




5-2014

# Picturing Argentina: Myths, Movies, and the Peronist Vision

Currie K. Thompson  
*Gettysburg College*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/books>

 Part of the [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [Latin American History Commons](#), [Latin American Languages and Societies Commons](#), and the [Latin American Studies Commons](#)

**Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.**

---

Thompson, Currie K. Picturing Argentina: Myths, Movies, and the Peronist Vision. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2014.

This is the publisher's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution.

Cupola permanent link: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/books/54>

This open access book is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact [cupola@gettysburg.edu](mailto:cupola@gettysburg.edu).

---

# Picturing Argentina: Myths, Movies, and the Peronist Vision

## Description

No individual has had greater impact on Argentine history than Juan Domingo Perón. The years 1943–1945, when he was an influential member in his nation’s governing junta, and 1946–1955, when he was its president, were tumultuous ones that transformed Argentina. Perón was a highly controversial figure, and his memory continues to provoke intense and often acrimonious debate. Moreover, the nature of his legacy resists neat classification. Many of his achievements were positive. He oversaw the passage of progressive social legislation, including women’s suffrage and prison reform, and he implemented programs that aided the nation’s poor and working classes. On the other hand, he tolerated no opposition and, as president, incarcerated even former supporters who questioned his actions, and he ordered the closure of newspapers that he judged inappropriately critical.

His regime’s impact on the nation’s cinema is similarly difficult to classify. When Perón came to prominence, Argentina had developed one of the two major film industries in Latin America. His government intervened in this sphere to an unprecedented degree and in contradictory ways. It encouraged production by providing financial credits for filmmakers, and in 1948 Perón and his wife, Evita, a former actress, presided over the inauguration of the nation’s international film festival in Mar del Plata. Conversely, his administration blacklisted a remarkable number of directors and performers, censored and prohibited movies, and required all films made in Argentina to portray his regime’s accomplishments in a favorable manner.

Although Perón’s central role in Argentine history and the need for an unbiased assessment of his impact on his nation’s cinema are beyond dispute, the existing scholarship on the subject is limited. In recent decades Argentina has witnessed a revival of serious film study, some of which has focused on the nation’s classical movies and, in one case, on Peronism. None of this work has been translated into English, however. The only recent book in English to study this topic divides its attention between Argentine cinema and radio and dedicates only one chapter to film during the Perón years. *Picturing Argentina: Myths, Movies, and the Peronist Vision* is the first English-language book that offers an extensive assessment of Argentine cinema during first Peronism. It is also the first study in any language that concentrates systematically on the evolution of social attitudes reflected in Argentine movies throughout those years and that assesses the period’s impact on subsequent filmmaking activity.

By analyzing popular Argentine movies from this time through the prism of myth—second-order communication systems that present historically developed customs and attitudes as natural—the book traces the filmic construction of gender, criminality, race, the family, sports, and the military. It identifies in movies the development and evolution of mindsets and attitudes that may be construed as “Peronist.” By framing its consideration of films from the Perón years in the context of earlier and later ones, it demonstrates that this period accelerates—and sometimes registers backward-looking responses to—earlier progressive mythic shifts, and it traces the development in the 1950s of a critical mindset that comes to fruition in the “new cinema” of the 1960s. [*From the Publisher*]

## Keywords

Juan Domingo Perón, Argentina, cinema

---

**Disciplines**

Film and Media Studies | Latin American History | Latin American Languages and Societies | Latin American Studies

**Publisher**

Cambria Press

**ISBN**

9781604978797

**Comments**

This is the introduction and first chapter of Professor Thompson's book, *Picturing Argentina: Myths, Movies, and the Peronist Vision*.

# PICTURING ARGENTINA

*Myths, Movies, and the Peronist Vision*



**CURRIE K. THOMPSON**

## INTRODUCTION

In 1950 Argentine audiences saw the premieres of two national films that portray characters waking up. In the first of these, Daniel Tinayre's *La vendedora de fantasías* (The costume-jewelry/fantasies sales clerk), Marta (Mirtha Legrand), a department-store clerk, helps her police-detective fiancé (Alberto Closas) investigate a gang of jewel thieves, falls into a trap from which there is no escape, and awakens to discover that the entire affair was a dream.<sup>1</sup> This story line and conclusion are similar to and may have been inspired by those of a U.S. movie, *The Woman in the Window* (Fritz Lang, 1944), in which Richard Wanley (Edward G. Robinson) also wakes up from a dream that criminals are about to murder him. Once they have awakened, both Marta and Wanley find themselves surrounded by disturbing remnants of their dreams that make them question whether they are in fact awake. Writing about *The Woman in the Window*, Slavoj Žižek has remarked that Wanley awakens in order to continue dreaming (*Looking Awry* 16). His observation can also apply to Marta in *La vendedora de fantasías*.

In the second Argentine film mentioned, Leopoldo Torres Ríos and Leopoldo Torre Nilsson's *El crimen de Oribe* (Oribe's crime), another young woman wakes up.<sup>2</sup> Lucía (María Concepción César) has been

placed by her father in a trance in which she lives eternally on Christmas Eve, thus circumventing her doctor's decree that she will die on 25 December. An intrusive reporter (Roberto Escalada), fascinated by a family that gathers each day around a Christmas tree to sing carols, breaks Lucía's spell and brings about her demise. The contrast between this movie and Tinayre's film is striking. In *La vendedora de fantasías* Marta's dream produces anxiety, and although her awakening leaves her confused, it brings relief. In *El crimen de Oribe* Lucía's dream prolongs her life, and waking up is fatal. This ending appears to suggest that life itself is an oneiric state after which there is only death.

Both movies play with a common motif that has captivated the attention of thinkers from Zhuangzi to Cervantes and beyond: the relationship between consciousness and illusion, between what is imaginary and what people perceive as real. Although human beings operate on the assumption that these two domains are neatly separated, everyday reality influencing illusions but not vice versa, at times one must acknowledge that this arrangement is not so clear-cut. Recognizing the impact of illusions on life, Vivian in Oscar Wilde's "The Decay of Lying" famously proclaims, "Life imitates art" (53).<sup>3</sup> Vivian celebrates this phenomenon because she believes art compensates for nature's "lack of design ... and defects" (1). *El crimen de Oribe*, in which Lucía's fictional Christmas Eve wards off nature's ultimate defect, death, appears to share that view.

