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Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes: On Brazil and Global Cinema, edited by Maite Conde and Stephanie Dennison. University of Wales Press, 2018, 286 pp.

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Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes: On Brazil and Global Cinema, edited by Maite Conde and Stephanie Dennison and with translations by Amber Rose McCartney, is the first collection of essays by Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes published in the English language. Most film scholars, even those not involved with Brazilian or Latin American cinema, will be familiar with the name of the film historian and critic, even if they have only heard of his monograph on Jean Vigo, which was first published in French in 1957 and translated into English by Salles Gomes himself in 1971 (with a new edition launched in 1998). However, in Brazil his legacy is still palpable today, most notably his attitude towards national cinema. Bringing together an unwavering socio-political commitment, a keen anticolonial engagement, a rigorous aesthetic approach and a concern for the material and intellectual heritage, Paulo Emílio set an example which is still recognisable in the work of both his disciples and of younger generations of Brazilian scholars.

The collection opens with a foreword by Randal Johnson which touchingly evokes the author's personal meeting with Paulo Emílio and outlines the most important details of his life, followed by an essay by Conde and Dennison which pinpoints the main features of his trajectory and style. These texts are a perfect gateway to his life and work for those not familiar with Paulo Emílio. Born in 1916 in São Paulo, a cultural journalist from the early 1930s onward, his left-wing militancy in opposition to Getúlio Vargas's regime resulted in him being imprisoned in 1935, and then, after he escaped, a two-year exile in Paris. There, he discovered the art of cinema under the guidance of Georges Franju and Henri Langlois and, on his return home, he started working as a film critic and divulgator of foreign films. After another stay in France, he played a crucial role in the founding of the Cinemateca Brasileira in 1956 and the introduction of film studies to Brazilian universities, and became gradually involved in a life-long reflection on Brazilian film culture. In order to explore the complexities of national cinema in his country, he paid close attention both to consecrated authors and to popular, underrated films, as well as to the film industry as a whole. This would be his major concern until his death in 1977.

The collection edited by Conde and Dennison is made up of a series of carefully selected texts which were published between 1941 and 1977, mostly in newspapers and journals such as *Clima* and *Suplemento literário*. In spite of its wide temporal scope, the book doesn't follow a strict chronology, and the texts are arranged in three blocks in accordance with thematic associations, each block with an introduction by the editors. The original publication

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dates are only listed at the start of the volume, instead of being mentioned in each of the texts, and they include the year but not the month. The interested reader can of course check the dates by going back to the first pages of the book, and knowing the month of publication is irrelevant in most cases. However, having the original date at a glance would be useful, especially for those texts dealing with political facts, and for some of those facts knowing the month would be important; for example, a 1945 article about fascism can be read differently if it was written in February or in November. Overall, this minor incompleteness might represent a hindrance for those readers who are particularly interested in the close links between Paulo Emílio's work and specific historical events, or in the evolution of his views. However, it also reflects the main goal of the volume, which is not to trace Paulo Emílio's trajectory in a linear way, but to provide a global vision of his thought through a careful work of montage—and this constitutes a strong, crucial contribution made by the volume.

In their introductory essay, Conde and Dennison express regret that one of Paulo Emílio's few texts translated into English to date, his seminal essay "Cinema: A Trajectory within Underdevelopment" (1973), has been widely circulated in a truncated version. While the original article included an opening reflection on cinema and underdevelopment in India, Japan, Egypt and Lebanon (the latter two problematically grouped as "Middle East countries"), the translation cut off that part and solely retained the major discussion, which the author devoted to his homeland. Conde and Dennison use this striking omission to affirm one of the principles of their collection. They indeed reject framing Paulo Emílio as a "local connoisseur", as if the scholars from peripheral countries were doomed to talk only about their national cinemas; as they write, "Quite simply, [the collection] presents Anglo-American readers with the work of a Brazilian film critic—work that is both national and international in its focus and reflections" (xxxiv).

