Although UCAL also sought to intervene in this matter, it was unable to, given the Cinemateca’s quick dissolution.

Another military intervention, this time in 1973 in Chile, led to the immediate closure of the Cineteca at the Universidad de Chile along with the dismissal of the entire staff. According to Chaskel, who was employed at the Cineteca as well as working as UCAL’s secretary, it was necessary to destroy UCAL-related documentation, including the manifesto “Cultura nacional y descolonización cultural,” anything with the printed words popular or pueblo, correspondence with the Cinemateca de Cuba, and any other records considered leftist or radical. The work of the Cineteca was resumed by Chaskel in Havana as the Cinemateca Chilena de la Resistencia (Chilean Cinemateca of Resistance), and his work as the secretary of UCAL was also carried out in Cuba, where he fled to exile. Additionally, Chaskel worked as film editor for filmmaker Patricio Guzmán’s clandestinely produced three-part documentary La batalla de Chile: la lucha de un pueblo sin armas (The Battle of Chile: The Struggle of an Unarmed People; Chile, Cuba, Venezuela, 1975–79). Because of the threats filmmakers and archivists faced under such politically chilling regimes, many were forced to flee their countries.

It is worth mentioning another institution in Chile that suffered from the authoritarian repression, Chile Films, the national Chilean film industry. Marcos Llona,
an employee of Chile Films, provides a vivid example of the extent of this repression in Chile. His testimony reveals details of the destruction at Chile Films the same day the raid on La Moneda (the presidential palace) took place, on September 11, 1973, which brought Augusto Pinochet to power:

The [military's] visit had another paramount objective: the destruction of all films that smelled of progressivism or leftist. A pyre was made in the patio. There, for the duration of three days, they burnt all newsreels from the year 1945 and onward. Also, other older ones, documentaries of the repression of González Videla, the shorts about the tancazo [a failed coup d'état on June 29, 1973, that used military tanks], all that had been filmed about the nationalization of the copper industry and Fidel Castro's visit to Chile. Burning were also some historical pieces, such as the Recabarren funerals, a relic of 16mm films that had recently been found with a number of other old things located in a house in [the city of] Antofagasta.54

The destroyed films to which Llona refers represented evidence of Chile’s political struggles and socialist history. Luis Emilio Recabarren Serrano was the founder of the socialist worker’s party in Chile in 1912. Gabriel González Videla was elected president in 1946 as a member of the Radical Party in Chile and would later betray and persecute the communists who had earlier helped him win the election. Many of the films that were targeted for destruction were also representative of the NLACM’s production output, and in some cases, these films were forced to undergo a kind of exile. Brazilian and Nicaraguan productions, for example, found their way to the Cinemateca de Cuba, known to have assisted filmmakers by taking in their smuggled films during violent political repression.

UCAL proved to be a critical network that helped member countries to closely collaborate with each other during politically dangerous times, and in this way, the new model of the Latin American cinemathecas aided their survival. What is most alarming is that this climate of terror in Latin America coincided chronologically with the FIAF Executive Committee’s decision to limit the number of its potential members at the same time that there had been numerous new archives from developing countries seeking membership.55 In this regard, the archival film histories of other Latin American countries are worthy of more investigation, though what is evident from this situation is that uncertainty about incorporating an unfit UCAL into FIAF represented a threat to an international network of archives, which had, until then, been centered on European

Close-up of documents burning in *El Tigre Saltó y Mató... Pero Morirá... Morirá* (Santiago Alvarez, Cuba, 1973).

Burning picture of Fidel Castro in *El Tigre Saltó y Mató... Pero Morirá... Morirá* (Santiago Alvarez, Cuba, 1973).
concerns. Yet, although there were some FIAF members that sought exclusivity, others, such as the East German and Soviet film archives, led the way toward Third World expansion.56