Post-Gramscian thinkers are more inclined to worry that art's designs may be insidious, that mass art, exemplified by genre films or pulp fiction, blinds those who consume it to the real conditions of their suffering, seducing them into complacency. Although their arguments address issues specific to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the fear that art blinds its audiences is old. Over two millennia ago, Plato proposed freeing society from the noxious influences of literary falsehood by expelling poets from the community. Because *The Republic* was itself a work of fiction, his solution was paradoxical. It was also, in

the most fundamental sense, unthinkable. Human beings cannot purge themselves of art because, as Žižek has explained, “(symbolic) reality [is] always-already ... ‘virtual’ ... [and] every access to (social) reality has to be supported by an implicit phantasmic hypertext” (*Plague* 143). Stated differently, fiction is an integral part of how people think. It blinds, and it also opens the eyes.

This book explores how this process works in movies made during *primer peronismo*, or first Peronism, a period that includes the years when Juan Domingo Perón was a major figure in the nation’s governing junta (1943–1945) and his first and second terms as president (1946–1955) but excludes his third presidency (1973–1974). This was a volatile period in Argentine history, framed by two coups and characterized by intense social conflict and reform. It was also an eventful time in the evolution of the nation’s cinema. This book conducts its examination through the prism of *myth*, a term defined by Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*. According to Barthes, myth is a “second-order semiological system” (114); that is, it is communication built on previous chains of meaning that include “photography, *cinema*, reporting, sport, shows, publicity,” as well as speech and written discourse (110, my emphasis). Its structure is like that of the dream (114), and it “transforms history into nature” (129) or takes “historical reality, defined ... by the way [humans] have produced or used it ... and ... gives in return a *natural* image of this reality,” making it appear that what it portrays is the way things inherently are, rather than the product of human activity (142).

In film studies myth is linked to genre criticism—the analysis of formulaic plot patterns or, as genre critics put it, recognizable syntactic and semantic configurations that define different groups of film labels such as *western*, *melodrama*, and the like.<sup>4</sup> So understood, film genres are “a site of struggle and co-operation among multiple users” (Altman 211). Myth is reflected in this arena of struggle and cooperation. For the most part, it is a conservative force that presents the status quo as a given, and Barthes has stressed that “[s]tatistically, myth is on the right” (148).

Myths are not static, however; they change, John Cawelti has explained, when they are “no longer fully adequate to the imaginative needs of our time” (260).

Sometimes the rate at which myths evolve becomes accelerated. The years of first Peronism were a time when Argentine cultural myths underwent remarkable transformation. To base an examination of this process exclusively on movies made between 1943 and 1955, however, produces a distorted view of these years’ influence because doing so fails to take into account seemingly Peronist attitudes in the nation’s cinema prior to 1943 and encourages an exaggerated understanding of first Peronism’s impact. Although this period was unquestionably transformative, its films built on and accelerated—and in some cases registered backward-looking responses to—mythic shifts evident in earlier cinema. It also witnessed innovations that came to fruition only after 1955 and that cannot be fully appreciated unless one takes into account movies from subsequent years. For these reasons, this book frames its consideration of films made between 1943 and 1955 in the context of earlier and later ones.

Argentine movies produced in all the years under consideration provide evidence of both change and stasis in the nation’s collective mindset, and it is instructive to examine them in the context of first Peronism, which was characterized by intense, often bitter conflicts. Underlying the political clashes of those years were incompatible mythic systems. Many of Perón’s opponents saw economic class divisions as “natural.”<sup>5</sup> His followers deemed them a perversion. Disagreement was not limited to economic issues, however. Also at stake were the “natural” roles of men and women, the “natural” behavior of fathers and mothers, the “natural” leadership talents of military figures, the “natural” implications of ethnicity, the “natural” role of authority, the “natural” practice of sports, and the “natural” response to crime. All these matters were of concern to Argentines during first Peronism, and all of them are reflected in the nation’s movies that premiered at that time.



It would be unrealistic to suppose that Argentines divided consistently into neat groups, the same subsets of the population sharing the identical views in each category. Individuals who advocated a progressive understanding of economic issues, for example, might hold regressive ideas about gender. It follows that an examination of the social myths communicated in movies from this period uncovers not a uniform design but a *mélange* of clashing and intersecting patterns. Amid this confusion one may discern evolution and stasis, change and continuity (and in some cases, resistance). One may identify in this cacophony strains that are more dominant than others, but no one voice drowns out all the rest.

Although the Peronist regime made noticeable efforts to direct and control this discourse, it was never entirely successful in doing so. Nor was it the driving force behind the impulse for social change that is evident in many films. In *Culture of Class* Matthew Karush has demonstrated that malaise with the nation's economic stratification was manifest in popular culture well before Perón became a major political figure. In the following chapters, I show that cinematic urgings for other reforms that may be construed as Peronist also antedate his participation in government.

Organized according to theme, this book begins by studying the dynamics of film authorship in Perón's Argentina. It then examines cinematic representations of gender myths, shifts to a consideration of race and ethnicity, surveys treatments of crime and justice, and concludes with attention to cinema movements that attempt to transcend myth. Chapter 1 studies how groups with different interests participate in the collective authorship of movies and summarizes developments during first Peronism that modify this process. It identifies common mythical assumptions shared by participants with conflicting ideologies.

Then, chapter 2 examines the treatment of gender in two types of films: those portraying cross-dressing and a group resembling the U.S. screwball comedy. For the most part, these movies employ humor to subvert gender myths, and they portray as admirable strong women who

transgress socially defined restrictions. Some, however—especially those premiering toward the end of the Perón years, as well as those targeting working-class audiences—reveal a suspicion of assertive women.

Chapter 3 studies motion pictures that show women in traditionally male professions. Some of these emphasize the discriminatory nature of gender-defined work and praise the courage of women who circumvent restrictions that bar them from specific jobs. Some present women performing “men’s work” in a matter-of-fact manner, suggesting that their doing so is too normal to merit notice. Some are critical of working women who neglect their families. Others portray women in positions of authority as inept. Unlike representations of women in temporary transvestite films and screwball comedies, the portrayal of women in the workplace did not evolve during the years under consideration; rather, contrasting attitudes are evident in movies from the entire period.

In chapter 4 I look at movies about maternity. These films—all of which present motherhood as the bedrock of female identity—may be divided into two groups: the majority, which exalt loving and nurturing mothers, and a handful of others that chastise women who neglect their children. This chapter gives special attention to the maternal melodrama, in which a mother sacrifices custody of her son or daughter (and sometimes her own life) for the child’s benefit.

