

# INTRODUCTION

ON MAY 27, 2003, police barricades caged the four blocks bordering the zone that surrounds the Brukman textile and garment factory, while armed guards anxiously stood watch over a large group of demonstrators who had gathered just outside the riot fences. Situated on Avenida Jujuy, the central artery leading from the central commercial district of Buenos Aires to distribution hubs across the country, Brukman was the scene of one of the most dramatic factory takeovers in recent Argentine history. On this particular evening, it was also the scene of a film intervention. The directors Ernesto Ardito and Virna Molina brought *Raymundo*, their first feature-length film, to share with the assembled group of demonstrators as a means of expressing solidarity with the unemployed workers' movement and the cause of occupied factories. This moment demonstrates a key shift in Argentine politics of the audiovisual in which activist filmmakers framed a significant national debate and its relationship to the evolution of leftist political action in a significant space of civil society, where social movements and emerging political identities were coming together in common struggle. In the following pages, I examine how the political filmmaker became an important feature of mobilization and activism in the transforming landscape of oppositional politics in Argentina

and how the act of filmmaking came to assert an unprecedented authority to intervene in critical debates about the nation's political past and future.

The events leading up to the Brukman factory occupation were set in motion in December 2001, as Argentina faced a dramatic crisis of its financial system. While the Argentine government undertook highly controversial policies to limit the macroeconomic impact of the banking system's impending insolvency, individual citizens faced first restricted access to their own savings and then a dramatic devaluation of the Argentine currency. Pensioners watched their life savings disappear just weeks after investment bankers had successfully sent their own assets overseas. Vast portions of the middle class began to struggle to meet daily needs, and many quickly fell beneath the poverty level. Protesters filled the streets banging on pots and pans, some even vandalizing and setting fire to buildings housing banks and foreign companies, such as the Bank of Boston and McDonald's.

That same month the owners of the Brukman clothing company had decided to cut their losses by closing the factory and filing for bankruptcy. On December 18 the company's displaced employees, already owed considerable back pay, decided to take matters into their own hands. While the company's owners prepared to leave the country, a group of the newly unemployed workers broke into the compound's central building and locked themselves inside, prohibiting entry by the factory's owners and former managers. The workers then restarted the factory's normal production schedule, arguing that Brukman's bankruptcy was no reason for its workers to lose their source of livelihood. Government officials and the factory's proprietors made a number of forceful attempts to remove the workers that eventually resulted in a series of increasingly violent standoffs. By the time Brukman's owners finally succeeded in expelling the workers from the factory, a section of Avenida Jujuy had been turned into a militarized zone in the heart of the city.

Outside the riot fences and just meters away from federal tanks and tactical security squads, the former employees of the Brukman factory refused to retreat. At first they gathered to protest, shouting slogans and waving banners, but soon the workers set up tents to maintain a constant presence in the street. As news of their protest spread, the demonstrators were joined by members of a number of sympathetic organizations, including student associations, the Movement of Unemployed Workers, the Partido Obrero (Workers Party), representatives of neighborhood assemblies, and at least two young documentary filmmakers. The standoff continued for seventeen months, but in May 2003 the former factory workers and their supporters decided it was time to recover their occupation of Brukman. The filmmakers Ardito and Molina,

supporters of the Brukman workers, offered to use their film work to help communicate the ideological aims of the takeover. In the middle of the rally, the directors presented a film to the audience, a documentary that recounted the well-known struggle of an Argentine filmmaker and militant leftist who had been the victim of military violence. The directors used this film to signal a common cause between the workers and themselves as activist documentary filmmakers, a line of connection and political affinity between two sets of victims of state repression.

After the screening, Ardito and Molina announced plans to make a new film about the successful takeover of the occupied Cerámica Zanon factory in northwestern Patagonia, documenting the workers' fight to reclaim livelihoods and personal dignity in the wake of neoliberal reforms and antilabor violence.<sup>1</sup> Using testimony from the workers themselves, the film would document the stories of two ceramists' wives who had been kidnapped in the midst of a series of attacks on the factory by paramilitary groups. The directors explained their hope that the screenplay would create a bridge of understanding between the politics of the military dictatorship and the incomplete process of ridding the country of the regime's legacy of structural and economic violence. Their film *Corazón de fábrica* (*Heart of the Factory*), they announced, would communicate the workers' efforts to audiences around the globe and generate transnational support for the occupied factory movement.