Indeed, Paulo Emílio not only wrote extensively on non-Brazilian cinema; even his work concerned with national film culture has an international breadth, given that it establishes a strong dialogue with postcolonial theory. The editors therefore stress the relevance of Paulo Emílio in our consideration of not only Brazilian cinema but global cinema as well, and this dichotomy, which is coherent with his anticolonial stance, inflects both the title (*On Brazil and Global Cinema*) and the structure of the book, where Brazilian and international cinema are dealt with in different sections. In fact, the publication has coincided in time with the launch of a similar book in 2018, the first collection of texts by Glauber Rocha published in English, edited by Paulo Emílio's disciple Ismail Xavier. In this case, the book is divided into three parts in accordance with three books by Glauber published long ago in Brazil, two of them devoted to Brazilian cinema and a third one to foreign films. The dichotomy between the national and the international is also maintained within the general structure of the volume, although the editor has avoided it in the general title: *On Cinema*.

While recognition of Paulo Emílio as a global film critic is one of the goals of the book, the other is to frame his reflections on film in the context of his political commitment. As both Randal Johnson and the editors stress in their initial essays, Paulo Emílio's concerns with national cinema were a consequence of his anticolonial activism, which predated his passion for film and inflected his anti-imperialist stance. The structure of the collection is informed by this conviction. The first of its three parts, "Social and Cinematic Engagements", is composed of seven texts published over a long period, from 1942 to 1970, and in no chronological order. The first four texts are basically political in content, and include a collective antifascist manifesto from the *Clima* journal board first published during the Second World War (1942), a short text responding to the repercussions of that manifesto (1943), a reflection on George

Orwell's *1984* and the situation of international communism in the late 1950s (1957), and an analysis of the political tendencies of Brazilian youth in the aftermath of the Second World War (1945).

These four texts, which are almost devoid of references to films, are followed by three works in which Paulo Emílio comments on cinema and the work of the film critic from a general perspective. The movement from political analysis to film criticism is therefore fluid, with no interruptions, in a masterful montage. The first of these texts, "Start of a Conversation", is the first column Paulo Emílio published in the magazine *Brasil, Urgente* in 1963. In this short, brilliant presentation, he promises not to be moralistic, not to speak about politics, and not to be the kind of film critic who seeks to influence others from an ivory tower while nobody understands him. Instead, Paulo Emílio says that he wants to start a conversation with the reader which is attuned to his view of cinema as a popular art: "What is great about cinema is that we are all up to date with it, just as we are with politics, football or high-profile crimes. So this column will encourage conversations about films and other aspects of cinematic life" (33).

Coherently, the other two texts in this section expand on his reliance on the spectator and his scepticism toward the critic. While "Unnecessary Intellect" (1957) deplores the poor intellectual level of much film criticism, "A Century of Film" (1970) places the audience at the centre. For him, the history of cinema is the history of three generations of spectators, who attended public screenings from the early twentieth century until the 1960s. However, this life cycle is now completed and there is no upcoming fourth generation, because cinema has lost its social relevance due to the popularisation of television. The new waves may bring something new and valuable to art and politics, but detached from social relevance, and therefore far from the massively shared experience that was central to the cinematic event. In spite of the crepuscular tone of this text, the fact of placing the audience at the core of the reflection is coherent both with Paulo Emílio's attitudes as a film critic and with his sociocultural engagement. Therefore, the conclusion of the first part of the book, where four reflections on politics are brought together with three essays on cinema and film criticism, is that his political militancy informed both his views on cinema and on his profession, not from a Manichean or strictly formalist point of view, but through a consideration of the social spheres where film is consumed and discussed. In his opinion, cinema is a shared activity that brings together people from different generations, and an opportunity to spark a conversation between the critic and the reader.

This attitude gains practical consistency in the second and third parts of the book, "Foreign Dialogues" and "National Cinema", which are dedicated to international and Brazilian films respectively. Throughout the pages, Paulo Emílio's insistence on sharing with the reader his experience as spectator stands out. This is an experience that is purposefully devoid of mysticism or seriousness, but infused with persistence and hard work. In his text on Humberto Mauro, Mário Peixoto and Lima Barreto (1961), Paulo Emílio admits "I don't know Mauro's films very well" (158), while regarding Peixoto's *Limite* (1929) he says, "I watched it some 20 years ago and enjoyed it. The impossibility of seeing it again, however, has blurred my memory of its details" (159). In his 1941 review of *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941) he admits that "I first saw *Citizen Kane* at a morning session in which the film was shown only once. I arrived late and caught less than half of the film, understanding very little of the story being told"; however, it is "after viewing the film three four or five times, that the film really begins. This is the *Citizen Kane* that I will analyse here" (72).