Chapter 5 shifts from myths governing female conduct to the construction of masculinity and analyzes filmic portrayals of fathers. Typically, movies from these years equate fatherhood with authority and identify “good” fathers as those who hold authority and exercise it wisely. A large number, however, condemn fathers who abandon their responsibility or who act in a tyrannical manner. A handful show fathers who, like female protagonists of some maternal melodramas, die in order to fulfill their parental role.

Continuing the exploration of male roles, chapter 6 explores the mythic equation of masculinity with soldiering by examining movies

that focus on the military. In all of these, soldierly conduct is a defining masculine value—the equivalent of maternity for women. Some movies portray military training as key to transforming boys into men. Others show men participating in battle, and three noteworthy films focus on male characters that die heroically in combat. An examination of these in the context of ancient tragedy explains how they reinforce the equation of military ideals with masculinity.

Cinematic representations of sports are the subject of chapter 7. Many motion pictures premiered during these years reinforce social myths linking sports with masculinity, and one highly popular movie equates dying in athletic competition to perishing in battle. The treatment of sports in films from this period is significantly less uniform than that of soldiering, however. Several movies mock the values sports are supposed to inculcate, and one questions the “natural” link between sports and masculinity.

Chapter 8 shifts from the analysis of gender myths to a scrutiny of those shaping understandings of race and ethnicity. It examines films portraying immigrants, blacks, and indigenous citizens. Movies from this period—many of which were directed by or featured artists who had emigrated from Europe—usually portray immigrants in a positive light and praise Argentina as a mecca of opportunity. A few challenge this assumption, and some use ethnic stereotypes as a source of humor. The portrayal of Afro-Argentines evolved. Movies made prior to 1943 portray blacks as blending unnoticeably with citizens of European descent; that year, however, films began recognizing the existence of racial prejudice—and portraying it as a phenomenon characteristic of pre-Peronist Argentina or of other countries. In contrast with immigrants and blacks, indigenous Argentines are for the most part treated negatively in movies focusing on nineteenth-century military campaigns against them.

The development in crime movies of a mindset that, following the pattern of U.S. film noir, questions the Manichaeian distinction between culpability and innocence is the subject of chapter 9. This chapter also

examines the introduction during these years of the police documentary, produced with the cooperation of government law-enforcement bodies, a genre that reinforces Manichaeian classifications and praises the regime for protecting citizens from criminals.

Finally, chapter 10 examines filmmakers' efforts to debunk myth and portray reality honestly. Movies endeavoring to accomplish this goal fit into two categories: those imitating the practices of Italian neorealism and an ostensibly contrasting style of film that scrutinizes Argentine society from an intellectual perspective. Both strains began to develop around 1950, but neither type flourished until after Perón's overthrow in 1955.

## NOTES

1. Except as noted, translations of quotations are mine. With titles, when I have found a generally accepted English one for an Argentine movie I refer to, I have used it. Frequently, however, I have had to provide one myself. Titles are notoriously difficult to translate because they often involve wordplay that cannot be easily rendered in English. *La vendedora de fantasías* is such a case. The word *fantasías* in Spanish means “costume jewelry” and “fantasies,” and both meanings are essential to the title because Marta, a costume-jewelry salesperson, is prone to fantasy induced by reading mystery novels.
2. Although Torre Nilsson, who later won recognition in Cannes, co-directed *El crimen de Oribe* with his father, Leopoldo Torres Ríos, the film’s intellectual tone marks it as the son’s creation. Raúl Campodónico has reported that in 1946 Torre Nilsson submitted to EFA studios a proposal to direct a film adaptation of Bioy Casares’s *El perjurio de la nieve* (The snow’s perjury; Campodónico 76). Although EFA rejected this project, four years later, working with his father, he brought it to fruition and gave it the title *El crimen de Oribe*. Tomás Eloy Martínez, concurring that the plan to adapt Bioy Casares’s narrative originated with Torre Nilsson, added that “although he was credited as co-directing with his father, the latter limited himself to exercising a general supervision” (*La obra* 37–38).
3. The claim that narrative (which includes film) influences thought is supported by research described in Richard Gerrig’s *Experiencing Narrative Worlds*. Gerrig has cited experiments showing that subjects lend credence to statements that, consciously, they know are false—and that the “suspension of disbelief” induced in this manner has a lingering effect.
4. As Rick Altman has explained in his classic essay “A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre,” which was republished as an appendix in his *Film/Genre*, earlier definitions of genre considered either films’ semantic traits—“attitudes, characters, shots, locations, set, and the like”—or their syntactic patterns—“constitutive relationships between undesignated and variable place-holders” (219). Both are essential to understanding genre and must, he added in his later work, be modified by pragmatics—by taking into consideration community responses that distinguish meaningful and insignificant semantic and syntactic variations (208–

- 209). For a discussion of the relationship between myth and genre, see Barry Keith Grant (29–55).
5. Whereas this mindset was characteristic of many of Perón's opponents, some of his enemies (the socialists, for example) were as committed to eliminating poverty as he was. Popular legends frequently portray Perón as Argentina's unique champion of the underprivileged and identify his enemies with the nation's oligarchy. Reality is more complex.

# PICTURING ARGENTINA

## CHAPTER 1

# MAKING MOVIES IN PERÓN'S ARGENTINA

Studying social change through the optic of genre films is counter-intuitive because it is their consistency that defines such movies as generic, and the degree to which they change has been the subject of debate. Linked to this paradox is the question of who determines movies' content. As Rick Altman has explained, some scholars assert that "audiences are manipulated by ... business and political interests," whereas others "attribut[e] ultimate authorship to the audience," whose interests the studios serve for a price (218). Typically, representatives of the first group consider film genres static, and those for whom audiences determine content believe they evolve.

Illustrative of the former position are Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, whose essay published toward the end of World War II compares mass culture to a concentration camp with invisible fences (120). For these authors, movie genres are stagnant: "Every film is a preview of the next, which promises yet again to unite the same heroic couple under the same exotic sun: anyone arriving late cannot tell whether he is watching the trailer or the real thing" (132). Although



they recognize that previous artistic creations reflected “the different structures of social coercion of those periods,” Horkheimer and Adorno have asserted that mass production so empowers the culture industry that it can increasingly “do as it chooses with the needs of consumers—producing, controlling, disciplining them” (103, 115). Expressing similar views, Judith Hess Wright has declared that genre movies “serve the interests of the ruling class by assisting in the maintenance of the status quo, and they throw a sop to oppressed groups who ... eagerly accept the genre film’s absurd solutions to economic and social conflicts” (42).