As mentioned earlier, since 1965, a representative from the Soviet Union’s Gosfilmofond had shown interest in collaborating with UCAL. The Cuban Cinemateca had been a member of FIAF since 1963, and it had been in association with the East German and Soviet film archives. However, UCAL had not. UCAL had been looking to Cuba for guidance on topics that included film distribution, borrowing rare films, learning about copyright laws, and better understanding the experience of a socialist cinemateca in Latin America.57 In 1976, at the FIAF congress at the Filmoteca de la UNAM, the offer from Gosfilmofond to collaborate came to fruition. Kiril Razlogov offered classic Soviet Films for their exhibition in Latin America and made a motion so that a member of UCAL could participate in the following FIAF congress in Moscow, titled “Soviet Silent Cinema and Films of Liberation.”58 The Mexican congress’s theme was “Latin American Cinema: Reality or Fiction?” and was significant because it was going to determine whether the Filmoteca de la UNAM would be admitted into FIAF as an official member. Films screened at the congress included some titles from the NLACM, such as El Coraje del Pueblo (The Courage of the People; Jorge Sanjines, Bolivia, Italy, 1971), La Patagonia Rebelde (Rebellion in Patagonia; Hector Olivera, Argentina, 1974), and Vidas Secas (Barren Lives; Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Brazil, 1963). At this congress, another Latin American organization, the Regional de Cinematecas del Cono Sur (Regional Cinematecas of the Southern Cone), had been announced as seeking to join FIAF as a regional entity. Those who were a part of the Regional de Cinematecas del Cono Sur had also been a part of UCAL, but they chose to withdraw their membership because they wanted to focus on concerns within their own region.59 After the congress in Mexico, it was decided by FIAF that the Filmoteca de la UNAM should be admitted.

NEW LATIN AMERICAN CINEMATECAS AS SITES OF CONTEXTUAL RUIN

David M. J. Wood claims in his article “Film and the Archive: Nation, Heritage, Resistance” that “there is little evidence that the principle of film preservation in itself served as a basis or pretext for grassroots popular organization.”60 What Wood does not acknowledge is that exhibition is constitutive of the practice of film preservation, and in Latin America, archival concerns during this period emerged in close relation to exhibition. The screening of films from the NLACM in cinematecas throughout the region transformed them into sites for the raising of consciousness. In some cases, film preservation’s
Exhibitory function evoked the social praxis behind grassroots popular organizing, as was the case with the C3M. In 1984, Cuban filmmaker Tomás Gutiérrez Alea called the public’s incorporation into filmmaking “the viewer’s dialectic” because the filmmaker could communicate with audiences through the evocation of conflict that could result in the gathering of a deeper understanding of reality that appealed to emotion and feeling but also to reason and intellect. 61 Eduardo Terra shared a similar interest in evoking realism through his desire for Uruguayan cinema to develop its “counter-information style.” Terra idealized the creation of a cinema of analysis and inventory, of investigation, and a deepening of reality to give their cinema a sense of authenticity.62 This search for reality was intricately linked to the social aspects of cinema and the dialectic created with audiences through the content presented but also the ritual and remembrance evoked through the curated programs of archivists who prioritized the screening of these films in cinematecas.

Film scholar Teshome Gabriel’s use of the metaphor of “ruin” helps us to think more deeply about how different cultural understandings of preservation are at the heart of the archival history of Latin American cinematecas. Gabriel describes how, during Native American healing ceremonies, meticulously created sand paintings are erased when they are finished. The sand paintings cannot be objectified or preserved because the tribe’s history lives in the culture, not in the object. Therefore the object must be destroyed—“it must be ruined; it must become a memory”—to become history.63 UCAL members found meaning in cinematecas as sites of contextual ruin by producing cinema, educating others about it, and assembling film archives to communicate the memories of colonialism so deeply rooted in popular culture and in the lives of individuals who were oftentimes semiliterate or illiterate. Cinematecas were the sites in which these memories circulated to recontextualize the past into the present as a timeless activity both through the screening of these films and through the archives that supported their exhibition. The “ruin” as it was exercised by authoritarian regimes (and their external influences) into censorship and/or the destruction of cinematecas for showing political films can be equated to the destruction of indigenous artifacts by the Spanish and Portuguese who colonized the native peoples of the Americas. As media and performance scholar Diana Taylor points out, not only did the colonizing wave of violence try to erase these indigenous forms, but it also tried to stamp out and discredit embodied memory systems.64 During the 1960s to 1970s, some cinematecas embodied an artificial memory system by socially encouraging popular spectatorship that placed memories of colonization alongside everyday realities so as to be able to resist through their bodies and gain a voice in the process. Furthermore, this is the making of a history.
of film preservation through the principle of social praxis called for by Latin American filmmakers and archivists in their manifestos.