Ardito and Molina's involvement in this most recent wave of factory takeovers in Argentina<sup>2</sup> reflects a shift in thinking about the politics of film that began in the late 1960s and culminated in the first decade of the new millennium.<sup>3</sup> This book is an attempt to describe how that ideological shift took place, drawing attention to what happened not only on screens but also in the moments of social interaction before, during, and after film screening events. I argue that contemporary political cinema in Argentina, particularly *documentalismo*, or activist documentary filmmaking, has become an alternative mode of political communication and engagement, one increasingly tied to social movements and institutions of the political left. Leftist intellectual communities, political organizations, and social movements alike have recognized the critical impact these films have made on national memory and identity debates, and the impact of the political film has been felt across all three realms.

This work explores the means by which filmmakers demarcated a new terrain of cultural politics, making the most of intervention in politicized public spaces, such as the one created in front of the Brukman factory. It follows the Cuban cinema scholar Michael Chanan's challenge to move beyond textual

analysis of film content to interrogate how films situate or position the viewer, recognizing the extraordinary role that these films have played in Argentina's recent political life, interacting with audiences in nontraditional settings and through exceptional means. To understand these films in their historical context is to understand how they began to engage in a thoughtful dialogue with an emerging political left and a growing public of politically committed groups, acknowledging "the space between the screen and the viewer's eyes" that makes these films truly distinct as a political phenomenon.<sup>4</sup>

Revising official historical narratives and retextualizing events of the past, filmmakers in Argentina began to reshape the nation's historical imaginary and to influence understandings of dictatorship and democracy, coding a new set of historical sensibilities onto the post-cold war political landscape. Ardito and Molina's alliance with the Brukman and Zanon workers illustrates how film became a key site of politics in Argentina, providing a frame for gauging the progress of civil society under democracy and for mounting a broad-based critique of neoliberalism and state violence. As filmmakers in Argentina have verified, film has the power to subvert state authority, offering alternative sources of historical knowledge and structuring alternative historical narratives. Film can function as a counterforce to hegemonic state discourses about the national past, suggesting critical viewpoints and attitudes toward events and ideas.

This book thus examines the role political filmmakers played in constructing a postmodern historical engagement with Argentina's recent past in dialogue with the post-cold war intellectual and political left. In the case of *Corazón de fábrica*, the collaborative work undertaken in producing the documentary not only unearthed the Zanon workers' lived experiences of exploitation and abuse at the hands of their employers but also provided a powerful corrective to the official story of the province and the state, whose authorities had previously cited truancy and irresponsibility when explaining the disappearance of workers. Ardito and Molina, by transporting repressed popular memories into public consciousness, took an active part in the construction of collective memory. They not only documented the repressed experiences of factory workers to a larger public but also communicated and interpreted information to the workers themselves, both during the process of making their film and afterward in exhibition spaces.<sup>5</sup>

To understand the genesis of political filmmakers' roles in generating a viable and *present* past, it is necessary to examine the interstices of practice and representation of film culture during Argentina's period of "transition to democracy." In the long process of seeking social justice and a return to

representative politics, transition culture faced a reckoning with history and a revisiting of traumatic and often incomplete collective memories of past events. A political and intellectual left, fragmented and largely dismantled by successive military regimes during the cold war,<sup>6</sup> also looked to film as a medium through which dissident and previously excluded voices could be meaningfully reintegrated into public debate. While many claim that a return to sustained democratic elections and civilian rule in 1983 marked a transformational change in Argentine political life, the left still struggled with important questions not only about the reinstatement of political process and constitutional protections but also about the extent of participation, the enforcement of human rights protections, and the political disempowerment determined by material inequality.<sup>7</sup> The left sought to demonstrate that the transition hardly ended socioeconomic injustice and certainly did not open the political playing field to all participants.

Understanding the context of political filmmaking and its relationship to the left requires challenging the standard framing of the transition, expanding the notion of transition along an extended timeline that begins with challenges to military rule of the late 1960s, when filmmakers became more directly involved in political activism, and reaches into the Néstor Kirchner administration, when the legacies of some of the most profound violence of the military regime's policies continued to be felt across the political and economic spectrum. The narrative thus begins in 1968 and moves through the dictatorship of 1976 and then into the postdictatorship period of 1983 to 1989 and beyond, tracing how cinematic politics evolved over this time to contextualize the flourishing of political cinema that began in 1983 and continues to the present. In discussing this history, I examine how political film practice transformed alongside critical moments for the left, as film activists using increasingly portable technologies began to adopt "camera as gun" revolutionary film techniques. Film simultaneously began to act as testimony to the present and as a means of facilitating political communication for organization. In many ways, the repression of filmmakers that followed in the 1970s and early 1980s mirrored the experience of many groups of leftists, though it was not until the early 1980s and the start of the return to civilian rule that filmmakers came to take on a more prominent role in mainstream political culture. Following my discussion of those issues, I examine the emergence of an independent film culture during the mid-1980s to the 1990s, culminating in the documentary film boom of the post-2001 financial crisis. Throughout these events, the relationship between filmmaking and political activism provided crucial momentum to political film culture, revealing much about the challenges