Evidence shows, however, that genres do evolve—for example, the classic crime movie gave rise to film noir—and some innovations evince more progressive attitudes than Wright’s piece takes into account. Thomas Schatz has argued that “genres are not blindly supportive of the cultural status quo,” asserting that if they “develop and survive because they repeatedly flesh out and reexamine cultural conflicts, then we must consider the possibility that genres function as much to challenge and criticize as to reinforce the values that inform them” (35). Similarly, Barbara Klinger has explained that “diverse critical positions that address [some genre movies] ... are united ... by an emphasis on the identity of these film groups as alternative or ‘countercinemas’ within the province of dominant cinematic practice” (81). Likewise, Leo Braudy has written that when “conventions can no longer evoke and shape either the emotions or intelligence of the audience, they must be discarded and new ones tried out” (*World* 179). Jorge Coscia’s reflection on this dynamic deems culture a form of social adaptation: “the changing plan, the strategy, and the work of a community to survive” (13). It would be naïve to dismiss these views as reflecting a reactionary mindset. Leftist filmmaker Fernando Birri has voiced the conviction that audiences help determine movies’ merits. Ana López quoted him, saying, “Film must be funded by its audience [because] the fact that the audience pays for its tickets confirms its interests in the film and keeps filmmakers committed to their audience” (“Argentina” 62). That movie content reflects viewers’ tastes does not necessarily imply that it serves

the public interest, however. Popular culture's "standardized forms" may, as Horkheimer and Adorno have argued, reflect "a cycle of manipulation and retroactive need" (95).<sup>1</sup>

Altman's study eschews attributing film authorship exclusively to audience or political and business interests. Rather, he has asserted that movies "serve diverse groups diversely," noting that "Hollywood itself harbors many divergent interests" (207–208). Argentine cinema also reflects the interests of different groups, and as I commented in the introduction, examining movies made before, during, and after first Peronism uncovers clashing patterns. Sometimes even individual films reveal divergent interests. The case of Francisco Mugica is illustrative. Given Octavio Getino's description of him as the "most notorious initiator of ... an openly bourgeois cinema for the consumption of the upper and middle classes" (36), one would scarcely expect Mugica's films to portray left-wing characters in a positive manner—but they do. *Así es la vida* (Such is life; Mugica, 1939) is a sentimental drama that, as I show in chapter 5, presents an idealized image of a patriarchal family. It includes, however, an important character who is a socialist, whom it presents in a manner that encourages "a positive response from viewers ... and not a devaluing of the character and his ideology" (Milesi and Carbajal 123). A later Mugica film, *La hija del ministro* (The minister's daughter; 1943) goes further; its male lead (Juan Carlos Thorry) is a socialist deputy who is portrayed as unqualifiedly admirable.

Both movies imagine communalities linking left-wing interests with representatives of the moneyed (but not oligarchic) classes. As Cecilia Milesi and Rodrigo Carbajal have explained, *Así es la vida* focuses on a family that has achieved "considerable wealth and a degree of prestige and social standing" but that, unlike the oligarchy, which "disdained all work," is headed by a father who "is concerned with his business and values daily work" (113). The film's socialist character is suitor to one of the daughters, and although they do not marry, he remains a valued and helpful friend of the family. *La hija del ministro*, which concludes

with the imminent marriage of a socialist deputy to the daughter of a factory owner, envisages a greater alliance between working-class and moneyed interests.

Although these two films are remarkable because they apply a political label—*socialist*—to working-class interests, it is not rare for pre-Peronist cinema to imagine the reconciliation of opposing class interests. The important point for now, however, is that Argentine cinema during the time studied, like Hollywood, served “diverse groups diversely” and harbored “many divergent interests” (Altman 207–208). These included producers, directors, writers, performers, and a government in which Juan Perón emerged as president. The relative influence of these participants shifted as the government acquired greater influence over filmmaking.

Assessing the impact of this shift is complicated because Perón remains a controversial figure, and interpretations of his actions often reflect ideological divisions. Early assessments of his impact on Argentine cinema are generally negative.<sup>2</sup> In *Historia del cine argentino*, published five years after the “Liberating Revolution,” Domingo Di Núbila has declared that like Lenin, Hitler, Mussolini, Roosevelt, and Churchill, Perón understood movies’ political clout and resolved to “take control of cinema’s reins” (2: 46). His study criticizes specific instances in which Perón’s government mandated changes in individual films’ content. Di Núbila regarded Peronist legislation that provided filmmakers with financial credits as a source of corruption and cited as evidence the debt the film industry owed the Banco Industrial when Perón was overthrown (2: 195). Although Di Núbila’s account recognizes that abuses continued under succeeding governments (2: 196), his judgment of Perón’s impact on the nation’s cinema is sweepingly negative.

Writing five decades later, Clara Kriger has sought greater balance, warning against seeing the Peronist regime’s involvement in cinema as “a phenomenon of domination or as taking place in only one direction” (18). She is right in this respect. Producers, writers, directors,

and presumably audiences continued to influence movie content during these years.<sup>3</sup> It is essential to recognize, however, that although the relationship between government and filmmakers during first Peronism was not hegemonic, it was one in which the regime endeavored to exercise uncontested control and penalized filmmakers, scriptwriters, and performers for ideological and personal reasons.

Reflecting this, a number of the nation's leading film directors have complained about the repressive atmosphere in which they worked during those years. Leopoldo Torre Nilsson, for example, described the period as one when "[b]lacklists operated as a coercive factor; if one could not tell a joke or express an opinion in a circle of friends, how much less could one make a film with authentic social and human content" (45). Although some have dismissed Torre Nilsson as representing the views of the oligarchy, it is important to note that he also condemned the military governments that replaced Perón. Moreover, as I explain in greater detail in chapter 10, his films evince a progressive attitude toward gender and lay bare the ugliness of oligarchic culture.

Another filmmaker who found the atmosphere of first Peronism repressive is Mario Soffici, who cannot be identified with the oligarchy. He is celebrated as the director of classics such as *Viento norte* (North wind; 1937), *Kilómetro 111* (Kilometer 111; 1938), and *Prisioneros de la tierra* (Prisoners of the earth; 1939), which "denounced the exploitation of poor Argentines in rural settings" (Karush, "Populism" 27). But during first Peronism the quality of his films diminished (Grinberg 46). According to his son Albert, "he always spoke of how difficult it was to work at that time" ("Re: Me dio"). Albert Soffici qualified this remark by adding that his father's greatest misgivings concerned people in Perón's government. Mario Soffici, he wrote, "always defended Perón as an extremely intelligent and astute politician. Apparently, those around him were really dangerous" ("Re: Me dio").