UCAL’S TRANSFORMATION INTO CLAIM

According to Manuel Martínez Carril at the Cinemateca Uruguaya, UCAL members had become very competitive with one another, splitting into two philosophical orientations. One group was associated with Cuba’s cultural and political ideology, interested in formal theories of cinema that focused on the filmmaker’s ability to relate truth to the public—like Gutiérrez Alea’s “The Viewer’s Dialectic”—whereas the other school of thought was partial to a notion of empowerment for the people and sided with the realist work and vision of Brazilian filmmaker Nelson Pereira dos Santos, summarized by Martínez Carril: “It is the public and the people, and not us, who have the truth revealed.” The breakup is said to have occurred at the FIAF congress in Mexico City in 1976, and the fact that a FIAF congress took place in Mexico was in itself a sign that changes were happening within FIAF. Martínez Carril’s view also suggests that such competing views were strongly associated with cinematic practice and philosophical orientations that were perhaps more charged with controversy because of the entanglement of their identities as filmmakers, archivists, and educators. It is also evident from Martínez Carril’s statement that Cuban ideology played into these controversies and created sectarian positions. Manuel González Casanova believed that UCAL ceased to exist because of the larger geopolitical issues going on at the time. He mentions in a 2011 interview that the growing number of regional filmmaking organizations—particularly those coming out of Cuba—the lack of funding, and the threatening political situation made it difficult for archivists to be active in a supraorganization like UCAL. It is also clear that the writing of UCAL’s manifesto had succeeded in creating tension at least with one institution that was opposed to it, the Archivo Nacional de la Imagen–SODRE in Uruguay. It is important to note that until 1985, Uruguay had been under vigilant military rule. González Casanova attributed other internal conflicts within UCAL’s membership to their sense (or lack) of pan–Latin Americanism as well as to notions of preservation in relation to exhibition as opposed to technical forms of conservation. Both Martínez Carril’s and González Casanova’s opinions reflect the hardships and numerous factors involved in the dissolution of UCAL but also the complicated and political nature of large professional organizations.

In 1985, the Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Archivos de Imágenes en Movimiento (Latin American Coordinator of Moving Image Archives; CLAIM) replaced UCAL
as a regional network of Latin American archives within FIAF. Through this entity, the philosophical differences that broke apart the UCAL membership have been reconciled, and since then, CLAIM’s founding members have collaborated on several film archival undertakings. Of note is an extensive audiovisual media cataloging cooperative called BIBLIOCI that began in the early 1990s and incorporates catalogers from Latin America and Spain. Also in the 1990s, CLAIM partnered with the Havana-based La Fundación del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano (New Latin American Cinema Foundation) to sponsor a research initiative and inventory to assess the physical state and preservation needs of films in Iberoamerican film archives. The School on Wheels in Latin America itself was an initiative that materialized in 2004 during Trujillo Bolio’s tenure, when he was the director of the Filmoteca de la UNAM. Trujillo Bolio’s leadership on behalf of the School on Wheels enabled FIAF to raise the necessary financial support to establish the program through a partnership with the coproduction filmmaking fund Programa Ibermedia (Ibermedia Program). What is most interesting about the development of CLAIM is how its alliances have expanded to Spain and Portugal, particularly in relation to transnational filmmaking endeavors.

Additionally, within FIAF, Mexican and Puerto Rican moving image archives form a part of another regional organization, the Council of North American Film Archives, whereas Spanish and Portuguese film archives form a part of FIAF’s Association of European Archives. FIAF has expanded Latin America’s film archival network through its infrastructure, but so has FIAF expanded through its partnership with Programa Ibermedia and Iberoamerica’s audiovisual market, one that is increasingly in need of moving image archiving and preservation training. Yet CLAIM’s successes within FIAF must also be attributed to the history of UCAL as well as to its persistent efforts to join FIAF at a time when Latin America’s film archives were seen as underdeveloped. Even though Latin American cinematecas were initially the orphans of moving image archival infrastructure, they managed to build their own, and it was one in which the culture of collaboration was valued as well as being necessary for its survival.

THE SCHOOL ON WHEELS AND CUBA’S CINEMA HERITAGE

In 1972, Hector García Mesa reported that five out of seventy films produced during the silent period had been rescued (three were incomplete), a third of its film productions from the 1930s to 1950s had been lost, but a complete collection of Cuban cinema since 1959 remained intact. An example of a post-1959 film collection held by the Cinematheca de Cuba is the Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano (ICAIC Latin American Newsreel). A total
of 1,493 newsreels were created from 1960 to 1990, covering local and international events, such as the Vietnam War and interviews with Salvador Allende, Ho Chi Minh, and other important Third World figures. Each newsreel is approximately ten minutes long, and they were shown not only in Cuba but across Latin America, inspiring the creation of other newsreel efforts in the region. Original footage along with found stock footage was used to resourcefully and innovatively report the news going on around the world. Jorge Fraga, former head of production at the ICAIC, commented that owing to the lack of raw film stock, only sixty copies of each weekly newsreel were printed for screening at five hundred Cuban movie theaters and over four hundred cine móviles (mobile cinemas). The Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano played an important role at the aforementioned School on Wheels workshop in Cuba as a portion of them were used for instructional purposes in film preservation. Nine newsreels were restored as a result of the workshop; however, because of the nonfunctioning laboratory at the ICAIC, the Filmoteca de la UNAM’s laboratory was used for processing the newsreels that were selected for restoration.