put to the redemocratizing state from a “new left” closely tied to emerging social movements. The book ends in 2004, when cinema legislation re-drafted under Néstor Kirchner cemented the gains of political filmmakers for independent filmmaking, and in particular, for the independent political documentary film.

## TRANSITION CINEMA AND DEMOCRACY

The year 1968 was critical for Argentine political cinema culture, a time when political filmmaking transcended any neat and dismissive interpretation as either the political genre film or “cinema with a social conscience.” Although earlier filmmaking had been an important venue for the expression of political critique, Argentine political and activist cinema traces its roots to the labor movement and the militant left as they intersected with the tumultuous events of 1968. Its principal assumptions, developed by an intellectual and cultural vanguard deeply engaged with political tensions between democracy and authoritarianism and wary of neocolonialism under the guise of the cold war, illuminate the left’s cultural response to a shifting national and international political economy. Activist filmmaking in this period was clearly influenced by the transnational flow of ideas about film and politics, art and revolution, associated with the cultural politics of the Cuban Revolution and earlier revolutionary cinema projects. Unlike later comparable cinema movements in other parts of the Latin America, however, political filmmaking in Argentina was remarkable in the scope and militant heights of its expression, its relative autonomy from the state, and its continuity between periods of dictatorship and democracy. Argentine film bore a distinctive relationship not only to the nation’s leftists but also to the legacy of Peronism, which set it apart as a vanguard of political filmmaking, one that would later be lauded as the intellectual wellspring of “Third Cinema.”

While events occurring in Argentina during the 1960s and 1970s mirrored changes happening in many other places, social and political transformations during this period were heavily influenced by the legacy of the populist president Juan Domingo Perón. Under Perón, Argentina had enjoyed a degree of economic expansion, fueled by industrial and urban growth, that by the late 1950s had resulted in the solidification of a working class eager to mobilize its political and material gains. The labor movement, the courting of which had powered Perón’s success, cast a tremendous shadow over the political landscape, even after Perón’s second presidency ended in 1955 in a

military-led rebuke. Throughout the decades that followed, tensions between the left, Peronists, and the military frequently came to a head, but in the fragile moments of a democratic opening for civilian rule, oppositional elements such as the labor movement, the Peronist resistance, and the student movement all asserted themselves. In the late 1960s, however, with the return of the military and increasing repression, factions within many of these social movements and dissident groups moved toward radicalism. Militant politics and attacks on the state, such as bombings, assassination attempts, kidnappings, and other violent acts, escalated rapidly beginning in 1969, from fewer than 200 in 1968 to a peak of nearly 1,400 such acts per year by 1972.<sup>8</sup> While these more radical expressions of discontent did not always reflect a more profound tidal shift, the most poignant moment of synchronicity between Argentina's historical experience of the 1960s and its Peronist past was the outbreak of strikes, work stoppages in industrial centers across the nation that paralleled France's general strikes of May 1968.

The nation's political left of the late 1960s was a product of the revolutionary spirit of the times, of Argentina's unique political past, and of conservative reactions to these challenges. Far from being a unified front, however, the left was riven by divisions and internal hostilities. Different groups formed factions that tended to identify themselves in terms of resistance to the state, with some favoring reform and others seeing a future only in armed revolutionary insurrection. Importantly, parties of the traditional left in Argentina and even Peronists faced extreme factionalism. Both fractured along divisions between factions firmly entrenched within the labor movement and its key bargaining tool of the general strike and those oriented toward militancy, such as armed struggle and the factory takeover. Anti-Peronism had long been a feature of some leftist circles, particularly those that viewed Peronism, and specifically the legacy of Perón, as authoritarian and patriarchal, a view espoused by the Communist and Socialist parties and many leftist intellectuals who had been repressed under Perón. Despite sharing common cause against military dictatorship, the place of Peronism within the left complicated the landscape of political activity around filmmaking. Individuals in the film industry had suffered at the hands of Perón, and many had been persecuted under his rule, but this period also marked significant advances for state subsidization of film,<sup>9</sup> and eventually, the most important filmmakers union came to be dominated by left-leaning Peronists. These complicated relationships among film, the left, and Peronism propelled film activism in the 1960s and 1970s as part of a set of central narratives of film activism and intervention in national politics.