One of those around Perón was his undersecretary for media, Raúl Alejandro Apold, who, even before Perón's overthrow, was labeled the

regime's Goebbels and who wielded more power than other cabinet members who outranked him (Mercado 23, 234–235). Torre Nilsson described him as “a shady, mediocre man” (45). In fact, Apold was one of the most unsavory figures of first Peronism, and his negative influence on Argentine cinema is widely documented.<sup>4</sup> César Maranghello and Andrés Insaurralde have reported that the months following his resignation in June 1955 witnessed “an entertainment renaissance. Restrictions were lifted, and previously prohibited themes and persons were permitted” (284).

Although he was appointed to enforce Perón's policies, sometimes Apold's repressive acts were motivated by his personal agenda. As Kriger has noted, targets of his ire included Fanny Navarro and Hugo del Carril, who were ardent Peronists (104).<sup>5</sup> Navarro was a friend of Eva, who appointed her to head her Cultural Athenaeum. She was temporarily blacklisted following Eva's death because she had antagonized Apold by using her influence to persuade the first lady to lift restrictions he had imposed on other performers (Maranghello, “Los exilios” 172). Del Carril's enthusiasm for Perón led him to record the anthem “Los muchachos peronistas” (The Peronist boys; Cabrera, *Hugo del Carril* 30). He fell from grace after he criticized the way Apold managed Argentina's participation in the 1952 Venice Film Festival (Maranghello, *Hugo del Carril* 10–11). To retaliate, Apold withdrew del Carril's *Las aguas bajan turbias* (Dark river; 1952)—one of the outstanding movies of the Perón era—from the theaters, although it was still attracting large audiences, had his contract to direct and star in *Del otro lado del puente* (The other side of the bridge; Carlos Rinaldi, 1953) revoked, delayed his filming of *La quintrala* (1955), had his singing contract with Radio Splendid canceled, and refused to authorize his singing tours in Latin America (10–11).

Apold had performers, directors, and scriptwriters banned—blacklisted—from work in film. This practice was also common in the United States at the time, but the number of prohibitions in Argentina is remarkably large given the size of its film industry.<sup>6</sup> Both countries banned

individuals with left-wing political views. A well-known Argentine case is that of Francisco Petrone, who was blacklisted in 1947 because of his affiliation with the Communist Party.<sup>7</sup> In Argentina, however, unacceptable political views included opposition to the Peronist regime, as well as clashes with individuals associated with it. Performers prohibited because of personal conflicts include Libertad Lamarque and Niní Marshall, two of the three female performers composing what Abel Posadas has called the epicenter of classic Argentine cinema (*Niní Marshall* 9). Although it is difficult to identify with precision the events leading to their being blacklisted, it is clear that both incurred the ire of members of Perón's family. It is beyond doubt, for example, that Libertad Lamarque offended Eva Perón—Eva Duarte, at the time—during the filming of *La cabalgata del circo* (The circus cavalcade; Mario Soffici, 1945), but the exact nature of her offense remains unclear.<sup>8</sup> Niní Marshall either mocked Evita or insulted Evita's brother, Juan Duarte.<sup>9</sup>

Like blacklistings, censorship operated differently in Argentina and in the United States. Clara Kriger has explained that Argentine national and local government bodies applied different criteria in scrutinizing movies; the central Dirección de Espectáculos Públicos (Office of Public Performances) considered films' ideological and political content, after which municipalities, whose boards included representatives from the Roman Catholic Church, examined them for objectionable moral content (51–52). Kriger has reported that the Office of Public Performances prohibited a single national film, Albert Arliss's *Juguetes modernos* (Modern toys), and that it required cuts in a number of others (53). Anecdotal evidence suggests that censorship of foreign movies occurred more frequently. Novelist Beatriz Guido has noted that while Perón was in office, she and Leopoldo Torre Nilsson “used to take the ferry to Montevideo and go to see films forbidden at home” (Torrents 44). César Maranghello's “Cine y estado” (101) lists four foreign films that were prohibited in 1950: *Madame Bovary* (Vincent Minnelli, 1949), *Stromboli* (Roberto Rossellini, 1950), *We Were Strangers* (John Huston, 1949), and *All the King's Men* (Robert Rossen, 1949). Oscar Terán has recalled that *The Great Dictator*

(Charles Chaplin, 1940) could be shown only after exhibitors agreed to cut a passage from the Chaplin character's antiauthoritarian speech at the end (263). In 1944, two years before Perón became president, the junta ordered the removal from the theaters of Alberto de Zavalía's *El fin de la noche* (The end of the night) because of its negative portrayal of the Nazis (Di Núbila 2: 35).

To a large extent, political and ideological censorship during first Peronism continued practices developed earlier. A 1944 U.S. Department of Commerce assessment of foreign motion picture markets indicates that "censorship in Argentina is probably the most severe in Latin America" and describes censors' primary interest as "controlling films which would in any way impair the external and internal political relations of Argentina" (Golden 27). This pattern was already evident in 1938, when authorities blocked the release of Manuel Romero's *Tres argentinos en París* (Three Argentines in Paris) because they judged that its protagonists' questionable integrity reflected poorly on the nation's citizens. The movie premiered after Lumiton, the studio, changed its title to *Tres anclados en París* (Three men stuck in Paris; Di Núbila 1: 100).

During first Peronism, however, the government became increasingly vigilant regarding what might impair the nation's "external and internal political relations" and began to require movies to portray contemporary Argentina in a favorable manner. Filmmakers accommodated this sensitivity by working into their scripts—sometimes in the dialogue but also through direct proclamations—the claim that the social evils they showed belonged to an era before Perón. Kriger has referred to this practice as "self-censorship" (201), and it is apparent that for the most part, producers and directors, aware that their movies would not be released otherwise, acted on their own initiative to incorporate the requisite notice. It is also clear that the need to do so created resentment, and in at least two cases, as I explain in chapter 10, filmmakers balked before finally yielding to government pressure. Working in this atmosphere also encouraged another form of self-censorship that

prevented producers from undertaking projects they suspected might not be acceptable; according to his son Albert, Mario Soffici spoke frequently of this practice, which he regarded as especially harmful ("Mario Soffici").