Franco-Brazilian filmmaker Alice de Andrade from Films do Serro, Dolores Calviño, vice director of the Cinemateca de Cuba, and Trujillo Bolio organized the workshop. They brought together participants from all over Latin America representing different moving image archives, FIAF instructors from around the world, as well as other individuals outside of FIAF. Throughout the course of the three weeks, the instructors and participants engaged in intense ethical, theoretical, and practical discussions regarding film preservation. Yet at the core of this workshop was the concern surrounding the state of the film archive at the Cinemateca de Cuba. Its poor condition was reflected in the state of the newsreels used for instructional purposes, and it further made evident the bleak social realities facing Cuba’s film heritage. As of 2005, the condition of the newsreel 35mm original negatives was as follows: 475 were mutilated, 474 suffered from vinegar syndrome, and 541 were in stable condition. Fortunately, concurrent advocacy efforts helped to have the Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano’s original negatives accepted in 2009 for the registry of the Memory of the World program, and two years later, de Andrade produced a documentary about the Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano with Iván Nápoles, who had been a part of the production team for the newsreel. The film is titled Memória Cubana (Cuban memory; Brazil, Cuba, France, 2010). Cuba’s submission to UNESCO’s Memory of the World program followed the Filmoteca de la UNAM’s submission of Luis Buñuel’s Los Olvidados (1950), distinguished as the first moving image selected by the program for its preservation. It is important to note that the Filmoteca de la UNAM was also a force behind Cuba’s submission as well as in creating awareness
Film vault at the Cinemateca de Cuba's Film Archive. Photograph by the author.
about the value of the newsreels through its collaboration with the Cinemateca de Cuba.

The collective effort organized to preserve and articulate the value of the newsreel collection demonstrates how the principle of social praxis remains alive, though it is sometimes obscured under the rubric of archival administration or outreach. The history of the archival experience of Latin American countries and institutions discussed in this article is a call for archivists, educators, and scholars to take into account the nuances of preservation practices in different settings and in relation to the cultures of cinematic practice that created them. As the training and professionalization of moving image archivists are increasingly mobilized and globalized, it is important to continue to consider and critique whose standards of archival practice are generalized as ideal and what material conditions are necessary for archivists to perform to the best of their abilities. Such short-lived historical moments as the one presented here can teach us to expand moving image archiving and preservation philosophies and techniques. The experiences of Latin American film archivists call on us to imagine and study alternative archival configurations and methods for other such imperfect archives.

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NOTES

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1. Food, medicine, and medical supplies were the exception to the embargo, but this has changed throughout the course of the embargo’s history.

3. Since 1973, the FIAF Summer Schools have been instrumental in training individuals from all over the world in the area of film preservation. They are supposed to be held every three years, but in actuality, they have been held every two to five years. FIAF, “Education and Training for Archivists,” FIAF Education, http://www.fiafnet.org/uk/education.

4. This model is not new: a similar one called the “traveling workshop”—a weeklong thematic course that runs sequentially in several countries—has been successfully organized by the Southeast Asia–Pacific Audio Visual Archives Association. Ray Edmondson, “Rochester Reflections—the 10th FIAF Summer School, and Beyond,” Journal of Film Preservation 65 (December 2002): 70.


7. Ibid.

8. For more on this, see Julianne Burton, “Film Artisans and Film Industries in Latin America, 1956–1980: Theoretical and Critical Implications of Variations in Modes of Filmic Production and Consumption,” abstract in Martin, Latin American Cinema, 162. The words cinemateca, cineteca, and filmoteca are interchangeable Spanish-language translations for the French term cinémathèque. These institutions also took after the model of the French Cinémathèque in its mission to showcase specialized cinema.