The radicalization of politics during the late 1960s and early 1970s provided conservative sectors with a crisis of security that the military used to justify deposing the civilian government. Although incidences of violence declined sharply in the period of democratic opening beginning in 1973, the military invoked these events to court international support for taking power again in 1976. The successful coup orchestrated that year began a period of military rule marked by the most violent state repression in Argentina's history, all with the approval of the U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger and other world leaders. Kissinger counseled that the coup's leaders should act with all due haste to counter the "terrorist acts" of revolutionary groups. The military regime, which remained in office until 1983, took the cold war mantra of national security seriously, stamping out supposed enemies of the state and rationalizing the national economy to stabilize and better integrate Argentina into hemispheric trade relations, all in the name of democracy, a political utopia that the far right would embrace only once order and progress could be effectively reestablished.

The city of Buenos Aires provided a key setting for filmmakers to respond to these decades of political upheaval. At a time when politically active filmmakers faced censorship, blacklisting, forced exile, and even kidnapping if they were suspected of involvement in leftist politics, the city provided them a nexus of exchange and collaboration, even when they were on the run. In the period after 1983, urban spaces associated with groups such as nongovernmental organizations, cultural centers, universities, film schools, and the municipal government came to play an increasingly critical role in the making and viewing of politically oriented films. During the democratic transition, the city witnessed the film sector mobilize, with film activists displaying renewed energies to deal with the complicated legacy of the dictatorship.<sup>10</sup>

Examining political filmmaking along a time horizon that connects the works from the 1960s to those of the next century's first decade breaks from traditional periodizations of Argentine film scholarship, which tend to divide the subject into decades and compare across expanses of time without examining continuities. Instead of taking this tack, I identify three distinct generations of "transition filmmaking" to emphasize the specific contributions of three sets of filmmakers vital to the transformation of film culture's role in political life during the long transition period. I use the term *generation* to refer to sets of filmmakers who became active politically during roughly the same period. This choice of terminology is meant to suggest, as it does in describing population demographics, that the start of activist filmmaking careers is really just a beginning and that although there is significance in the

collective experience of time, this feature is not sufficient to determine any given individual filmmaker's intersection with his or her time. I also use the term to argue that the repercussions of political film work were not tightly confined within decades, historical moments, film groups active at a given time, or film genres; rather, political filmmaking was constantly adapting and evolving over time, even in periods of official silence.

The periodization of this work also departs from the standard model of political history of Argentina, which treats "transition culture" as overlapping with the civilian administration of Raúl Alfonsín, from 1983 to 1989. Starting from the premise that the circulation of films relevant to the political opening was not bounded by the political markers of this time period, I push the temporal endpoints in both directions in the hope of illuminating the continuities of film activism in reaction to the neoliberalism, social inequality, human rights violations, and repression that characterized the cold war era in Argentina and the rest of Latin America. The political economy of transition culture after 1983 included the rediscovery and circulation of critical films from the late 1960s and early 1970s. It also included cinematic revisitings of Argentina's history of labor struggles that antedated 1968, an important feature of which included the dramatic reenactment and revisioning of the place of filmmakers in that history. These "present pasts" formed an important part of the landscape of ideas about filmmaking that informed political cinema produced in the 1980s and afterward. If we think about political transitions as broader democratic openings involving greater profundity than just a return to free elections, we can see that the cultural transformations of political filmmaking in Argentine cold war history followed a distinct ideological progression, from the militant cinema that emerged in 1968 to well beyond the final days of the Alfonsín administration, culminating in 2004, when political cinema was officially recognized as a critical feature of political and intellectual life in Argentina, worthy of institutional support.