The Peronist regime also took steps to promote Argentine cinema. These included facilitating loans at favorable rates to cover up to 70 percent of the cost of making a movie, as well as a 1947 law that required theaters to exhibit more Argentine films (Kriger 43–50). Although this Ley de Cine 12.999 (Film law 12.999) was passed with backing from the opposition and was received enthusiastically by filmmakers, subsequent legislation claiming to support the nation's cinema was of more dubious merit. Three years after the passage of Ley de Cine 12.999, Peronist lawmakers pushed through Ley de Cine 13.651, which authorized the Office of Public Performances to use its assessment of films' artistic and cultural merit in determining whether they qualified for loans (Kriger 58–61).

Valeria Manzano has noted that Perón's government also adapted to its purposes a preexisting system of prizes given annually to the nation's best movie (272). Reviewing her list of winners, I find it intriguing that for four consecutive years—1947, 1948, 1949, and 1950—this prize was awarded to films directed by Luis César Amadori, who was a close friend of Apold.<sup>10</sup> Amadori's 1949 winner, *Almafuerte*, a biopic about the poet Pedro Bonifacio Palacios or Almafuerte (lit., "strong soul"; 1854–1917), includes a sequence that suggests a parallel between its protagonist and Eva Perón. The film shows Almafuerte, who worked as a schoolteacher in a rural district, giving his students a daily ration of bread and milk—a practice Argentines praise Evita for inaugurating during first Peronism. In the movie, the village baker balks at providing free bread and tells Almafuerte not to return to his shop with his hands empty. Almafuerte repeats these words to his students, instructs them to fill their hands with sticks and stones, and leads them to the bakery, where they take the bread by force. It is improbable that this incident, which is not



mentioned in Julio Alari's biography of *Almafuerte*, reflects a real event. The movie likely included it as a way of calling attention to a popular government program and reminding audiences of the regime's support for their children.<sup>11</sup> *La campana nueva* (The new bell; Luis Moglia Barth, 1950) also lauds schoolteachers for ensuring that their students receive a daily snack; in it, the only recalcitrant contributor is a cow that, upon learning that her milk is for children, allows it to flow freely. The timing of these movies—*Almafuerte* premiered on 20 December 1949 and *La campana nueva* fifteen days later, on 4 January 1950—is striking because they ushered in the year the government proclaimed the Year of the Liberator General San Martín. That year was a key one, Mariano Plotkin has explained, because it enabled the government to communicate a symbolic link between Perón and the nation's historic liberator (78). Interestingly in the context of *Almafuerte* and *La campana nueva*, 1950 was also the year the government began to extend its influence over education, "Peronizing" the curriculum (100).

Two other movies that premiered at approximately the same time evoke a less popular government practice. *Edición extra* (Extra edition; Luis Moglia Barth, 26 Oct. 1949) and *Hombres a precio* (Men on the take; Bernardo Spoliansky, 16 Mar. 1950) are political thrillers about newspapers that falsify their reporting to accommodate business interests. *Edición extra's* plot is based on the historical murder of a municipal government official in 1926 that had inspired a silent movie (Manrupe and Portella 196). It adapts this story, however, in a way that transforms it into a condemnation of a corrupt newspaper editor, Carlos Linares (Eduardo Cuitiño), who accepts bribes to destroy the career of Martín Barrera (Enrique de Pedro), a senator opposing a law that will benefit foreign capitalists. When Barrera is murdered, the reporter, Alberto Giménez (Jorge Salcedo), moved by the plight of the senator's daughter, Rosario (Chela Cordero), defies his boss and undertakes an honest investigation that reveals the truth. According to Manrupe and Portela, the movie's tone so alarmed Argentina's press union that it issued a communique repudiating it as an affront to Argentine journalism (196).

*Hombres a precio*, which premiered five months later, elicited similar protests from journalists (Manrupe and Portela 287). Like *Edición extra*, it portrays a reporter, Rodolfo (Carlos Cores), who works for a corrupt newspaper, *El heraldo*, whose editor rewrites stories in a way that will encourage a strike furthering the interests of foreigners and damaging Argentine business. Because the articles are published under Rodolfo's name, they cause a conflict between him and his girlfriend, Carmen (Yeya Duciel), whose brother Manuel (Luis Otero) opposes the strike. Agents provocateurs frame Manuel for murder, Rodolfo investigates and proves his innocence, and he and Carmen are reconciled. Rodolfo then confronts his editor and kills him in a struggle when the editor threatens him with a gun. After the authorities exonerate him, he proclaims one of this movie's—and *Edición extra*'s—underlying messages: “It is necessary to put an end to dailies like *El heraldo*.”

His words give succinct expression to the mindset supporting one of first Peronism's most controversial practices: the closure and confiscation of newspapers and periodicals that, in the regime's assessment, misled the public and undermined confidence in the government's programs. The most famous case is the takeover in 1951 of *La prensa*, which, as James Cane has observed, gave the government control of “eight newspapers in the city of Buenos Aires alone, including those that had been Latin America's five largest dailies at the time of Perón's election in February 1946” (3).<sup>12</sup> Closures and confiscations of newspapers were frequent during first Peronism, and the reasons justifying them were sometimes capricious. On 1 January 1950, for example, the government ordered the closure of *La hora* because it had omitted from its masthead the proclamation “the Year of the Liberator General San Martín” (Luna 2: 4). Two days later the regime shut down three other dailies (Luna 2: 4).

*Edición extra* and *Hombres a precio* are supportive of the government's position in its conflict with the press, and like *Almafuerte* and *La campana nueva*, they appear to have been made with the goal of

presenting Peronist policies in a positive light. It is impossible to determine whether the initiative to make these films originated with their producers or whether they were conceived at the urging of officials like Apold.<sup>13</sup> Because their premieres coincided with the inauguration of the Year of the Liberator General San Martín, which the government endowed with special connotations, the latter explanation seems likely.

The government measures I have described—blacklisting movie professionals, imposing censorship, blocking the release of films, requiring plot modifications or commentary distancing the regime from the social ills portrayed, rewarding pro-Peronist filmmakers with preferential financing, and encouraging content designed to evoke associations with beneficial government practices or to give a positive spin to controversial ones—complicate the understanding of how films “serve diverse groups diversely” during first Peronism (Altman 207). As conveyers of myth, however, movies from this period remain a reliable gauge of public outlooks. To understand why this is so, it is useful to compare *Edición extra* and *Hombres a precio* with an earlier film, *Héroes sin fama* (Heroes without fame; Mario Soffici, 1940), which presents journalism as a defense against government graft and in which the forces intent on shutting down a newspaper are a violent mob paid by a corrupt government official. In Soffici’s movie, newspaper editor Jacinto (Rufino Córdoba) incurs the ire of a dishonest oligarch who dupes Torcuato (José Olarra)—a friend of Jacinto and the father of Jacinto’s son Enrique’s (Angel Magaña) girlfriend, Aurora (Elisa Galvé)—into holding a government office and implementing his schemes. When Jacinto continues to criticize the government, thugs murder him, and Enrique assumes his father’s mission. This brings a break with Aurora—until a contractor delivers to Torcuato a bribe intended for his boss, and realizing that he has been duped, Torcuato joins Enrique in a campaign to restore honest government.