9. Latin America and the Caribbean will hereinafter be referred to as “Latin America.”


11. Ibid.


17. Ibid.


20. María Beatriz Hernández Ortiz and María Eugenia Santiago Piña found that, in 1936, during Mexico’s postrevolutionary period, there was a filmoteca called Nacional de México (National Mexican Filmoteca), perhaps the earliest to be established in the region. It is not unlikely that there were other such short-lived archival efforts in Latin America. Hernández Ortiz and Santiago Piña, Filmoteca de la UNAM a 33 años de su nacimiento, reportaje (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma de México, 1995), 15. Still-existent film archives that were founded in the 1940s include the Uruguayan Archivo Nacional de la Imagen-Sodre, Fundación Cinemateca Argentina, and the Cinemateca Brasileira. In the 1950s, four more cinématékas were established: the Cinemateca Uruguaya, the Cinemateca at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Rio de Janeiro, Puerto Rico’s Archivo de Imágenes en Movimiento, and the Cinemateca de la Universidad Agraria del Perú. See Maria Rita Galvão, “La situación del patrimonio filmico en Iberoamérica,” Journal of Film Preservation 71 [July 2006]: 44.

21. The names of some of these institutions have changed or were incorrectly named in the publication. Current naming conventions are as follows: the Fundación Cinemateca Argentina for what was then the Cinemateca Argentina; the Instituto Nacional de Cinematografía is now the Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales; the Cinemateca Brasileña is the Spanish translation of Cinemateca Brasileira; the Cinemateca Universitaria de Chile is referred to as the Cineteca Universitaria de Chile as opposed to “cinemateca”; the film department’s archive at the UNAM is now the Filmoteca de la UNAM; and the Cinemateca de la Universidad Agraria del Perú is no longer active at what is now the Universidad Agraria La Molina. Filmoteca UNAM, “Filmoteca de la UNAM, 1960–1975” (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1975), 21.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., 22.

24. For more on Langlois’s cinema museum efforts, see Laurent Mannoni and Richard Crangle, “Henri Langlois and the Musée du Cinéma,” Film History 18, no. 3 [2006]: 274–87.


30. Emmanuel Vincenot, “German Puig, Ricardo Vigon, and Henri Lan-
imperfect archives and the principle of social praxis

glois, Pioneers of the Cinemateca de Cuba,” http://www.hermanpuig.com/article_cinemateca_de_cuba.php. See also Arturo Agramonte, Cronología del cine Cubano [Havana: Ediciones Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos, 1966], 86.


34. Ibid., 31.

35. Ibid., 32.

36. Ibid., 33.


38. Ibid., 39.


42. Frick, Saving Cinema, 19.

43. Héctor García Mesa, “Cinemateca de Cuba, informe al VI Congreso UCAL,” Cine Cubano 73–75 (November 1972): 123. Similarly, Caroline Frick cites a Cuban representative from the minutes of the FIAF Congress in 1973, when it was suggested that well-established European archives, or other affluent national archives, preserve the films of archival institutions in developing countries, as being under “the impression that they did not fully understand what the cinema meant for Latin American countries. Their films were not museum rarities which could be preserved abroad. They were living vehicles of propaganda and decolonization, a medium for culture in the widest sense of the word and must therefore be shown as much as possible.” Frick, Saving Cinema, 114.

44. New spectators were considered those who would have otherwise had little to no access to cinema and who were often reached via the Cinemateca’s cine-móvil [mobile cinema] ICAIC program. Héctor García Mesa, “Estructura del cine movil,” Pensamiento Crítico 42 (July 1970): 116. It should be mentioned that cine-móviles also existed in other countries, such as Mexico, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.


47. Also in 1972, and presumably after Achugar, Eduard Terra was arrested and imprisoned by the military. Filmoteca UNAM, “Filmoteca de la UNAM,” 37.


50. Craig L. Arceneaux, Bounded Missions: Military Regimes and Democratization in the Southern Cone and Brazil (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2001), 188.


52. Most of this information has been gleaned from Filmoteca UNAM, “Filmoteca de la UNAM,” 37.

53. Ibid., 36–37.


56. Penelope Houston, Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives (London: British Film Institute, 1994), 67.


59. Ibid.

60. David M. J. Wood, “Film and the Archive: Nation, Heritage, Resistance,” Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy 6, no. 2 (2010): 169. In a footnote, Wood acknowledges that film archives have “been the site of popular organization over related issues such as exhibition.” He mentions how the attempt to censor the exhibition of the film El coraje del pueblo (The Courage of the People; Jorge Sanjinés, Bolivia, 1973) in La Paz, Bolivia, caused enough public reaction and protest that the officials agreed to allow it to be screened.


66. Ibid., 50–51.


68. See Galvão, “La situación del patrimonio filmico en Iberoamérica.”