In categorizing individual examples of Argentine political cinema as "transition film,"<sup>11</sup> I mean to assign a specific political valence to the cinematic encounter of these films and to political film culture within the political economy of transition culture. I have identified three generations of transition filmmakers belonging to this overarching and eventually quite broad-based cultural phenomenon. The first generation produced films prior to 1976, both during the dictatorship of 1966–1973 and during the somewhat more open period beginning in 1973. These films were frequently censored and generally formed part of an underground grassroots activism, screening either clandestinely or in spaces of exile. Many of these films circulated only after

the democratic opening in 1983. The second generation made their first films after the reintroduction of democracy in 1983. Their works began to stake out new territory for film's entry into national political and historical debates and entered the national film scene as filmmakers in the first generation were becoming more widely known, and at least a few were continuing in more advanced careers. Finally, the most recent generation of filmmakers, those who began working after 1989, past the endpoint of Alfonsín's formal transition government, made films that not only underscored the accomplishment of filmmaking's strategic positioning as a result of the cultural politics of the transition but also called into question the notion of the transition as a *fait accompli*. This generation came of age as the institutions of cinema were being radically stripped down and reinvented in the name of free trade. Reperiodizing political filmmaking in this way highlights the continuities and contrasts between the cultural institutions and markets of the dictatorship and those of the civil governments that followed in their wake, specifically in terms of the everyday regulation of film work. It also proposes an analytical bridge between generations of filmmakers and their political habits that have traditionally been studied only in isolation or in very general comparative terms.

Transition cinema began to shape a new political subjectivity that was highly accessible to other kinds of intellectual projects, particularly to those of the Argentine intellectual left. Film projects traded in iconic moments in the history of the left, reinvigorating successful narratives and framing more troubled aspects of this history within a critical and reflective consciousness. Filmmakers relied on the ability of audiences to quickly read and identify historical news footage and important figures of the left as representations of ideas that transcended the scripted narrative. In this regard, transition film as an event wielded a tremendous mimetic capacity for representing competing narratives of the cold war era. Filmmakers of the transition reproduced coded encounters among images, testimonies, narratives, and sound that could simultaneously resonate with and challenge subjective experiences of the past. In a general sense, these films situated the individual viewer within a past only partially accessible but from which new collective memories could be cobbled together. As a result, viewing films in Buenos Aires during this period was a highly self-conscious experience. The individual film viewer, typically well aware of the constructed nature of a film's representation of a particular past, actively negotiated categories of understanding through which the film could operate both on its subject and its spectator.

Viewers of political films during the long transition actively elected to participate in this process of imagining and reimagining the past, willfully allowing their own political identities to be called into question. In this way, film also became a vehicle for and common referent within emerging debates in other politicized spaces. Argentine film moved into a controversial realm that, instead of using history as background, made history the revealed content of the film. As a register of politicized representations of the past, these films also began to suggest possible new or newly refined political subjectivities. Providing filters of intelligibility for connecting to meaningful pasts within the present, political filmmaking by 2001 had become deeply embedded in the political projects of social movements and in the framing of left-oriented activist resistance to neoliberalism and social inequality. Some transition films, particularly those of the third generation, even went so far as to suggest specific revised categories of posttransition political subjecthood that would better jibe with the challenges of realizing meaningful citizenship. They suggested multiple ways Argentines simultaneously positioned themselves within and were positioned by historical narratives of dictatorship and resistance, neoliberalism, and state violence. Transition film became a key instrument in setting the tone of left-leaning activism for intellectuals in search of a more authentic encounter with historical silences and, later, for a digital media generation with new demands for a wider political community.

## BEYOND FILM AS TEXT

The chief obstacle to the historian trying to map the political ecology of film in Argentina during this period is the task of teasing out the social and political history of film practice and culture from the myriad responses any given film provokes. Although the role of culture in transitions has recently come into sharper focus in the theoretical literature on democratic political life and civil society, studies of Argentine cinema have tended to approach the subject predominantly from the study of film as a cultural text.<sup>12</sup> Cultural studies and film scholars have made tremendous progress in identifying subjectivities crafted on-screen, and this book is heavily indebted to their fine work.<sup>13</sup> One leading theory of this literature argues that the transition in Argentina and its cultural by-products were a highly sophisticated performance that concealed the persistence of political and economic inequalities.<sup>14</sup> According to this hypothesis, film was the commercial consequence of a

market for social memory, and cultural production during the transition merely served as a means for the transition administration to establish control over the symbolic field. Critics of this hypothesis argue that Argentina's postdictatorship period reveals art's power to speak truth to silences and ruptures in the official historical record. They assert that the visual and literary arts brought about new collective understandings, primarily emerging from an organic ethical humanitarianism, that, together with a determined human rights movement, challenged both the new political order and the left's entanglement in the violence of the past. While each of these positions adds depth to the multiplicity of meanings and interpretations of the period, neither conclusion adequately describes the political economies within which transition films actively took part.