On its most obvious level *Héroes sin fama* is diametrically opposed to the ideas in *Edición extra* and *Hombres a precio*. Moglia Barth’s and

Spoliansky's films portray newspapers as enemies of the public welfare. In contrast, Soffici's movie presents the unsung heroes of the press as the guarantors of good government. At the level of myth, however, the three movies share a pattern of coding so seemingly natural that it almost escapes notice. In each of them a young male reporter acts with integrity against the forces of corruption, his actions threaten his relationship with an attractive woman, but he and the woman are reconciled in the end. All these elements—the organizing motif of crime and justice, the male-female relationships characterized by break and reunion, the positioning of the men as agents and of the women in more passive roles as muses and trophies—reflect social myths that Moglia Barth's and Spoliansky's pro-Peronism movies share with *Héroes sin fama* even as they reject its portrayal of journalists as heroes.

Bruce Lincoln has remarked that in order to appeal to audiences, speakers need “to say inconsequential and platitudinous things in a way that makes them sound fresh and stimulating, and to say challenging things in a sufficiently conventional way as to make them sound mild” (10). The same observations may be made of motion pictures, and from all appearances *Edición extra* and *Hombres a precio* follow the latter strategy; they present the regime's controversial policies of press control by replicating *Héroes sin fama*'s pattern showing a male journalist whose battle against corruption enables him to win the affection of an attractive woman. Indeed, their treatment of this formula reflects an even older—medieval—tradition of heroic men who aid damsels in distress.

The way these films portray men and women is no less political than their attitudes toward press censorship are. Their treatment of gender, however, operates at a different level: one that David Bordwell has labeled *symptomatic meaning* and identified as lying “outside the conscious control of” movies' creators (72). Symptomatic meanings, which are “intrapyschic or broadly cultural” (72), function as myths. Consequently, they escape the notice of large segments of movie audiences who deem them natural. In contrast, viewers can scarcely overlook

the call for censorship that is implicit in Spoliansky's and Moglia Barth's films and that becomes explicit when *Edición extra*'s protagonist urges putting an end to dailies like *El heraldo*.<sup>14</sup>

Scholarly film analyses have mirrored the attitude of the general public in this regard. As Ana Laura Lusnich has reported, film historians trace the beginning of Argentine political cinema to the premiere of Fernando Birri's neorealist documentary, *Tire dié* (Throw a dime) in 1958 ("Orígenes" 25). Although she and other contributors to her volume have identified precursors, their focus remains on films whose political dimension is blatant and deliberate. This traditional approach is useful. Here, however, I follow a broader understanding that takes into account twenty-first-century psychological research showing that political convictions are not, as common sense holds, deliberate. Rather, they are based, Jonathan Haidt has explained, on "quick moral intuitions ... followed (when needed) by slow, ex post facto moral reasoning" ("Emotional Dog" 817).<sup>15</sup> Political cinema in its broadest sense reflects the dominant "quick moral intuitions" of a given period by presenting them as natural (as myths)—but it may also reflect *on* them and call them into question. As will become evident in the following pages, the interplay between these two trends attests fundamental changes in Argentine society during crucial years of the nation's history.

## NOTES

1. Although their use of the word *need* to describe mimetic desire is misleading, Horkheimer and Adorno's point is valid. Popular demand is a measure of exchange value, not use value, and as economists are increasingly aware, consumer choices are frequently irrational.
2. As Oscar Terán has explained, Argentine intellectuals were predominantly hostile to Perón's regime, but the actions of the Liberating Revolution, which overthrew him, provoked "an authentic boomerang" that led to a "dizzying rereading of Peronism" (270). This shift of posture is evident in assessments of Perón's impact on cinema.
3. Often filmmakers' and the state's interests were compatible. The case of Manuel Romero is illustrative. As Andrés Insaurralde has noted, prior to first Peronism, Romero's movies divided characters into contrasting groups in which "[t]he good are very good and are on one side (usually, the left), and the bad, tremendously bad (although well educated)" are on the other (11). During the Perón years, "'the bad guys' receive the name of 'oligarchy;' 'the good guys' are 'the people'" (19). Although the shift in vocabulary echoes the oligarchy-people opposition popularized by Evita, it reflects a mindset that was already evident in Romero's earlier movies.
4. Apold's own description of his duties as media undersecretary makes clear that he believed his work included silencing Perón's opponents. In a 1953 speech he described restricting paper supplies as a means of controlling newspapers, and he urged the propagation of false rumors in order to undermine the opposition's credibility (14, 25). He justified the second measure by remarking that Perón's adversaries used it (25). Although I cannot admire Apold, his description of Perón's enemies was, in many cases, accurate. The day before Apold's speech, bombs killed seven and wounded ninety-three participants in a massive assembly of the Peronist labor union in the Plaza de Mayo (Luna 3: iv).
5. When Perón was overthrown, Del Carril and Navarro were among the filmmakers and performers penalized for supporting him. Navarro's career suffered especially. She began filming *Marta Ferrari* (Carlos Gorostiza, 1956) in June 1955 (Maranghello and Insaurralde 283). She did not appear in another film until 1963 and performed in only three movies (one of them never released) and two television series between that year and her suicide in 1971. Her personality may have exacerbated

the slump in her career. According to José Antonio Martínez Suárez, the assistant director of *Deshonra* (Dishonor; Daniel Tinayre, 1952), in which she had the leading role, she was a prima donna who, among other things, insisted that crew members address her as “Madam President” in recognition of her role as president of Eva Perón’s Ateneo (interview with Martínez Suárez, June 2005). Del Carril had starring roles in two movies released in 1956 and in fifteen more before 1976, when a brutal anti-Peronist dictatorship gained control of Argentina. Between 1956 and 1976, he also directed eight films. Del Carril’s ties with Peronism may have impaired critical appreciation of his work, however. As Cabrera and Castagna have noted, for years he was recognized only as the director and protagonist of *Las aguas bajan turbias*, and the rest of his films were ignored (68).