Indeed, his recording of these setbacks sits together with a close analysis of the films, provided that the material is available. His accurate observation of performers' gestures, visual compositions and editing details are revealing of a great capacity for observation, but also of his many viewings of each movie. His careful descriptions of lighting and atmosphere in *The Long Voyage Home* (John Ford, 1940) and his detailed account of some of the editing techniques in *Citizen Kane* do not reek of any pedantry or analytical ostentation; instead, they are the result of his desire to share the film with the reader, to make the images appear in front of our eyes, in an attempt to build a conversation. This unprejudiced, down-to-earth but rigorous approach to film criticism is mirrored in one of the most beautiful texts of the collection, an article on André Bazin (1959) written shortly after the French critic's death. In it, he extols the fact that Bazin "voluntarily disarmed himself and scrupulously avoided imposing any pre-established system on a film, dutifully allowing it every opportunity to reveal itself. […] Each of Bazin's critiques is an adventure" (127). In fact, "His starting point was never Cinema with a capital 'C'—that is, an idea of what cinema should be—but rather what cinema has been and in fact is in the living world of film" (126). Can we imagine a better self-portrait for Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes himself?

In the part "National Cinema", Paulo Emílio's socio-political engagement not only emerges in the texts themselves, but also informs the way they are arranged in the structure as a whole. Instead of opening it with his wide-ranging essays on Brazilian film culture, such as "A Colonial Situation?" (1960) and "Cinema: A Trajectory within Underdevelopment", and following with the texts devoted to specific directors and films, Conde and Dennison organise the texts the other way round. First come the examples ("On Brazilian Cinema"), ranging from the arthouse filmmaker Walter Hugo Khouri to the popular comedian Amácio Mazzaropi, and then the general reflections ("For a National Cinema"), which include the above-mentioned essays, as well as an analysis of early Brazilian documentary and a series of short texts about the situation of Brazilian cinema which considers audiences, exhibitors, film archives and film clubs.

By placing films and filmmakers before the wide-ranging essays, the structure of this last part devoted to Brazilian cinema moves from the specific to the global, from the films themselves to film culture, and from aesthetics to politics. It chimes with the beginning of the collection, where purely political reflections preceded and somehow introduced the texts concerned with filmmaking; by returning to wider sociocultural issues at the end, the book achieves a circular quality—one where politics bookend film criticism. This structure is fair to Paulo Emílio's vital stances, and placing the more general reflections at the very end also keeps their provocations open and highlights their validity to understand contemporary phenomena.

The final text of the book, titled "The Latin American Situation" (1957), comments on a study on Latin American film culture by Rudá Andrade, one of the founders of the Cinemateca Brasileira. The article broadens Paulo Emílio's horizon from Brazil to Latin America, and regrets that Brazil film archives are in a worse situation than those in Uruguay and Argentina. In spite of its pessimistic undertones, it also brings a ray of hope. Following Andrade's analysis, Paulo Emílio highlights the role played by film clubs in Latin American rural areas. While in the big cities they are integrated into a wider cultural network, in small towns they constitute isolated enterprises that enhance the cultural and artistic life of the locals, as well as the community bonds and the social transformations. The text stresses once again the notion of cinema as a shared experience with a direct collective impact, those same ideas that Paulo Emílio highlighted when placing the audience at the core of the film experience. The difference here is that, under the title "The Latin American Situation", these small, informal

gatherings become a political conversation with a continental scope. This is a beautiful image with which to close what is a crucial collection: cinema brings the community together, and the unchanging role of the critic, either writing about Brazil, about Latin America or about global cinema, is continually to provoke this essential and inexhaustible dialogue between art and life.

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