I thus initiate this study by examining relationships among filmmakers, their collective organizations, political activism, and the state. I emphasize the complex processes of cultural production and reproduction within this context and focus on the political alliances and directives of filmmakers that formed part of political cinema culture. In doing so, I turn the investigative and thematic gaze away from the films per se and toward the political landscape of filmmaking itself. I take this more expansive view of political filmmaking and activist cinema principally because most directors and state institutions regulating cinema rarely saw themselves or their work as separated from historical situations or political contexts. I study film practice and other by-products of cinema culture not only for their on-screen politics but also as "important events in their own right."<sup>15</sup> This is not to say that the films somehow should not speak for themselves, for certainly they do, but my aim here is to fill in a significant gap that has been overlooked by studies that focus primarily on film content.

In part, this approach is a response to the way that the linguistic turn in contemporary scholarly writing on Argentine film has decentered the filmmaker and the political economy of filmmaking, replacing individual agency with representational analyses of film as text. The tendency of this critical approach has been to "desocialize" culture, such as cinema, stripping a degree of political agency from filmmakers and from audiences alike in the process of reifying a general narrative of culture as politics. But the everyday political and social habits that surround cultural objects are just as important as (if not more important) than the politics they may exemplify and inscribe. Political filmmaking in Argentina has a material and social life in which producers, filmmakers, activist groups, critics and intellectuals, and audiences actively participate, each making an important contribution

to the varied landscape of political concerns expressed and transported into public consciousness through film.<sup>16</sup> Within this heterogeneous political economy, production decisions are also governed by system-level operations, such as the laws governing cinema production and regulating viewing experiences, underlining the decisive magnitude of power relationships between cultural producers and the state. In my research and analysis, I constantly sought to forge a more integrated methodology and conceptualization of cultural politics by combining an analysis of social structures and political economy with cultural theory. I reintroduce the political film in Argentina to an older tradition of history of ideas that connects practice to representation.<sup>17</sup>

The nature of the questions that drove this project led me along an unusual and somewhat complicated journey. I examined documents related to individual filmmakers, people and organizations connected to the industry, and the regulatory apparatus of the state in setting the parameters for film production and film politics. In doing so, I was most interested in finding out how the institutional settings of film, which often changed with each new government or as a result of broader economic shifts, influenced the way filmmakers went about their work. In addition to reviewing legislation and records of regulation, I looked at previously unexamined industry archives, film union records, obscure trade magazines, film school curricula, directors' requests to the national film institute for funding, "organizational memories" of film institutions, and production data. I also sought to assess the role of state power in a changing cinema culture by analyzing film policy, legal conflicts, political campaign rhetoric, senate proposals, executive decrees, and cultural ministry initiatives. I read directors' initial proposals and *post facto* narratives of filmmaking aims against their official submissions to the national registry of films, which contain detailed records of the justifications filmmakers used to convince the state of the merits of their projects, in order to piece together the complex negotiation of ideological projects behind the scenes. I went to hear makers of both films and film policy speak about their careers in retrospective events at museums and film festivals across the continent. I examined debates between filmmakers and the organizations and political entities that negotiated their relationships to the viewing public or markets in concert with the accounts of filmmakers and films themselves. Along the way, I often found myself checking my intuition in conversations, observations, and informal interviews. Together, this variety of sources helped form my interpretation of the many internal mechanisms that drove production before and throughout the long transition.

I decided to approach the more complicated question of reception by examining the relationships between groups of viewers brought together by acts of film exhibition. For instance, I open a window onto the interested parties in film circulation and film culture by examining the financing and sponsorship of film production, promotion of film products, and cycles of film exhibition in university faculties, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, film clubs, and cultural centers, among other venues. I was particularly interested in the physical spaces of these exhibition events, the way space determined relationships of film viewing to the politics of the social encounter and to the referentiality of film content, and where possible, I tried to determine who came to see these films, who advertised them, how they were publicized, and in what material context they were screened. Were there tables of propagandist party literature outside the theater doors? Was the theater part of an educational space? Were screenings designed to attract the average passerby, or were they better suited to a more exclusive and informed public? I also was compelled to examine the way filmmakers, film critics, and public figures reframed the history of the film industry, particularly in the literature and the pamphlets that introduced or critiqued film exhibitions, and specifically how they treated censorship, blacklisting, and disappearances of filmmakers during the dictatorship. This helped indicate the variety of narratives about earlier generations of political filmmakers presented to and received by those who would form opinions about filmmaking's political relevance during the later transition. Finally, I examined the field of film study in intellectual journals, scholarly works, critical sources, and the popular press to gauge the reception of films and filmmakers within well-defined intellectual communities.