6. For a catalogue of banned performers, consult Maranghello, “Los exilios.” As mindboggling as it is, however, Maranghello’s list apparently does not aspire to be complete. It omits Niní Marshall’s case, which I discuss later.
7. Demare, who directed *La guerra gaucha* (The gaucho war; 1942), in which Petrone had a major role, was blacklisted at the same time. He has related, “They lifted the prohibition against me, but he [Petrone] had to go to Mexico” (Ferreira 126). Demare described himself as a less extreme anti-Peronist than Petrone, although he has reported being troubled by the lack of freedom during first Peronism and described Perón as “a very talented liar” (Ferreira 127). Petrone returned to Argentina after Perón was overthrown.
8. According to popular legend, Lamarque slapped Evita. Published accounts of the alleged slap vary. In his biography of Evita, J. M. Taylor did not mention it. John Barnes has referred to Lamarque as “the actress who once slapped Evita’s face” (139). Alicia Dujovne Ortiz has reported that “[t]he highlight of the film [*La cabalgata del circo*] was to be a slap, a slap that the film’s star, Libertad Lamarque, would give to Evita” (80). Shortly afterwards, however, the account refers to “the slapping scene, or the lively argument” (81), and a page later concedes that “the slap may have been metaphoric” (82). Nicholas Fraser and Marysa Navarro have reported that during the filming of *La cabalgata del circo*, “a trivial argument ... developed into a shouting-match and ended with Libertad Lamarque supposedly slapping Evita across the face” (42). Sofici, who directed *La cabalgata del circo*, died in 1977, but his son Albert has said that according to his father, Evita used to carry a pistol that she

often showed to people, announcing that no one was going to intimidate her. In this context, it seems unlikely that Lamarque slapped her physically ("Mario Soffici"). Lamarque's account alleges that while the movie was being made, Evita arrived late for filming sessions. She showed up, moreover, in a chauffeur-driven limousine paid for by the government at a time when gasoline shortages had forced the other performers to use public transportation. On one occasion, Evita announced she was giving the chauffeur time off, and Lamarque responded, "You're very kind-hearted, so when you have too much gasoline, please bring us a little to the studio, even if it's only a mouthful" (212). Lamarque made one more Argentine movie, *Romance musical* (Musical romance; Ernesto Arancibia, 1947), after which she learned that she had been blacklisted and departed for Mexico, where she continued to work in film until her death in December 2000.

9. Marshall, who has claimed that her prohibition was punishment for not dating Eva's brother, also reported the charge, which she denies, that she mocked Evita (Marshall and d'Anna 174–179). She stated that in 1949, when she learned she was blacklisted, she requested an audience with Perón and was referred to Duarte, his secretary, one of whose film-star mistresses, Fanny Navarro, co-starred with Marshall in *Mujeres que bailan* (Women who dance; Manuel Romero, 1949). Marshall has claimed that during that movie's filming, Duarte repeatedly invited her to dinner, and she refused. When she made appointments to talk with him, she has said, she was twice turned away after a prolonged wait. The third time one of his assistants entered the waiting room and loudly accused her of dressing as a prostitute and mocking Evita at a party. Understanding the futility of appealing, she left Argentina to work abroad. Six years earlier, she had been blacklisted as a radio performer by the GOU government (Santos, Petruccelli, and Russo 51–69). Shortly after it came to power, the junta issued a set of rules to "purify" Argentine Spanish. Marshall wrote the scripts for a radio program in which she portrayed Catita, a working-class woman whose mangled pronunciations and malapropisms the government deemed offensive. Ordered to reform her character's speech, she made Catita speak flawless Castilian—in verse. She then moved her program to a radio station in Montevideo, Uruguay, which Argentines living along the border could still listen to. The decree banning "incorrect" speech was never withdrawn, but popular opposition to it convinced the junta that enforcement was impossible, and although Marshall was barred from radio, this did not initially affect



her film career. Her earlier run-in with the authorities and her defiance of them may, however, have influenced the 1949 decision to prohibit her in film as well.

10. According to Carlos Hugo Christensen, a critic of Peronism, Amadori enjoyed a sycophantic relationship with Apold and proposed giving him a special award in recognition of his supposed contributions to the nation's film industry (Gallina 118; Ruffinelli, "Conversación" 329). The two men were lifetime friends. They met as students at the Colegio La Salle; Apold and his wife were godparents for the baptism of Amadori and Zully Moreno's daughter (Mercado 35, 287).
11. Because Almfuerte teaches his students to use violence against a businessman who refuses to support his socially beneficial program, this film brings to mind allegations made by Perón's detractors that many of the contributions to the Eva Perón Foundation were coerced. Mariano Plotkin has reported that a commission investigating these claims after Perón's overthrow found no evidence to substantiate them; he suspects, however, that the foundation exercised "informal coercion" because it "was able to obtain donations from businessmen that it would be difficult to believe were voluntarily granted" (150–151).
12. Cane's study focuses on large newspapers such as *La prensa*, rather than "explicitly partisan periodicals" (15). Perón targeted the entire gamut ranging from major dailies to small publications, and he did not limit his attacks to those, such as *La prensa*, that supported oligarchic interest. A special target was the Socialist Party's *La vanguardia* (García Sebastiani 15–19). Although small in comparison to commercial dailies, *La vanguardia* "had by 1945 achieved a circulation level equal to that of the largest newspapers of both Colombia and Chile" (Cane 15).
13. Christensen has reported being angered when, after returning from work in Venezuela, he suggested filming an Argentine-Venezuelan co-production portraying the life of Simón Bolívar and Apold asked why he had not proposed, instead, a movie about San Martín (Gallina 117–18; Ruffinelli, *Conversación* 329). Based on this anecdote, it is apparent that Apold understood his authority as extending to recommendations regarding film content.
14. Bordwell's taxonomy distinguishes four classes of film meaning: referential, implicit, explicit, and symptomatic (8–9). The term *implicit* for the second type may be misleading because symptomatic meanings also depend on implication—the three films under consideration here, for example, imply the existence of a natural gender order defining male and

female behavior. The difference, Bordwell has explained, is that in creating referential, implicit, and explicit meanings, "the film 'knows' more or less what it is doing," whereas symptomatic meanings are expressed "involuntarily" and "are assumed to be at odds with referential, explicit, or implicit ones" (9).

15. In the article referenced, Haidt has focused on moral philosophy, a field that includes politics, although he has not elaborated on this relationship. Recently, he summarized his research in a book, *The Righteous Mind*, which explicitly links his findings to political discourse.